



William Charles Cave

Canadian Merchant Navy

World War II



Born: Sep 1907

Place of Birth: Bay Roberts

Parents: Henry and Sarah Ann Cave

There are conflicting dates for the birth year of William C. Cave, the listings include 1904 and 1907. It seems more likely that the former 1904 is more accurate than 1907, since he dies in 1942 at the age of 38.

The 1921 Newfoundland census shows William at age 13 living in Bay Roberts with sisters Mary, Irene, Caroline and Mary (all older than William) and younger brother Henry Victor. They are the children of Henry and Sarah Ann Cave of Bay Roberts.

By 1935, only William and Henry are living with their mother Sarah who appears to be a widow at this time.

William, a sailor, joined the Canadian Merchant Navy and was assigned to the S.S. Tacoma Star. The Star would be sunk on 01 Feb 1942 by U-109



S.S. Tacoma Star

Name: Tacoma Star

Type: Steam merchant

Tonnage: 7,924 tons

Completed: 1919 - Workman, Clark & Co Ltd, Belfast

Owner: Blue Star Line Ltd, London

Homeport: London

Date of attack: 1 Feb 1942

Nationality: British

Fate: Sunk by U-109 (Heinrich Bleichrodt)

Position: 38° 46'N, 64° 17'W - Grid CB 5447

Complement: 97 (97 dead - no survivors)

Convoy Route: Buenos Aires - Hampton Roads - Liverpool

Cargo 5107 tons of refrigerated and general cargo

History: Laid down as War Theseus for The Shipping Controller, completed in July 1919 as Wangareeta for British India Steam Navigation Co Ltd, London. 1929 renamed Tacoma Star for Blue Star Line Ltd, London. At 22.40 hours on 3 May 1941, the Tacoma Star was hit by a heavy bomb while in dock at Liverpool during an air raid on the city. She caught fire and settled slowly by the stern

on to the dock bottom but was subsequently salvaged and repaired.

Notes on event:

At 03.30 hours on 1 Feb 1942, U-109 fired a spread of three torpedoes at the unescorted Tacoma Star (Master Robert George Whitehead) about 387 miles north of Bermuda. One torpedo hit at the forward hold and a second struck amidships in the engine room, causing the ship to sink by the bow after four minutes. The U-boat was just about to meet U-130 (Kals) for refueling when the vessel was spotted at 16.20 hours on 31 January and Bleichrodt began chasing the zigzagging ship. The Germans reported that the crew abandoned ship in five lifeboats, but the survivors were not questioned as the vessel had already been identified from her distress signals. These signals were also received ashore, and USS Roe (DD 418) was sent to search for survivors but found no trace of the ship because the position 37°33N/69°21W mentioned in the radio message proved to be wrong. The master, 87 crew members and nine gunners were lost.

William was one the casualties of the sinking of the S.S. Tacoma Star. He was only 38 years old at the time.

He is commemorated on the Halifax Memorial, Panel 22 as part of the CWGC (Commonwealth War Graves Commission). William is also remembered on the Cenotaph in Bay Roberts.

Below is a clipping from The Bay Roberts Guardian dated 06 June 1942 that makes mention of William being "Missing at Sea":

WM. C. CAVE

MISSING AT SEA

Word was received this week that William C. Cave, son of Mrs. Henry Cave, of Bay Roberts, who was serving in the Mercantile Marine, was missing at sea, the ship on which he was serving having been torpedoed and sunk.

We learn that Mrs. Cave had not heard from her son for several months. Letters that had been forwarded to him were returned, and money that he had allotted to his mother, had been stopped.

Because of the anxiety caused, Victor Cave, brother of the deceased, went to St. John's to obtain information, and was told that his brother had been missing for several months and that this information had been given to the St. John's newspapers.

We also learn that Victor forwarded a message to Rev. Torraville to convey the sad news to his mother. However, this message had been received too late, and it was necessary for Victor to tell his mother that William was missing, on his return from St. John's. Up until then Mrs. Cave had received no official information that her son was missing at sea.

If these are the true facts, and we believe they are, then there has unnecessary neglect on the part of whoever is responsible in not properly advising the mother of the deceased who was the next of kin.