

THE SINKING OF THE TROOP TRANSPORT, H.M.S. TUSCANIA

FEBRUARY 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918

IN THE

NORTH CHANNEL, BETWEEN SCOTLAND AND IRELAND

DURING WORLD WAR I

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"THE LAST OF THE FLEET"

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By: LEO V. ZIMMERMANN,

Historian,

National Tuscania  
Survivors Association,  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Compiled By:

EDWARD T. LAUER, SR.,  
Secretary-Treasurer,  
National Tuscania  
Survivors Association,  
8035 Stickney Avenue,  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin 53213

**LAST MAN'S CLUB  
Of The**

**Units Aboard**

ADVANCE ELEMENTS, 32<sup>nd</sup> DIV.

**National**

(Wisconsin & Michigan National

**TUCANIA SURVIVORS  
Association**

Guard)

100-158-213 AERO SQDSN

U.S. Army Air Force

20<sup>th</sup> FORESTRY ENGINEERS,

Sixth Battalion

CASUAL OFFICERS & ENL. MEN.

Camp Travis, Texas

February 5, 1978.

*S. S. Tuscania, sunk off the coast of  
Ireland on the night of February 5<sup>th</sup>,  
1918 by the German Submarine UB-77.*

Edward T. Lauer, SR.,  
Secretary-Treasurer,  
8035 Stickney Avenue  
Wauwatosa Wisconsin  
53213

**TO ALL SURVIORS:**

You are being reminded of THE SIXTIETH ANNIVERSARY of the torpedoing of the S.S. Tuscania at dusk, February 5<sup>th</sup> 1918, when the well protected CONVOY HX20 with the heavy cruiser COCHRANE and EIGHT DESTROYERS steamed Along the North Channel, between RATHLIN ISLAND, NORTHERN IRELAND and the INNER HEBRIDES, ISLE OF ISLAY, SCOTLAND.

Chairman:  
MAXWELL W. COLLINS  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Co-Co-Chairman:  
DELL E. ROGERS  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
PAST PRESIDENTS:

ARCHIE H. PULS  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
of DEANE R. KNAPTON  
West Allis, Wisconsin

TRACY S. GREENE aboard and taken below and given a drink of whiskey.  
Arcadia, Florida  
HERBERT E. HURD  
Clearwater, Florida  
OMER HOUKOM  
Racine, Wisconsin  
WERNER W. PFAENDER  
Portland, Oregon

Everyone who was on board the S.S. Tuscania on that cold winter night will remember what happened when they groped their way in the darkness up the stairs to their assigned lifeboats - on the portside where it was extremely difficult to lower because of the suction caused by the entry of the 2,000 pound torpedo below the water line on the starboard side.

Many of you will remember leaving the portside in a lifeboat and rowing toward SCOTLAND in the darkness, only to be dashed upon the rocks of the rocky cliffs the ISLE OF ISLAY where many were killed. Those who were intercepted by the destroyer H.M.S. GRASSHOPPER were the lucky ones, having been yanked

Others will remember how the skippers of the H.M.S. MOSQUITO hove to and how the men swung from the deck onto the destroyer - how the H.M.S. PIGEON also followed on the starboardside and took off the remaining men. Remember how the skipper of one of the destroyers ordered the boatswain to lower his boat, to tie the lifeboats together and guide them to LARNE, IRELAND.

I personally remember to this day when the H.M.S. GRASSHOPPER steamed along in darkness, picking up men in lifeboats, and when the rescue work was completed, steamed to Northern IRELAND, arriving at about 5:30 am the next morning. I also remember your stories of the seamen aboard the destroyers MOSQUITO and PIGEON, after doing an excellent job of rescuing men on the starboardside, finally bringing the survivors to BUNCRANA, Northern Ireland the following morning.

I remember the work of the ROYAL INNISKILLEN FUSILLIERS and other British outfits who bedded us down after they had given us their food, clothing and shelter; how UNA PEELE and her mother, who operated the canteen at CARRICKFERGUS County of Antrim, gave me stationery, postage etc., and notified my parents back in Milwaukee, that I was safe.

All of us SURVIVORS are now in the EIGHTIES, but memory lingers on. The S.S. TUSCANIA still lies in 300 ft of water just a few miles from RATHLIN ISLAND, after three years of transporting ALLIED TROOPS to FRANCE.

Since 1976 I have received letters from only 12 Survivors. For this reason there will be no NEWS LETTER. It will be appreciated if you will write, also show this letter to your local newspaper, and send a clipping on to Edward T. Lauer Sr., Secy-Treas. THE LAST MAN'S CLUB Nat'l Tuscania Survivors Assn. 8035 Stickney Avenue, Wauwatosa, Wis. 53213

## PREFACE

This historical account of the torpedoing of the Anchor Liner, H.M.S. Tuscania, is respectfully submitted by your National Historian, Leo V. Zimmermann, who as a member of Sanitary Squad No. 7, 32<sup>nd</sup> Division was on board on the night of February 5<sup>th</sup>, 1918.

