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Combat Action in the North Atlantic: The USCGC Spencer vs. U-175 on 17 April 1943

Allied Convoy HX-233

By

Scott T. Price, Historian, U.S. Coast Guard

Coast Guard Combat Victory on (and under) the North Atlantic

On 17 April 1943, the U.S.C.G.C. Spencer, one of the Coast Guard's largest cutters of the time, was escorting Convoy HX-233 across the North Atlantic to the United Kingdom. While steaming ahead of the convoy, the cutter's sonarman detected the submerged German submarine U-175 as the submarine maneuvered to attack a large tanker within the convoy. Spencer immediately dropped depth charges on the target and their attack was perfectly timed and placed – the charges exploded all around the U-boat, damaging it severely and forcing the Germans to surface.

Spencer, her sister cutter Duane, and many of the merchant ships in the convoy then opened fire on the U-175 as soon as the submarine broke the ocean's surface. The U-boat's crew attempted to abandon their boat despite the heavy fire. The U-boat's commanding officer was killed in the initial hail of gunfire but ultimately 41 Germans got off and were rescued by Spencer and Duane safely. There were two combat photographers aboard the cutters, Jack January aboard Spencer and Bob Gates aboard Duane, and they captured the action on film, giving posterity a close-up view of the death of one of Hitler's U-boats (referred to by Allied sailors during the war as "hearses") during the height of the Battle of the Atlantic.

My thanks to the veteran crewmen of *Spencer*, *Duane*, *U-175* and Win Haskell for their assistance in identifying many of the individuals in the following photographs. Mr. Haskell, who served as a crewman on board the SS *G. Harrison Smith*, the attempted target of U-175's attack on the convoy, wrote a detailed history of U-175 and Convoy HX-233 entitled *Shadows on the Horizon – The Battle of Convoy HX-233* (London: Chatham Publishing, 1998).



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Official Caption: "THE COAST GUARD IS THE CONVOY'S BODY GUARD: It's guns manned and its decks laden with depth charges, a Coast Guard combat cutter helps to safeguard a long line of merchant ships (on the Horizon carrying supplies for the Battle of Germany. These Coast Guard fighters played a major role in breaking the Nazi submarine menace in 1942 and 1943. Now they continue to keep the ship lanes to Europe free of enemy intruders."

Date: Not listed (1943); Photo No.: 1624-34

Photographer: Bob Gates?

Source - NARA

Description: A view of *Spencer* taken from *CGC Duane*.



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Official Caption: "RIDE 'EM CONVOY: Guarded by Coast Guard cutters, destroyer escorts and frigates, another parade of troop transports and supply ships runs into stormy weather as it drives toward an Allied supply base somewhere in the Seven Seas. Coast Guard craft reach out into all seven as they keep unceasing watch over the vital charges."

Date: ?; Photo No.: 3321

Photographer: Unknown

Source – NARA



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Official Caption: ""COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Target of the Nazi U-Boat -- These ships in the convoy being shielded by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER steam past the warship just before the latter detects the underseas [sic] raider and swings into action. The U-Boat, endeavoring to break into the center of the convoy, was sunk."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the original photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1523

Photographer: Unknown

Source - NARA

Description: The *U-175* was actually targeting the tanker *S.S. G. Harrison Smith*. The Germans had already entered the targeting information on their torpedo data computer when the *Spencer* first attacked them, thereby saving the tanker.



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: After blasting a U-Boat from beneath the surface of the Atlantic, then battering it with deck guns until it was ready to sink, Commander Harold S. Berdine, right, commanding officer of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER, takes time out to talk over the action with Captain Paul Heineman, USN, escort commander."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1524

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: CAPT Heineman was the commanding officer of Escort Group A-3 that protected the convoy and he flew his flag from *Spencer*.



