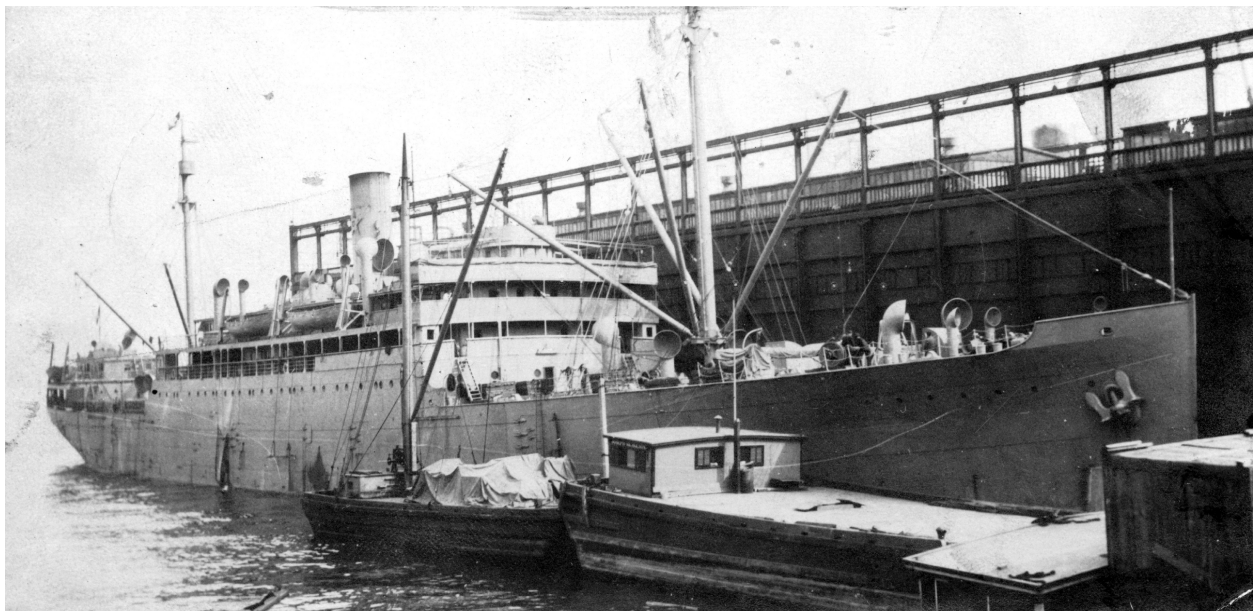


Richard Edmund Holland

Born: May 13, 1922
Hometown: New York, NY
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: February 7, 1943, /
55-18N, 26-29 W
Date / Place of Burial: February 7, 1943, /
Lost at Sea - 55-18N,
26-29 W
Age: 20



Richard E. Holland signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the U.S. Army Transport SS Henry R. Mallory on January 24, 1943 at Boston, MA. He had recently returned to the U.S. from Reykjavik, Iceland aboard the Army Transport SS Chateau Thierry. His first ship, the SS William Clark, was sunk on November 4, 1942 en-route to Murmansk, Russia. Signing on at about the same time were Cadet-Midshipmen Robert Helling, George R. Race, and Frank C. Roberts. The men joined Cadet-Midshipmen James A. Hammershoy (Engine) and Joseph E. Best (Deck) who had sailed aboard the Henry R. Mallory on its previous voyage.



U.S. Army Transport SS Henry R. Mallory (ca. 1918)

The Henry R. Mallory sailed on January 24, 1943 as part of slow convoy SC-118 bound for Liverpool via Nova Scotia. However, the Henry R. Mallory and several other ships were to split off from the convoy on February 9 and proceed to Iceland. Loaded with 383 Army, Navy, Marine Corps and civilian passengers, the ship was also carrying a mixed cargo of clothing, food, trucks, tanks, cigarettes, liquor and 610 sacks of mail.