Historian Zimmermann has spent much time and effort in contacting former officers and men of the U.B. 77 of the German Navy, and also the officers and men of the various ships of the British Navy who aided in the rescue of the American troops on that fateful night.

It is hoped that our memory of this occasion will always strengthen the Comradeship of the members of our National Tuscania Survivors Association.

EDWARD T. LAUR SR.,  
Secretary-Treasurer,  
Nat'l Tuscania Survivors Assn.,  
8035 Stickney Avenue  
Wauwatosa, Wisconsin 53213.

This was retyped for electronic transmission by Jeanne Ostnes with the compliments of the Museum of Islay Life and Margot Perrons, administrator. Please send any comments to Jeanne Ostnes, POB 241492 Anchorage, AK 99524. Alternately you can use [jeannebeni@gmail.com](mailto:jeannebeni@gmail.com)

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Up at 4:30 A.M. to catch a troop train in which only standing room was left. Thus we journeyed from Camp Merritt, at Dumont, New Jersey to Hoboken. The ferry Chautauqua took us to the Cunard Line Dock where our names were checked up as we boarded the transport H. M. S Tuscania. The sides of our ship were camouflaged in wide black and gray angled lines. A derrick loading barrack bags dropped a net full into the water and we wondered who was unlucky enough to have his amongst that lot. How little that mattered for this ship, the last of the fleet, was bidding adieu to New York and was going out to sea to meet that same fate that befell her sisters.

The ship's guttural whistle blew and orders were given to go below deck, to hide the cargo of soldiers from prying spy's eyes. Then we were again allowed to clamber up the hatchways, as the last vestige of land was being obliterated in the ocean mist. The liner scurried along the New England coast; we though our journey across had begun until unexpectedly the following day on January 26th, we entered the harbor of Halifax, Canada.

Spruce trees dot the snow covered shore line. Through a steel net, floating gateway we pass and now view the ruins of buildings occasioned December 6th when the "Ioma", a Belgian relief ship and the "Mount Blanc", an ammunition vessel in from New York, collided. About 1,500 people were killed. The Belgian ship was just bound out to sea when it rammed the American ammunition ship, which also carried a load of benzene on deck.

They haul the British flag up on the stern of the Tuscania and we cheer when a little launch goes by with an American flag at its stern. The following day the thermometer registered about 20 degrees below zero. In the afternoon at 2:00 P.M. we set sail and at 4:00 P.M. form in columns outside the harbor with others to make a convoy - Naval numbered HX 20. H.M.S. Cochrane an English second class Cruiser took the lead as escort. Up her signal flags were hauled, triangular or square and varied colored We watched the fleet assemble and maneuver into position and wonder from where the rest had come so silently and unannounced.

Fourteen vessels formed in five columns. The escort led the "XA" (middle) lane, consisting of the "Baltic", Commodore ship, a passenger and troop transport. In its wake followed the Tuscania and the U. S. S. "Kanawha", that doggedly hung at our stern. She was a collier bristling with guns as a rear protection against sub attacks on the convoy. A supply ship of the U. S. Navy, she also had aboard sailor recruits for the Navy as Scapa Flow. The "WA" column on our port side was made up of two cargo ships, one the "Scotian" with Canadian troops aboard. To starboard of the Tuscania the "YA" column consisted of three cattle boats, further on the "ZA" line of three merchant ships and the outer line of three more.

In convoy all ships are placed in parallel lines. Ours two three and four in a line. Six cable lengths apart and three cable lengths between ships in a line. Of course this would vary from time to time according to the capabilities of the slower vessels to keep up and hold a formation. The larger and more important vessels are placed in the center lanes. A cruiser leading all the way across as protection against German raiders, a destroyer escort later forming an outer ring for protection against submarines.

Over each side at the bow of our liner the paravanes cut through the water. These guardians against menacing mines could ward off this missile of destruction by swerving it to the side, along a cable and away from the ship to a steel knife, set there to cut it from its floating mooring, when it would rise to the surface and be exploded by gun fire. At the stern of our transport a rapid fire piece was mounted, with shells standing about it, to us such grim reminders of constant impending danger.

Some of the vessels were equipped with M-V sets. These are composed of microphones set at different places on a boat to pick up underwater sounds of submersibles. Their rotating propellers by being amplified can be detected two miles away.

The British steamship H.M.S. Tuscania of 14,348 tons gross, under the command of Captain Peter Alexander McLean and R. W. Smart as Chief Officer, was a passenger and freight liner. She had below a number of compartments for animals, which we now occupied. The rest of the cargo at this time consisted of thirty head of mules, supply wagons, boxes of bacon and aeroplane parts. Frequently our mess consisted of a small portion of steam cooked, unsalted potatoes, fish, cheese or "slum". What appeared like bay leaves bathed in hot pip water and served in tin cups comprised the drink.

