

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

MVI

14 MAR 1956

(PILGRIM BELLE - C-1 Bd)

Commandant's Action

on

Marine Board of Investigation; grounding of SS PILGRIM BELLE,
Spectacle Island, President Roads, Massachusetts, 22 June 1955

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 C.F.R. Part 136, the record of the Marine Board of Investigation convened to investigate subject casualty, together with its Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Recommendations, has been reviewed.

2. The PILGRIM BELLE, an excursion passenger steam vessel of 420 g.t., built in 1888, on 22 June 1955 departed from Boston for Nantasket Beach with 272 passengers on board. The weather was fair but hazy, with visibility about three-quarters mile. The radar after check was found unreliable and not used. Shortly after departure, thick fog was encountered, and the vessel proceeded at slow speed with visibility practically zero. At 1102, after the navigating personnel had failed to sight two channel buoys, the vessel struck a rock off the north end of Spectacle Island, opening three compartments to the sea. The vessel was immediately backed off, maneuvered, and grounded on a mud bank in the bight of the island, where the lower part of the vessel filled with water to the level of existing tides. There were no lives lost or injuries sustained as a result of this casualty.

REMARKS

3. The Board recommended that the Merchant Marine Safety Council examine the desirability of radio communications on inland passenger vessels with the possibility of making the use of this equipment mandatory. In this connection, there are now two bills before Congress, H.R. 7536 and H.R. 7789, for the purpose of amending the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, so as to require passenger vessels navigated in the open sea or on any tidewater within the jurisdiction of the United States adjacent or contiguous to the open sea to be equipped with an efficient radiotelephone installation in operating condition. Since any consideration of the subject could only culminate in recommendations for legislation and as such proposed legislation is now before Congress, further consideration by the Council is therefore unnecessary.

4. Subject to the foregoing Remarks, the Findings of Fact, Conclusions and Recommendations of the Marine Board of Investigation convened to investigate subject casualty are approved.

(signed) [REDACTED]

A. C. RICHMOND

Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant

REPORT OF
MARINE BOARD OF INVESTIGATION

SS PILGRIM BELLE
Grounding - 22 June 1955

FINDING OF FACT

1. The SS PILGRIM BELLE (Ex CITY OF WASHINGTON), O.N. 126493, is a steam screw vessel of 420 gross tons, 166 net tons; 191.8' x 44.4' x 9.2'; built in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1888; iron hull, wooden superstructure; owned by Wilson Excursion Lines, Inc., foot of 4th Street, Wilmington, Delaware; powered by two gun bore type oil fired marine type locomotive boilers, triple expansion engine of 1000 HP turning about 124 RPM at full speed. She was last inspected at Philadelphia, Penn., on 21 May, 1955 and was certificated for carriage of 1911 persons, including passengers and crew, on "Rivers."

2. That on 27 May, 1955 the PILGRIM BELLE arrived at Boston from Wilmington, Del., and on 28 May, 1955 made her first run in the Boston - Nantasket Beach Service, operated by Wilson Excursion Lines of Massachusetts, Rowe's Wharf, Boston, Mass.

3. That the freeboard of the vessel when floating at a draft of 7' forward and 10.5" aft, "light condition", was determined by the Board as follows:

(a) 3'-5" Amidships

(b) 7'-1" Forward

(c) 4'-3 $\frac{1}{2}$ " Aft

4. That the Board determined the areas of the various decks and their respective heights above the top of the keel to be as follows:

(a) Main Deck 5500 sq. ft. 10'-6"

(b) Dance Deck 6055 sq. ft. 18'-6"

(c) Observation Deck 4703 sq. ft. 25'-10"

(d) Hurricane Deck 2739 sq. ft. 33'-10"

5. That on 22 June, 1955 PILGRIM BELLE loaded 272 passengers, the bulk of whom were children of school age, and left the Rowe's Wharf landing on Atlantic Avenue, Boston, at 1043, draft 7' fwd. and 10' aft, bound for Nantasket Beach in the town of Hull, Mass.

6. That the weather in the vicinity of Rowe's Wharf and at the time of departure from Rowe's Wharf was hazy; gentle SE breeze; smooth sea; no precipitation; visibility approximately 3/4 of a mile.

