

Jonathan Ford Sturges

Born: June 19, 1919
Hometown: Fairfield, CT
Class: 1943
Service: Merchant Marine
Position / Rank: Engine Cadet
Date / Place of death: September 24, 1942 / 56N, 31W
Date / Place of burial: September 24, 1942 / Lost at Sea – 56N, 31W
Age: 23



Jonathan F. Sturges signed on as Engine Cadet aboard the SS *John Winthrop* on August 3, 1942 at Boston, shortly after the ship was completed and delivered to the War Shipping Administration. After a voyage to the United Kingdom, the *John Winthrop*, with its crew of 39 and fifteen Naval Armed Guard Sailors aboard sailed for Liverpool to join Convoy ON-131. On September 18, 1942 the 61 ships of the convoy, with 17 escorts, sailed into the stormy North Atlantic bound for New York.

By September 21, 1942 the *John Winthrop* was unable to keep up with the convoy and became a straggler, the favorite prey of U-boats. For three days the *John Winthrop* managed to evade detection. However, on the evening of September 24 the *John Winthrop's* luck ran out. The ship was detected, stalked and attacked by U-619 who hit the ship with five torpedoes. According to German Naval records, the *John Winthrop* broke into two pieces, which remained afloat. In order to finish the job, U-619 surfaced and sunk the remnants of the SS *John Winthrop* with its deck gun. The SS *Jonathan Winthrop* was the only ship of the more than sixty ships in Convoy ON-131 sunk.

Cadet-Midshipman Jonathan Sturges was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat bar with star, the Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and the Presidential Testimonial Letter. In addition, the Liberty Ship *Jonathan Sturges* was named in his honor.

Jonathan F. Sturges was the only son and oldest child of Harold M. Sturges and Laura Ford Sturges. Jonathan had two little sisters, Nancy and Priscilla. According to the 1930 and 1940 U.S. Census, Harold Sturges was an insurance salesman. At Roger Ludlowe High School Jonathan was an officer of the Boys Home Economics Club, and a member of the Public Health Club. According to his sister Priscilla, Jonathan came to

the sea early, including becoming a very active and involved member of the local Sea Scout Ship. Priscilla believed that her brother was destined to pursue a seagoing career that would be marked by professional achievement. She believed that,

“With his interest in the sea, Jonathan had found his ‘true self’ that was the mainspring within him.”