

"...there was not time to waste on the dead"

The US Coast Guard Cutter *BIBB's* Rescue of

S.S. HENRY R. MALLORY Survivors

Convoy SC-118

7 February 1943

Background:

Dates: 25 January – 10 February 1943

Convoy Route: New York City to Liverpool, England

Ships in Convoy: 61 Ships

Losses: 8 sunk

The events related took place during the most brutal weather and the bloodiest months of the Battle of the Atlantic.

The winds were blowing thirty-five to forty knots (gale force) with seas running twelve to fifteen feet. *BIBB* had joined convoy SC-118 on February 1st and been on constant alert since then. *BIBB's* War Diary from February 7th gives a bare bones account of the next few hours (all times are two hours ahead of local time, exam.: 0940 Z is 7:40 AM local).

0940 Z - Sighted red flare bearing 285 (T).

1000 Z - Sighted lifeboat ahead.

1010 Z - Maneuvered alongside to windward of lifeboat and began taking aboard survivors from the S.S. HENRY R. MALLORY. Operations continued throughout forenoon, 202 survivors being taken from three lifeboats and numerous rafts. During latter part of operations *BIBB* was screened by *CAMPANULA*, *MIGNONETTE*, and *INGHAM*.

Raney continues in his Official Report. "It is believed that no life boats got away from the starboard [side]. Four hundred and ninety-nine persons were reported as having sailed on the MALLORY. The torpedo struck in a hold occupied by Marines, probably accounting for the relatively small number of Marines recovered. Occupants of the life boats were in excellent condition. It was apparent early in the morning that men of the rafts, especially the dough-nut type of rafts, would not last long. As raft after raft was brought alongside, it even became

necessary to leave dead bodies on the rafts, (always the dough-nut type) there being insufficient time to waste on dead men when living men were clamoring to be saved. Due to the height of the seas, it was rarely possible to see more than two or three rafts at one time. The water temperature was 50 degrees.

"The survivors were divided as follows: S.S. HENRY R. MALLORY – Army Officers 8 and enlisted men 28; Navy Officers 5 and enlisted men 96; Marine Corps - Officers 2 and enlisted men 31; Merchant ratings-31; Red Cross Worker - 1.

BIBB was attached to the British Convoy Escort Group B4, Commander Proudfoot, RN commanding. Commander Roy Raney, BIBB's commanding officer, was ordered by the Escort Commander not to stop for the survivors.

After sending a message telling of Mallory's torpedoing to the Escort Commander, he was ordered not to stop for survivors. Melvin "Mel" Gardner, a signalman, was on the Bridge when the message came in. "It took a little while for all that to sink in and the severity of it. Captain Raney said: 'the sea is alive with men and we have to go get them.'"

Henry R. Mallory was an old ship that had seen service in World War I then spent the next two plus decades as a coastal steamer plying between New York and Florida. The long years and hard times during the Depression had taken their toll and Mallory was showing her age. The 440 foot long ship had two cargo holds forward and two aft. Below the mid-ship's superstructure was a compartment that spanned the width of the ship and was about 150 feet long which was split in the middle by an uptake which allowed passage of the smoke stacks. The resulting port and starboard areas were fitted with bunks stacked three high and berthed the enlisted men. The Navy contingent of 165 men was in the port one while sixty-eight Marines and 101 Army troops were in starboard one. Among the troops were three Protestant and three Catholic chaplains.

In addition there were thirty-six Army officers, four Marine officers, eight Navy officers, two civilian workers, thirty-four Naval Armed Guards, and a crew of seventy-seven embarked. Loaded in her holds was a cargo of foodstuffs clothing, trucks, tanks, jeeps, and 610 sacks of mail.

Mallory left New York on January 24th, headed for Halifax to join SC-118. It was eventually destined for Iceland. Although capable of doing eighteen knots, she was placed in a slow convoy whose average speed was six knots. Horace R. Weaver was the new captain for this trip, but he had made several convoy runs as on *Mallory* before taking command. Also, about half the merchant crew were new and were not familiar with the ship or lowering the boats.