7. That the normal route of PILGRIM BELLE followed courses along the line of the black buoys marking the Southerly side of the main ship channel, the ship passing the buoys close aboard and that the reasons given for running so close to the edge of the channel were:

- (a) To keep well to her own right in compliance with Article 25, Inland Rules.
- (b) The greater certainty of good departure from, and pick up of, aids to navigation.
- (c) Comparatively light traffic liable to be encountered there, especially meeting situations.
- (d) The shallow draft of the vessel does not require the greater depth found nearer the channel axis.

8. That the pilothouse of the PILGRIM BELLE was manned as follows:

- (a) [REDACTED], as master at the con.
- (b) [REDACTED], Helmsman, "Standby pilot and alternate master"
- (c) [REDACTED], Quartermaster.

[REDACTED] was in direct and sole control of the navigation of the vessel and [REDACTED], while a pilot and alternate master himself, was acting solely as helmsman in the instant case.

9. That a fore deck lookout was posted because of the limited visibility and consisted of:

- (a) [REDACTED], Inland Mate
- (b) [REDACTED], Watchman

10. That the engine room watch consisted of:

- (a) [REDACTED], Engineer in charge
(alternate chief engineer)
- (b) [REDACTED], Fireman
- (c) [REDACTED], Oiler

11. That the vessel was equipped with a radar for navigational purposes; that it was in operation at the time of the casualty and for a considerable prior period; that while the visibility was still satisfactory it had been checked and the picture found to have been poor and unreliable and was, therefore, disregarded and not used thereafter.

12. That the compass of PILGRIM BELLE was new and had been very recently adjusted and that the deviation was nil.

13. That the run of PILGRIM BELLE was uneventful till she was abreast of Castle Island, about 2 miles from Rowe's Wharf and about 1 mile above Spectacle Island, when thick fog was encountered.

14. Witnesses and the log establishes that PILGRIM BELLE, proceeding under a full speed signal, passed the channel buoys at the following times:

- (a) #11 10.46
- (b) #7 10.50
- (c) #3 10.58

The Board, using these times as obtained from the testimony and the log and the distances between the buoys as charted, computed the following speeds:

From #11 to #7	- 0.73 miles in 4 minutes	- 10.9 kns.
" 7 "	3 1.25 "	" 8 " - 9.63 "
" 11 "	3 1.98 "	" 12 " - 9.9 "
" 3 to grounding	- 0.56 miles in 4 m	- 8.4 "

15. Witnesses and the log establishes that at 1058, the vessel was at #3 buoy between 1 and 2 ship lengths off, and a course of SE $3/4$ E mag. was set. The engine room was signalled for slow speed at this time and the vessel continued on this course enveloped in a dense fog with visibility practically zero.

16. That the channel course between Buoy #3 and Buoy #1 is SE x E mag. and that the course set by the master of PILGRIM BELLE was intended to pass close enough to Buoy #1 for that buoy to have been seen.

17. Witnesses establish that neither #1A nor #1 buoy was sighted and that at 1102, the PILGRIM BELLE was felt to strike hard at a point off Spectacle Island which was later ascertained by witnesses to have been a rock on the beach off the North end of Spectacle Island in approximate Lat. 42-19-43 N, Long. 70-59-25 W.

18. That the time of striking at 1102 was approximately $3\frac{1}{2}$ hours after low water at Deer Island, and that tidal current chart, "Coast and Geodetic Survey, Serial No. 504", shows that the set and drift of the tidal current on the course of PILGRIM BELLE would have been approximately West at 0.8 kn., intersecting the course of PILGRIM BELLE at an angle of approximately 30° , intending to carry the vessel to her right on her compass course.

19. That the point on the beach of Spectacle Island struck by PILGRIM BELLE bears approximately SE $3/4$ S, 1140 yards (0.56 miles) from the vessel's departure point off #3 buoy, and that this represents the course and distance made good by the vessel.

20. That comparison of the compass course and the course made good produces a difference of some 22 degrees; and if caused by a current: a drift of approximately 360 yards in 4 minutes corresponding to a current rate of 2.6 kms. against the charted rate of 0.8 kn.

