

ELEVEN SURVIVORS OF TANKER LANDED

(Continued from Page One)

He was a wiper in the engine room.

"I was in the mess hall drinking a cup of coffee," he said, "and a gang of us were talking about what we'd do if a torpedo hit us." He told of the concussion and the sudden side-slip of the vessel, and of the bedlam which followed. "And we did just the opposite of what we said we'd do," he commented.

He went to the forecabin, he said, to get his life jacket and upon arriving at the entrance of the quarters, found the entire ship in flames. When he finally reached a life boat which was being lowered, he was told that it was full and to go to another. Making his way along the flaming walkway, he found a second boat. In the haste and confusion, the boat had nearly capsized, and was in no condition to float, he said.

Hangs to Line

Hanging to lines over the side of the ship, he tried to make his way back to the deck, after an attempt to right the life boat. Too weak to pull himself up the line, he hung there, hoping for rescue.

A Filipino mess-boy, who had also tried to right the capsized life craft, was below him on the line, he said. "I tried to get him to grab my feet but he couldn't make it. After a few attempts, he just let go and fell into the water and disappeared," he related.

"Finally, I jumped clear of the side and hit the water," Gardner continued, "and believe me, I just didn't expect to come away from that mess alive. I tried to swim clear of the ship, through that blazing oil. Three times I came up to the surface through the oil and felt my hair catch fire," he said. "I'd duck under and stay as long as I could, then come up again. After a while I came up in a spot that was clear of the fire and began swimming away from the ship.

"I saw a buddy of mine about 50 feet away," Gardner said, "and I began moving over toward him, intending to let him hang on to me if he didn't have a life jacket. He told me to stay away. I guess he thought I was after his jacket, and I didn't blame him," he continued. "I put my wool cap over my nose to keep out the gas fumes, but it didn't do much good. In a few minutes I heard a fellow yelling for me to come toward him, but I couldn't see him at first. He gave me directions on how to locate him on his life raft, and I swam over. I had to be helped on board and after that I just laid there for about an hour, then I got up and helped to row away.

"It was just plain hell," Gardner said, and continued: "When I go back to sea, I'm going to do the hunting, not be the hunted." He told of his intention to join the Navy and help to get the submarines that infest the Atlantic.

Ensign Robert B. Hutchins, USN, who was commander of the gun crew on the ill-fated tanker, was in his bunk reading when the torpedo struck, he said. "There was a terrific blast and I ran from my room in an effort to join my gun crew. Everything was dark at first and I ran along the catwalk over the tanks amidships, when I suddenly ran into the mainmast, knocking my glasses off and darn near putting myself out." He exhibited a terrible black eye from the impact of his collision with the mast. "When I got to the gun, we looked for the sub, but nothing could be seen or heard," he continued.

"When the flames got on top of us, we jumped over the side," Hutchins said. "I saw two of my boys go into those flames, and heard them scream as they died." Four of the gun crew of sev-

first but it wasn't long before everybody got excited. I guess we couldn't help it with that kind of death staring us in the face."

The narrator, Herbert L. Gardner, Jr., 22, of Nashville, Tenn., was on his first sea voyage, having just finished a course of instruction at the Maritime Commission school in St. Petersburg, Fla. civil life, received his commission on the old Navy training ship Illinois some time ago.

Hero of Sinking

At the time of the explosion Quartermaster Edwin Cheney, 24, of Yedon, Pa., was at the wheel of the vessel. He didn't have much to say about the terrible ordeal he went through, but his rescued shipmates credited him with saving many of their lives.

Cheney swam to a life raft after jumping overboard, and by calling directions and words of encouragement through the smoke and flames was able to guide several of the men to the raft.

He and several of the survivors who found sanctuary on board the tiny life raft submitted their bodies to cruel punishment during the night when they alternated in making human oar-locks so that the others could pull the heavy oars necessary to get away from the blaze.

Cheney's body was black where the oars had bruised his body as the men put their strength against the sea. "We just let 'em pull against us. It wasn't anything," he said.

When the 11 men were picked up by a Coast Guard cutter early Friday morning, they had spent nine hours on the little life raft, expecting every moment to be their last. As Ensign Hutchins put it, "We surely lived our lifetimes out there."

Brought into Southport, the survivors were rushed to the Arthur Doshier Memorial hospital for treatment. Many of the men were unrecognizable under their coat of crude oil and burns. A little Filipino messboy, his eyes seared from the cruel blaze, was pitifully holding to the belt of a companion for guidance. His face puffed from the blisters which covered his body, he is now suffering in silence in his room at the hospital.

Before the men arrived at the hospital, the local auxiliary nurses corps of the American Red Cross had been summoned from their homes in Southport, to aid in taking care of the men. They worked unceasingly until each man was given the best of care, and then went into town to bring back bed-clothing and street dress for them.

The condition of all the survivors at Southport was reported "good" by a naval doctor in charge.

Bring in Dead

Later in the afternoon another rescue boat arrived at Southport, but this time there were no men who walked from the dock with a prayer of thanks on their lips—only a row of dead bodies recovered from the sea as they washed away from the flaming area.

Only one of the dead had died from burns, it was learned, the rest from drowning and suffocation. They were taken to a small undertaking establishment in Southport where the business of identifying them began.

Many of the drowned men had their identification papers in their clothing, but several had to be recognized by their surviving shipmates Saturday morning.

V

Three Persons Cut During Affray Here

Three persons were treated at the James Walker Memorial hospital Sunday afternoon for knife wounds as the result of an affray.

Abe Gaymon, of 908 North Tenth street, suffered 12 puncture wounds in the back. He told police he was injured by Joe Logan, of 924 North Tenth street.

Sara Logan, wife of Joe Logan, received a laceration on the left arm which she told police was inflicted by Gaymon. Joe Logan the laceration on a finger on his right hand was made by Geston.

Sara Logan told police she was wounded while trying to stop a fight