

SHIPMATE OF KENNETH VARVIL TELLS OF DEATH

Describes Last Minutes A- board Ship During Fury Of Typhoon

3-29-145

Mr. and Mrs. Roscoe Varvil have received a letter from a shipmate of their son Kenneth E. Varvil, who was lost at sea during a typhoon that struck his boat in the far Pacific waters on December 18. The letter, written by Water Tender 2/c Joseph C. McCrane tells in detail of the terrible fury of the storm that sent the U. S. S. Monaghan to the bottom, taking young Varvil and most of the other members of her crew with her.

Another letter was also received from Admiral A. S. Carpender, commandant of the Ninth Naval District, which extended his sympathy to the bereaved family.

The letter from McCrane says that so far as known only six members of the crew of the Monaghan were saved and he sent the parents a list of these survivors in event they cared to communicate with them.

McCrane spoke in high tribute to the character and seamanship of young Varvil. His letter dated March 24, follows:

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Varvil:

As the senior survivor of the U. S. S. MONAGHAN, it is with deep regret and sorrow that I write you concerning the loss of your son, Kenneth Edgar Varvil, who, following the capsizing and sinking of that vessel of 18 December 1944, was listed as missing at sea. It is my painful duty to inform you that after careful review of all circumstances there can be no hope that he survived the disaster.

On the 18th of December the Monaghan was steaming at sea in a forward Pacific area in company with a large number of naval vessels, which included the unfortunate Spence and Hull. With little warning a vicious typhoon struck the group of vessels with terrific violence. Our Commanding Officer, Lt. Comdr. F. B. Garrett, Jr., USN, did everything he could to improve the vessel's situation but it was of no use; the storm was too much for our ship, as it was for the two other destroyers lost. Mountainous seas pounded the vessel as the wind rose to an amazing velocity of well over one hundred knots, as we later found out. Many ships, larger and sturdier than our vessel, were in serious trouble, too. The ship rolled violently under the punishment of the typhoon wind to angles of list over fifty degrees. It was all any of us could do to hang on to the ship's structure and pray for deliverance from the fury of the storm. Finally the ship was struck by winds near the core of the typhoon and we rolled over on our side. A few of us, who happened to be in the after part of the ship, felt it going over and ran out of our shelter only to be carried overboard by the heavy sea. Somehow we came across a life-raft torn loose by the raging sea and clung to it until we were picked up three days later. It was a horrible experience, and a miracle that any of us survived at all.

Very careful and extensive searches of all possible areas in which survivors might have been carried were made by surface vessels and aircraft in the days following the passing of the storm. There was no land of any description within several hundred miles, so it is quite impossible that any of the men, other than the six who were picked up, could have survived.

Ken was one of the most promising young men aboard our ship. He could be counted upon to execute all of his assigned duties with integrity and perseverance. In his relations with his shipmates he was always kind and cheerful. Ken's heart was as big as the world itself, and I know him to have aided his shipmates on several occasions when it was not all easy for him to do so. He left behind him a grand record of service and was a great credit to his home and to his country. We who survived considered him as one of the finest shipmates we could ever possibly have had and deeply grieve his passing.

It should be of some consolation for you to realize that your son lost his life while actively engaged in the service of his country, fighting a war against a vicious enemy of our nation. Those of us who were fortunate enough to come through the disaster, will go back again to serve our country to the best of our ability. Please **accept my sincerest sympathy** in your **great sorrow** and feel free to contact me if there is anything further I can do to help. Further inquiries will be received if addressed to me in care of Room 4625, Bureau of Naval Personnel, Navy Department, Washington (25), D. C.

Very sincerely,
Joseph C. McCrane
Water Tender second Class