

Jay Richard Rosenbloom

Born: June 19, 1926
Hometown: Kansas City, MO
Class: 1945
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet
Date / Place of death: April 9, 1945 / Bari, Italy
Date / Place of burial: Bari, Italy
Age: 18



Jay R. Rosenbloom signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the *SS Charles Henderson* on February 24, 1945 at New York. He was the only Cadet signed on aboard the ship. The ship sailed the next day for Norfolk, VA where it loaded 6,675 tons of aircraft bombs in its holds. Loading was completed and the ship sailed for Bari, Italy on March 9. However, the *Charles Henderson* returned to Norfolk the same day to repair its condenser's main induction valve. The ship waited five days for the next convoy bound for the Mediterranean, UGS-80. Upon the convoy's arrival at Gibraltar the *Charles Henderson* proceeded independently to Bari via Augusta, Sicily, arriving on April 5.

According to "The Liberty Ships", by L.A. Sawyer and W. H. Mitchell, by April 9, the *Charles Henderson*, berthed in the center of the Bari dock complex, had discharged over one-half of its cargo. Gangs of Italian longshoremen were working in each of the ship's five holds under the supervision of British Army Engineers. Just before noon observers ashore saw a sheet of flame, followed by an explosion erupt from the after part of the ship, which still held 1,000 tons of bombs. The after portion of the ship disintegrated while a column of smoke rose thousand feet into the air. The forward part of the ship containing the remaining bombs slammed into Berth 14 and burst into fire. The detonation of these bombs demolished the facilities at Berth 14. A piece of the *Charles Henderson's* deck house weighing 60 tons landed on a nearby pier where it set buildings afire. When another Kings Point cadet arrived in Bari a month later, the wreck of the *Henderson's* deck house was still resting on the pier. Five other vessels in the harbor caught fire from the explosion although none were damaged beyond repair. Although heavily damaged, the port of Bari was back in action one month later just as the war in Europe ended. However, the wreck of the *Charles Henderson* remained in Bari until 1948 when it was sold for scrap. The cause of the explosion was never determined, but a 1992 review of the record by the Department of Defense Explosives Safety Board indicates that rough handling of the bombs by the longshoremen may have been the cause.

Jay Rosenbloom, along with everyone else on board the *Charles Henderson*, died in the explosion. The only survivor among the crew was the Chief Engineer, who was ashore at the time.

Cadet-Midshipman Jay R. Rosenbloom was awarded the Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal, and the Presidential Testimonial Letter. Because his death was not due to enemy action neither he, nor any other member of the ships crew or Armed Guard, were eligible to receive awards for death in combat.

Jay R. Rosenbloom was the youngest of Joe W. Rosenbloom and Eva Rosenbloom's two sons. Joe Rosenbloom owned a company which manufactured and sold store fixtures. Jay attended Southwest High School in Kansas City where he was a member of the National Honor Society. According to James Hoffman, Jay Rosenbloom was one of the youngest men, if not THE youngest man, to attend Kings Point during World War II.