Wilson Flartey was part of the Navy passengers on board as the ship sailed from New York. "A tug boat was pushing on the port side near the stern swinging the ship so that it headed down river. The main engine of the *Mallory* took over and we were underway. The ship moved slowly down river. As we passed the Statue of Liberty, I gazed at it and watched until she vanished in the early morning haze I wondered if I would ever see that beautiful Lady Liberty again."

One of the Marines was nineteen year old Thomas Sullivan from Kansas City. "The passage was miserable. We never had one day of sunshine, and we were sailing in one of the worst winters known in the North Atlantic. Our quarters were overcrowded, and the food served to us was abominable. Sad to say, these were profitable operations for the ship owners, and the profit motive was the overriding factor. I doubt that accommodations for the officers on board were much better than ours."

The convoy had trouble holding formation due to the rough weather and the situation was exacerbated by constant U-boat attacks. *Mallory* straggled during the night of February 3rd and lost the convoy. Wilson Flartey recalls: "We were awakened by a strange sound. The thump bump of the engine had picked up in tempo it was going twice as fast as we had become accustomed to hearing. Some of us rushed up on deck to see what was happening. We had been traveling in convoy all this time. There were always several ships in sight. Now we were completely alone. Not a wisp of smoke or any other sign of the convoy."

Victor Clark was one of the Naval Armed Guard gunners. "We had protection during the day by planes, but not at night. They always attacked at 9:00. We were at General Quarters every night for a week."

The first U-boat scare wasn't long in coming. The following night, as they lay in their bunks, the men could feel torpedoes hitting other ships and depth charges

exploding while those on deck watched starshells bursting overhead. No one knew how many escorts there were or the number of U-boats they faced.

Boat drills were held daily and two night drills were also held. During the drills men reported to their boat stations, but the boats weren't swung out or tested and the passengers were neither shown how to lower them nor what they contained for emergency supplies.

The evening of the 6th the chaplains on board held a service for the men. Wilson Flartey was one of the attendees. "Word was passed that there would be a prayer meeting in the mess hall at 1900 hours. Several of us decided to attend. The leader of the meeting was a chaplain, denomination unknown. His sermon was on the Lord's Prayer. He took the prayer phrase by phrase and explained its meaning. The phrase 'Thy will be done' made a particularly strong impression on me. After the meeting we went below to our quarters. It was soon time to turn in."

Manuel "Manny" Silva, a Navy Ship Fitter, was also there. "They said we were approaching a dangerous area known as 'Torpedo Junction' and that we may have a bad night. Also we were advised to sleep in our clothes."

Attacks on the convoy began before midnight. An alert for the gun crew was sounded at about 1:30 in the morning, but it was generally reported as false and the men, outside of the gun crew, who had gotten up, went back to bed. The entire gun crew, however, remained on duty until 3:45, when a part was secured.

Empire Squire, the ship directly behind *Mallory*, was reported to have been a constant source of trouble in the column through continuous failure to hold position. At around 2:00 on the morning of the 7th, *Empire Squire* began to zigzag. She pulled abeam of *Mallory* on the starboard side, apparently because of a possible U-boat astern which a corvette was engaged in chasing, cut in and forced the troop-laden ship to slow down.

For perhaps an hour or more until the attack, there was no ship outboard of the *Mallory*. At the time of the attack it is believed there were three ships in sight and estimates place her between 400 and 1,000 yards astern of *Empire Squire* and possibly none inboard of her for about 2,000 yards. The attack occurred from inboard side. One or two corvettes were reported to be a mile and a half to two miles astern.

At the time of the attack the sky was overcast. There were moderate swells, winds east south east, at about fifteen knots, visibility fair to good with estimates going up to four miles. She was making seven and a half knots.

U-402's torpedo hit #3 hold on the starboard side right at about 3:58, exploding on contact. The blast blew out #4 hatch, destroyed the oil pump, knocked all gauges out, damaged two life boats, and cracked the ammonia lines to the refrigeration unit which mixed with the choking smoke from the explosion. The ship listed sharply to starboard and then righted herself almost immediately.

Tom Sullivan was getting a cup of coffee. "I had been assigned a guard duty. I was unable to sleep and went to get a cup of coffee. Father James Liston was there and we visited over coffee. We were visiting when the torpedo struck. There was no mistaking the fact that the *Mallory* had sustained a finishing attack."