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Sailors aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER watch a K-Gun go into action following detection of a submarine below [the] surface. This is the opening round of a battle in which the sub is blown to the surface, where it is engaged by Coast Guardsmen protecting a large Atlantic convoy."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1515

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Coast Guardsmen on the deck of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER watch the explosion of a depth charge which blasted a Nazi U-Boat's hope of breaking into the center of a large convoy. The depth charge tossed from the 327-foot cutter blew the submarine to the surface, where it was engaged by Coast Guardsmen. Ships of the convoy may be seen in the background."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1517

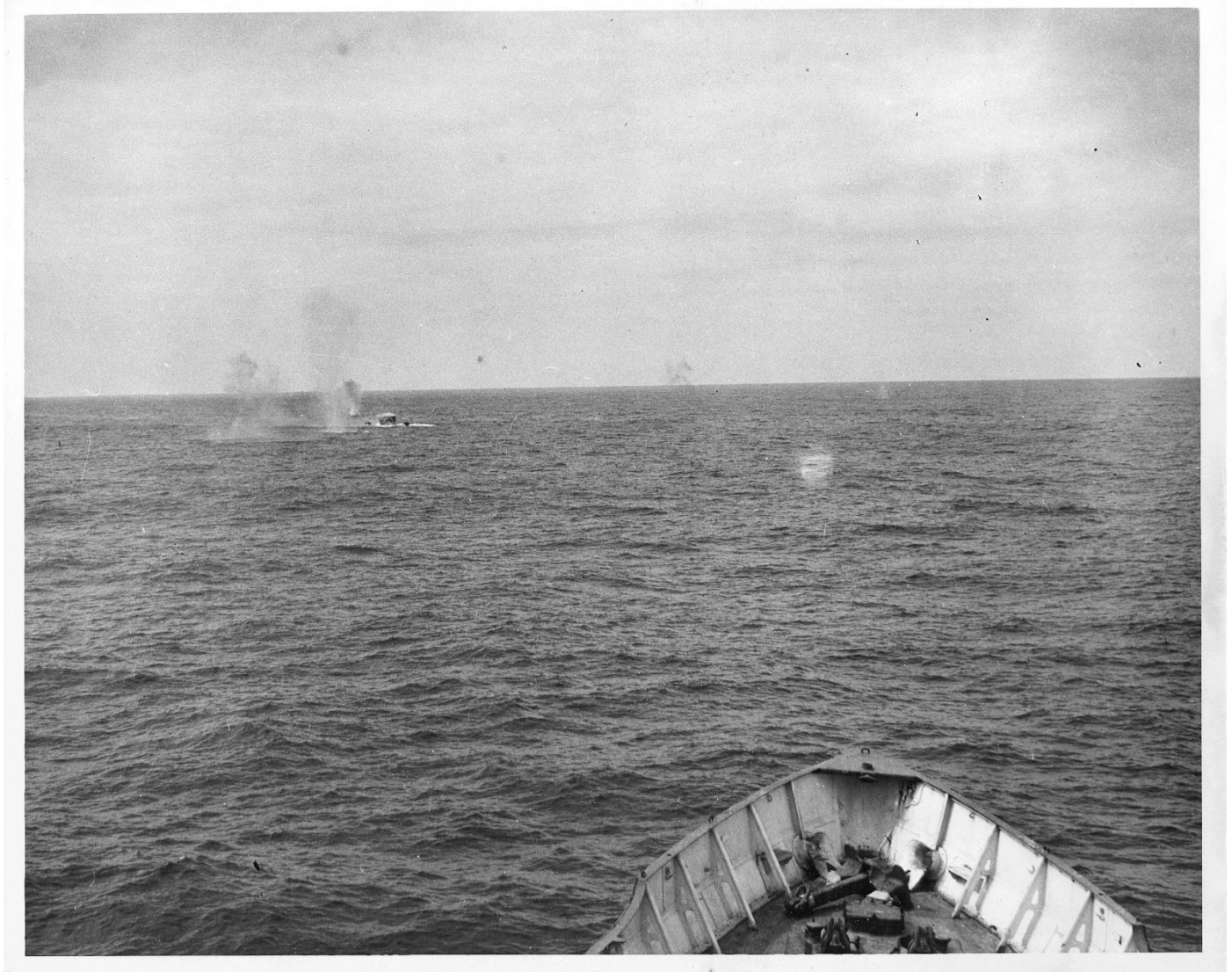
Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER opens fire on the Nazi U-Boat, lying dead ahead in relatively calm seas. The submarine was blown to the surface by the Coast Guard combat cutter's depth charges."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the original photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1630

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Heaved up from below by the force of a depth charge, the Nazi U-Boat breaks surface as the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER, guns ablaze, bears down on it, full speed ahead."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the original photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1513

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: Not available
Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: Not available
Photographer: ?
Source - NARA

Description: Scanned from a print made from a copy negative (original is in the National Archives).



