

William Henry Green, Jr.

Born: November 6, 1922
Hometown: Louisiana, MO
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: July 9, 1943 / 9-00S, 81-00E
Date / Place of burial: July 9, 1943 / Lost at Sea – 9-00S, 81-00E
Age: 20



William H. Green signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the SS Samuel Heintzelman at Charleston, SC on May 11, 1943. He was joined by his Pass Christian classmate Cadet-Midshipman John N. Stewart who signed on as Deck Cadet. The ship sailed the same day for Fremantle, Australia via the Panama Canal.

After safely crossing the Pacific the Samuel Heintzelman sailed from Fremantle, Australia, on 1 July, en route to Calcutta by way of Colombo and Karachi with a cargo of ammunition and general cargo. The Heintzelman was due to arrive in Colombo on 14 July, but she never arrived. For months her disappearance was a mystery. Then, on 29 September, a plank marked with the ship's name, along with several boxes of ammunition and boxes of glass vials with an unidentified powder, washed up on the beach of Minni Minni village on Diego Garcia, one of the Chagos Islands. Villagers had also noticed two unoccupied ship's boats the previous day, but these were never recovered.

After the war, German records showed that the ship had been torpedoed on July 9, 1943 by U-511. The submarine submerged after shooting its torpedoes, but the crew heard underwater explosions. When U-511 surfaced there was no sign of the ship or any survivors, only debris floating on the surface of the ocean. All of the seventy five people aboard the Samuel Heintzelman (42 crew, 27 Armed Guard and six passengers) were lost.

Cadet-Midshipman William H. Green was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Pacific War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

William H. "Billy" Green was the only son and oldest child of William H. "Willie" Green and Lucy Protzman Green. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Willie Green was a printer who worked for a nursery. Billy's younger sister, Margaret Lucile, known as "Peggy", was four years younger. According to information on his "family tree", Billy attended the Missouri School of Mines at Rolla, MO before he was accepted into the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps.



Billy Green Age 11

Billy was remembered by neighbors and friends as a standout student who studied Trigonometry in a special advanced class his senior year in high school. He was described as a handsome and well-mannered young man who was welcome in every circle in the community located about eighty miles north of St. Louis. Friends recall that he was a fine singer, and often performed in Louisiana with his girlfriend Honey, who was an accomplished pianist. Billy was appointed to the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy on December 17, 1942, and entered the Pass Christian Basic School in January. Because of his short stature Billy needed, and received, a waiver of the minimum height requirement for his appointment in the Merchant Marine Reserve.



Proud Mother says "Good Bye" to Son

One of the Chaplains at Pass Christian wrote to William Green's parents several times before his death. In one letter he spoke highly of William's personality and his faith:

"As you know, by this time your son has left the Cadet Basic School to continue his studies at sea. During the time that he was here it was my privilege to be associated with him and all of our contacts were very pleasant. During the last few days he was here I talked with him and his spirits were high and his belief in God was as great as ever."



Billy & his girlfriend "Honey"



Family with Billy at Train Station before joining his ship.



Last Day at Home