Light calisthenics and an occasional life boat drill constituted our exercises. On shipboard were the following units: Headquarters, Companies "D", "E", and "F", Twentieth Engineers; 51 Casual Officers; 100th, 158th, and 213th Aero Squadrons; 107th Engineer Train, 107th Military Police; 107th Supply Train and the Sanitary Squads #7 and #8 of the 32nd Division. (Beginning with the 107th Engineer Train, all of the later units listed above were of the 32nd Division.) This comprised in all a compliment of 2,336 American soldiers, two British stewardesses and a personnel of 237 officers and men in the crew.

The Sea Gulls had deserted us, even the porpoises appeared rarely. In the evening the ships faded away in the enveloping gloom, like phantoms on the horizon. The blue stern light of the "Baltic" alone discernable at night beckoned us on. Above Deck it was quiet, except for the whistle of the wind through the rigging and the incessant pounding and lashing of the salt sea waves along the sides of the liner.

Into the warmth of the Gulf Stream we passed and entered the submarine danger zone, where we perceived a tramp steamer on the starboard offing approaching and receding in the distance. In an admiring mood we contemplated her pluck and having safely crossed the ocean alone and unprotected, now rewarded by this act of daring.

After a rainstorm a huge rainbow appeared; always elusive for we never passed under its extended arches, resting upon the horizon at about one point on our starboard bow, to three point on or port side.

At night we slept in our clothes, life belts hung at the head of our bunks. All ships were zigzagging, except for a few like the oil tanker astern that had difficulty in keeping up with the convoy.

It is a trail of a dark and fearsome cruise; one evening on the horizon appeared the silhouetted specter of a frigate on fire. It was but the shape of a small cloud that wreathed the rising red moon. A black banana stalk floated by, just far enough away to make it seem a skeleton. I slung my life belt to my waist as into the storm we rode. It had hailed the day before and now the wind whistled past the creaking cabin walls. The steel ship dipped deep and the waves pounded hard, as we tried to sleep in coffin shaped boxes in converted horse stalls.

At 7:00 A.M. February 4th, the convoy was joined by eight British Destroyers of the 4th Flotilla from the base at Lough Swilly, Northern Ireland. H.M.S. Cochrane, the cruiser now taking the lead in the column "YA". Three destroyers, H.M.S. Beagle, Savage and Grasshopper took position to starboard of the convoy; H.M.S. Grasshopper the rear of this line. In front two, H.M.S. Minos and Harpy took position. To port of the convoy first in line was H.M.S. Badger, following H.M.S. Pigeon and next H.M.S. Mosquito.

The following night we were awakened by the Tuscania dropping into a deep trough of the sea. Excitement prevailed for a short time until reassured it was not a torpedo.

The day of February 5th, (Tuesday) 1918, dawned with a sea somewhat more calm, although still choppy but not so rough, being under the lee of the land. Partly cloudy and dark it continued with a strong southern breeze blowing.

At about 4:00 P.M. we saw the first sight of land to port, the high cliff shores of the Scotland coast. We were safe now, we thought and the next morning expected to arrive in the harbor of Liverpool. Then in the distance to starboard, a dark gray line lengthened itself on the horizon and formed the shore of Ireland. We expected to pass it by, never realizing it possible to set foot on its coast. With the coming of dusk the lighthouse on the point of the Mull of Cantyre cast its bright blinking beacon of light to our eyes. A welcome sight to us, and tired of a long and wearisome ocean trip, but still to meet a more sinister ordeal before we would again set foot on land and entirely prohibited to those that lost their lives.

The last change of course was made at 6:40 P.M., a change of 40 degrees to right or 20 degrees of base course was made. The speed was 12 knots, the ship appearing to fall back as if changing its course.

A few days previously, on the 29th of January, the German U.B. 77 with Lieut. Captain Wilhelm Meyer in command, had left Borkum, Germany, standing to the north. On the 31st it encountered the German U.B. 86 likewise starting on a cruise to the north. The U.B. 77 then passes in sight of Fair Island February 1st, then doubles the seaward of Rona Island, the Flannan Islands February 2nd and St. Kilds February 3rd. On

February 4th like a huge triangular iron file she cuts the surface, bound in toward the north coast of Ireland. On the 5th of February it arrives off the North Channel, where the U.B. 97 is also operating. About 5:00 P.M. it observes a large convoy escorted by destroyers and maneuvers to place itself in position for attack.

The log of the U.B. 77 reveals that in the early morning, February 5th, she was obliged to dive on the appearance of destroyers out of the darkness, proceeding away from the sound of their propellers. Her position at the time, 7:07 A.M., was in the North Channel - Latitude 55 degrees 3 minutes North, Longitude 7 degrees 6 minutes West; Sea 5-6, Wind S. 4-5. Later a steamer's propeller was heard. The periscope was raised several times but only destroyers were sighted.

At 8:20 A.M. a 2,000-ton vessel is sighted, approximate course 145 degrees, angle on the bow 100 degrees to starboard, range 3,000 meters (3,279 yards). The attempt to reach position ahead of her fails, the submarine consistently breaking surface owing to the swell, and destroyers are sighted in vicinity of the steamer. The attack is therefore abandoned.