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Official Caption: "OFF TO RESCUE THEIR BEATEN FOES: A pulling boat leaves the side of a Coast Guard combat cutter to rescue Nazi seamen struggling in the mid-Atlantic after their U-Boat had been blasted to the bottom by the cutter's depth charges. Two Coast Guard cutters brought 41 German survivors to a Scottish port."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1516

Photographer: Jack January

Description: The men in this pulling boat were in fact a trained boarding team led by LCDR John B. Oren (standing in the stern and wearing the OD helmet) and LT Ross Bullard (directly to Oren's left). With the assistance of the Royal Navy while in Londonderry they had practiced boarding a submarine at sea to capture an Enigma coding machine and related intelligence material. They were forced to take the pulling lifeboat when the *Spencer's* motor lifeboat was damaged by friendly fire.



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Official Caption: "NAZI SUBMARINE SUNK BY THE FAMED CUTTER SPENCER: Effect of the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER'S fire are visible in this closeup shot of the U-Boat, taken as the battle raged. The Nazi standing by the stanchion amidships disappeared a moment after this picture was taken by a Coast Guard photographer. The U-Boat had been trying to sneak into the center of the convoy."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1512

Photographer: Jack January?

Description: The "Nazi" mentioned in the above caption was probably in fact a member of the Coast Guard boarding team--one of the first Americans to board an enemy man-of-war underway at sea since the War of 1812.



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Official Caption: Not available
Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: Not available
Photographer: Jack January?
Source - NARA

Description: Scanned from a print made from a copy negative (original is in the National Archives).



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Coast Guardsmen from the cutter SPENCER picking up survivors from the Nazi U-Boat just before it made its final dive. Meanwhile the convoy steamed on."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1514

Photographer: Jack January?

Source - NARA



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1549

Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: Last sight of the doomed German U-Boat that the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER'S crew see is the bow disappearing below the North Atlantic. The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter DUANE is shown at the right. The DUANE screened her sister ship, the SPENCER, from possible attack by another U-Boat during the battle."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1549

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: More than a score of Nazis, who a short time before had been ready to deny life to others, struggle in the water to preserve their own lives following sinking of their U-Boat by the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER. They were picked up by the SPENCER, one of whose gunners is shown in the right foreground, and the U.S. Coast Guard Cutter DUANE, shown in the distance. The Nazi submarine was sunk as it tried to break into the center of a convoy shepherded by the Coast Guard cutters."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Note on the back of the photo notes: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1597

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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1931

Official Caption: "HE COULD AFFORD TO SACRIFICE HIS LIFE -- CAN YOU AFFORD TO BUY ANOTHER WAR BOND?: His hands clenched in death's agony, this young Coast Guardsman falls mortally wounded at his battle station. Tender, swift hands of his shipmates are helpless. This boy died that his Coast Guard combat cutter might win a battle on the long road to final victory. His sacrifice will not have been in vain, if our freedom is preserved. Support the Sixth War Bond Drive by investing today in that final victory."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1931; Photographer: Jack January

Source – NARA

Description: RM 3/c Julius Petrella was killed by shrapnel from a boat davit that had been hit by friendly fire, probably from one of the guns manned by the Naval Armed Guard on board nearby merchant vessels. Ironically shrapnel from that hit to the davit also holed the *Spencer's* powered monomoy lifeboat. As such the boarding team had to launch the pulling lifeboat and that, of course, slowed their attempt to board the U-boat, which probably saved the lives of at least two of the boarding team members.

Spencer crewman in the dark coat administering aid to RM 3/c Petrella is Pharmacist's Mate 1/c Daniel Jack Horton.



