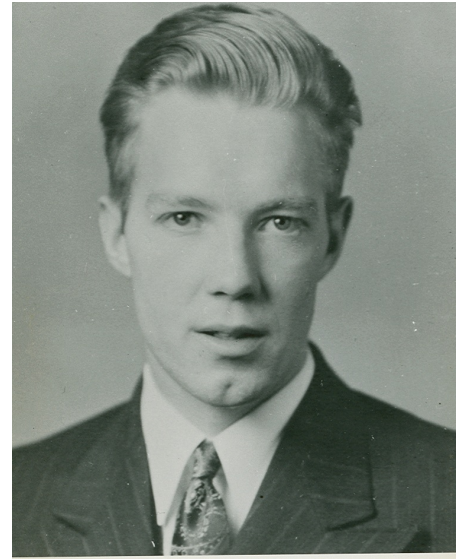


Floyd Walter Roach

Born: September 18, 1921
Hometown: Park City, UT
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Second Assistant Engineer
Date / Place of death: July 2, 1944 / 3-28S, 74-30E
Date / Place of burial: July 2, 1944 / Lost at Sea --
3-28S, 74-30E
Age: 22



Floyd Walter Roach graduated from the Kings Point on January 12, 1944. He had previously sailed as Engine Cadet aboard the *SS James Duncan* for its maiden voyage from Portland, OR. This single “voyage” lasted from September 18, 1942 to September 5, 1943 after arriving in New York from Malta. After graduation Floyd Roach signed on aboard the *SS Jean Nicolet* on April 28, 1944 at San Francisco, CA. Also signing on for the voyage was another Kings Pointer, George M. Rutan, who signed on as Third Mate.

The *Jean Nicolet* sailed on May 12, 1944 from San Pedro, California, en route to Colombo, Ceylon with a cargo of heavy machinery, trucks, steel plates, and other general cargo. As usual with war-time practice the ship also had a deck cargo of steel mooring pontoons, disassembled barges and more steel plates.

On July 2, 1944, at about 1907 local time, shortly after securing from evening General Quarters, the *SS Jean Nicolet* was struck by two torpedoes on the starboard side, thus initiating a chilling tale of death and atrocity. The torpedoes were launched by the Japanese submarine I-8, while the *Jean Nicolet* was traveling unescorted alone in the Indian Ocean.

After the impact, the ship began to list dangerously to port, and the engines were secured in preparation for abandoning ship. The Captain feared the ship would capsize, and ordered the crew to abandon around 1920. Four lifeboats and two rafts were successfully lowered, and the entire complement, 41 crew members, 28 Naval Armed Guard, 26 passengers, and 1 U.S. Army medic, abandoned ship. After the boats had been lowered, the submarine began shelling the ship, and fires were seen on the main deck. The radio operator had been able to send a distress signal before leaving the *Jean Nicolet*, which probably saved the lives of the 23 men who survived the Japanese atrocities to follow.

The submarine commander, Tetsunosuke Ariizumi, ordered the boats and rafts to approach the submarine, and all of the survivors, except for five men who were able to pull away unseen on a small raft, were taken onto the deck of the submarine. The survivors, including Floyd W. Roach were then subjected to brutal and violent treatment. After their hands were bound behind them with wire, many of the survivors were bayoneted and thrown into the water. Others were made to run through a gauntlet of Japanese crew members armed with steel stanchions, bayonets, and rifles. Many of the men died on the deck of the submarine while the rest either drowned after being thrown into the water, or were finished off by hungry sharks attracted to the scene by the blood in the water.

Only when an approaching plane was heard, several hours after the torpedoing, did the submarine submerge. Many of those left on deck drowned, with their hands were still tied together. A few survivors managed to stay afloat until another plane, flying over at 0630 the next morning, dropped bread, water, and life jackets. A total of 23 men were eventually rescued by *HMS Hoxa (T-16)*. However, crewmen, Armed Guard Sailors and passengers, including Floyd Roach, died either at the hands of the Japanese or drowned. The Captain, the radio operator, and Francis J. O'Gara, a representative of the War Shipping Administration were taken on board the submarine as prisoners. Of the three, only Mr. O'Gara survived to be liberated from a Japanese Prisoner of War camp in 1945. Presuming that Mr. O'Gara died, the U.S. Maritime Commission named a Liberty Ship after him, the only Liberty Ship named after a living person.

The I-8 was sunk later in the war by U.S. Navy destroyers, killing most of the crew which perpetrated the atrocities on the Jean Nicolet's survivors and those of the Dutch freighter *SS Tjisalak*. Upon the announcement of the Japanese surrender Tetsunosuke Ariizumi committed suicide, evading responsibility for his actions. Two surviving crew members were convicted of their crimes by post-war tribunals and sentenced to prison terms.

Based on his service both as a Cadet-Midshipman and Licensed Officer, Floyd W. Roach was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, Pacific War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Floyd W. Roach was the second of Earl Soren Roach and Amanda Burgess Roach's three sons. His older brother was Delbert while his younger brother was Dean. Floyd also had four younger sisters, Lona Beth, Vera, Melva and Julia. According to the 1940 U.S. Census, the family was living in Park City, UT where Earl was the bookkeeper at a silver mine. The 1940 Census also identifies both Floyd and Delbert as silver miners.