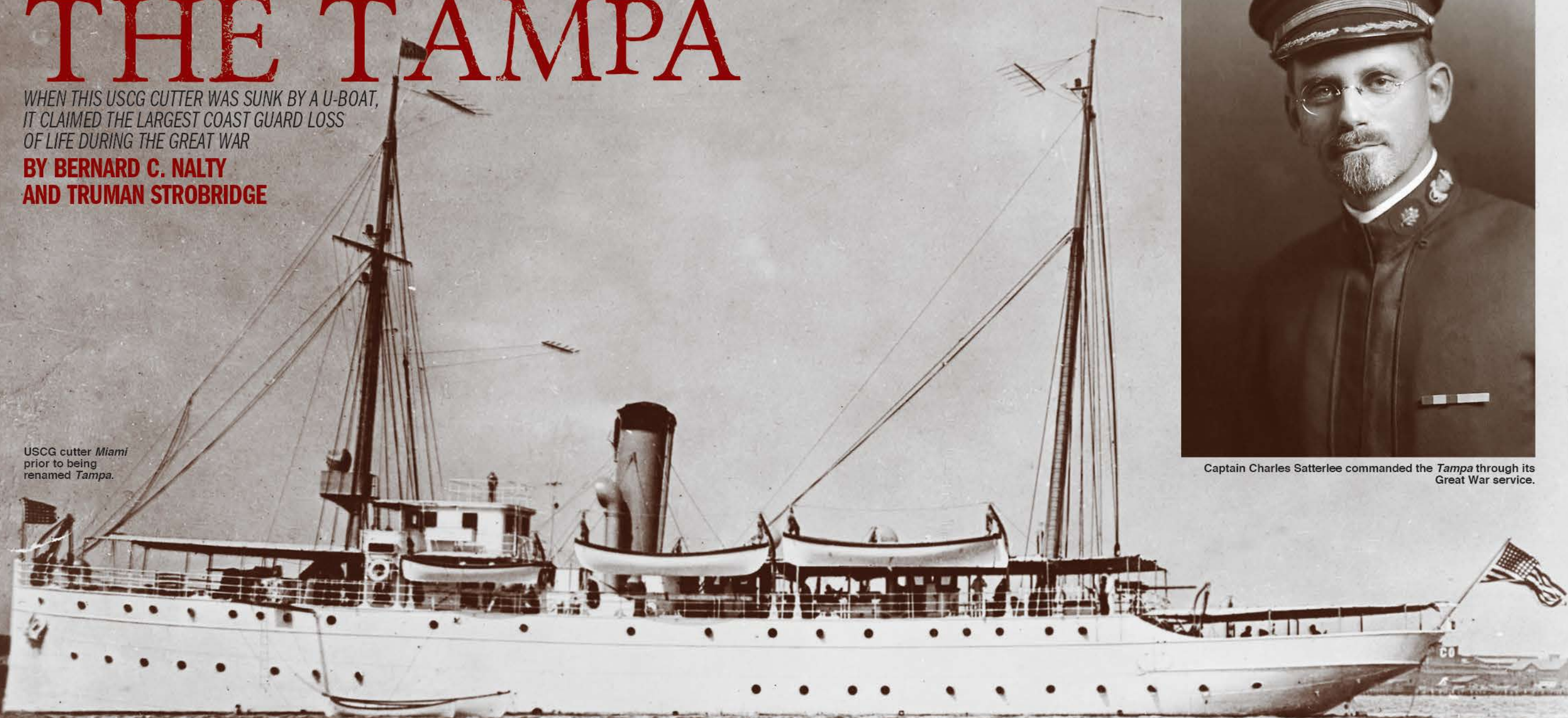# LOSS OF THE TAMPA

WHEN THIS USCG CUTTER WAS SUNK BY A U-BOAT, IT CLAIMED THE LARGEST COAST GUARD LOSS OF LIFE DURING THE GREAT WAR

BY BERNARD C. NALTY AND TRUMAN STROBRIDGE

USCG cutter *Miami* prior to being renamed *Tampa*.

Captain Charles Satterlee commanded the *Tampa* through its Great War service.

The Great War was raging in February 1916 when the four-year-old US Coast Guard Cutter *Miami* received a new name. She became the USCGC *Tampa* and began a tragically brief association with that Florida city. For two years the crew of the *Tampa* participated in the local winter carnival and annual South Florida Fair. Then, on 6 April 1917, the United States declared war on Germany and her allies and *Tampa* abandoned peacetime routine to fight enemy submarines in the Atlantic.

When *Tampa* steamed off to war, 24 of the 111 Coast Guard officers and men on board called the city their home. Back in February 1912, Miss Bernes Richardson had christened her *Miami* and the 1181-ton revenue cutter had slid down the ways at Newport News, Virginia. Built at a cost of $250,000, the ship was 190-feet long with a beam of 32.5 feet. Power came from a triple-expansion steam powerplant that produced 1300-hp, giving a top speed of 13 knots. As she was undergoing sea trials off Hampton Roads, the British liner *Titanic* hit an iceberg and sank with the loss of 1513 lives. The USA joined an international ice patrol organized to prevent a repetition of the tragedy and in 1915 *Miami* took part. The following year, as the *Tampa*, she returned to the North Atlantic to guard against drifting ice.

With the coming of war, the ice patrol was quickly forgotten and the *Tampa* came under the control of the US Navy. While still at anchor in Tampa harbor, the cutter struck her first blow — providing men for the boarding party that seized the steamer *Borneo*, tied up nearby. That ship flew the flag of Austria-Hungary, an ally of Germany. On 10 April 1917, the day following this capture, the *Tampa* steamed to Key West, her home port until 30 July when she departed to Boston to be fitted out for combat. In September, after the installation of four 3-in/50-cal weapons, she sailed for her new wartime base of Gibraltar.

Under the command of Capt. Charles Satterlee, USCG, the *Tampa* made her first combat foray on 4 November, serving as an escort for a convoy of boats from Gibraltar to Pembroke Dock in Wales. This was the first of 18 convoys, totaling some 350 ships, that the cutter helped shepherd through the perilous waters between Gibraltar and the British Isles.

That first patrol was uneventful, but on the return voyage, while escorting southbound merchantmen, a German U-Boat fired upon the steamer *Suzanne Marie*. The