

Robert Stanley Walter, Jr.

Born: November 19, 1917
Hometown: Washington, DC
Class: 1937-39 - USMMCC
Cadet Officer
1937 - Pennsylvania
Nautical School
Service: Army Coast Artillery
Position / Rank: Mate (Civilian)
Date / Place of death: January 8, 1942 / Off
Portsmouth, NH
Date / Place of burial: January 8, 1942 / Lost at Sea - Off Portsmouth, NH
Age: 25

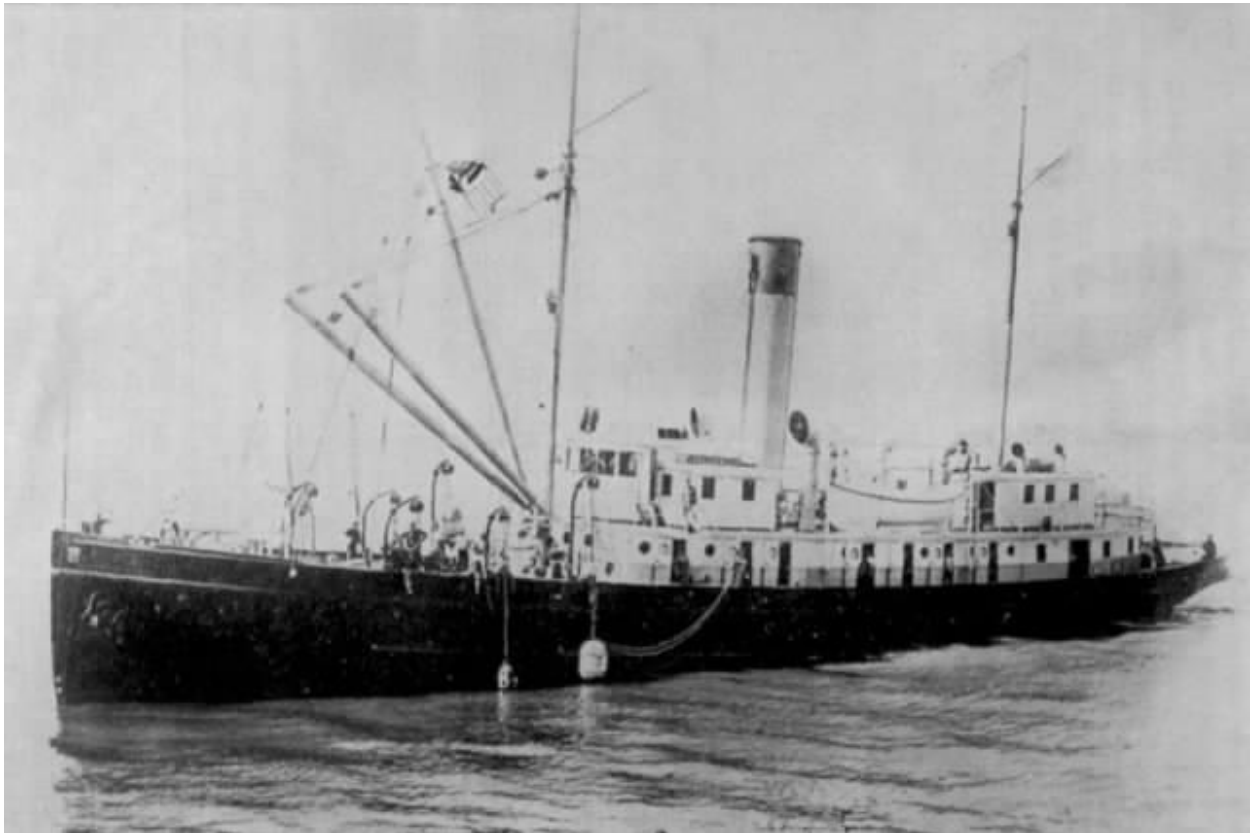


U.S. Coast Guard records show that Robert S. Walter received his license as Third Mate, Oceans, Unlimited on May 26, 1937, the day after he graduated from Pennsylvania Nautical School. He signed on as Cadet Officer aboard the *SS President Roosevelt* shortly after receiving his license. Crew lists on file in New York, NY indicate that he remained aboard the *SS President Roosevelt* until 1939. He then served as Junior Third Mate aboard the *SS American Trader* until later that year. On February 23, 1940 he signed on aboard the *SS Manhattan* as Junior Third Officer. In November 1940 he signed on aboard the *SS Artigas* as Junior Third Mate. He remained aboard the *Artigas* until July 1941. Based on his subsequent employment he must have become employed by the U.S. Army shortly after leaving the *Artigas*.

On 7 January 1942, the U.S. Army Mine Planter *General Richard Arnold* was called out to rescue a sister Mine Planter, *L-88*, off of the Isles of Shoals, near Portsmouth Harbor, New Hampshire. The *Arnold*, a 98-foot ship built in 1909, gallantly made its way through stormy weather to aid the disabled *L-88*, which had been drifting in the storm for more than six hours. The *Arnold* reached the *L-88* at 2030, made itself fast to the *L-88*. The two ships, powered only by the *Arnold*, could not make any progress back to port and hove to using the *Arnold's* engines until a larger Mine Planter, the *General Absalom Baird*, could tow the *L-88* back into port.

The *Baird* arrived at the scene at around midnight, and began towing both ships back to harbor. However, ice had been building up on the *Arnold* since it left port and both ships were heavy with ice. At 0050 on January 8, the *Arnold* reported that it was taking on water by the stern. The crew manned the pumps but was unable to keep the water

from rising. By 0130 the water had risen over the pumps and put out the fires in the boiler, leaving the *Arnold* helpless. Fifteen minutes later the *General Richard Arnold* suddenly plunged under the waves. The *L-88* would have been dragged down by the sinking *Arnold* if the *L-88*'s crew had not rushed on deck to cut the lines binding them fast to the doomed ship. The Master of the *General Richard Arnold*, William H. Chasteen, was able to jump from the bridge into the icy waters as the ship sank. He was the only survivor, the rest of the crew, including Mate Robert S. Walter, Jr. were lost.



U.S. Army Mine Planter General William H. Arnold

Based on his merchant marine service, Robert S. Walter was posthumously awarded the Merchant Marine Defense Bar, Atlantic War Zone Bar, the Victory Medal and Presidential Testimonial Letter.

Robert S. Walter was the oldest son of Robert S. Walter, Sr. and Anne R. Walter. Robert had an older sister, Jane and a younger brother George. According to the 1920 U.S. Census, Robert, Sr. was Vice President of Army & Navy Preparatory School in Washington, DC. However, by the 1930 Census Robert, Sr. is identified as being a life insurance agent.