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: As the convoy sails on in the background, Coast Guardsmen Julius T. Petrella, 21, Radioman, of Brooklyn, N.Y., is buried in the North Atlantic after being killed in action. His ship, the Coast Guard Combat Cutter SPENCER, contacted a U-Boat, forced it to the surface with depth charges, then shelled it with her deck guns. Commander Harold S. Berdine of the Coast Guard, commanding officer of the cutter, reads the ceremony, as Captain Paul R. Heineman, right center foreground, commodore of the convoy, and all crew stand at attention."

Date: 18 April 1943?; Photo No.: 1543; Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: RM 3/c Petrella was the only Coast Guardsmen killed in the battle but another 24 were wounded. All were aboard *Spencer*.



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARD CUTTER SINKS SUB: A U.S. Coast Guardsman, wounded in one of the outstanding dramatic engagements of submarine warfare in this global conflict, Robert J. Croak, motor machinist's mate first class. . .Arlington, Mass., lies in his bunk aboard the Coast Guard Cutter SPENCER. His left hand and arm painfully injured, is supported by a wire frame and pins inserted through the fingers. Coast Guardsmen Croak sustained his injuries during the ensuing battle when the Cutter SPENCER crippled a Nazi undersea raider with gunfire after the sub had been forced to the surface by a depth charge."

Date: 17 April 1943? (Notation on the back of the photo reads: "Not to be released for publication or announced to the public before 10:00 A.M. Eastern War-Time, June 2nd."); Photo No.: 1525;

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: *Spencer* suffered 25 casualties, including one KIA, RM 3/c Julius T. Petrella. Nine of the wounded suffered ruptured eardrums.



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Official Caption: "NAZI SEEKS AID: One of the Germans to escape, when a Coast Guard convoy cutter sank their submarine in the Atlantic, this Nazi lifts hands and voice in a plea for help."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1567;

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: This sailor was identified as Obersteurmann Helmut Klotzch. Some of the U-175's crew later joked that while still aboard the U-boat just prior to abandoning it Klotzch ordered the men not to call out for assistance once they entered the water. Klotzch was rescued by *Spencer*.



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Official Caption: "German submarine men swim in the Atlantic. U.S. Coast Guardsmen fished them from the water, after sinking their sub."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Photo cleared by censors and released on 19 July 1943)

Photo No.: 1565; Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: Two surviving officers of the U-175, Fähnrich zur See Walter Wepplemann (left); Leutnant zur See Paul Möller (right) awaiting rescue by *Spencer*. Note their inflated escape vests.



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1600

Official Caption: "OUT OF THE SEA AND OUT OF THE WAR: Frightened Nazis, who a short time before had attempted to ambush an Allied convoy in the North Atlantic, clamber up the life nets of a Coast Guard combat cutter after the sinking of their U-boat by another Coast Guard combat cutter. The fight knocked out of them, they mumbled, 'Wasserbombs terrible, terrible.' The 'wasserbombd' [sic] were the depth charges that blew the sub to the surface, shattered its steel and sent it into the last dive to the ocean floor."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1600; Photographer: Bob Gates

Source - NARA

Description: The last two crewman off the U-175, Matrosenobergefreiter Dieter Wolf (left) and Mechanikergefreiter Peter Wanamacher (right), climb aboard the *Duane* using a cargo net.



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Official Caption: "CLAMBERING INTO CAPTIVITY: Nearly an hour after he slipped through the sinking U-boat's escape hatch, the jaws of this Nazi are still clamped on his artificial lung. He is one of 22 prisoners taken aboard a Coast Guard combat cutter after a second Coast Guard cutter had sunk the German sea marauder in the mid-Atlantic action. The Coast Guard craft were protecting a convoy and intercepted the U-boat as it attempted to slip within torpedo range of the Allied merchantmen."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1568; Photographer: Bob Gates

Source - NARA

Description: U-175 crewman Matrosenobergefreiter Dieter Wolf, one of the last two men off the U-boat before it sank, climbs aboard *Duane* to safety.



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1578

Official Caption: "U.S. Coast Guardsmen help a Nazi U-Boat man along the deck of the Coast Guard cutter, after fishing him out of the sea. The German in one of a number who managed to escape from their submarine, sunk by Coast Guard depth charges and guns when it attempted to attack a convoy in the Atlantic. The German still wears around his neck the 'lung' used in going through the submarine's escape hatch."