21. That after PILGRIM BELLE struck, the engine was run astern for upwards of one minute and the ship backed off and away from the scene of grounding into deeper water and was thereafter maneuvered by engine and helm for about 4 minutes around the Northwestern end of Spectacle Island and into a bight on the West side of the Northerly end where with diminished speed she was delivered fast aground and upright into the mud bank extending off the beach.

22. That immediately after PILGRIM BELLE struck, a superficial examination of the lower interior of the vessel by the mate and engine room personnel immediately disclosed water being made rapidly in the fireroom, and a very short time after rising water was discovered in the galley compartment immediately forward of the fireroom.

23. That the engineer on watch, [REDACTED], felt the shock of striking and reported to the bridge that the fireroom was filling fast.

24. That the steam siphon connected to the fireroom bilge was put in operation and apparently worked; that in rapid succession, the engine room bilge pump already in service was speeded up, the sanitary and fire pumps were started and put on the engine room bilge.

25. That the water was observed by engine room personnel to have continued to rise very rapidly in the fireroom, the siphon having no noticeable effect on the rate; that the fires were secured as soon as it was determined that the rising water could not be checked; that engine order signals from the bridge were received and executed in the engine room; and that the pumps continued to operate at a decelerating rate as the steam pressure dropped.

26. That the sliding watertight door between the fireroom and the engine room, normally open, was closed before the water in the fireroom had reached to the sill; that the water was seen to enter the engine room from the fireroom through this door after it was closed; that an abnormal quantity of water was observed to accumulate in the engine room bilge; and that the watch engineer opined that had steam pressure been maintained, the pumps could have controlled the water in the engine room.

27. That the engine room personnel remained in the engine room until the dropping steam pressure made ineffective any further effort on their part and until the vessel was beached, whereupon they abandoned its confines.

28. That the watertight hinged doors in the two bulkheads immediately abaft the engine room were either already closed when the vessel struck, or were closed immediately thereafter.

29. That the master of PILGRIM BELLE made his decision to beach the vessel within a minute of the time of striking, while still backing away from the scene of striking, and as soon as he received advice on the location and rate of incoming water, and before he was aware of any certainty of the vessel's sinking.

30. That the tide was at approximately 1/2 stage when PILGRIM BELLE was beached at 1102, and that she failed to refloat with the rising water.

31. That the PILGRIM BELLE has a sharp rise of floor producing a "V" bottom inclined approximately 30° to the plane of the base line and so that she would be stable only when buoyant or supported on the sides as well as keel.

32. That at approximately 1300 PILGRIM BELLE abruptly assumed the list of approximately 18° to starboard and remained in that position until refloated during salvage operations.

33. That as soon as practicable, PILGRIM BELLE sounded her steam whistle as a distress signal and when the loss of steam made the whistle ineffective, the ship's bell was sounded.

34. That [REDACTED] Plant Superintendent of De Matteo Disposal Company, located on Spectacle Island, the first person to see PILGRIM BELLE after striking, heard her whistle and saw her coming in for the beach, and assuming she was in distress, phoned the facts to the Harbor Master (Boston Police Department) at 1120.

35. That the Tug PROSPECT in command of [REDACTED], lying at the wharf of the Disposal Company on Spectacle Island and close by the scene of the beaching, also saw the beached PILGRIM BELLE, and leaving the wharf, went to her assistance with an offer to remove the passengers on a lighter. This offer was declined by the master of PILGRIM BELLE, who expected the momentary arrival of tugs.

36. That the Harbor Master, LT. [REDACTED], upon receiving word from Mr. [REDACTED] at 1120, immediately made contact with two police boats on patrol and then relayed the information as follows:

- (a) Search & Rescue, U.S. Coast Guard, Boston, at 1121
- (b) Boston Towboat Company, Boston, at 1121
- (c) Wilson Lines, Boston, at 1122

37. That the Police boat CROWLEY was lying at the Army Pier on Deer Island about 2 miles from PILGRIM BELLE, and Police boat PIERCE was on patrol in the upper harbor about $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles from PILGRIM BELLE when the Harbor Master made radio contact with them and both vessels immediately departed for the scene of beaching.