On February 4, 1943 German submarines sighted the convoy and began attacking it. The attacks continued until the afternoon of February 7. At 0538 GCT on February 7, despite the rising sea and snow, a torpedo fired by U-402 struck the starboard side of the Henry R. Mallory at Hold #3, damaging the engines and blowing the hatch covers off of #4 Hold. Although two of the aft lifeboats had been damaged in the explosion and others were damaged by the heavy seas, the rest of the boats seemed secure.

According to some survivors the ship began sinking immediately, while others, apparently including the Captain, believed that the ship would remain afloat. As a result, distress messages were not sent and flares were not fired to alert other ships to the Henry R. Mallory's distress. Survivors also reported that the General Alarm was not rung and no order was given to abandon ship. Thus, between the failure to communicate its distress and the confusion of the greater attack on the convoy, none of the other ships in the convoy knew that the Henry R. Mallory was sinking.

Unfortunately, after a period of perceived stability the ship suddenly began sinking faster by the stern. The abrupt change caused panic among passengers and crew. Men rushed on deck amid frigid temperatures without proper protective clothing. In the chaos, only three boats were lowered successfully. However, each of these was dangerously overloaded either during launching or after picking up survivors from the water. Several other boats capsized as crew and passengers tried to launch them in the heavy seas. According to Cadet-Midshipman Joseph Best, his life boat was intended for fifty men but held eighty. With so much weight the boats gunwales were just inches above the water and the high seas threatened to either capsize or simply sink the boat. Many of the men frantically bailed with anything they could lay their hands on to keep the boat afloat while others jettisoned anything that did not appear to be necessary to survive their imminent sinking. Fortunately, Best took custody of the distress rockets and flares because he thought, ". . . they might become useful."

Although the ship was also equipped with life rafts, several of these could not be launched because they were either tied or frozen in place. Further, the men on the life rafts that could be launched were insufficiently trained in how to use their rafts. As a result, they did not properly deploy key parts of the raft to prevent capsizing in the heavy seas. Hundreds of the men aboard jumped overboard, where they would be forced to wait several hours in the freezing water.

With daylight the men in Best's boat sighted the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Bibb (WPG 31). The rockets hoarded by Best were fired into the air while Cadet-Midshipman Frank C. Roberts waved a yellow flag to attract the Bibb's attention. The Bibb saved 205 freezing survivors of the Mallory, including those in the life boat with Cadet-Midshipmen

Best and Roberts. The Bibb's sister ship, USCGC Ingham (WPG 35) also picked up some survivors. According to the official U.S. Coast Guard history of the USCGC Bibb,

"Lookouts aboard the Bibb sighted one of the Mallory's lifeboats at 1000 and, disobeying an order to return to the convoy, Bibb's commanding officer, CDR Roy Raney, ordered his cutter to begin rescuing survivors.

Many of Bibb's crewmen leapt into the water to assist the nearly frozen survivors, and the cutter Ingham assisted. One of Ingham's crew described the scene, a dreadfully common one along the North Atlantic that year:

"I never saw anything like it, wood all over the place and bodies in life jackets ... never saw so many dead fellows in my whole life. Saw lots of mail bags, boxes, wood, wood splinters, empty life jackets, oars, upturned boats, empty life rafts, bodies, parts of bodies, clothes, cork, and a million other things that ships have in them. I hope I never see another drowned man as long as I live."

Among the 272 men who died in the frigid water were Cadet-Midshipmen Richard E. Holland, Jay A. Hammershoy and George R. Race.

Cadet-Midshipman Richard E. Holland was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with two stars, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Richard Holland was one of seven children of James C. Holland and Helen Bender Holland. The 1930 U.S. Census finds the Holland family living in Scranton, PA where Richard's father worked in an electric generating plant and his mother managed a grocery store. Richard's father died in April 1933 and the family of six boys and one girl were raised by their mother. Richard joined the Civilian Conservation Corps and was assigned to a camp in New Mexico. When he returned from New Mexico he applied for entrance to Kings Point and was accepted.