Date: 17 April 1943 (photo cleared by censors and released on 19 July 1943); Photo No.: 1578

Photographer: Bob Gates

Source - NARA

Description: On board the *Duane*, Coast Guardsmen assist U-175 crewman Matrosenobergefreiter Dieter Wolf. The Coast Guardsman on the left is Petty Officer 2/c George Chioran, Jr.



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1591

Official Caption: "Nazis who escaped from a U-Boat sunk by a U.S. Coast Guard convoy cutter are helped aboard the cutter by Coast Guardsmen. The German in the bow of the boat was wounded. Coast Guardsmen sank the submarine in the Atlantic when it tried to attack the convoy."

Date: 17 April 1943 (Photo was cleared by censors and released on 19 July 1943)

Photo No.: 1591

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "OUT OF THE BRINY INTO CAPTIVITY: Coast Guardsmen aboard a combat cutter protecting an Atlantic convoy help peel the dripping garments from Nazi seamen picked up from the sea after their U-boat had been depth charged and sunk. The Coast Guard cutter spotted the submarine attempting to slink close to the convoy and dropped the deadly pattern of depth charges. Forty-one Nazis were captured by two Coast Guard cutters."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1564

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "COAST GUARDSMAN TREATS WOUNDED NAZI PRISONER: Coast Guardsman William Crumbaugh, pharmacist's mate first class, of Des Moines, Is., wipes blood from the face of the chief engineer of a Nazi U-boat which was sunk by a Coast Guard combat cutter's precisely placed depth charges. The engineer was wounded by shrapnel in a sharp mid-Atlantic engagement that spelled doom for the enemy undersea raider. He was picked up with 21 other German seamen by a second Coast Guard cutter."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1575; Photographer: Bob Gates

Source - NARA

Description: The Chief Engineer of the U-175 and ranking POW aboard *Duane*, Oberleutnant (Ing.) Leopold Nowroth, is treated by *Duane* crewman PhM1c William Crumbaugh, USCGR. Nowroth ensured the U-boat's sinking by opening most of the submarine's flood valves before he abandoned ship.



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1581

Official Caption: "'CALM DOWN FRITZ, YOU'RE OUT OF THE WAR': Fished out of the Atlantic after a Coast Guard combat cutter had scored a kill over a Nazi submarine with the depth charges, this frightened German seaman is led to the cutter's quarterdeck by two Coast Guardsmen. Forty-one Germans were picked up by two Coast Guard cutters during this mid-ocean action."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1581; Photographer: Bob Gates

Source - NARA

Description: Maschinengefreiter Otto Herzke is escorted by two *Duane* crewman. Note his escape equipment and uniform.



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Official Caption: "CHASTENED BY BOMBS AND A DEEP SEA DUCKING: The arrogance of the 'master race' knocked out of them, Nazi seamen eagerly grasp mugs of coffee offered them by Coast Guardsmen aboard the combat cutter which sank their submarine in a mid-Atlantic engagement. The half drowned Germans were picked up, given warm blankets, cigarettes and coffee, as they learned the American way of treating prisoners of war."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1572

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "AFTER THEIR LAST RAID: Hauled frightened and shivering from the mid-Atlantic, crewmen from a sunken Nazi submarine huddle in warm blankets on the quarterdeck of a Coast Guard combat cutter. Given cigarettes by their Coast Guard captors, they saw brighter days ahead. The war was over as far as they were concerned."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1590

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "HIS UNDERSEA RAIDER UNDER THE SEA FOR KEEPS: Foiled as he sought to maneuver his U-boat within torpedo range of an Allied Atlantic convoy, this German officer still presents a belligerent front as two Coast Guardsmen lead him to confinement in the ward room of the Coast Guard cutter which sank his sub.

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1592; Photographer: ?
Source - NARA

Description: Left to right: SM1c Norman E. Praet (from Bronx, NY); Fähnrich (Ing.) Karl Völker (from St. Leon-Rot); & RdM3c William E. Bugbee (from Roscoe, CA).