"A fellow by the name of McConnell from Boston had just come off of watch and I asked him how it was. 'A real quiet night' he said'," relates John Reid. "He hadn't anymore than got into bed and it was WHAM! A torpedo hit just forward of my compartment and blew me out of my bunk and into the passageway."

Wilson Flartey had gone to sleep to sound of depth charges exploding. "Restlessly I tossed about but sleep would not come. Something kept prodding me to get up and put on heavy clothing. We were required to sleep in our pants and shirt but this was not sufficient for the spirit that was prompting me. Before we boarded the ship each of us had been issued some clothing not normally required in a Navy man's sea bag. There was a heavy, water resistant, fleece lined jacket, a bib overall type of garment of the same material as the jacket, fur lined gloves and woolen underwear. I got up and put on the heavy pants and jacket and lay back down with my life preserver as a pillow. In seconds I was asleep. THEN THE TORPEDO STRUCK."

When John Reid, Wilson Flartey, and others in the compartment reached the hatch to get out they found it jammed shut. A spare gear secured just outside of the hatch had been knocked loose. "We sent two men around another way and they cleared it for us."

Joseph I. McMillen, a Marine, had celebrated his nineteenth birthday just four days before. After the earlier alert. instead of going back to his own bunk, he

joined a fellow Marine, A. Pasinski, in a couple of unoccupied bunks nearby to talk and to try to relax after the excitement then fell asleep in that bunk. "I woke up to the sound of people yelling and screaming and much confusion. The area was a mess. I do not remember an explosion, and I am not sure if I may have been unconscious for a short period. But I do remember looking in the direction of where I should have been sleeping and there was nothing there. I managed to get on deck and to my assigned lifeboat, but it was gone. Then for some reason, I decided that it was going to be cold on the water, so I went back down below and got an overcoat."

Two of the Navy men who had been sleeping near the stairway were the first up to the door. They unfastened the levers securing it and tried to open it. It was stuck. They struggled and finally opened it far enough to slip through. A large spare gear for a deck winch, which had been secured to deck cleats with rope, had come loose and been blown against the door. The men, with great effort, were able to move the gear out of the way and fully open the door.

After the explosion, no alarm was sounded, no order to abandon ship was given, and no flares or messages were sent to let other ships know what had happened. The men were left to fend for themselves. A number of them didn't think wearing heavy clothing all the time was necessary and came on deck barefoot clad only in shirts and pants. Others, particularly the Marines, were stunned by the explosion and were not able to get their clothing from the damaged compartment.

BM2 Peter P. Ciganek, a member of the Naval Armed Guard detachment, was manning his general quarters on the stern gun. About twenty-five minutes, after unsuccessful attempts to launch a life raft, he gave the order for his crew to abandon ship. "Prior to leaping over the side, two of my crew and me threw over a life float; I swam to the float, but could not locate the other two men of my crew. I later paddled the float to a life boat, got in, and then located the two other men and hauled them in." Two other survivors from his forward gun crew later reported that when they released the forward life raft on the starboard side it fell apart upon hitting the water.

Victor Clark was on the forward guns. "The sea was getting rough and we had rain gear on, but we were still getting wet. Then the torpedo hit us and the

lieutenant ordered us to Abandon Ship. I had the only knife and I cut the life raft free. It fell into the water upside down. One of the men with me who had family with two little girls jumped when the raft was at its lowest point and missed. A seventeen year old boy jerked away from saying 'I'm going to find the Lieutenant' and he never made it either. There were about a dozen of us on the raft and I was trying to cut the line holding it to the ship. I didn't dare let go of the knife although I was getting soaked. Finally the thing got loose and as we were going by the side, people were jumping off half-clothed, some clothes, head first, feet first. There were two life boats hanging by one end. We go by the stern and there's one of our boys and he jumped aboard."

"I was the last man off the ship," says Edward Irwin. "As soon as the raft got to the stern, I stepped in to the water and swam two or three strokes. That water was a little chilly." He was the thirteenth man.

The life rafts had been lashed to the ship with heavy, one-inch line that was almost impossible to cut. There were supposed to be hatchets at each station, but some were missing while others were lost over the side trying to free the rafts. Also, no one had told the men how to release the netting in the center of the raft and many were washed back into the water.