U.B. 77 at 10:30 A.M. came to the surface and charges its batteries. At 2:18 P.M. it had to make a quick dive to avoid patrol craft. At 3:05 P.M. it came to the surface and proceeded into the North Channel. Except for the patrol craft to the Northwest, no patrols were seen. At 3:30 P.M. met U.B. 97.

British cruisers were supposed to be as thick as fish in this region. Having given up hope of sighting prey in this area Captain Meyer decides to head of the entrance to the North Channel, intending to enter the Irish Sea from the North.

Aboard the submarine valves, manifolds and hatches had been secured hours before. Electric signals and orders were now given in rapid succession. Scurrying feet added to the clang of metal. Each of the thirty-five members of the crew were at their particular stations and at the alert ready for any emergency. Minutes of suspense and action. The electric motors had quieted down to a purr. In the steel conning tower ringed by portholes of heavy glass stood an officer. Directly below is the helmsman tensely steering his course by the aid of a gyro-compass. Next to him another sailor governs the motors. This control room is a maze of levers, valves and switches. Further below stands Captain Meyer peering into the main periscope his hands on levers that swing, raise or lower it. The navigating warrant officer is at the forward periscope. A sailor stands at a bank of small valve wheels that control the compressed air for the ballast tanks. Two more men stand at upright levers, ready to open the ballast tanks for an inrush of sea water that will submerge the U.B. 77.

At the other side more men grasp large wheels, keeping their eyes on depth gages. Torpedoes weighing 2,000 lbs. Lie ready to be fired out of their tubes at the bow of the submarine. Officers in the control room handle their ejection by compressed air.

Ready and fire comes the command. A sudden jar shakes the U.B. 77 and two torpedoes slither out almost simultaneously; their propellers

spinning but leaving little of a whit trail as their set rudders hold them under water on their designated course toward the Tuscania.

More commands are given, "blow the tanks" and the underwater craft starts a running dive. At the portholes large chains of bubbles flash by; the sea water turns dark gray, deep blue, then black as the desired depth is secured. In a few minutes the dive had been made, then gradually leveling itself the submarine at a speed of 7.8 knots, the limit of its electric motors against the pressure of water, headed out to the open sea. Away from the danger it sure must face to stay in that locality. The officers who so intently watch their periscopes, look at time pieces, and listen with nerves still on edge.

Lieut. Captain Meyer relates: "With surprise and trembling at 4:50 P.M., February 5th in the West I noticed heavy clouds of smoke. Immediately the U.B. 77 was ordered swung around. We hurried up toward these and soon made out a large convoy that was steering in a southeasterly direction, toward the North Channel, evidently having taken the extreme north route across the Atlantic. Soon I was able to detect a huge sea going fleet.

At the head of the convoy was a medium sized steamer, presumably acting as a barrage breaker or mine sweeper (Baltic), following it a large white painted vessel with two smoke stacks, (Tuscania), behind this one a large cruiser with four smoke stacks, resembling the Drake class (Kanawha) and behind still six to eight medium steamers in keel line, (one back of another). The whole convoy being strongly guarded by destroyers.

I cruised above water back and forth and in front of the advancing transports in order to determine the course and the speed of the Tuscania; and also to work out a suitable method of attack. We then awaited the convoy in attack position, holding a northeasterly course close to Rathlin Island. The course of the convoy is 145 degrees, speed 12 knots. At 6:05 P.M. I made up my mind to attack. Visibility was poor, as now twilight had set in; I wished to make a water surface attack from the starboard side. Going in a course 60 degrees, our range abeam estimated 1,000 meters (1,093 yards).

There was constant danger we might underestimate the speed of the ships and be run down in their path as in the meanwhile the vessels in the rear and a few destroyers had set themselves out on the starboard side of the large liner, beside which they now rode a parallel course in a 'dwarline' (side by side). This formation surly made a U-Boat attack difficult. We were now with our submarine directly in front of those ships, set abreast of one another and the destroyers. I though we had been detected as we could easily be seen by them as there still was a good deal of light. I therefore dive at 6:25 P.M. and thereby our visibility was greatly made more difficult and I could perceive things only thorough the periscope. Our course was now 80 degrees - the convoy 140 degrees. I had taken a good look at the largest transport before submerging. My hand trembled as I move the sighting apparatus.

On account of darkness I could but with trouble find the Tuscania, upon which we had intentions. Our situation was somewhat uncomfortable as the oncoming ships and destroyers could easily run us down. The navigating warrant officer using the foremost periscope, is to observe the

approaching vessels on the port side, while I endeavor to pick up the liner (Tuscania) with the main periscope. I only succeed in doing so by using magnification (sighting mirror) and after searching for a long time.

Finally do I see gliding into the periscope an indistinct, befogged shadow; only until over this shadow just as indistinct a smoke stack make it appearance, do I recognize the sought for ship. Thereupon at 6:40 P.M., I fire No. 1 tube, which torpedo is aimed for just about the second funnel and immediately after the torpedo from No. 2 tube is released. They are G-7 torpedoes.

I had estimated a speed of 15 sea miles, the transport was making but 12 knots. As I had however somewhat drifted away from the spot the ship would have, so the torpedoes must hit midship.

