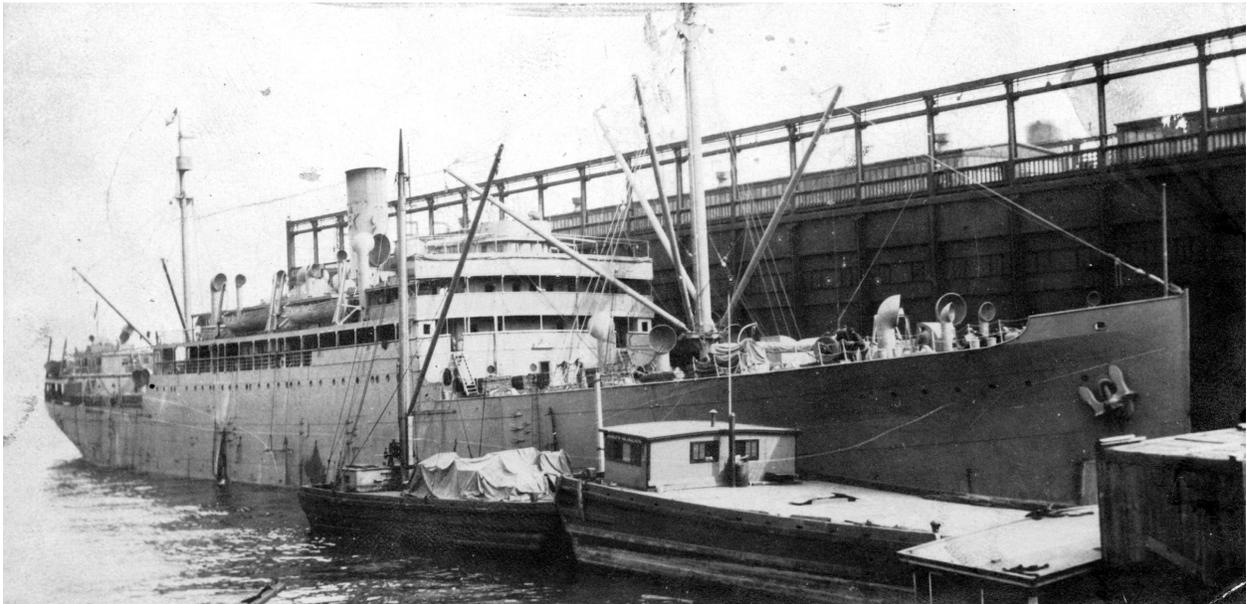


## George Robert Race

Born: April 18, 1919  
Hometown: Schenectady, NY  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet  
Class: 1944  
Date / Place of death: February 7, 1943 / 55-18N,  
26-29W  
Date / Place of burial: February 7, 1943 / Lost at  
Sea -- 55-18N, 26-29W  
Age: 24



George R. Race signed on aboard the U.S. Army Transport *SS Henry R. Mallory* as Engine Cadet on January 15, 1943 at Boston, MA. Joining him were Cadet-Midshipmen Robert Helling, Richard E. Holland (Deck) and Frank C. Roberts (Deck). Two Cadet-Midshipmen were already aboard from the ship's previous voyage; Joseph E. Best (Deck) and James A. Hammershoy (Engine).



**U.S. Army Transport *SS Henry R. Mallory* (ca. 1918)**

The *Henry R. Mallory* sailed on January 24, 1943 as part of slow convoy SC-118 bound for Liverpool via Nova Scotia. However, the *Henry R. Mallory* and several other ships were to split off from the convoy on February 9 to proceed to Iceland. Loaded with 383

Army, Navy, Marine Corps and civilian passengers, the ship was also carrying a mixed cargo of clothing, food, trucks, tanks, cigarettes, liquor and 610 sacks of mail.

