

## James Joseph Magee

Born: September 26, 1923  
Hometown: Philadelphia, PA  
Class: unknown 1944  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: April 11, 1943 / 53N, 39W  
Date / Place of burial: April 11, 1943 / Lost at Sea - 53N, 39W

Age: 19



James J. Magee signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the SS Edward B. Dudley at Savannah, GA on March 1, 1943, just days after its delivery from North Carolina Shipbuilding. James was joined aboard the Edward B. Dudley by Cadet-Midshipman James Hope, also sailing as Deck Cadet.

After loading a cargo of cotton in Savannah, the Edward B. Dudley sailed on its maiden voyage for New York. At New York the ship loaded more cargo, including either ammunition or explosives. The Edward B. Dudley sailed from New York with convoy HX 232 on April 1, 1943 bound for Liverpool via Halifax, Nova Scotia.

At some point after the convoy sailed from Halifax the Edward B. Dudley straggled behind the convoy, due to, according to some sources, a bent propeller blade. According to German Naval Records, the Edward B. Dudley was located by U-615 on April 10. The submerged submarine fired a four-torpedo spread at the ship. Only one of the four torpedoes was seen by U-615 to hit the ship, and it failed to explode.

Alerted to the danger, the Edward B. Dudley began zig-zagging but it was unable to shake off the pursuit by U-615. The pursuit lasted all night with U-615 finally getting ahead of the Edward B. Dudley and setting up its approach on the surface. When the Edward B. Dudley was in U-615's sights it fired two torpedoes at the ship, hitting it amidships and stopping the ship. However, the Edward B. Dudley would not sink. Twenty minutes after the first torpedoes hit the Edward B. Dudley the U-615 closed to within ½ mile of the ship and fired another torpedo which hit the stern. The explosion of this torpedo detonated the ammunition for the 5" gun there, but the Edward B. Dudley still remained afloat. At this point the crew of the U-615 witnessed the crew abandoning ship in the ship's lifeboats.

The U-615 then moved even closer to the crippled ship and fired a fourth torpedo which was observed to hit under the bridge. This torpedo detonated the Edward B. Dudley's cargo, totally destroying the ship. Falling debris from the explosion wounded the U-615's captain and slightly damaged the submarine's conning tower, forcing the submarine to abort its patrol and return to base. The U-615 itself was sunk by allied aircraft in the Caribbean on its next patrol.

Although the U-615's captain and other crew members had seen boats being lowered, no survivors of the Edward B. Dudley, including Cadet-Midshipmen Joseph J. Magee and James A. Hope, were ever heard from. Given the extent of the explosion of the Edward B. Dudley's cargo any survivors who were in the life boats perished in the explosion.

Ironically, James was supposed to do his at sea training aboard another ship, the SS Daniel Heister, and signed on aboard the ship as Deck Cadet on January 28, 1943. However, a few days later he came down with a case of what the ship's Master noted as "grippe" (today known as influenza). He was sent ashore to a hospital in New York for treatment and was left behind when the ship sailed. The Daniel Heister survived the war without incident.

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

James J. Magee was the middle son of John Charles Magee, Sr. and Anna C. McShea Magee of Philadelphia. Anna Magee died on November 5, 1930, leaving her husband to raise three young boys with the help of her mother, Annie Margaret McShea. Following her death, the brothers took care of the family with the help of their grandmother. Neighbors in Philadelphia thought highly of James, who was always willing to cut a lawn or shovel some snow. Many thought he might later become a priest. Robert Magee, the youngest son in the family, remembers brother Jim as an excellent student at West Catholic High School, and a member of the crew team, the student government, and the Senior Prom committee. He also recalled that his brother could be tough on the youngest son in the family! James Magee attended Drexel University for one year before enrolling at Kings Point. Robert P. Magee Jr., the son of James' brother Robert, graduated from Kings Point in the Class of 1969. According to Robert Magee, when his sister Diane asked their father about whether he thought about his brother often he said,

"No, but I never forget him."