At this moment a destroyer appears 150 meters (163 yards) away and heads for the submarine. We dive to 30 meters (98 feet), the crew and I listen in suspense. One minute and ten seconds later a very violent explosion is felt and told us we had hit the target. This would make the range 1,200 meters (1,312 yards). I consider that both torpedoes must have detonated."

On the Tuscania no M-V sets had register the approach of a submarine. We saw nothing of the lurking German U-Boat which, sighting our convoy, had stalked to shoot its missile of destruction. At 6:45 P.M. one of two fired torpedoes struck between the engine room and stoke hole on the starboard side. These compartments were immediately filled by water and steam, the crew there on watch being killed. The force of the explosion threw water and debris up as high as the lifeboats, hanging by their davits, damaging a few, enough to make them unfit for use.

At the time of being torpedoed, the Tuscania was immediately wrapped in darkness. Speech to us onboard was muffled for a time in fright. It felt like running into a sandbar, in addition to the roar of the explosion, the crashing of steel and timbers as also the racket of scattered breakables. In no uncertain terms were we appraised of what had happened. So we crowded to the deck.

Thus the Tuscania met her fatal blow, heeling over 8 to 10 degrees and swinging to starboard. This occurred seven miles north of Rathlin Island lighthouse, off the North coast of Ireland, in latitude 55 degrees 22 minutes North, longitude 6 degrees 13 minutes West.

The hatches were filled with soldiers adjusting lifebelts as they scrambled up to the forward deck. With overcoats on, it made quite a difficult task and some us fell down on the slanting concrete floor. The steps leading to the promenade deck were crowded with a slowly moving line. Others were clambering up ropes dangling near.

No bugle call had been sounded nor any warning of impending danger given. The submarine unperceived had maneuvered into position between our "ZA" column of ships and the outer starboard guard of destroyers and fired just as twilight began to shroud the sea in gloom. The other vessels put on full speed ahead to leave us to our fate. (A naval ruling rather than a desire). The U.S.S. Kanawha skirted our starboard, firing its aft gun.

Like a wounded bird of the flock, the Tuscania whistle incessantly shrieked its call of distress as if to give voice to its pain. Up into the sky, like two spurts of blood, climbed and quivered two red stars, submarine warning rocket signals.

No panic was apparent amongst the soldiers; they knew their stations from previous boat drill. Few words were spoken, all being intent upon the one object of securing their position in line of abandonment of the ship. There in the dusk they stood, counting off or repeating names, as they waited the launching of the life boats.

The night was clear, a slight wind blowing and visibility for about a mile. One line of auxiliary lights, like a diadem about the promenade deck were now visible, gradually meeting their reflection in the water as the ship sank. The stars in the wide firmament blinked sadly and the lighthouse on the treacherous high Scotland cliff many miles away beckoned us on, like a siren to destruction amongst its pounding breakers.

The English destroyer "Mosquito", Lieutenant T. B. Fellows in command, approached the Tuscania from the starboard side; on the port side H.M.S. "Grasshopper", Lieutenant John M. Smith in command, hove into view.

The lifeboats came scraping down the port side of the Tuscania laying to starboard. As they were filled with soldiers the waves battered them against the bilge of the steel liner. Oars were broken to absorb each shock of impact and pocket knives at times were used to cut the taught davit ropes; cracked and leaking some drifted away. One striking another lifeboat in its descent, crushing and plunging these men into a black obliterating sea. On the starboard side other difficulties were encountered in launching. The davits and the waves holding lifeboats out of reach. Soldiers lost their lives in trying to reach these by jumping overboard. The slow churning ship's propellers menaced each boat invariably drifting aft.

The destroyers now began picking up survivors, at times darting off short distances to prevent the submarine sighting them stationery. The Grasshopper, having rescued numbers up to her capacity limit, was obliged to leave. The Mosquito in a more dangerous position continued the rescue.

Alongside the Tuscania now deep in the water, H.M.S. Pigeon, Lieutenant K. E. Eddis in command, had ropes thrown to the deck and the remainder of the survivors (except for about seven), slid down to safety on these improvised lines that burned hands and muscles.

A few lifeboats were drifting to the Scotland coast, only to be broken up against the high cliffs that denied them a landing, the beating breakers taking their death toll here. Out in an open boat for four hours, a lifeboat with about fifty survivors was picked up 18 miles west of where the Tuscania sank by Skipper E. Neeve of the British Navy in command of the trawler "Gloria". From Ireland came the little fishing vessel "Carrie Roy" and picked up a lifeboat of survivors from eleven boats, who were taken to Larne, Ireland. The trawler "Walpole" from Scotland rescued others.

During this the German U.B. 77 in a course straight away on the starboard beam of the Tuscania for a distance of a few nautical miles and after an elapse of twenty minutes, quietly rises to the surface. At first, swinging her periscope about and perceiving the vessel it had hit, heeling to starboard and settling aft, comes up, its conning tower slightly above the water. Then its wireless intercepts our signal of distress signed "Tuscania" revealing its victim's identity.

