

John Yelvington Led Party That Saved Tanker

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A collision damaged tanker laden with high octane gasoline was saved in the middle of the Atlantic last March by a Naval repair crew that refused to accept defeat.

The Navy, telling the story Wednesday, identified the stricken ship as the Lone Jack. It and another merchant vessel, the Frontenac Victory, radioed for help after colliding. Both reported themselves in immediate danger of sinking.

Their appeal was intercepted by a westbound convoy 150 miles away. Despite heavy seas which had cut the convoy speed to five knots and increased the danger of enemy submarines, two destroyer escorts, the USS Hammann and the USS R. E. Peary, were sent to their assistance.

Waves Pour Through Hole

The two ships shoved off on their mercy mission at midnight. The damaged ships were sighted at daylight March 3. The Frontenac Victory had a thirty foot hole in her bow, but was not in immediate danger so long as her watertight compartments held.

The Lone Jack, however, was in bad shape, and steadily getting worse. A thirty foot hole in her side had opened her engine rooms to the ocean. Tons of water poured in with every wave, and she was without power. She was slowly sinking.

The destroyer escorts managed to come close enough to the stricken ship to rescue its crew without injury. The Peary was detailed to escort the Frontenac Victory to the nearest United States port, while the Hammann stayed alongside the Lone Jack.

Newton Man to Rescue

Throughout the night the sea tossed the crippled ship. Her chance of survival appeared slim, but Lieutenant John J. Yelvington of Newton, the Hammann's damage control officer, asked and received permission to board the Lone Jack with a party of volunteers.

Electrical equipment was taken aboard and life restored to an emergency generator. After hours of work, Lieutenant Yelvington reported, "We're making headway. We're pumping out more water than is pouring in."

Work continued all night. Finally, the salvage tugs Kiowa and Escape arrived, and at two knots speed, the journey to port began. Now the Lone Jack is back in operation.

Lieutenant Yelvington, a son of Judge and Mrs. Milo D. Yelvington, received the Navy and Marine Corps medal for his work as told recently in the Press.