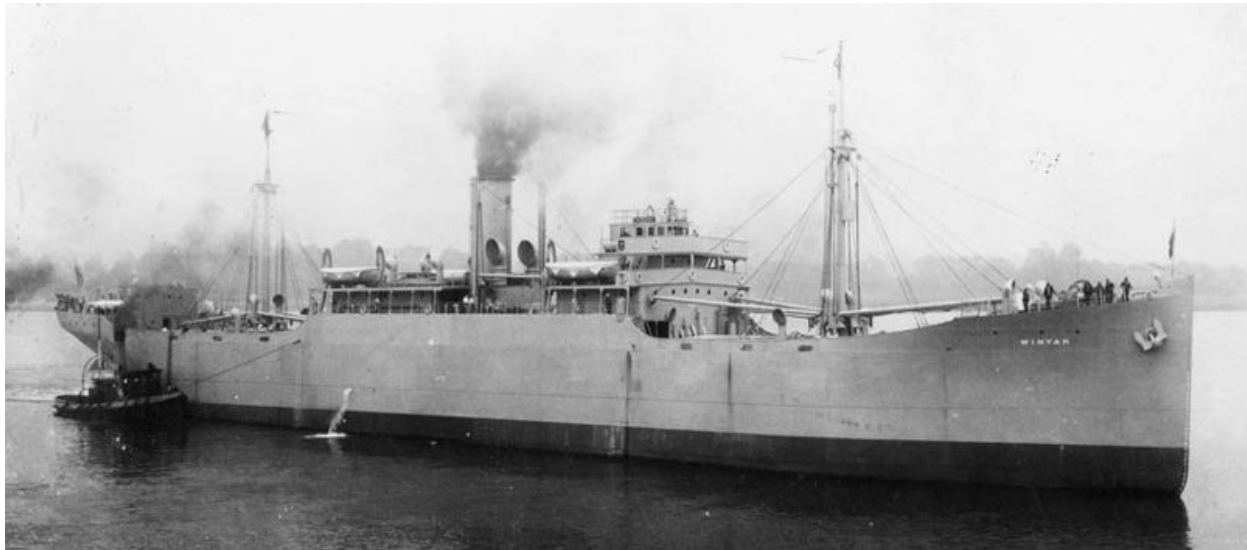


George Edgar Guilford

Born: July 22, 1921
Hometown: Centralia, KS
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: November 7, 1942 / 40S, 21-30E
Date / Place of burial: November 7, 1942 / Lost at Sea --40S, 21-30E
Age: 21



George E. Guilford attended Basic School at Pass Christian, MS. According to Academy records he signed on aboard the SS La Salle as Engine Cadet at Balboa, in the Panama Canal Zone, on September 26, 1942. Also aboard the ship was the Deck Cadet, his Pass Christian classmate Fred Pennington, and 1942 alumnus James D. Herndon, the ship's Third Assistant Engineer. Shortly after the men signing on the La Salle sailed for Cape Town, South Africa loaded with a cargo of trucks, steel and ammunition. However, the La Salle never arrived at Cape Town and the fate of the La Salle remained a mystery until after the war. The vessel was officially marked as "Presumed Lost" on December 2, 1942.



SS Wynah, a shipyard sister to the SS La Salle

After the war, German Navy records solved the mystery. On November 7, 1942, when the La Salle was nearing the end of its voyage, the unescorted freighter was sighted by U-159 about 350 miles southeast of the Cape of Good Hope. The submarine chased the La Salle for over five hours, missing with one torpedo, until it managed to achieve a better target solution and fired another torpedo. The explosion of that torpedo detonated the La Salle's ammunition cargo, instantly destroying the ship. The crew of U-159 reported that the explosion sent pillars of flame hundreds of feet into the air. Three of the submarine's crew were wounded by the debris that rained down on the submarine for several minutes after the explosion. It was later claimed that the explosion could be heard 300 miles away, at South Africa's Cape Point Lighthouse.

Everyone aboard the SS La Salle was killed instantly, including Cadet-Midshipmen George E. Guilford and Fred Pennington and Third Assistant Engineer James D. Herndon. Also among the dead was the ship's Armed Guard Officer, the former Mayor of Milwaukee, WI, Lieutenant Carl F. Zeidler, USNR. After resigning as Mayor so he could be commissioned Zeidler is said to have asked for the most dangerous job in the Navy. He was then assigned to command a merchant ship Armed Guard detachment.

Cadet-Midshipman George E. Guilford 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.

George Edgar (Edward according to his family) Guilford was the oldest of Harvey Dickerson Guilford and Hazel Zeola Condit Guilford's two sons. The Guilfords owned a farm outside of Centralia, KS. George's younger brother, William E. Guilford, was killed at Aachen, Germany in 1944 while serving in the U.S. Army.