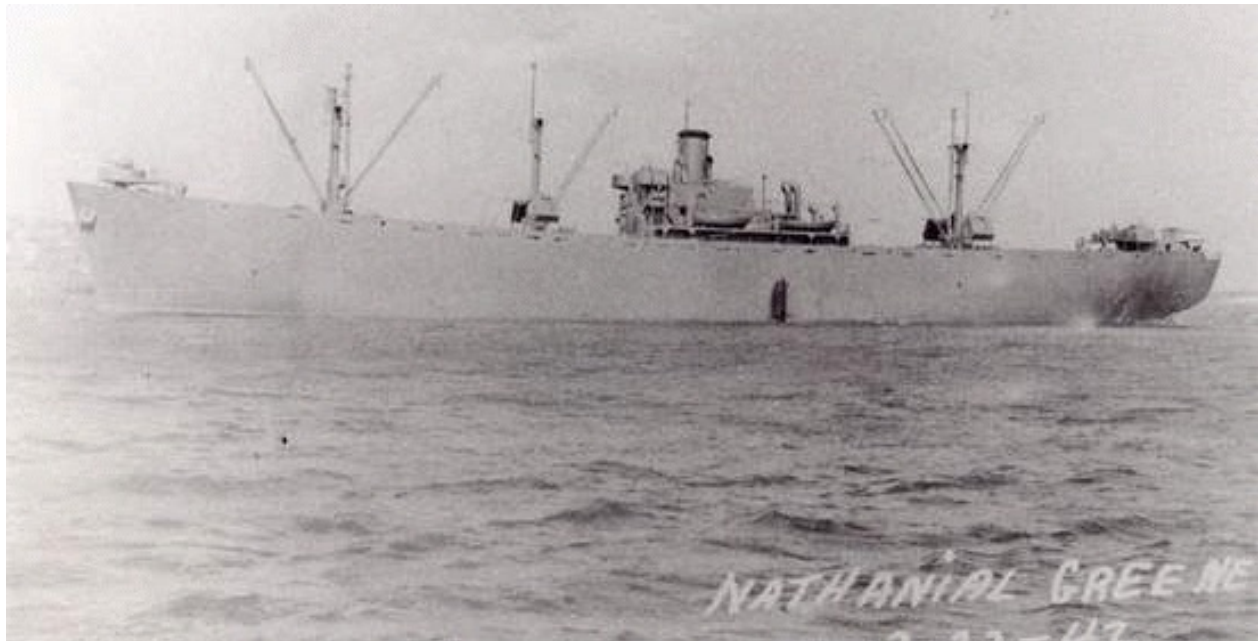


John Robert Gordon, Jr.

Born: January 6, 1920
Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: February 24, 1943 / 36-04N, 0-02.5W
Date / Place of burial: February 24, 1943 / Lost at Sea – 36-04N, 0-02.5W
Age: 23



John R. Gordon, Jr. signed on aboard the SS Nathaniel Greene as Engine Cadet in March 1942, shortly after it was delivered from North Carolina Shipbuilding. He was joined by his classmate, Cadet-Midshipman John A. Harley, who signed on as Deck Cadet.



“Gallant Ship” SS Nathaniel Greene

According to Cadet-Midshipman Harley’s report, the Nathaniel Greene sailed from New York for Russia via ports in the United Kingdom. After a harrowing voyage to

Murmansk in Convoy PQ-18, which lost 13 of 41 ships, the Nathaniel Greene's return trip was fortunately covered by a severe gale which prevented its detection by the enemy. The Nathaniel Greene arrived safely and discharged its cargo from Russia in Glasgow. During the combat actions of Convoy PQ-18 the SS Nathaniel Greene's gun crews shot down five enemy aircraft and was cited by the escort and convoy commanders for its gun crew's efficiency.



After loading cargo bound for North Africa the ship sailed on January 21, 1943, arriving at Mostaganem, Algeria on February 5. The Nathaniel Greene discharged all but about 800 tons of its food cargo there. On February 24, the ship sailed at noon GCT to meet up with Convoy MKS-8 for protection as it sailed for other Algerian ports to deliver the rest of its cargo. Escorted by the minesweeper HMS Brixham (J 105) the Nathaniel Greene's crew could see the convoy on the horizon. However, U-565 was also patrolling off of the port and sighted the Nathaniel Greene. The submarine's captain maneuvered into position and fired three torpedoes. At 1351 GCT two torpedoes struck the ship on the starboard side at the Number 2 and amidships at the engine room. As the Nathaniel Greene began to sink German dive and torpedo bombers began attacking the convoy.

The anti-aircraft cruiser HMS Scylla (98) promptly commenced firing on the attacking aircraft. Along with the efforts of two Hurricane fighters the attack was broken up. However, the attacking aircraft spotted the crippled Nathaniel Greene and turned their attention to safer prey. Although the Nathaniel Greene's gun crews were able to shoot one attacker down the ship was hit by three other torpedoes in the forward part of the ship. Cadet-Midshipman John Harley described the scene that ensued.

"Shrapnel was raining from the sky.... The midship section was engulfed in smoke and could not be seen. The deck cargo was littered with debris. In the excitement the two forward life rafts had been cast adrift, their painters parted and they drifted astern."

HMS Brixham came alongside the crippled Nathaniel Greene to take off its wounded and survivors. Other survivors, able to escape in the Numbers 2 and 4 lifeboats were also picked up by the HMS Brixham. The Brixham then began towing the sinking vessel back to shore to beach it so that its cargo could be salvaged. The vessel was beached late the next day, at Salamanda, Algeria, four miles west of Mostaganem. Only four of the 44 crew and 17 Armed Guard Sailors died in the attack on the Nathaniel Greene, but the four included Cadet-Midshipman John R. Gordon. He was last seen at his assigned station in the Engine Room, working the grease extractors. For its actions in the Russian Convoys and at Algeria the SS Nathaniel Greene was awarded the Gallant Ship Unit Citation.



**Mr. & Mrs John R. Gordon at
Christening of SS John R. Gordon**

Cadet-Midshipman John R. Gordon was posthumously awarded the Gallant Ship Citation Bar, Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter. In addition, the Liberty Ship SS John Robert Gordon was named in his honor

John R. Gordon was the only son of John R. Gordon and Kathleen Gordon. According to the 1940 Census the senior Gordon owned a hardware store.



**Mrs. John R. Gordon Christens
Liberty Ship named after her Son,
John Robert Gordon, Jr.**