Lieut. Captain W. Meyer further relates: "We waited, for a while the evil depth bomb racket. Nothing was felt nor happened probably because we were too far away. At 6:57 P.M. we could again come up and see what had occurred. The liner had two white masthead lanterns lit (auxiliary lights) and lay very much over to starboard, and astern deep in the water. It looked like a specter of a horse rearing its hind legs. The doomed ship was visible to us only because of the searchlights of the destroyers. It was like sitting in a motion picture theater, viewing a silent film drama, except that we could not see a single human soul. This was probably due to the fact that we were too far away and because the Tuscania's lifeboats were lowered on the port side, while we were on the starboard side.

Even stranger, we did not know the identity of our victim. The minutes seemed like days before we found out, when the Tuscania gave out frantic signals, (S.O.S. wireless), its name, gross tonnage and owner, Anchor Line, Glasgow. We suddenly realized that we had hit a much bigger vessel than we had first surmised. The position given by the radio signals from the Tuscania differed from our calculations by one half a degree North and one fourth a degree West. We put this down to the probability that the Tuscania officers were greatly excited. With the number of destroyers standing by, the position scarcely mattered anyhow.

The Tuscania's convoy apparently thought we had fled after the torpedoing, because not a single attempt was made to sink us. In order to hasten the sinking of the Tuscania, which according to its radio messages was not proceeding rapidly, we determined to loose a third torpedo at 7:15 P.M.

We dive to 11 meters (36 feet) in order to approach the ship submerged but it is already so dark that the situation cannot be ascertained and besides the sounds of destroyers propellers are heard. I maneuvered my submarine close around the Tuscania's port side. 7:40 P.M. we came to the surface to attack. At 7:49 P.M. fired No IV tube, a K-111 torpedo; it passes ahead of the Tuscania, at a speed of two knots was assumed and allowed for. As we immediately saw by the course it was taking that the torpedo was going to miss, for we thought the ship had not come to a complete stop. Immediately one of the destroyers started full steam in our direction as if it had sighted us and we dived like a duck.

At 8:34 P.M. when we again came to the surface a considerable distance away, we were able to see with glasses that many ships were still around the spot where the Tuscania had been. We charge the batteries; pump up the air bottles. Boats and signal lights are visible in vicinity of the ship. At 10:00 P.M. (2300 German Naval time, one hour ahead of U.S. Naval time) our submarine again approaches, but nothing more of the Tuscania can be seen. A number of destroyers with all lights screened are steaming about, also smaller craft. Morse signals are being used everywhere. There is nothing to be seen of any vessel in tow. Half an

hour after being struck the ship has ceased to send out wireless messages. I assume that she had foundered. During the night we cruised backwards and forwards to the southward of the Rhynus of Islay.

In view of the improvements to submarines since the World War, I believe two submarines working together could easily torpedo an entire convoy, including the escort, making a total of eight or ten ships. I say this in light of my experience with the Tuscania".

It was known to the British destroyers that the submarine had not vacated the vicinity, as both threw out heavy smoke screen. The Mosquito gave warning by a heliograph message, having seen the torpedo flash by the starboard bow line of the sinking Tuscania. The destroyer Pigeon now came up to assist in the rescue of the remaining soldiers aboard the liner as the other destroyers now filled to capacity were obliged to leave for Irish ports.

The Tuscania all this time settled to starboard, then straighten out, each side lower in the water. The abandonment had been completed at 8:40 P.M., and the liner sank an hour later, her stern first, the bow for but a few minutes protruding above the sea like a monument and wreathed by smoke and the churning water. In all 2,114 persons had been saved and over two hundred lost their lives.

A few hours later the destroyer Grasshopper, cutting through the waves, passed up the River Foyle and we landed upon the cobble stone wharf of Londonderry, Ireland. A number of British officers escorted us up to an old Irish fort, where we billeted with the Inniskillen Regiment. We were treated to a big bowl of warmth producing tea and then talked ourselves to sleep amongst the straw and woolen blankets on our stone barrack floor, just as dawn streaked the East in gray.

The following day February 6th, U.S. 77 continued to cruise in the northern part of the North Channel, between Rhynus of Islay and the Mull of Cantyre. On the 7th a British Admiralty dispatch from Poldhu was intercepted stating that the Tuscania was sunk.

Late that afternoon another convoy of thirteen ships was sighted and an attack attempted. However, a stormy sea and a dark night, making visibility in the North Channel difficult, prevented it and the convoy was lost. In this lot was the "Orduna" with 200 U. S. Nurses aboard, also the 107th Ammunition Train, 32nd Division.

On February 13th UB 77 leaves the North Channel and heads into the Sea of Hebrides on February 14th looking for stray victims and turning about between the Islands of South Uist and Rum on February 15th; she is well out, cruising for home. Circulating the Orkney Islands the 16th, she passes in sight of Fair Island on the 17th - February 18th into the North Sea. Meets on the 19th U.B.97 likewise returning, and on the 20th, having skirted the Danish Coast, arrives at Bremerhaven. Germany Feb. 21st. In all twenty three cruising days - with one transport sunk.

