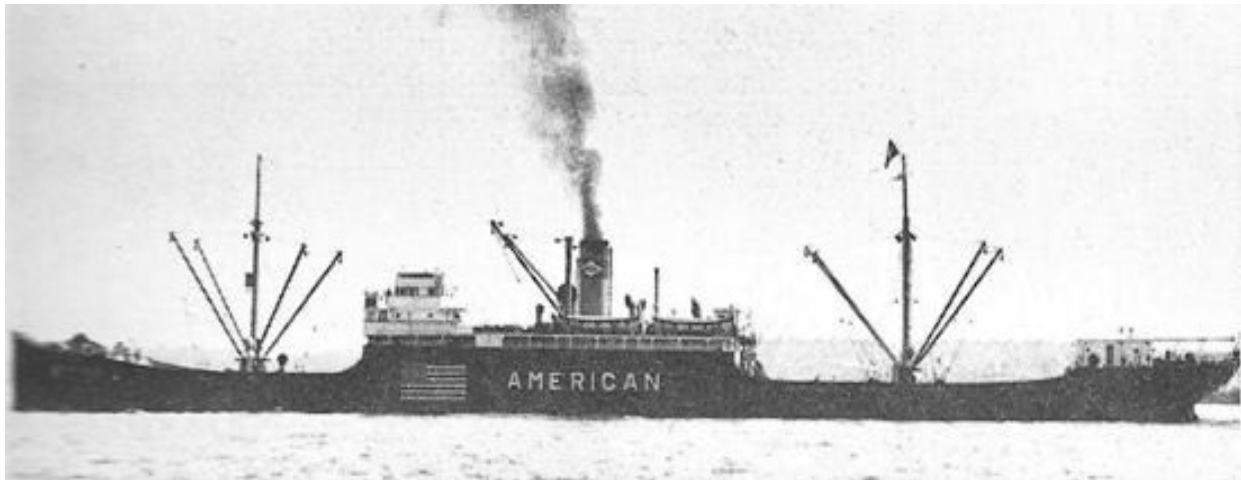


Robert James See

Born: February 3, 1919
Hometown: Brooklyn, NY
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: February 20, 1942 / 38N, 78W
Date / Place of burial: February 20, 1942 / Lost at Sea
– 38N, 78W
Age: 23



Robert J. See signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the *SS Azalea City* at New York, NY on November 29, 1941. This was just days before the United States officially entered World War II. Also joining him was his classmate Cadet-Midshipman Richard E. Lewis, the Deck Cadet. Two months later, on February 12, 1942, the *SS Azalea City* left the island of Trinidad, en route from Bahia Blanca, Argentina to Philadelphia, PA with a cargo of flax seed. The vessel, with a crew of 38 was traveling alone and not zig-zagging. When the *Azalea City* failed to arrive in Philadelphia after several months, the ship was presumed lost, though its exact fate remained a mystery.



SS Azalea City

The details of the loss were discovered after World War II in the records of the German Navy. On February 20, 1942 U-432 sighted the *Azalea City* about 125 miles east south-east from Ocean City, Maryland. Over several hours U-432 fired three torpedoes

at the *Azalea City*, two of which struck the ship. For some reason the ship was unable to send a distress signal after the first torpedo struck the ship and the crew did not abandon ship. Apparently the ship capsized immediately after the second torpedo hit, taking all hands with it, including Cadet-Midshipmen Robert See and Richard Lewis. These men were the first two Academy cadets killed through enemy action. However, due to the nature of the disaster, their fate remained unknown for months, and Cadet-Midshipman Howard P. Conway was mourned at the Academy as the first Cadet to give his life in service of his country.

Cadet-Midshipman Robert J. See was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Robert J. See was the oldest of Ella H. See's two sons, both of which were born in Panama. According to the 1930 U.S. Census, Robert J. See, along with his younger brother Kenneth, were living with their Aunts, Mary Kilbride and Margaret Kilbride at 25 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, NY. Passenger lists on file in New York indicate that the Ella See and her two sons spent part of each year in New York and the other part of the year in Central America until Robert was about four years old. Their address in New York was 25 Prospect Place, Brooklyn, NY. In 1931, Robert, then eleven years old, visited Bermuda with his Aunt, Mary Kilbride. Robert enlisted in the New York National Guard on September 29, 1937 and served in Battery A, 245th Coast Artillery. He re-enlisted in September 1940, but was discharged on September 28, 1941, apparently so that he could attend Kings Point.