

Chester Edward Klein

Born: June 5, 1920
Hometown: Elmhurst, NY
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: September 19, 1942 / 11-20N, 58-50W
Date / Place of burial: September 19, 1942 / Lost at Sea - 11-20N, 58-50W
Age: 22



Chester E. Klein signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the *MS Wichita* on May 1 at New Orleans, LA. He had been assigned to the *MS Blenheim* from the Cadet School in New Orleans, but was abruptly transferred to the *Wichita* on April 30. He was joined on May 20 by recent graduate Ceslaus (Chester) Maciorowski, who signed on as Third Assistant Engineer. The next day Cadet-Midshipman Robert J. Bole signed on as Deck Cadet. The *MS Wichita* was a World War I-era "Hog Islander" converted from steam turbine to diesel propulsion in 1929. The ship sailed for Africa in late May, calling at several ports before sailing for the U.S. from Takoradi, Ghana.



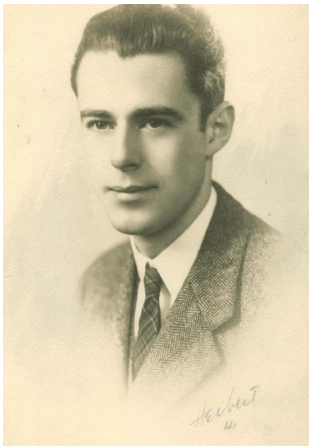
MS Wichita

The *Wichita* sailed from Takoradi on September 1, 1942, without any escort, bound for St. Thomas, U.S. Virgin Islands loaded with general cargo. According to German Navy records the *Wichita* was located and attacked by U-516 on the morning of September

19, 1942, when the *Wichita* was about 300 miles east of Barbados. The submarine's initial attack was unsuccessful. Re-positioning itself, U-516 managed to put a torpedo into the *Wichita* between the foremast and the bridge despite the old ship's desperate zig-zagging maneuvers at its full speed of about 11 knots. The *Wichita* sank in less than a minute with no survivors.

The U-516's log book states that the submarine surfaced and searched the area but found neither survivors nor lifeboats. Cadet-Midshipmen Chester E. Klein, Robert J. Bole, III and Third Assistant Engineer Ceslau Maciorowski all died in the attack.

Cadet-Midshipman Chester E. Klein was posthumously awarded the Mariner's Medal, Combat Bar-with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.



Chester E. Klein

Chester (Chet) Edward Klein was the oldest of Dr. Henry Klein and Lucy Ermold Klein's two children and their only son. His little sister, Lucy, also known as "Sis," was one year younger. When Chet and Sis were young teenagers the Klein family moved to Beacon, New York, to be closer to the families of Lucy's father, George, and uncle Edward Ermold, owners of successful manufacturing businesses. Chet, Sis, and John Ermold, a cousin with whom they were close, spent much time on Edward's Hudson River based yacht before the war. Chet and Sis attended Newtown High School in Elmhurst, NY.

Chet attended Middlebury College for one year after graduating from high school. However, according to his family, the next year Chet entered Pratt Institute of Technology to prepare him for his responsibilities running the Ermold family manufacturing businesses. However, after entering Pratt Chet applied for and was accepted to the U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps and reported for training at the New Orleans, LA Cadet School. Letters to his family reveal that he enjoyed his Merchant Marine training and life.

In his last letters Chet said he was looking forward to a short trip of three months and then to return for shore school for ten months after which he would seek active duty in the Navy.



Lucy and Chester

According to Lucy's son, Mark Lofgren, in her last days his mother frequently asked for "Chet" and that being told she would meet him soon eased her last days.