One of the *Mallory's* cooks was George K. Dunningham. "There was no warning at all. The big ship lurched and staggered as though the stern were going under when the torpedo hit us. It hit us with the noise of a bulkhead door slamming to. Everything was surprisingly calm and orderly. It was just as though we had expected this." He managed to get into one of the badly overcrowded life boats. "It was black as pitch," he said, "and there were a lot of men yelling and blowing whistles. Many of them were in the water and each had his red rescue light lit. It looked like some weird, strange dream to see all those little red lights bobbing up and down."

Manny Silvia: "Once I got out in the open I went to my life boat station and went down the cargo net to my boat. It was rough, the boat was bouncing up and down, I reached it and my foot touched it a couple of times. A kid named Shepherd from New Jersey says to me 'Jump in the water I'll grab you.' I says 'Forget it, I'll take my chances.' So I climbed back up the cargo net and as I got back on deck I

looked out and the boat didn't get twenty yards away before it flipped over and that was the end of them, I never did see any of them again."

Only four rafts were launched and, of the nine lifeboats, three capsized either upon hitting the water or while being lowered. Among the six remaining lifeboats one could not be lowered, the second one sank with men on board; the third was lowered, but couldn't pull away from the ship and was swamped and sank. The fourth one, partially loaded did get away while the fifth managed to get away, but it too was swamped. The last got away with seventy men on board.

"I managed to get on deck and to my assigned lifeboat, but it was gone. Then for some reason, I decided that it was going to be cold on the water, so I went back down below and got an overcoat," continues Joe McMillen. "Back on deck, I went to another lifeboat station and got into that boat as it was being lowered, but when we reached the water, no one could figure out how to release it from the lines. Then someone found a hatchet and used that to cut the lines at one end. While passing it to the other end, though, the hatchet was lost over the side. The issue with the lines became moot; however, as we also discovered that the boat was filling with water, since no one had closed the seacock. As the waves lifted the boat, guys would jump out of the lifeboat and back onto the deck of the Mallory. I was still in the lifeboat when an object landed in the water next to me; I jumped to it. I did not land on it, but did manage to grab hold of it and climb aboard.

"Once aboard, I realized that it was a life raft and soon it began to rain men who were jumping from the Mallory. When morning came I counted twenty-two people on board and was riding so low we were almost up to our waists in water. I slipped off the raft once and a couple of the guys pulled me back on board. I remember that two of the persons aboard appeared to be dead. I also noticed that my wristwatch was stopped at 4:00 o'clock."

James Joseph Jenkins and Sydney C. Buffett were best friends. There was only room for one more in the life boat and Jimmy told Syd to jump into it and he would take the next one and ran off. Jimmy could only get on a two man donut and he died from exposure in the bitter cold North Atlantic.

"I climbed over the railing to a rope ladder and climbed down to get off the

ship that was now listing badly and sinking. It was a nightmare," is part of Louis Strauss' memories. "The water was freezing and snow was now falling. I was knocked off my perch by a tremendous wave and thrown into the frigid water. It seemed that I was under water for a long time. Oil and debris faced me as I popped up from the cold sea, pulling on a rope that hung down from the vessel. I found my way to a nearby lifeboat, where I was about to be pulled in by a friend, but before he could help me aboard, I was hit from behind by another lifeboat and injured badly. I hung on and was finally taken aboard.

"Dead bodies were floating by, and some were in the lifeboat. Survivors were praying. I suddenly remembered hearing somewhere that most people can last only about seven minutes in such cold water, and survive. The last thing I remember was bright colors coming, and then I became unconscious. I didn't know until later that what I had seen was a camouflaged British ship that came to rescue us. I think that the name of the British ship was *Campanula*."

Manny waited until the ship had almost sunk before getting off. "I stayed there and it got lower in the water, a chaplain came over and gave me a chocolate bar saying 'you might need this'. Eventually I was able to just walk over the side into the water and started to swim. I watched it go down on end. I got to some wreckage. At first there were five or six of us, but gradually somebody would drift away and drown.

"I had seen the *BIBB* once, but it seemed to go away again, apparently they had a contact, they couldn't see us. I'd gone in the water at 5:00, that's when my watch stopped. It was very cold; I started to lose my sense of feeling in my legs. We kept drifting further and further apart. You could hear the guys praying. It seemed when some one drowned all you could see was the little red light on their life jacket. It's something you never forget. It's part of my life.