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Official Caption: "WHERE IS THAT NAZI ARROGANCE?: An officer looks over Nazi prisoners after they had been dragged from the mid-Atlantic during a combat in which a Coast Guard cutter sank their U-boat with depth charges. Warmed in blankets and given cigarettes, the Germans sampled American treatment of war prisoners. Their natural belligerence was knocked out by the crash of depth charges, the mid-ocean ducking and the fair treatment by the Coast Guardsmen."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1594

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA



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1584

Official Caption: "HIS WAR CAREER IS 'WASHED UP': This German U-Boat officer, hauled in from the sea and wrapped in blankets, is marked for a prison camp 'somewhere in Britain.' His submarine blasted to the bottom of the North Atlantic is [sic] battle with a Coast Guard combat cutter, the Nazi appears to be struggling to prevent a smile from breaking though a mask of haughtiness. He is being escorted to the ward room."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1584; Photographer: Jack January
Source - NARA

Description: Left to right: SN1c Anthony Volonino (from Lowell, MA); Leutnant zur See Paul Möller (in blanket); WT2c King George (from Zalma, MO); & ENS Victor Belluci (from Mansfield, MA). Möller was the highest ranking POW aboard *Spencer*.



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Official Caption: "NAZI 'SUPERMAN' SULKS AS U-BOAT CAREER ENDS: Two captive Nazis huddle in wool blankets after being hauled in from the sea by Coast Guardsmen aboard a combat cutter convoying Allied merchant ships across the Atlantic. Another Coast Guard cutter sank their U-boat with depth charges. The Nazi at the right seems to be frothing at the mouth after his deep sea ducking [sic]. Hot coffee clamed them down and warmed them up."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1571; Photographer: Bob Gates
Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "WHEN A CIGARETTE HITS THE SPOT: Floundering in the North Atlantic after their U-boat's raiding of the Allied shipping lanes had been ended abruptly by depth charges from a Coast Guard combat cutter, these German seamen were picked up by the cutter's crew, bundled in blankets and treated to cigarettes, which they hadn't tasted in years, helped knock the fight out of these erst-while warriors of the 'master race.'"

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1582; Photographer: Jack January
Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*: Back row, left to right: Maschinenmaat Hermann Küffner (smoking); unknown; Funkmaat Hermann Kohler (facing camera) and Maschinist Helmut Schlosser behind Kohler. Laying down in front of them is Mechanikersmaat Herbert Brunken.



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1589

Official Caption: "NO MORE RAIDS FOR THESE U-BOAT CREWMEN: These deflated German seamen will make no more forays on the North Atlantic ship lanes. Lucky to slide out of the escape hatch as their sub was shattered and sunk by depth charges from a Coast Guard combat cutter, 41 of the Nazis were fished out of the sea to become prisoners of war on two Coast Guard cutters."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1589

Photographer: Jack January

Source – NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*: Right to left: Funkobergefreiter Rudolf March; Matrosenobergefreiter Ewald Urbanek; Matrosengefreiter Jean Bamberg; Fähnrich (Ing.) Karl Völker; Maschinenobergefreiter Werner Bickel (with head turned to his right in front of Völker).



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Official Caption: "COFFEE FOR CAPTURED U-BOAT CREW: Rescued from the deep by Coast Guardsmen aboard the combat cutter that blasted their U-boat to the bottom, these Nazi seamen huddle in blankets, drag on good American cigarettes and eye a pot of hot coffee hungrily. Coast Guardsman John Tumas, radio man third class, of Boston, Mass., pours coffee for the shivering survivors."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1570

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*.



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1603

Official Caption: "CORNEB BEEF BREAKS GERMAN ARROGANCE: German prisoners from a sunken U-boat in the North Atlantic find the chow on a Coast Guard combat cutter to their liking. Their bitter arrogance, evident immediately after the capture, disappeared in a hurry and gave way to broad smiles as mess attendants spread a dinner of corn beef and cabbage on the table. It was their first meal aboard the cutter and the best they had eaten in weeks."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1603

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*; Back row facing the camera, left to right: Maschinenmaat Erwin Geimeir; Mechanikersmaat Herbert Brunken; Maschinengefreiter Gustav Brückmann, & Maschinenobergefreiter Walter Schroeder.