38. That Mr. [REDACTED], dispatcher of Boston Towboat Company on Lewis Wharf, logged the alerted call from the Harbor Master at 1120 and immediately contacted the Tugs HERCULES and JUNO, which were standing by for a steamer docking assignment and lying in the main ship channel off Buoy #2, about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from PILGRIM BELLE, and the Tug ORION, also standing by for a steamer docking assignment and underway in the vicinity of Nixes Mate, about 2 miles from PILGRIM BELLE; that all three vessels, somewhat fog-bound, upon receipt of the news immediately maneuvered toward the scene of PILGRIM BELLE.

39. That at about 1125, Search & Rescue, Boston, notified the office of the Captain of the Port of the plight of PILGRIM BELLE. Port Security patrol boats were dispatched by the Captain of the Port as follows:

- (a) 1130 CG 40456 and CG 40417 underway in President Roads about 1 to 2 miles from PILGRIM BELLE.
- (b) 1155 CG 40457 and CG 40473 moored at Base, Boston, about 4 miles from PILGRIM BELLE.
- (c) 1215 CG 40393 moored at Base, Boston, about 4 miles from PILGRIM BELLE.

40. That Boston Lifeboat Station at 1140, 22 June 1955, received a phone call concerning PILGRIM BELLE from Search & Rescue and at 1145, CG 386369 was dispatched from Base, Boston, about 4 miles from PILGRIM BELLE.

41. That Pt. Allerton Lifeboat Station about 5 miles from PILGRIM BELLE was called by Search & Rescue, Boston, at 1130 and CG 40495 departed immediately for the scene. Later, upon advice from Search & Rescue, CG 36526 and CG 253016 departed for PILGRIM BELLE.

42. That after the initial alert occasioned by Mr. [REDACTED] call to the Harbor Master, numerous exchanges were made by telephone and radio-phone between parties and units mentioned in paragraphs 36 to 41, advising each other of the progress of events.

43. That the fog hampered the navigation of the rescue vessels, slowing progress toward the scene, but did not prevent the final contact which was made with the aid of bell signals and the sound of voices on PILGRIM BELLE.

44. That CG 40458, Tugs HERCULES and ORION, Police boats PIERCE and CROWLEY arrived on the scene more or less simultaneously at about 1140 and stood in cautiously toward the beached PILGRIM BELLE.

45. That Tugs HERCULES went alongside the port quarter of PILGRIM BELLE at about 1155; Tug ORION went alongside HERCULES; Police boat CROWLEY alongside ORION; Police boat PIERCE alongside CROWLEY in that order; and that between 1203 and 1215 all the PILGRIM BELLE's passengers were transferred to these 4 vessels, passing from vessel to vessel, and loading as follows:

(a) HERCULES	74
(b) ORION	71
(c) CROWLEY	101
(d) PIERCE	<u>26</u>
Total	272

46. That HERCULES and ORION landed their complement at Wilson Lines, Rowe's Wharf, and PIERCE and CROWLEY landed theirs at the Harbor Master's Station, Commercial Street, Boston.

47. That there was no panic or unwarranted excitement among the passengers or crew during any stage of the casualty, and no person injured or even wetted as a result of the casualty.

48. That the other vessels mentioned as having been dispatched to the scene arrived in irregular intervals shortly after and within reasonable time from departure and stood by without active participation in the removal of the passengers.

49. That at 1215, Boston Lifeboat Station CG 38636 removed eleven crew members, who were not needed on board the PILGRIM BELLE and landed them at Rowe's Wharf, Boston, at 1350.

50. That PILGRIM BELLE was aground and upright with the main (lowest) deck entirely clear of the water during the transfer of the passengers.

51. That when PILGRIM BELLE listed sharply to starboard, attending Coast Guard craft removed an undetermined number of the remaining crew members and returned them aboard when it was determined that there was no further danger to personnel from this source.

52. That initial efforts by the crew to refloat the vessel were more or less unorganized or experimental in nature and included the attempt to use 2 pumps supplied by De Matteo Disposal Company at about 1230; and that at 1320, City of Boston fireboats arrived on the scene and stood by in the event their pumps or fire control equipment was needed. These efforts were abandoned when PILGRIM BELLE assumed the list.