"When the *BIBB* left, I thought I'm all done. A couple of hours later, it's now late in the afternoon, I can see *BIBB* coming back. Now there are only two of us left. I tried to wave and some one must have seen me. Just when it was only fifty yards away this guy I'm with says he's going to give up, it's too tough. If he'd only said something, but I was so intent on watching the *BIBB*, he drifted away and all I

heard was 'glubb, glubb' and that was the end. If he'd only waited another five minutes, he'd have been picked up."

Father Gerald Whelan, a Catholic chaplain, made it into one of the boats. In the same boat was Joe Reilly from Gloucester, Massachusetts with who he had become friends. "I knew he would know how to run a boat because every mother who gives birth to a boy in Gloucester takes him down to sea immediately and gives him oarlocks. I said he would run the boat and the rest of us would take orders from him. He found the sea anchor, which helped keep our boat into the seas. He closed the seacock which had been letting in water by the bucket full. We also had two poor Marines, legs broken, their faces damaged badly. How they got into the boat I don't know, but someone should have gotten the Soldier's Medal for their rescue.

"I said: 'Joe, let's you and me start saying a rosary. We need help. I don't know whether you guys have ever heard of the Blessed Mother of Christ, but Reilly and I have and some of you guys are Catholics. I can't make you out in the darkness, but if you'll be quiet and join in with us, and promise to change your lives if they need changing, we will be picked up.'

"So, we said our rosary once or twice or more, it didn't seem like four and a half hours.

Suddenly, someone screamed. It was my young midshipman. 'We are saved.' We strained to look and getting on top of a wave we could see the stars and stripes snapping in the sleet and snow of the USS *BIBB*, a Coast Guard cutter. What a beautiful sight!

"The Captain yelled down through a megaphone, 'if you are able, grab the railing as we come up by you, if you are not able, wait until we throw you a rope.'

"Then it happened, we lost heart. The ropes were pulled back and *BIBB* raced away. Submarines had followed the boats. *BIBB* dropped a pattern of depth charges and we saw later, with *Ingham* screening, as depth charges were dropped. Finally, *BIBB* came along side. We were so low beneath *BIBB* at times that we could see the whole belly of the ship and the twin screw propellers were almost cutting us and then we would be so high that we looked down on the bridge which

is thirty-five feet off the water level. It gives you an idea of how the seas were running.”

Joe McMillen clung to his raft. “Although I was alive, I did not have much hope for survival, since we had been told that ships in convoys did not stop to pick up survivors, because that would make them sitting ducks for the subs. Sometime after daybreak, we noticed smoke on the horizon. We could see it only when the raft was on the crest of a wave, but we noticed that sometimes the smoke was not there, and then the next time it was there.

“We thought it might be a vessel picking up survivors, so when we were on the crest of a wave, we would wave all sorts of things to attract attention. On one crest we noticed a signal light that looked like it was aimed in our direction, and that gave us some hope. At about noon, the USCG Cutter *BIBB* stopped by the raft and dropped ropes with loops over the side. I put one under my arms and was hoisted aboard. When I reached the deck, I had trouble walking and was helped by the crew to the boiler room, where I could dry out and warm up. I was also given a cup of black coffee, which I drank without hesitation even though I had never had a cup of coffee before.”

George Dunningham was another who kept alive. “Day finally broke. It was gray and cold and the seas were running higher and we were alone on a big ocean. We felt awfully small and lost. And then we saw a ship on the horizon. We saw the most beautiful ship in the whole world. I can't tell you how wonderful she looked.”

Victor Clark and Edward Irwin spent seven and a half hours on their box-type raft. “We almost turned over a couple of times. I started praying and I promised never to gamble, smoke, drink or chew and serve him all the rest of my life. In the morning we saw a ship and BM2 Ramsey dug around and found a flare pistol and fired off a couple. We got picked up by the USS *BIBB*. When they pulled aside, I told them to get the five men on the doughnut raft nearby, but was told they were all dead, froze to death. I sure appreciate Charlie Griffin and the Coast Guard *BIBB* for saving my life.” All thirteen men on the raft survived.

