

Niles Kendall Stevens

Born: November 4, 1921
Hometown: Linesville, PA
Class: 1944
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Second Mate
Date / Place of death: February 23, 1945 / about
116 miles N of Wadi Seidna
Airport, Khartoum, Sudan
Date / Place of burial: March 1, 1945 / New
Christian Cemetery,
Khartoum, Sudan;
Date Unknown / North Africa American Cemetery, Carthage,
Tunisia, Plot D, Row 11, Grave 12
Age: 23



Niles K. Stevens enrolled in the U.S. Maritime Service on December 26, 1941. He received his initial training aboard the training ship *SS American Sailor* which was located at the Coast Guard / U.S. Maritime Commission Training Station at Port Hueneme, CA. However, although Niles Stevens received his Coast Guard papers as Ordinary Seaman / Wiper on April 9, 1942, he signed on aboard the *SS Santa Ana* as Deck Cadet on July 3, 1942 at San Francisco. Thus, he may well have been transferred from the *American Sailor* to the Basic School at San Mateo. Following his Sea Year aboard the *Santa Ana* in the South Pacific, Niles Kendall returned to Kings Point to complete his education and sit for his Coast Guard License as Third Mate. He signed on as Third Mate aboard the tanker *SS Red Canyon* on February 26, 1944. Niles Stevens made several voyages to the United Kingdom aboard the *SS Red Canyon* and was promoted to Second Mate in late-July 1944.

On October 12, 1944 Niles Stevens signed on aboard the *SS George H. Williams* as Second Mate. He was signed off shipping articles on February 17, 1945 at Aden for an appendectomy. Within days he was apparently sufficiently recovered to rejoin the *SS George H. Williams* for the return voyage to New York. By February 22, 1945 he had managed to make his way from Aden to Khartoum, Sudan. On the morning of February 23, 1945 Niles Kendall was one of the passengers aboard an Army Transportation Corps C-46A (#42-96541) bound for Cairo, Egypt. The aircraft took off from Wadi Seidna Airport, a Royal Air Force Base about 20 miles north of Khartoum, Sudan, around sunrise (0354 GMT).



Curtiss C-46A "Commando"

According to the log of radio traffic in the aircraft accident report, the take off was about one hour late for unknown reasons. After clearing airfield the plane reported at 0402 (GMT) that it was climbing to 8000 feet

and would check in by radio at 0550. When the plane failed to check in at this time, and no contact could be made for six minutes, the plane was declared overdue. When the limits of its known fuel load were past the aircraft was declared missing. American, British and Sudanese search efforts located the aircraft on February 27, 1945 about 116 miles north of Wadi Seidna Airport. A search and rescue party arrived at the crash site the following day.

Interviews with three witnesses, and analysis of the crash site, found that a fire started in the aircraft's left engine and spread into the structure of the left wing which then fell away from the aircraft. The rest of the aircraft burned when it crashed into the earth, instantly killing all of the crew and passengers. Witnesses said that at the time the left wing collapsed the plane was headed south, in the direction of Wadi Seidna. It was presumed that the pilot was attempting to return to Wadi Seidna due to the engine fire.

Niles Kendall's remains were initially interred in the New Christian Cemetery, Khartoum after a Protestant service. However, after World War II the remains of all those interred in temporary cemeteries were either returned to their next of kin or interred in an American Cemetery administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission. Today Niles K. Stevens remains rest in the North Africa American Cemetery, Plot D, Row 11, Grave 12. The remains of two other Kings Pointers; Thomas Kellegrew and Otto Kern are also buried there.

Based on his service both as a Cadet and Licensed Officer, Niles K. Stevens was posthumously awarded the Atlantic War Zone, Mediterranean-Middle East War Zone and Pacific War Zone Bars, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Niles K. Stevens, was the youngest son of Myrl Levi Stevens and Pansie Kendall Stevens. According to the 1940 U.S. Census Myrl Stevens was employed as a trackman for the Pennsylvania Railroad. At the time Gordon, Niles' slightly older brother, was working as a clerk in an Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company grocery store.

In December 2011 Niles' brother Gordon L. Stevens, of Lake City, PA wrote the following about him;

"My brother was born in 1921 in Linesville, PA. During high school he played varsity basketball. He graduated in 1939.

Niles was always noted for his fascination with words. He was extremely articulate and he used his incredible vocabulary to challenge his teachers and parents. He used his skills to acquire two jobs simultaneously during the Great Depression while most individuals felt fortunate to have one.

Although Niles was raised in a small town, he had dreams of becoming a cartoonist and traveling to see the world. Shortly after graduation from high school he and a school friend drove to Florida to work in the tourist business. Soon after he and his friend purchased a new car and drove to California where he worked in the ship builders industry. He soon became foreman.

While attending the Merchant Marine Academy my parents and I went by train to visit him at Kings Point.

Although Niles had a short life, I believe he had a full one and some of his dreams were realized. He was able to travel to places most of us only read about. I can only imagine what would have achieved if his life had not ended so soon."



**Stevens Family Marker
Linesville Cemetery, Linesville, PA**