

## Ralph Henry Nemitz

Born: February 25, 1922  
Hometown: Chicago, IL  
Class: 1943  
Service: U.S. Maritime Service  
Position / Rank: Lieutenant (junior grade)  
Date / Place of death: June 10, 1945 / Lake Pontchartrain, LA  
Date / Place of burial: June 10, 1945 / Lost at Sea -- Lake Pontchartrain, LA  
Age: 23



Lieutenant (junior grade) Ralph H. Nemitz, USMS had been assigned to the Merchant Marine Cadet Corps office in New Orleans since January 1945 when he was accidentally drowned on June 10, 1945 while sailing on Lake Pontchartrain. His body was not recovered.

Ralph H. Nemitz, entered Kings Point in May 1942 for Basic School and received his Cadet documents from the U.S. Coast Guard on June 14, 1942. He received his appointment as Cadet-Midshipman, USNR on June 11, 1942. Ralph Nemitz began his Sea Year by signing on aboard the SS John Carter Rose as Deck Cadet on August 14, 1942 at Baltimore, MD for the ship's maiden voyage. The ship was loaded with 26,000 drums of gasoline along with other war material. On October 6 the ship was located by U-201 and U-202. Through evasive maneuvering and gunfire from the John Carter Rose' Armed Guard the submarines were unable to launch a successful attack on the ship. Eventually, after a 32 hour-long chase over a distance of about 290 miles and being missed by seven torpedoes, the SS John Carter Rose ship was struck aft between #2 and #3 holds by one torpedo fired by U-201. The explosion of the torpedo immediately ignited the ship's gasoline cargo, but did not sink the ship. Because of the burning gasoline the ship's crew had difficulty launching the life boats. Cadet-Midshipman Nemitz took charge of one of the lifeboats, successfully launched it and was able to successfully maneuver the boat, and its occupants, to safety.

Upon his safe return to the U.S. after becoming a member of the Academy's "Tin Fish Club", Cadet-Midshipman Nemitz was assigned to the SS Monmouth to complete his Sea Year. After signing off the Monmouth on March 3, 1943 he returned to Kings Point to complete his education and prepare for the U.S. Coast Guard examination for his Third Mate's License. He graduated from Kings Point on December 3, 1943 with

Section A-243. He was commissioned an Ensign, USNR on December 15, 1943, but did not receive this Third Mate's license until December 28, 1943. With his new license in hand, Ralph Nemitz signed on aboard the SS John F. Steffen on January 18, 1944 as Third Mate and served aboard in that capacity until March 24. On April 1, 1944 he was promoted to Acting Second Mate and served in that capacity until he signed off on September 4, 1944 to sit for his Second Mate's license. Ralph Nemitz received his Second Mate's license October 4, 1944. During his service as Acting Second Mate aboard the James F. Steffen, the ship participated in the Normandy Invasion.

On November 17, 1944 Ralph Nemitz wrote to the Chief of Naval Personnel informing him that he had been recalled to Active Duty with the U.S. Maritime Service and assigned to duty as Junior Instructor, U.S. Merchant Marine Cadet Corps at the office of the Officer-in-Charge of Cadet-Midshipmen, Baltimore, MD. In the same letter he requested that his next of kin be designated as his wife, Joan R. Nemitz at their home in Baltimore, MD. This office apparently closed in January 1945 and Ralph Nemitz was transferred to the New Orleans office with similar duties. According to the Navy's Report of Casualty, Joan R. Nemitz was living on Staten Island, NY at the time of his death.

Based on his U.S. Merchant Marine career to the time of his death, Lt. (j.g.) Ralph H. Nemitz, USMS had earned the Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Ralph Nemitz was the only son of Henry F. Nemitz and Frances Nemitz. Ralph's little sister, Edna, was four years younger. According to U.S. Census data, Henry Nemitz was a life insurance salesman. Ralph Nemitz graduated from Chicago's Jones Commercial High School in 1940.