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1586

Official Caption: "AMERICAN CHOW RESTORES U-BOAT SURVIVORS: Corn beef and cabbage, served aboard the Coast Guard combat cutter which sank their U-boat in the mid-Atlantic, seems to restore the spirits of this group of Nazi seamen. They were picked up from the sea by Coast Guardsmen. After donning dry American clothes, they downed plenty of hot American food."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1586

Photographer: Jack January

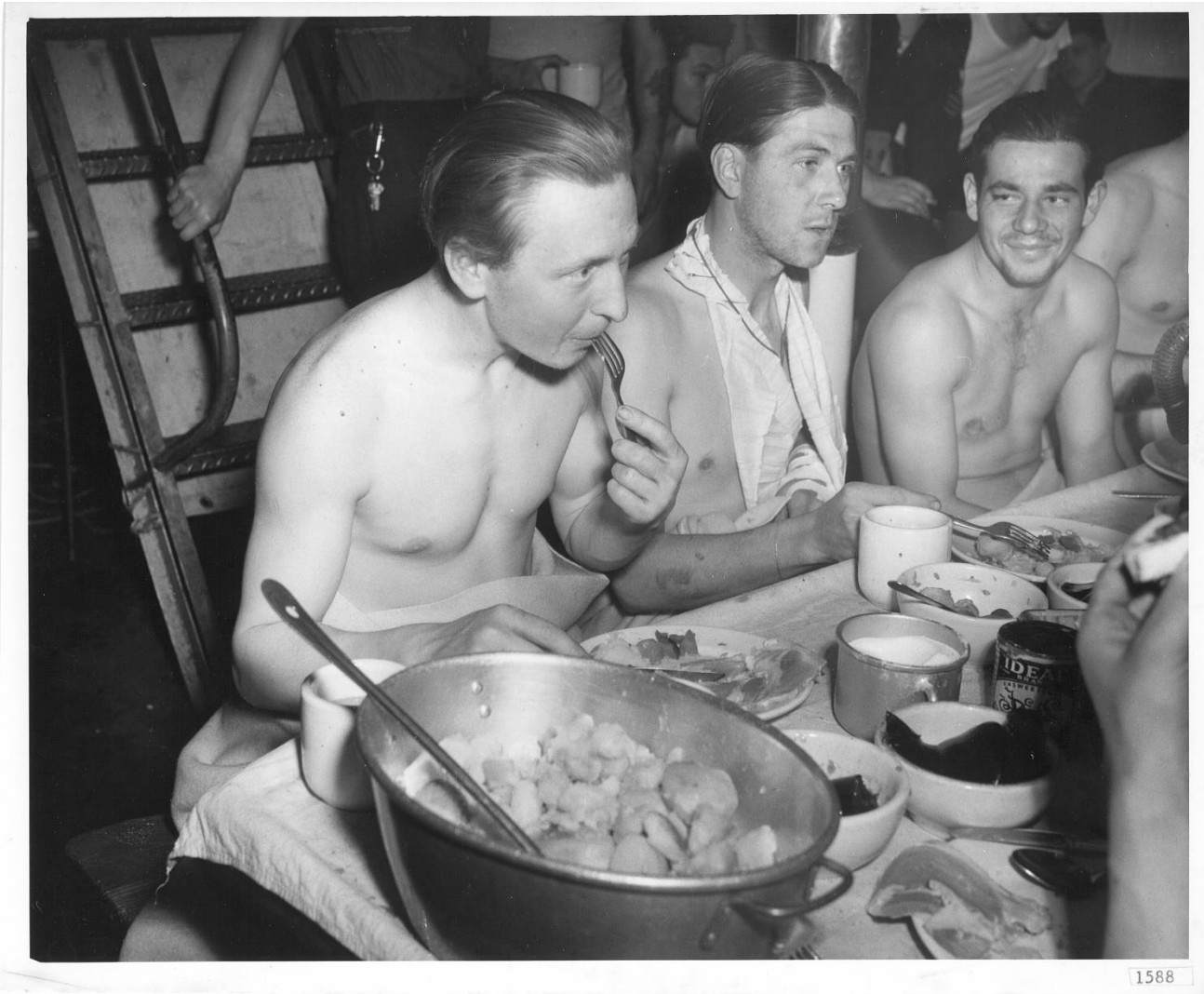
Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*.