BIBB had been at general quarters since mid-night. Her lookouts sighted the flares and closed in. “In doing so we drove right through masses of humans and

each one wore a red light on his life jacket on the left side," says Murray Steiner "Sometimes there was a boat with just a mast and nobody aboard it."

"It was horrible," tells Wally Cudlipp. "I saw men bare from the waist up, they hadn't had time to put a coat on or anything and they were dead of course. They were purple; we couldn't do anything for them. As I talk about it, I can see it."

Lyle Reed was on deck as they drifted down to the rafts. "Martin Keller from Ogallala, Nebraska was the first man we put a line on and lowered to the rafts. He tied lines around them and we'd pulled them aboard."

"A lot of them were dead on their life rafts and we would yank their dog tags, collecting as many as we could," adds Mel. "Sometimes in a pile of men there'd be a live one there, you know, in the middle of all those bodies. We'd grab him and pull him aboard."

Charlie Griffin: "It was quite a scene. We'd go way up then come down and almost smash the boats along side. I remember one guy in a boat hanging on our ship with a rope and won't let go. It pulled part of his hand off. So many things happened so quick at that time."

The strangest survivor was a mongrel pup named Ricky that Dunningham had lost track of during the sinking. The dog turned up on one of the rafts and George was there when *BIBB* found him. "One of the men threw a heavy line at him," Dunningham continued.

Lieutenant Henry Keene was in the nets hauling men aboard. "We would bring a raft along side our scramble nets on the starboard side in order for the occupants to climb out of the boat or off the raft. It soon became apparent that this process was too slow and many of the survivors were in no condition to make the climb. The deck force then prepared a number of lines with bowlines in the end. These would be thrown down to individuals who would place them under their arms and a number of men would hoist them rapidly on deck.

"I climbed into a starboard boat that was swung out and was throwing heaving lines to the boats or rafts where they would be grabbed, I would pass the

lines down to deck and this would enable the boat or raft to be brought rapidly alongside.

At some time during the proceedings, I heard Captain Raney yell: "Someone get that damned dog." I jumped down from the boat, ran to the port side and saw a white dog on a raft coming down the side. I tied a heaving line around my waist, jumped onto the raft and grabbed the dog. Men on deck pulled me back up the side; I dropped the dog, and ran back to the boat and started throwing lines to the boats and rafts again. There were two guys on the raft dead."

Other survivors weren't so lucky. "There was a Marine hanging on a door and our skipper, Captain Raney, said 'I want to rescue that man if we don't rescue another one. He really wants to live. Let's get him,'" Wally Cudlipp continues.

"So I ran out and jumped into a life boat with a few other guys and we started to lower it when somebody hollered 'Periscope!' Of course we jumped back, got aboard, put the ship in gear and took off after the periscope. Well it was a life boat with a mast on it, but the seas were so high that what we saw was the mast. When we came back to pick this Marine up, he had slipped off the door and went under."

"Captain Raney handled the ship like a taxi cab," says Charlie Griffin. "We were picking them up one at a time, two at a time, ten at a time, whatever we'd come to. When you pull 200 some people aboard one at a time, it takes quite a while, quite a while."

Father Liston was among the dead and so was Seaman First Class Alfred Wolf, one of the Naval Armed Guard. Wolf's previous ship, *Samuel Chase*, had survived PQ-17, the worst convoy debacle of the war. Six near-misses from enemy bombers caused heavy damage, snapping all steam lines, cutting off all auxiliaries, and blowing the compass out of the binnacle. Her gunners fought with their weapons efficiently and courageously. Wolf earned a letter of commendation which praised his meritorious conduct in action. It didn't help him here.

By the time the *Ingham* arrived the large groups had already been picked up and only scattered rafts with a few men on each were seen. Bill Gallaher in *Ingham* remembers the night. "About 8 or 9 o'clock we got word to drop behind the convoy

and pick up survivors. *BIBB* was there. Captain Martinson signaled: 'Where are the people?' *BIBB* replied: 'Look around, they're all over.' The ocean was covered with litter and dead soldiers. They had their [life] jackets on and they'd float up and down with the waves."