53. That after the passengers and some of the crew had been removed, the balance of the crew of PILGRIM BELLE, including the master, deck crew, and other key personnel, upon being mustered, elected to remain on board to facilitate salvage of the vessel.

54. That at high water at about 1347, the PILGRIM BELLE lay inert in the mud listing at about 18° with the main deck under water for nearly its full length; the second deck (dance deck) about 50% under-water; a small portion of the third deck awash on the starboard quarter; and the fourth deck (hurricane deck) entirely out of water. The interior of the hull was completely flooded.

55. That Marine Inspector, Commander W. C. Mahoney, was detailed by OCGM, Boston, to conduct a preliminary investigation into the casualty and to make a materiel inspection; and that he boarded PILGRIM BELLE beached on Spectacle Island at about 1358 and departed at 1435, 22 June, 1955 after having ascertained the elements of the casualty and withdrawn the certificate of inspection.

56. That various Coast Guard craft, at least one boat at a time, as directed by Coast Guard, Search & Rescue, Boston, maintained a continuous standby watch on the immediate scene as a precaution against complications affecting the safety of personnel until the vessel was eventually refloated and towed to dry dock in Boston.

57. That the strategic use of ground tackle, several portable high capacity pumps, plugs in the damaged portion of the shell from both interior and exterior sides, services of a diver, and attendant tugs and lighter resulted in floating PILGRIM BELLE at about 1335 on 23 June, 1955.

58. That at 0500, 24 June, 1955 PILGRIM BELLE left the scene of her beaching and proceeded in tow to the Bethlehem Steel Ship Repair Yard in East Boston, where dry-docking was completed at 0947, 24 June, 1955.

59. That on 24 June, 1955 Marine Inspector, Commander W. C. Mahoney reported damage to the hull of PILGRIM BELLE, resulting from grounding as follows:

(a) AREA No. 1

A strake starboard Damaged for a length of approximately 25 feet extending aft from a point approximately 48 feet abaft stem. Plating scarred and set in - numerous fractures and rents providing an aggregate open area upwards of 100 sq. in. approximately.

B strake starboard Damaged for approximately 43 feet extending aft from a point approximately 48 feet abaft stem. Plating scarred and set in - numerous fractures and rents providing an aggregate open area of upwards of 100 sq. in. approximately.

The damage in Area No. 1 involves openings torn in shell in way of 2nd bulkhead (between fireroom and galley compartments). This bulkhead is buckled and the watertight integrity of both compartments has been lost. The entry of water into each of these compartments would be beyond the capacity of ship's pumps to control.

(b) AREA No. 2

Starboard strake starboard Damaged over an area of approximately 16 inches square at a point approximately 40 feet forward of stern post. Plate is deeply indented and fractured so as to provide a small opening into the crew quarters compartment (between 5th and 6th bulkheads). The leak into the crew quarters compartments might be controlled by the ship's pumps.

60. That the local press reported at length on this casualty and that a wide spread interest in the case was expressed by the general public.

61. That, in general, press editorials and legislators were critical of the law and regulations which permitted a vessel like PILGRIM BELLE to operate without benefit of radio communication.

62. That the existing regulations do not require a means of radio communication in the equipment of PILGRIM BELLE; and that neither PILGRIM BELLE nor any other vessel operated in the Nantasket Beach service was ever so equipped.

CONCLUSIONS

For the purpose of analysis, this investigation is divided by the Board into two phases, as follows:

FIRST, the navigation of PILGRIM BELLE incident to, and until, the initial accidental grounding.

SECOND, the immediate consequences of the casualty to PILGRIM BELLE, its passengers, and its crew, and the events incidental to her salvage after the initial grounding.

