

## Peter Joseph Smith

Born: July 9, 1921  
Hometown: Norwood, MA  
Class: 1943  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet  
Date / Place of death: November 4, 1942 / 71-05N, 13-20W  
Date / Place of burial: November 4, 1942 / Lost at Sea – 71-05N, 13-20W  
Age: 21



Peter J. Smith reported aboard the *SS William Clark* in New York harbor on August 17, 1942. Also joining the ship on the same day were Cadet-Midshpmen Robert Everhart (Deck), Herman Garritsen (Engine), and Richard Holland (Engine). They joined a crew of 38 merchant ship officers and seamen along with 30 officers and men of the Navy's Armed Guard. The ship sailed on August 22, 1942, carrying a cargo of general military supplies in its holds and a deck cargo of aircraft and tanks bound for Murmansk, Russia.



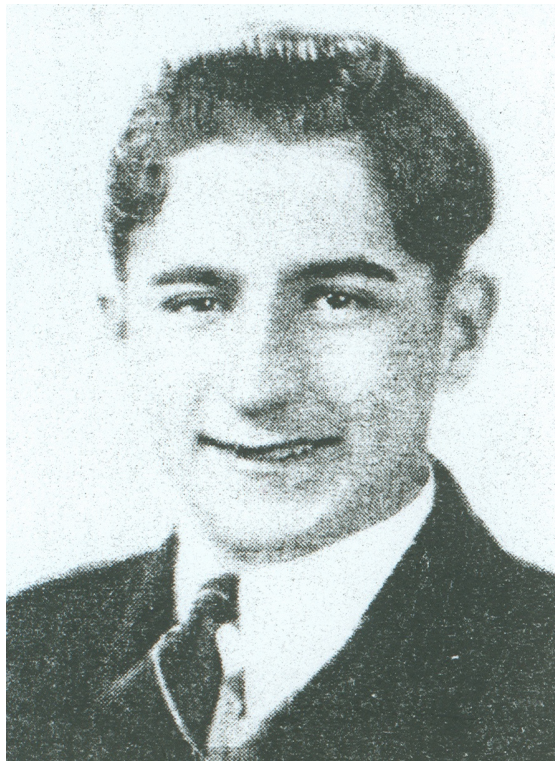
**SS William Clark**

The *William Clark* traveled with convoys via Boston (BX-35) and Halifax, Nova Scotia (SC-99) to Reykjavik, Iceland where the ship would normally have joined a Murmansk bound convoy. However, due to the high losses of the previous two Murmansk Convoys, PQ-17 and PQ-18, and the demand for warships to support the landings in North Africa, the Murmansk convoys were suspended. In the interim, supplies still had to flow to Russia. So, the thirteen ships (seven British, five U.S. and one Russian) that would have been in the next Murmansk convoy were ordered to sail independently from

Reykjavik. The ships left port at twelve hour intervals between October 29 and November 2, 1942 in what was called Operation FB. Of the thirteen ships, three turned back to Reykjavik, five arrived safely and five, including the *SS William Clark*, were lost.

At 1135 on November 4, 1942, near Jan Mayen Island, the *SS William Clark* was hit on the port side, amidships, by one of three torpedoes by U-354. The explosion completely destroyed the engine room killing all five of the engineers on duty, including Engine Cadet Peter Joseph Smith. The remaining crew abandoned ship into two life boats and a motorboat. Although the motorboat was able to keep the survivors together by towing the lifeboats, the towline eventually broke, permitting the boats to drift apart. One boat with 26 survivors was found after three days afloat by *HMS Elstan* (FY 240). The second boat with fourteen survivors was found by *HMS Cape Passiser* (FY 256) after over a week at sea. The master and other survivors in the motor boat were never seen again.

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



**Peter J. Smith**  
**High School Graduation**

Peter J. Smith was born in East Walpole, Massachusetts, one of seven children (four brothers and two sisters) of Mrs. Annie Smith. The close knit family was active in St. George's Catholic Church in Norwood, MA. Nicknamed "Sarge" at Norwood High School, Peter is remembered by members of the Norwood community as being popular with his classmates, and as a young man of fine character who was welcome in all social circles. He was active in school activities, including track, drama and the Senior Prom.