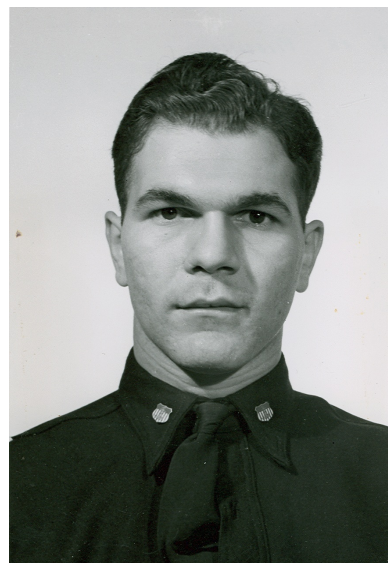


Antonio Vito Graziano

Born: February 5, 1922
Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Class: 1944
Service: USNR
Position / Rank: Boilers Officer / Ensign
Date / Place of death: February 1, 1945 / Pacific Ocean, S.E of Hawaii
Date / Place of burial: Unknown / St. John's Cemetery, Middle Village, Long Island, NY, Section 36, Range M, Plot 27, Graves 1 & 2
Age: 22



Anthony V. Graziano was sworn in as a Midshipman, Merchant Marine Reserve, U.S. Naval Reserve on December 24, 1942 four days before he completed his 10 weeks of training at the Pass Christian Basic School. According to Crew Lists on file in New York he signed on aboard the SS David G. Farragut as Engine Cadet on January 9, 1943. He signed off articles on September 14, 1943 after making voyages across the Atlantic and into the Mediterranean. According to U.S. Navy records he was awarded the Combat Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar and Mediterranean - Middle East War Zone Bar. During his service as a Cadet - Midshipman he received a letter of commendation from the David G. Farragut's Armed Guard Officer for his participation in repelling aircraft attacks on the ship.

Upon reporting to Kings Point he was assigned to Section B-116 and joined the Academy's Boxing Team. On May 19, 1944 he applied for an Active Duty Commission in the Navy. He graduated on July 12, 1944 and was commissioned Ensign, USNR on July 15, 1944. After reporting for duty on August 11 he was assigned to initial training at Newport, RI. Upon completion of his initial training he was assigned to the pre-commissioning crew of the USS Queens (APA 103) then being constructed and converted into an Attack Troop Transport at Bethlehem Steel Company's Sparrows Point, MD shipyard.

The USS Queens was commissioned on December 16, 1944. Ensign Graziano was assigned to duty as the ship's Boiler's Officer. The ship and its crew underwent their initial training and "shake down" cruise in the protected waters of Chesapeake Bay. When the ship was ready for duty it sailed from Norfolk, VA for Pearl Harbor via the Panama Canal.

The afternoon Deck Log Book entries for the USS Queens for February 1, 1945 state, in part,

“1330 Ensign Antonio V. Graziano, EM, USNR #181430 sustained injuries to the head. 1509 Ensign Antonio V. Graziano died from gunshot wound, circumstances being investigated.”

A board of investigation, headed by Commander M. H. Hegarty, USNR, the ship's Engineering Officer, convened a little more than an hour after Ensign Graziano's death. After several meetings the Board concluded that Ensign Graziano died of a self inflicted gunshot wound to head. The Board stated,

“At the time of the act, the deceased was temporarily insane caused by acts of duty as shown by changes in behavior and personality in the past six weeks as stated in the statements of witnesses. It is concluded that his death occurred in the line of duty and not the result of his own misconduct.”

The USS Queens arrived at Pearl Harbor on February 7, 1945, two days after what would have been Antonio V. Graziano's 23rd birthday. Ensign Graziano's body was transferred to U.S. Naval Hospital #8, Aiea, Hawaii. He was buried in the Halawa Naval Cemetery in Pearl Harbor. After World War II parents or next of kin of deceased military personnel buried outside the continental U.S. were given the option of either leaving the remains buried where they were or having the remains disinterred and returned to them for burial in their home town. On November 21, 1947 a headstone for Ensign Graziano was ordered from the Government. It was shipped on April 2, 1948 to St. John's Cemetery in Middle Village, Long Island which is Antonio V. Graziano's final resting place.

Antonio V. Graziano was the youngest of Michele (Michael) Graziano and Mary Graziano's two sons and third of their four children. His older brother was Daniel and his two sisters were Angelina (older) and Elizabeth. According to the 1930 U.S. Census Michele Graziano was a “boot black” or shoe shiner. The family lived at 1166 43rd Street in Brooklyn, NY. Antonio graduated from New Utrecht High School and took evening classes at Brooklyn College before his appointment to Kings Point. During the days before Kings Point he worked as a clerk in a stationery and printing company, and as a diamond cutter's apprentice.

In an historical note, the USS Queens was decommissioned on June 10, 1946. The ship was converted into a trans-Atlantic passenger ship and renamed SS Excambion. As one of American Export Lines “Four Aces” the ship operated from the East Coast of the U.S. to Mediterranean ports until 1958. In 1965 the ship was assigned as the first training ship of the Texas Maritime Academy in Galveston, TX. After many years of service training new merchant mariners the ship was retired. In 2007 the ship was sunk as a reef approximately 17 nautical miles northeast of South Padre Island, TX where it is a popular scuba diving attraction.