

15th, about 0535, a shot suddenly rang out from a point about three points off the starboard bow of the ACACIA. Since no signals had been passed, nor anything sighted previous to this, it was assumed that the shot came from an enemy submarine. Engines were stopped at once, a general alarm sounded and boats lowered to the rail to await further orders. An emergency message was sent after the first shot had been fired. The commanding officer had prepared the positions of the ACACIA for every two hours on the previous evening, and was carrying them in his pocket as an emergency measure.

The first shot did not hit the cutter. The enemy, however, kept up a slow fire after about a minute or two from the first shot, until the ACACIA started to send the SSSS message, stating her position. Then the submarine commenced using machine guns. It was thought that the enemy used two of the same type but with two different colors of tracer bullets, namely red and green. Two guns of heavier caliber were also used at intervals, probably 3-inch and 4-inch guns. At 0540 all hands were ordered to abandon ship. This was five minutes after the first shot, and by this time a great many shots were finding their mark and had already started fires in the upper deckhouse, which was of wood construction.

Several of the crew were hit by many fragments of shells flying around the cutter's lifeboat. Four men were hurt badly enough to draw blood, but only one man required medical attention. He was struck on the right cheek by a fragment of shell and cut so deeply that the cheek bled profusely and swelled. He was given first aid in the lifeboat and later one stitch was taken by the doctor on the destroyer which picked up the crew.

At 0600, the submarine, now in plain sight, approached the burning cutter, now ablaze from stem to stern, an inferno of smoke and fire. Some of the shots had broken gas pipes in two gas buoys which were on the forward deck, and at least one gasoline drum had been punctured. The submarine passed the ship's stern



**DURING A DRAMATIC battle between a Coast Guard Cutter and a German undersea-boat Seaman Ernest Godfrey was wounded by shell fire from the enemy. The submarine was destroyed.**

at a distance of about two hundred yards and made a half circle of the ship, keeping at about the same distance, apparently trying to read the cutter's name on the stern and determine her type. The submarine then opened fire once more with what appeared to be a 3-inch gun, and fired fifteen or twenty more rapid shots into the ACACIA's side. Immediately after this last burst of shell fire the cutter started to settle rapidly and took on a starboard list; then the stern settled and at 0625 she went down stern first.

The submarine was still on the surface about one mile away, heading east as the ACACIA went down. Then the submarine slowly submerged, still heading east, and was not sighted again. The only object visible after the cutter sank was one of the gas buoys which had floated clear. All three lifeboats headed for this buoy and moored there awaiting rescue, which the crew knew would arrive sooner or later because their SSSS message had been acknowledged by at least five or six ships almost immediately.

A few hours later a U. S. Navy PBY plane was sighted. It was soon followed by another. Both planes flew low over the lifeboats and signalled that assistance was coming. It was then 0810. The planes remained at the scene of the disaster continuously until the stranded crew were picked up by the destroyer USS OVERTON at about 1430. The destroyer did not have room for all three lifeboats, so the two motor lifeboats were taken on board, and the launch and gas buoy were sunk by shell fire from the OVERTON. The destroyer arrived at San Juan, Puerto Rico, at 0700 on March 17, 1942. While no lives had been lost, all personal effects of the officers and men of the ACACIA were sunk with her.

The CGC ACACIA (Tender Class) had been built in 1919 by the Fabricated Ship Corporation, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at an original cost of \$540,000. She was a steamer, twin screw, with steel hull and was 172 feet long with a 32-foot beam. She drew 11 feet 6 inches when loaded and had an indicated horsepower of 1,040. !



**COAST GUARDSMEN ABOARD a Cutter on wartime convoy duty are shown firing a depth charge from a K-gun. This was the opening round of a battle that forced a Nazi submarine to the surface where it was demolished by the guns of the Cutter SPENCER. Enemy submarines in World War II took a terrific beating from Coast Guard Cutters.**