FIRST PHASE - Navigation of Vessel

1. The CAUSE of the initial grounding of PILGRIM BELLE was accidental and was due to erroneous and negligent navigation while encumbered by fog. The FAULT lies with the Master, [REDACTED], who was in active charge of her navigation before and at the time of the casualty.
2. There is no evidence of the failure of propulsion, controls, or other materiel, and there was no direct contributory negligence evident by personnel other than the master.
3. It appears that the course of Boston Harbor main ship channel axis outbound between Buoy #3 and Buoy #1 is SE x E mag., and that this course if continued "brings up" on Long Island about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles distant from Buoy #3, which necessitates a timely and substantial change in course to the left if a vessel were to avoid grounding there. It also appears that the clearance on Spectacle Island afforded by this course depends largely on the position of a vessel relative to the middle of the channel when departure from #3 buoy is taken: Starting from a point close aboard the #3 buoy, there is little or no margin of safety; while starting from a mid channel position, there is ample, if not substantial, clearance.
4. It was the practice of PILGRIM BELLE, starting from a point near Buoy #3, to steer a course of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ E to a point near #1 buoy during this stage of tide. In the instant case, the course of SE $\frac{1}{4}$ E mag. from the departure point of PILGRIM BELLE, about 96 yards abeam of #3 buoy, intersects the #1 buoy. The PILGRIM BELLE set a course of SE $\frac{3}{4}$ E mag. which if made good would have brought the vessel about 90 yards abeam of #1 buoy. The change of $\frac{1}{2}$ point from the standard course was intended as an additional marginal safety measure.

5. With visibility practically zero, the safety of the vessel on this course of SE $3/4$ E is necessarily predicated upon the following factors:

- (a) A correct determination of the departure point at #3 buoy.
- (b) The accuracy of the compass.
- (c) The diligence of the helmsman in maintaining this course.
- (d) A correct evaluation of the effect of wind and tidal current.
- (e) A correct estimation of applicable speed.
- (f) An accurate accounting of time.
- (g) A change of course to the left or a stoppage of the ship on or before the earliest time the vessel could arrive at Buoy #1, if that buoy was not sighted.

6. The evidence indicates the PILGRIM BELLE made good a course of SE $3/4$ S mag. from #3 buoy to the point of striking on Spectacle Island, averaging a speed of 8.4 km. for an elapsed 4 minutes enroute.

7. A tracking of the vessel using the speed so established, places PILGRIM BELLE abeam of #1 buoy 3 minutes after departure from #3 buoy, so that the vessel was in imminent danger of grounding from 11.01 on.

8. The Board cannot reconcile the evidence of the factors of time/course/speed as contained in statements of witnesses and verified by log book entries, with the phenomena produced, without recognition of careless procedure in the establishment, recording, and evaluation of these factors. There is a very definite probability that the course actually steered was SE $3\frac{1}{4}$ S (made good) and not SE $3\frac{1}{4}$ E as ordered by the master. The similarity of course names could easily promote such an error despite the wide angular difference. The compass was in view of the helmsman alone, and an error by him could go unnoticed by all concerned even after the fact of grounding. The Board can come to no other logical conclusion.

9. Hypothetically, the effect of the erroneous course of PILGRIM BELLE did not guarantee her grounding. It merely increased the imminence of risk and accentuated the need for application of the fundamental safeguards.

10. The Board is of the opinion that the master relied primarily upon past experience and guessed at the factors of time and speed instead of utilizing the means of determining them, and after passing Buoy #3 relied entirely on his ability to pick up Buoy #1A or Buoy #1, or both, and not having paid the speed and time elements their due, was unaware that he had passed #1 buoy, and consequently continued his course into Spectacle Island under the impression that he was safe for the time being. The Board considers that this action of over-running the #1 buoy at the indicated speed and without a use of the lead, contains the elements of culpable negligence.

11. The Board recognizes the limited soundness of adherence to tried and proven courses and times and of certain departures from academic practices by expert pilots, and has no adverse criticism of the course or intentions of the master of PILGRIM BELLE; but holds that any navigator who disregards the elementary precepts of recognized procedure in piloting as a means to an end, does so through a familiarity which breeds contempt, and that he incurs the responsibility of showing that his action was justified by circumstances, and that the end justified the means. In this case, the end was near-disaster and there is no justification.