The German Admiralty on February 24th closed the Tuscania incident with the following communique: "Among the sunken tonnage was the British transport Tuscania, 14348 tons loaded with American troops. The Tuscania shortly before the entrance into the Irish Sea and despite a most

effective convoy guard, was cleverly shot out from among a large troop transport, at the head of which it was steaming"

Regarding the incidents relative to his rescue of survivors, Commander John M. Smith of the H.M.S. Grasshopper has this to relate: "When Tuscania was hit, we were ordered to close her and pick up survivors. We closed and as one destroyer was alongside we started taking men off the lifeboats and rafts."

Commander T. B. Fellowes of H.M.S. Mosquito writes: "After the Tuscania was torpedoed I was ordered to stand by her, and was proceeding to do so when I came across some men clinging to an up-turned boat, these men I got on board the Mosquito and while doing so an officer standing aft, reported that a torpedo had passed close under my stern. I therefore went ahead at high speed and dropped a depth charge in the position I calculate roughly that the torpedo had been fired from. I thought this might at least frighten off the submarine and I believe it may have done so as she gave no further trouble, but I fear the explosion of the depth charge caused some further alarm on board the Tuscania and it was thought she had been struck by another torpedo."

Albrecht Heilmann, helmsman aboard the U.B. 77 at the time, reports that this charge was felt by them and rolled the submarine. Further, Commander Fellowes relates: "I then took the Mosquito alongside the port side of the Tuscania and secured there, and started getting men across from the Tuscania's well deck on to my forecastle; some also came down boats falls and a few were lost by this as swell kept taking my ship off."

We remained alongside the Tuscania for between 20 to 25 minutes, by which time it was reported to me that all available space was occupied and I shoved off and proceeded to Lough Swilly, and Grasshopper and Pigeon in time took my place.

It was fortunate that the submarine did not again torpedo the Tuscania while the work of rescue was going on, or the loss of lives might have been severe."

John N. Jones, Petty Officer aboard H.M.S. Pigeon relates: "We received the alarm on board the Pigeon before the Tuscania was actually struck. A torpedo going under our ship could be heard in our lower mess deck plainly. Fortunately for us the torpedo was set at a greater depth than our maximum draft and so passed clear under u.

After that No. 2 torpedo struck the Tuscania, giving us on board the impression the attack was from our side of the convoy. We noticed immediately, however, that the explosion was on Tuscania's starboard side and concluded for the moment there was more than one submarine in the vicinity. We received signal to return to stricken ship and did so at full speed.

On our run back, we heard many cries for help. Our Captain (Commander Eddis) decided to lower our only sea boat, of which I was Coxwain. My orders were to search for men in the water and keep the Tuscania lifeboats as close together as possible. Many hours later I sighted the trawler "Elf King" and signaled her and in a short space of time had us all on board and returned with us to Larne, North Ireland."

E. Denman McNear, in relation to the last men to leave the Tuscania says: "The second destroyer leaving took all that were left, but our boat load, in which we were prepared to cast off. ONE man was left on the ship and he floated away on a raft (he had cut loose) when the ship went down, and was picked up.

The Tuscania began to sink faster and in a minute or two the little of her that was left above water had been submerged. I watch her go down, gently it seemed to me, without any explosion, buckling or breaking in tow, and as she went down a gentle glow was seen in the shape of a bowl over the spot where she sank. That must have been something from the engine room, which the water forced up through the smokestacks."

Signal Petty Officer William E. Brookes aboard the destroyer H.M.S. Harpy writes: "The Tuscania convoy was bound for Liverpool, and on the night in question we had entered the dangerous part known as the North Channel, intending according to orders to take the route North and East of the Isle of Man and so into Liverpool.

H.M.S. Harpy was leading the convoy and the lookouts were posted as usual, I myself being on the Bridge. NOTHING unusual was seen or heard on the H.M.S. Harpy until the torpedo struck the Tuscania. I then received orders to make the necessary signals for escorting destroyers to proceed as previous detailed; (they had already done so) after which we endeavored to keep the convoy together. I may here mention that the rescuing destroyers had all necessary orders to proceed with survivors.

Visual signalling was necessarily always cut down to a minimum during darkness. After proceeding a short time we found the convoy was scattered and one large "Shire" liner had gone on ahead. This ship was torpedoed the following day and abandoned after being beached. ORDERS were given for the route to be altered to West and South of the Isle of Man, but she apparently did not receive it and was lost on the East coast of the Isle of Man. I believe she was beached in Morecombe Bay, North of Liverpool by a crew from H.M.S. Beagle.

I have passed through the North Channel many times since always to remember that tragic night and to see on the Mull of Cantyre the last resting place of your gallant comrades. May they rest in peace."

Chief Officer R. W. Smart of the Tuscania, writes: "The reason the Transport Tuscania remained afloat so long was due to the strength and number of her bulkheads and the fact that all water tight doors were closed when the vessel entered the danger zone. I am sure if it had not been for the coolness and splendid behavior of all, the loss of life would have been much heavier."