Ingham readied two boats for lowering. Ltjg. John Waters took the port boat and Chief Boatswains Mate Allen Smedberg took a starboard boat. Ray Souza was in the port boat. "We grabbed many people in the water. Lieutenant Waters says 'lift them up to see what they feel like, there's no sense bringing them aboard if they're dead.' We did that to several people and then we came across a boat with three or four guys in it and we got them aboard. We're in the midst of the rescue and *Ingham* sailed off, we didn't know if they were going to come back."

Alone on a dark corpse filled sea, the boats continued their work.

The first raft Smedberg reached had five people on it. Bill Gallaher was in the bow as they got to it. "There was a big red-headed Irish merchant sailor from Boston; he was a rough neck, two or three live soldiers and two guys face down in the water. This kid Bob Waters and I were in the bow and we pulled the soldiers up and got them in the boat. I reached over to grab this merchant sailor and he said 'take these guys.' I said they're dead.

'What are you a wise guy? Are you from Brooklyn?' he asked. 'Take 'em.'

"Smedberg said 'take 'em.' So Bob and I are trying to pull them off the raft and they won't come. I said to Waters 'lift.'

'What do you think I'm doing?' he asked.

"Then the merchant sailor says: 'they're tied down to keep them on the raft so they won't give up during the night and drown themselves.'

"We finally got back to the ship and they lowered litters to haul the men aboard. The red head 'says: 'I'm goin' up the ladder.' Three hours later, he was volunteering in the ship's laundry."

Ingham picked up twenty-two men from rafts. They were in terrible condition due to long exposure. As *BIBB* before her, *Ingham* had to lower men onto and in the rafts to secure lines about the helpless survivors. Ensign John Juraschek was attempting to get five men off a raft when *Ingham* rolled heavily and he was sucked

under the ship. When the ship rolled back, he was hauled aboard safely and another man immediately took his place.

As the day progressed, Commander Proudfoot, the British Escort Commander, sent another message to *BIBB*. Captain Raney response was: "Tell him to go to Hell. We're not leaving here until we get every man in the water." So they stayed until there was no hope of finding anyone alive.

Two of the men rescued by *Ingham* died and were buried at sea. One man recovered after he was given artificial respiration for twenty minutes. None of the survivors needed to be hospitalized. While in their berths their clothes were laundered and dried and necessary additional clothing was issued for their comfort and health.

"Later on I put a soldier in my bunk and got talking with him," says Bill Gallaher. "Like a lot of them he said he knew that as soon as they got on the ship, they were going to get torpedoed. This was typical of men making their first trip. I asked him what it was like on the raft.

"I knew I was going to lose my legs because I couldn't feel anything," he answered, "but I kept moving my hands because I figured I could get a job as a watch maker."

Henry Keene remembers the end of that day. "During the day three of the individuals from the *Mallory* died. At sundown we prepared to commit the remains to the deep. Among the survivors were a Catholic priest and Protestant chaplain. They agreed to conduct the services. When all was ready the bridge was advised.

"I was officer of the deck at the time and the captain was on the bridge. We stopped engines which we considered safe as it was dark, until we were advised that the burial ceremony was complete when we again got under way.

At this time, Captain Raney said to the junior OOD, "Mr. Melia, it is good to be a member of the cloth. We saved both a Catholic and a Protestant chaplain." Melia dryly replied, "Captain, before that ship was torpedoed, there were 13 chaplains on board." Of course we did not know if the other ship had rescued any chaplains."

Chaplain Whelan read the service as they were slipped over the side.

The cutters and corvettes worked for hours to rescue survivors before heading east to rejoin the convoy. Before leaving, *Campanula* and *Mignonette* each saved four men, while *Ingham* had her twenty, and *BIBB* gathered 202 for a total of 230 out of the 495 who started from New York.

BIBB rejoined the convoy with 235 survivors. "We had one meal in twenty-four hours and all they served was stew and rice. There were 537 some guys onboard. Everybody slept in everybody's bunk. We had a lot of wounded, burned or oiled," wraps up Charlie Griffin.

"That was a bad day for a lot of people and a good day for many more," Lyle Reed concludes.

Commander Roy Raney risked his own ship being destroyed and her crew killed by stopping, but none of the men questioned the decision - they were all Coast Guard and this was the right thing to do. They followed Coast Guard traditions, not the dictates of War.