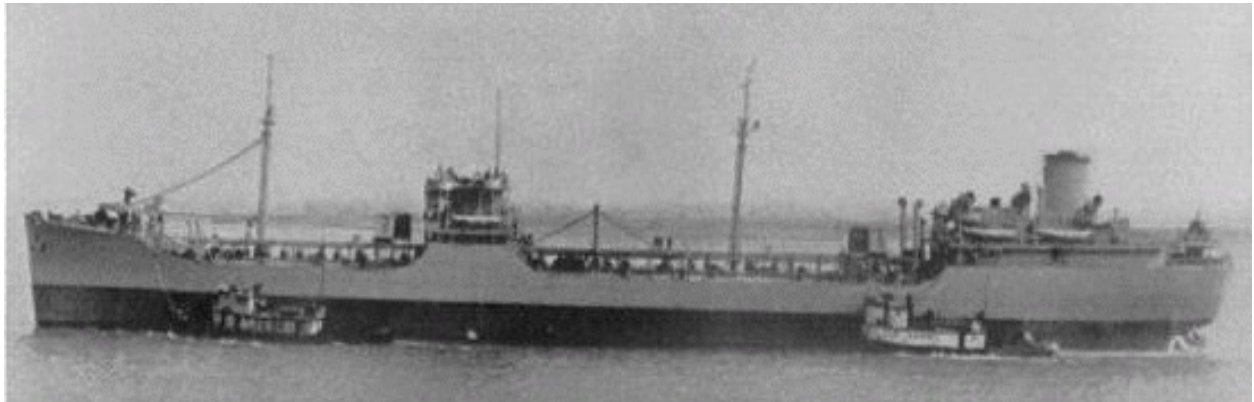


Joseph J. Landron, Jr.

Born: October 5, 1922
Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: June 10, 1943 / 31-02N, 79-17W
Date / Place of burial: June 10, 1943 / Lost at Sea -- 31-02N, 79-17W
Age: 20



Joseph J. Landron signed on aboard the SS Esso Gettysburg as Engine Cadet on May 27, 1943 at New York, NY. The ship was engaged in the coastal oil trade, running from the Gulf of Mexico to the East Coast. Also aboard the ship were Cadet-Midshipmen John M. Carter (Engine), Alfonse Miller (Deck) and Eugene Quidort (Deck). The ship sailed on June 6 from Port Arthur, TX bound for Philadelphia, PA loaded with 120,000 barrels of west Texas crude oil for the Atlantic Refining Company's refinery there.



Esso Gettysburg

On the afternoon of June 10, the ship was under way about 100 miles southeast of Savannah, Georgia traveling without escort, apparently due to its ability to make more than 15 knots. However, the ship was steering evasive courses. Although the vessel had been warned after rounding Key West that submarines were in the area, none had been sighted by the lookouts.

At around 1400 local time, 1900 GCT, the Esso Gettysburg was sighted and attacked by U-66. The submarine's two torpedoes hit the ship's port side, the first one aft of midships while the second torpedo hit the engine room in the stern. The impacts ruptured 25 feet of deck and hull, and raised a 100-foot geyser of oil and water. The crude oil exploded on impact, transforming the ship into an inferno. A thick cloud of black smoke rose almost a thousand feet in the air. The ship settled by the stern, and began to list to port.

At the time of the attack Alphonse Miller was painting the starboard side of the afterdeck with one of the seamen. John Carter was on duty with the 2nd Assistant Engineer in the Engine Room. Joseph Landron, who was not on watch, was sleeping in his room. The fact that Eugene Quidort was off watch on the flying bridge near the compass probably saved his life. Carter, along with the rest of the engine crew on duty, was killed instantly. Miller was seen to run along the catwalk toward midships, where he was caught in the flames and killed. Landron made for the lifeboats, but when these caught fire, jumped into the water with the rest of the survivors. He was last seen by another crew member fighting the flames in the water.

Cadet-Midshipman Eugene Quidort also jumped overboard, after unsuccessfully attempting to help the Chief Mate lower one of the lifeboats into the sea. He was able to swim away from the burning oil, towing for a while, Ensign John S. Arnold, the Armed Guard Officer. Quidort eventually found a burned lifeboat to hang on to. Several hours later, he was rescued by the Chief Mate and 2nd Mate, who had managed to climb aboard another partially burned lifeboat. The two men pulled aboard six crew members and seven Navy men – the only survivors among 45 crew members and 27 Naval Armed Guard. The following day, the survivors were spotted by an Army B-25 patrol plane. They were picked up by the SS George Washington and taken to Charleston, South Carolina.

The Armed Guard, under the command of Ensign John S. Arnold, USNR, did manage to fire one shot in the direction of the submarine before being forced to abandon their post by the flames. Ensign Arnold survived the sinking and was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions.

Cadet-Midshipman Joseph J. Landron, Jr. was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Joseph Landron was the oldest of Joseph Landron and Carmen Landron's two sons. The family moved to Brooklyn, New York by 1925 when Joseph, Jr. was a small boy. According to the 1930 and 1940 U. S. Census Joseph Sr. was a compositor for a printer.