Lieut. Captain Meyer writes: " That before the Tuscania the larger liner the Baltic had stood at the time was not apparent. I took the Baltic to be a medium sized steamer, that to all appearance was a mine sweeper before the transport. From afar the white painted Tuscania was revealed so much more distinct than the camouflaged gray of the Baltic. Naturally had this steamer appeared larger to me than the Tuscania I would have torpedoed it."

C. W. Nice writes: "I was on the U.S.S. Kanawha, directly behind the Tuscania. It was just a dull explosion, neither loud nor soft, -- More like a dull thud. After the explosion, our captain ordered full sped ahead and as we passed, the lowering of lifeboats was visible and men were in the water. The Kanawha passed the starboard of the Tuscania. It was while we were opposite you that one of our lookouts reported a sub between the two ships. After we had gone by some distance, the aft gun crews opened fire on a supposed sub."

Miss Flora Collins, a stewardess aboard the Tuscania says: "I think the poor boys behaved splendidly under the circumstances. You see they were not used to the ocean as we were."

Some of the burial accounts as published in Scotland newspapers read: Oban, Argylshire -- Many sad scenes have been witnessed in Islay, but no one can remember any tragedy of the sea which so deeply stirred the feeling of all as the internment of the brave young men from America, who lost their lives when coming to fight for us. The people of this district did all that was possible to render assistance in the sad work or reverently disposing of the remains and showing all honor to the United States. Plain coffins were made and a suitable piece of land was given for burial. Altogether 50 bodies came ashore in Lochindaal. Some were temporarily placed in the church at Porthaven, others housed at Port Charlotte and two at Bowmore.

Port Ellen -- The last week was one of mournful activity in this district. Civilians of all grades took part in searching for bodies on shore, rock and islets and aiding the survivors in burying the dead. The first internment took place at Killeyan in a wild, romantic spot, known locally as Portman Galon, and adjoining the Mull of Oa. A green grassy plain, well above the reach of the sea, was selected for the burying place. Here the spectator is surrounded by high precipitous hills, scalable only on one side by means of a narrow path. From the plain the sea is visible only in one direction southwest. The massive shoulder of the Mull on one hand and reef on ragged rocks on the other, form a channel through which race mountainous seas to break in foam and spray on the beach. Such was the spectacle viewed by the funeral party when on the 8th the remains of gallant men were reverently committed to earth.

THE DESTROYERS Mosquito and Pigeon were sold out of service in 1920; the Grasshopper (H17) in 1921.

THE MONUMENT to the Tuscania dead stands in their memory on the Scotland coast at Islay, about seven miles offshore, from where the transport was sunk. The inscription over the door reads:

ERECTED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

This monument is a "cairn" of stones in the form of a lighthouse. These cairns were formerly used as monuments in the Scottish Highlands to mark the resting place of a chieftain, or an important battlefield; the custom being for passers by to add a stone to the cairn before they went on their ways -- and the monument grew larger as time went on.

THE TUSCANIA was built in 1914 by Alex. Stepehn & Sons Co., at Glasgow, Scotland. She had two funnels and two masts.

Gross tonnage, 14,348. Tons net, 8,621 I.H.P 9,000.  
Dimensions, 549.3 (length) by 66.5 (depth) by 41.7 (breadth).  
Engines, Geared Turbines - Oil Fuel -- Speed 15 1/2 knots.  
Passenger accomodation, 271 saloon; 246 second class, 1900 third class.

First voyage, 1915. Left Glasgow February 6th and Liverpool February 7th for New York.

September 1915; on voyage Glasgow to New York - rescued 339 passengers and 70 members of crew of Greek steamer "Athinai" on fire in Atlantic.

September 1916; Brought Canadian troops from Halifax to Liverpool.

August 1917; Left New York for Liverpool via Halifax with first contingent of American troops carried by Anchor Line, namely 1,236 officers and men of the 16th Engineers Regiment of the U. S.

February 5, 1918; Torpedoed

U.B. 77 Saw 12 months service without receiving a scratch. The U.B. 77 was a class B, coastal cruiser type, ocean going craft. Built in Vulcan Yard, Hamburg, Germany. She was completed in 1917. Her displacement on the surface was 502 tons, submerged 723 tons. Horsepower - surface 1,060; submerged 1,000. Speed - surface 13.1 knots; submerged 7.8 knots. Extreme length 180 ft. 9 inches - extreme breadth 19 ft. 6 inches. Draught on surface 12 ft. 0 inches. Armament 1 - 4.1 or 22 pr. 1 M, 5 S.T. (19.7"). (Two guns). Seagoing complement 7 officers and 28 men. Surrendered by the terms of the Armistice, January 1, 1919 at Harwich, England. Sold for junk and broken up by Messrs. G. Cohen Sons & Co., London.

**POINT OF INFORMATION:** A selection of 18 pictures relative to the Tuscania incident - Ferro type 6 inch by 8 inch in size, at the price of 15 cents each may be had by addressing: Army Pictorial Service, Signal Corps, Room 3405 Munitions Building, Washington, D.C.