ACTION TAKEN

12. The theory of an error in course was kept in hypothetical status by the Board for lack of concrete evidence. [REDACTED] was charged with negligence under the provisions of RS 4450, as amended, specifying:

- (a) Failure to go at a moderate speed in Boston Harbor with due regard to existing circumstances of fog within the meaning of Article 16, Inland Rules.
- (b) Allowing his vessel to continue on a course standing into danger after he was overdue at an aid to navigation, to wit: #1 main ship channel buoy, Boston Harbor, and subsequently ground on shoals extending off the beach of Spectacle Island.
- (c) Neglecting to take soundings as he approached dangerous shoals after other reliable means of determining his position had been eliminated by fog.

13. In a hearing continued intermittently over a period extending from 18 July to 26 August, 1955 before an examiner, the first specification alleging immoderate speed in a fog was found proven and the two specifications alleging overrunning and failure to use the lead, not proven. The charge of negligence was found proved. The examiner issued an order suspending [REDACTED] license for a period of one month, to be effective only upon conviction of a violation occurring within a probationary period of twelve months.

SECOND PHASE - Rescue and Salvage

1. The decision of the master to beach PILGRIM BELLE as soon as a possibility of the vessel sinking appeared was a sound one. Under the circumstances, in the instant case, which involved a flooding of the machinery space and a probability of the loss of propulsive power, no delay could be tolerated.
2. The manner in which PILGRIM BELLE was maneuvered from the point of accidental grounding to the point of beaching, handicapped by the lack of visibility and a sharp and continuous reduction of applicable power, is most commendable.
3. The discovery of the plight of PILGRIM BELLE, the ensuing dissemination of information, the alerting and dispatch of rescue vessels, indicates the general readiness of the maritime interests in the port of Boston, and an adherence to the highest traditions of the common interest.
4. The action of the rescue and relief vessels in finding PILGRIM BELLE and their removal of the passengers was most prompt and efficient.
5. While the Board has no adverse criticism on this phase of the incident, including the operations accomplishing the recovery of PILGRIM BELLE and her placement in dry dock, it is significantly noted that the loss of visibility occasioned by fog was a complication which under other circumstances might have promoted a major disaster, and that the radio-telephone, in the instant case, was the key to the dispatch with which the situation was met. PILGRIM BELLE, alone, among the various craft involved was without this means of communication.
6. While the regulations contain no requirements for any kind of radio communication equipment on inland vessels, it appears that most commercial and fishing craft and many pleasure craft have been equipped with radio-telephones in late years, and this has apparently given rise to a popular fallacy that radio-telephones are a legal requirement on board vessels in general. This fallacy appears to be at the bottom of the wide spread editorial indignation of newspapers and legislators.
7. Under the circumstances, no action was taken by the Board on this phase of the casualty.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8. That the Merchant Marine Safety Council examine at length the desirability of radio communications on inland vessels in the light of the comparatively cheap and efficient radio-telephones currently in use, with the possibility of making the use of this equipment mandatory on certain vessels.

SUMMARY CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The casualty to PILGRIM BELLE in grounding on Spectacle Island was not an extraordinary one. It can be categorized as resulting from an operational risk erroneously and negligently calculated during foggy weather, the negligence not being of a gross nature.
2. The damage to the shell of PILGRIM BELLE resulted from grounding on a rocky beach. The damage opened three compartments to the sea. The resulting leakage into one of these compartments was negligible being controllable by the ship's pumps. The entry of water into the other two compartments, adjacent to each other, was in such volume as to constitute a complete loss of their buoyancy. The loss of buoyancy of these two compartments assured the sinking of the vessel. A loss of life and injury to persons was averted by selective beaching of the vessel.
3. The salvage of PILGRIM BELLE and the rescue of her passengers and crew were well carried out and according to well conceived plan. All persons and organizations, including the master, participating in the operations are to be commended.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That this case be closed.

(signed) [REDACTED]
ALEXANDER G. MOBERG, Commander, U. S. Coast Guard
Chairman

(signed) [REDACTED]
WILLIAM C. MAHONEY, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard
Member

(signed) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], Lieutenant, U.S. Coast Guard
Member and Recorder

The Board then, at 1200, 9 September 1955, adjourned to await the action of the convening authority.

(signed) [REDACTED]
ALEXANDER G. MOBERG, Commander, U.S. Coast Guard
Chairman

(signed) [REDACTED]
[REDACTED], Lieutenant, U.S. Coast Guard
Member and Recorder