

Warren Johnson, SS THOMAS SCOTT

Warren Johnson is a sailor, friend, husband and father who proudly served in the U.S. Navy Armed Guard on SS THOMAS SCOTT (torpedoed and sunk on February 17, 1945, off Murmansk). He is an example of the fine sailors who not only served his country but continued to contribute to his community throughout his life.

Naval Armed Guard crew, SS THOMAS SCOTT, October 1944. Warren Johnson, second row third from left. He recovered these pictures from his locker before abandoning ship as she sank.



Armed Guard crew on deck of SS THOMAS SCOTT while underway. Warren Johnson middle row third from left.

Upon graduation from Rhinelander (Wisconsin) High School, Warren Johnson joined the Navy in June 1944. Seaman First Class Johnson served as a Navy gunner assigned to the Armed Guard Company B-1, crew number 2593.

During his service he made two Atlantic crossings. The first ship was the SS THOMAS SCOTT, a Liberty ship, which was torpedoed and sunk off the coast of North Russia (Kola Inlet 69.30N, 34.42E) on Saturday, February 17, 1945, in convoy RA-64. U-boat 968 attacked the SCOTT during a convoy run returning from Murmansk, Russia, in the Kola Inlet destined for Loch Ewe. Until now much of the historical detail came from the U-boat captain and logs.

The torpedo struck starboard at 12:00 noon in the #3 hold filled with sand ballast, which was fortunate because the Navy Armed Guard were eating lunch and slept only 20 feet away. Immediately the ship took a severe starboard list (25 degrees) and eventually split in half. All aboard the ship, including 42 merchant seamen, 27 Navy Armed Guard, and 40 Norwegian refugees survived the initial explosion and had to climb into four life boats that were then lowered into the freezing Arctic Ocean.

Warren and his crewmates were transported to a Russian destroyer ZHIVUCHIY (Ex USS FAIRFAX DD-93 a World War I four-stack lend lease destroyer transferred to England as HMS RICHMOND and later to the Russian Navy). She took the bow section in tow but later cut all lines as the bow sank at 1900 hours. Warren recalled seeing the ship's bell (ex HMS RICHMOND) while the destroyer was towing the bow. He also recalled a British seaman in the berthing compartment rack below him, probably from HMS LARK also sunk that day. ZHIVUCHIY along with Russian PT boats transported the crew to Murmansk for berthing until they could join another convoy to Scotland six weeks later. Warren arrived in Scotland, received three months' worth of mail and later shipped back to the Armed Guard Center in Brooklyn for a new issue of uniforms and reassignment.

Warren's later naval service was on the SS CHARLES SUMNER for another Atlantic crossing, SS WILLIAM H JACKSON, USS BAYFIELD AP-33, and USS CC BALLOU AP-157, assigned to Pacific magic carpet duty. He was discharged in May 1946 and married in August 1946. He later went to college and received an engineering degree under the GI Bill and raised four loving sons (David, Mark, Kelly and Andy) with his wife, Dorothy, in Wausau, Wisconsin, where he lives today.



Warren is a productive member of the community as a retired paper mill engineer. He is active in local clubs including the Wausau Elks Lodge #248, where he is a past Exalted Ruler. He is an avid Packers fan and golfer, who has scheduled a foursome for over 45 years.

More importantly, he is a friend to all that are fortunate to know him and he still enjoys a meal out with his friends.

"On the beach"
Jack Dempsey's 1945