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Official Caption: "NAZI PRISONERS FARE WELL ON COAST GUARD CUTTER: Earlier that day these German seamen were at their stations aboard a U-boat which was sneaking toward an Allied convoy in the mid-Atlantic. A Coast Guard combat cutter spotted the marauder, plastered it with depth charges and sent it diving to sea bottom. Picked up by Coast Guardsmen, the 41 survivors sat down to a dinner of corn beef and cabbage."

Date: 17 April 1943; Photo No.: 1588

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*; Left to right: Maschinenobergefreiter Werner Bickel; Maschinenmaat Hermann Küffner; & Matrosenobergefreiter Ewald Urbanek.



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Official Caption: "MAKE YOURSELVES AT HOME, NAZIS!": Magazines and cigars are passed out to Nazi prisoners aboard a Coast Guard combat cutter after a stirring battle in the North Atlantic sent their U-Boat to the bottom about a year ago. The Coast Guardsmen fished their enemies out of the ocean, fed them, clothed them, and told them to relax."

Date: ?; Photo No.: 3474

Photographer: ?

Source - NARA



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Official Caption: "U-BOAT CREW DUNKED RIGHT OUT OF THE WAR: Members of a German submarine crew appear to take their capture by Coast Guard cuttermen philosophically. Their U-boat badly mauled and sunk in a sharp North Atlantic sea battle, they know that the war is over as far as they are concerned. They were picked up struggling against death after their craft was depth-charged to the bottom."

Date: ?; Photo No.: 1599

Photographer: Jack January

Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*; Left to right: Maschinenobergefreiter Walther Schroeder; Mechanikersmaat Herbert Brunken; Matrosenobergefreiter Ewald Urbanek; Funkobergefreiter Rudolf March; Maschinenobergefreiter Werner Bickel; Maschinengefreiter Gustav Brückmann; & Mechanikerobergefreiter Josef Rosenkranz. Aboard *Spencer*; note the POWs are shackled. *Spencer's* Master-at-Arms stated that the POWs were shackled the day *Spencer* arrived at Scotland.



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Official Caption: "CAPTURED GERMANS: Their submarine was sunk by a U.S. Coast Guard convoy cutter, but these Germans smile, after they have been given hot coffee and dry clothing. The Coast Guard cutter sank the U-Boat with depth charges and gun fire when it attempted to attack a convoy in the Atlantic."

Date: ?; Photo No.: 1601

Photographer: ?

Source - NARA

Description: Aboard *Spencer*; Left to right: Maschinenmaat Herman Küffner; Maschinenmaat Werner Kahmann; Maschinenmaat Erwin Geimeier; Maschinist Helmut Schlosser; Funkmaat Herman Kohler; Fähnrich zur See Walter Wepplemann; & Matrosenobergefreiter Max Klinger.



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Official Caption: Not available
Date: ?; Photo No.: Not available
Photographer: ?
Source - NARA

Description: Scanned from a print made from a copy negative (original is in the National Archives). Aboard *Spencer*; note that the POWs are shackled.



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Official Caption: "From two Coast Guard combat cutters docked in the background, a group of German prisoners are marched along the waterfront of an Allied port. They were picked up from the North Atlantic waters after their U-boats had been depth-charged and sunk. Their fighting days ended, the prisoners are under guard of British Marines after delivery by Coast Guard captors."

Date: 20 April 1943; Photo No.: 1595

Photographer: Unknown

Source - NARA

Description: Prisoners from *Duane* are transferred to British Army authorities in Scotland. After interrogation by the British they made their way to POW camps in the U.S.



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CGC *Spencer*/U-175 file, Coast Guard Historian's Office.

Michael G. Walling. *Bloodstained Seas: The U.S. Coast Guard in the Battle of the Atlantic, 1941-1944*. International Marine/McGraw-Hill, 2004.

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