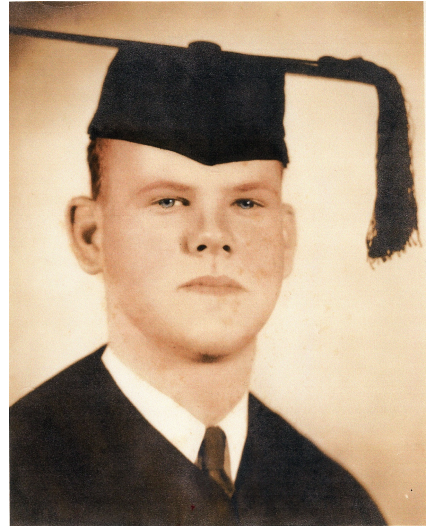
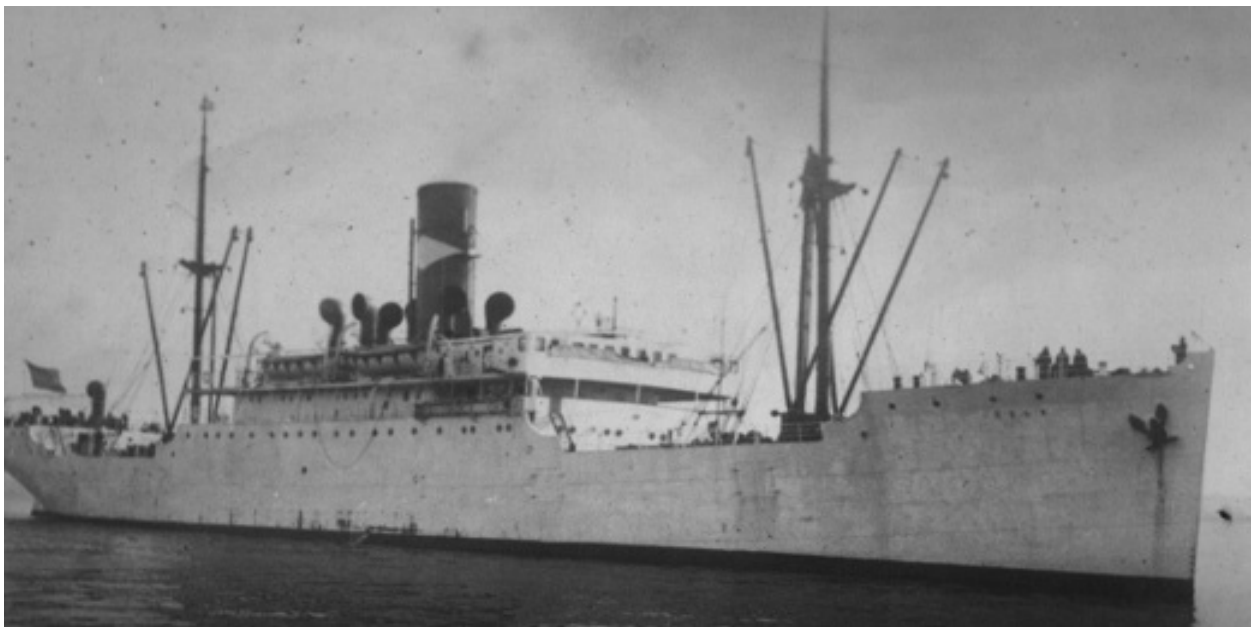


Kenneth McAuliffe

Born: December 20, 1923
Hometown: Metairie, LA
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Class: United Fruit Company Cadet
Date / Place of death: June 8, 1942 / 18-15N, 85-20W
Date / Place of burial: June 8, 1942 / Lost at Sea -- 18-15N, 85-20W
Age: 18



Kenneth McAuliffe, the son of a United Fruit Company executive, signed on as Cadet (no Deck / Engine designation on the Shipping Articles) aboard the SS Tela, a United Fruit Company "banana boat" on May 31, 1942 at New Orleans, LA. The Tela was scheduled to sail from New Orleans on June 2, bound for Port Limon, Costa Rica. He had sailed as Cadet on another United Fruit Company ship, the SS Musa, the previous summer.



SS Tela

On the night of June 8 the Tela, which was traveling at 15 knots on a zigzag course under clear skies was sighted by U-504. The submarine fired two torpedoes at the Tela. Both torpedoes hit the Tela on its port side, one at the engine room and the other at #3 Hatch. The first torpedo destroyed the Engine Room while the second caused the ship to burst into flames, illuminating the entire ship.

The forty-three survivors of the attack were able to launch two lifeboats and two rafts before the ship sank stern first, just five minutes after being hit. The Tela went to the bottom with eleven of its crew, including Kenneth McAuliffe. Eventually, all of the men on the rafts were taken aboard the two life boats. After about 12 hours in the lifeboats, the Tela's survivors were picked up by the MV Port Montreal. However, two of the Tela's survivors died from their injuries while aboard the Port Montreal.

On June 10, 1942 the Port Montreal was sighted by U-68. Although the U-68 was poorly positioned for an attack, its captain fired what he later described as a "desperation" shot that he described as a "very lucky" shot. The torpedo exploded in the ship's stern, causing it to sink quickly. However, the 41 remaining survivors of the Tela's sinking were all able to take to the boats again. After three days afloat the MV Port Montreal's boats were located by the Colombian schooner Hilda, and landed at Cristobal, in the Panama Canal Zone, on June 16, 1942.

Kenneth McAuliffe was posthumously awarded of the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Kenneth "Ken" McAuliffe was the middle son of Daniel J. McAuliffe and Catherine McAuliffe's three sons (Ernest, Kenneth and Edwin). Daniel McAuliffe was a senior executive of the United Fruit Company. Edwin McAuliffe clearly remembers that in High School his brother played football at St. Stanislaus College, in Bay St. Louis, MS. That team was famously lead to an undefeated season in 1941 by "Doc" Blanchard, the first college junior to win the Heisman Trophy. According to Edwin, because there were a lot of native Spanish speaking students at St. Stanislaus, Ken wanted to improve his mastery of Spanish. So, for the summer of 1941 Ken's father had him assigned to work in the engine room of the SS Musa which had an all Spanish speaking crew. By the end of the summer Ken was nearly fluent in Spanish. He had also picked up a love of going to sea and marine engineering.

Upon graduation from St. Stanislaus Ken decided to go back to sea in the Merchant Marine rather than enlist in the Army. Daniel McAuliffe, wanting to be sure that his son was in good hands, arranged for his son to sign on aboard a ship, the SS Tela, whose Captain he knew personally. According to Edwin, one of Daniel McAuliffe's jobs at United Fruit Company was to interview survivors of company ships that had been sunk. Edwin recalls that one of the Tela's survivors told his father that he was about to relieve Ken just as the torpedo hit the Engine Room, killing Ken, the Chief Engineer and seven other men instantly. Shortly after this interview Daniel McAuliffe left United Fruit to start his own business. According to Edwin, the death of his son Kenneth was a contributing factor to his decision to leave United Fruit.