On February 4, 1943 German submarines sighted the convoy and began attacking it. The attacks continued until the afternoon of February 7. At 0538 GCT on February 7, despite the rising sea and snow falling, a torpedo fired by U-402 struck the starboard side of the *Henry R. Mallory* at Hold #3, damaging the engines and blowing the hatch covers off of Hold #4. At the time of the explosion the *Henry R. Mallory* was traveling at about 7 knots and was not steering an evasive course. According to some survivors the ship began sinking immediately, while others, apparently including the Captain, believed that the ship would remain afloat. As a result neither distress messages nor flares were launched. In addition, after the sinking survivors reported that the General Alarm was not rung and no order was given to abandon ship. In the confusion of the greater attack on the convoy, none of the other ships in the convoy knew that the *Henry R. Mallory* had been hit.

However, the *Henry R. Mallory's* engines were badly damaged and quickly shut down. Two of the aft lifeboats had been damaged in the explosion while others were damaged by the heavy seas, but the remainder seemed secure. When the ship suddenly began sinking faster by the stern the abrupt change caused panic among passengers and crew. Men rushed on deck amid frigid temperatures without proper protective clothing. In the chaos, only three boats were lowered successfully, and each of these was dangerously overloaded either during launching or after picking up survivors from the water. Several other boats capsized as crew and passengers tried to launch them. Many of the life rafts could not be launched either because they were tied or frozen in place. Others were insufficiently trained in how to use their rafts and did not properly deploy key parts of the raft to prevent capsizing in the heavy seas. Hundreds of the men aboard jumped overboard, where they would be forced to wait several hours in the freezing water.

Meanwhile, the situation on the overloaded lifeboats was perilous. According to Cadet-Midshipman Joseph Best, his life boat was intended for fifty men but held eighty. With so much weight the boats gunwales were just inches above the water and the high seas threatened to either capsize or simply sink the boat. Many of the men frantically bailed with anything they could lay their hands on to keep the boat afloat while others jettisoned anything that did not appear to be necessary to survive their imminent sinking. However, Cadet-Midshipman Best took custody of the distress rockets and flares because he thought, “. . . they might become useful.”

With daylight the men in Best's boat sighted the *USCGC Bibb (WPG 31)*. The rockets hoarded by Best were fired into the air while Cadet-Midshipman Frank C. Roberts waved a yellow flag to attract the *Bibb's* attention. The *Bibb* saved 205 freezing survivors of the *Mallory*, including those in the life boat with Cadet-Midshipmen Best and Roberts. The *Bibb's* sister ship, *USCGC Ingham (WPG 35)* also picked up some survivors. According to the official U.S. Coast Guard history of the *USCGC Bibb*,

"Lookouts aboard the Bibb sighted one of the Mallory's lifeboats at 1000 and, disobeying an order to return to the convoy, Bibb's commanding officer, CDR Roy Raney, ordered his cutter to begin rescuing survivors.

Many of Bibb's crewmen leapt into the water to assist the nearly frozen survivors, and the cutter Ingham assisted. One of Ingham's crew described the scene, a dreadfully common one along the North Atlantic that year:

"I never saw anything like it, wood all over the place and bodies in life jackets ... never saw so many dead fellows in my whole life. Saw lots of mail bags, boxes, wood, wood splinters, empty life jackets, oars, upturned boats, empty life rafts, bodies, parts of bodies, clothes, cork, and a million other things that ships have in them. I hope I never see another drowned man as long as I live."

Among the 272 men who died in the frigid water were Cadet-Midshipmen George R. Race, Jay A. Hammershoy, and Richard E. Holland. In a sad twist of fate, Richard Holland had survived the sinking of the *SS William Clark* three months earlier.

Cadet-Midshipman George R. Race was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

George R. Race was the second son of Nicholas Racz and Magdalena Helen Racz, who had emigrated to the U.S. before World War I. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, George's family name was spelled Racz, although it became "Americanized" within the following two years. In 1940 George was working as an Apprentice Electrician while his father worked in a bakery. George reported to Kings Point in October 1942. George's older brother, Victor, sailed aboard U.S. Army Transports in the Atlantic and Pacific during World War II