

## Samuel Thomas Tyler, Jr.

Born: February 12, 1924  
Hometown: Wilmington, NC  
Class: 1944  
Service: Merchant Marine  
Position / Rank: Deck Cadet  
Date / Place of death: February 3, 1943 / 59-22N,  
48-42W  
Date / Place of burial: February 3, 1943 / Lost at Sea  
-- 59-22N, 48-42W  
Age: 18



Samuel T. Tyler signed on as Deck Cadet aboard the U.S. Army troop transport SS *Dorchester* on October 13, 1942 at Boston, MA. He was joined on January 19, 1943 in New York by Cadet-Midshipman Edward J. Gavin who signed on as Engine Cadet. On February 3, 1943, the *Dorchester* was about 150 miles west of Cape Farrell, Greenland in a small convoy with two other ships (Convoy SG-19). The ship carried a complement of 130 crew members, 23 Naval Armed Guard, and 751 passengers (made up of U.S. Army personnel, civilian workers, Danish citizens, and U.S. Coast Guard personnel). The vessel, which was traveling between St. John's, Newfoundland, and Narsarsuak, Greenland was also laden with 1,069 tons of general cargo and lumber, and 60 bags of mail and parcel post.

Just before 5 a.m., one of five torpedoes fired by U-223 struck the *Dorchester* on the starboard side near the engine room. There were no submarine sightings before or after the attack, and those on watch did not notice any wake indicating a torpedo attack. Survivors recalled little noise, but a considerable concussion. A gaping hole in the starboard side of the ship caused extremely rapid flooding, and the engines were completely destroyed. Two of the lifeboats were also destroyed by the impact of the torpedo.

Only three minutes after the vessel was hit, the Captain gave the order to abandon ship. However, only two boats were successfully launched. Whether because of shock, confusion, or limited space, hundreds of passengers and crew remained on board and went down with the ship when it sank about 30 minutes after being hit. Some of the passengers were apparently unaware of the seriousness of the situation. Two of the convoy's U.S. Coast Guard escorts, *USCGC Escanaba (WPG 77)* and *USCGC Comanche (WPG 76)* remained at the site of the disaster, picking up survivors

throughout the night, and into the following day. In all, only 229 of the *SS Dorchester's* 904 passengers and crew survived the sinking. Cadet-Midshipmen Samuel T. Tyler and Edward J. Gavin were among those missing and presumed lost.



**USAT Dorchester**

was posthumously awarded the Mariners Medal, Combat Bar with star, Atlantic War Zone Bar, Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Samuel T. Tyler was the youngest son of Samuel T. Tyler and Mary Dell Brown Tyler. He had an older brother, Horace. However, by the time he entered Kings Point, his mother was using the name Mary D. Thomas.

In a renowned act of bravery, four U.S. Army chaplains on board the ship gave their life jackets to nearby soldiers who had none. The four men held hands and prayed as the ship went down. Each was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart and Distinguished Service Cross. A stamp honoring the four men was issued by the Post Office in 1948.



Cadet-Midshipman Samuel T. Tyler, who perished just days before his nineteenth birthday,