

Ceslaus Adam Maciorowski

Born: November 27, 1917
Hometown: Chicago, Illinois
Class: 1942
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Third Assistant Engineer
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: 24



Ceslaus “Chester” Maciorowski sailed as Engine Cadet aboard the passenger ship SS Santa Rosa. According to Merchant Marine Cadet Corps records, he signed off in June 1941 with 11 ½ months of experience aboard steam ships. He spent the next few months in academic studies at Fort Schuyler before returning to sea to acquire additional sea time on diesel powered ships. On November 18, 1941 Chester signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the MS Wichita at the port of New York for a voyage to Australia. He signed off upon the ship’s arrival in New Orleans in early April 1942. This gave him just enough time to sit for his license examinations in New Orleans on May 5 and 7, and return to the ship as its new Junior Third Assistant Engineer on May 20, 1942. Already aboard the ship was Cadet-Midshipman Chester E. Klein who had signed on a few days earlier as Engine Cadet. Cadet-Midshipman Robert Bole signed on as Deck Cadet the next day. The MS Wichita was originally a World War I-era “Hog Islander”, but was converted from steam turbine to diesel propulsion in 1929.



MS Wichita

The ship sailed for Africa in late May. After calling at several ports the Wichita sailed from Takoradi, Ghana 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. However, after re-positioning itself the U-516 hit the Wichita with a torpedo between the foremast and the bridge, despite zig-zagging at a 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 sinking area but found neither survivors nor lifeboats. Ceslaus (Chester) Maciorowski, Cadet-Midshipmen Robert J. Bole, III and Chester E. Klein were among the dead.

Based on his sailing experience as an Engine Cadet, Ceslaus A. Maciorowski had already earned the Pacific, Atlantic and American Defense bars when he signed on aboard the MS Wichita for its final voyage. From his final voyage aboard the MS Wichita he was posthumously awarded the Mariner's Medal, Combat Bar with star, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Chester Maciorowski was the middle of Adam Maciorowski and Camilla Maciorowski's three children and the oldest of their two sons. Chester's sister, Mary, was the oldest by three years while John, the youngest, was three years younger. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, Adam Maciorowski was employed as a Molder while Chester was working full time as a Machinist.