

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO:
COMMANDANT
U. S. COAST GUARD
HEADQUARTERS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.



MVI
18 November 1953
(CORNHUSKER MARINER -
C-3 Bd)

From: Chief, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division
To: Commandant
Via: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; stranding of the SS CORNHUSKER
MARINER, off Pusan Harbor, Korea, on 7 July 1953

1. The CORNHUSKER MARINER, a freight vessel of 9218 g.t., anchored during favorable weather in the outer harbor, Pusan, Korea, at 1642 6 July 1953. The master and officers had kept a close check on typhoon "Kit" and the master determined that this typhoon would not affect his vessel. After anchoring, the engine room telegraph was placed on "Stop" and not on "Finished With Engines", which meant that the vessel could be under way in estimated time of between five and ten minutes. The steering apparatus was secured. The master did not write any night orders but had verbal orders passed to all mates to check the anchor at least every fifteen minutes and to call the master if there was any change in the anchor bearings or the weather. These orders were verbally received by the mates. At about midnight weather began to make up and steadily worsened throughout the night. The mate on the midnight to 0400 watch failed to take adequate anchorage bearings to ascertain whether or not the vessel was dragging anchor and further failed to notify the master of the steadily worsening weather conditions. Some time after midnight the vessel began dragging her anchor, accompanied by an occasional slipping of the anchor chain at the windlass, and at about 0342 stranded on the rocks of Cryuk To Island, Pusan Harbor. No timely or effective action was taken to prevent the stranding. There was no loss of life or serious injuries sustained as the result of this casualty. The vessel has been cut in two and the stern section salvaged.

2. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 C.F.R. Part 136, the record of the Marine Board convened to investigate subject casualty, together with its Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

Chief, MVI Division, to
Commandant

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REMARKS

3. The Board made four recommendations, three of which are as follows:

"1. That Captain Telesmanic be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by specifications alleging:

- a. failure to properly evaluate the storm warning received upon the arrival of his vessel at Pusan Harbor, Korea, on 6 July 1953, which failure contributed materially to the stranding of the SS CORNHUSKER MARINER;
- b. failure to issue written night orders in the night order book as to the manner in which the deck officers were to perform their watch duty while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea;
- c. permitting the securing of the engines of the CORNHUSKER MARINER and the disengaging of the vessel's steering engine contrary to the accepted practices of good seamanship in an anchorage situation, thus contributing to the stranding of his vessel.

"2. That Third Mate McCarthy be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by specifications alleging:

- a. failure to properly determine the position of the CORNHUSKER MARINER while standing the 0000 to 0400 watch while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea, on 7 July 1953, thus contributing to the stranding of the CORNHUSKER MARINER;
- b. failure to obey the verbal night orders given to him by the Chief Officer of the CORNHUSKER MARINER as to the manner in which he was to stand the deck watches while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea in that he failed to call the Master when he was in doubt as to the vessel's position or a change in the weather;
- c. while serving as deck watch officer on the 0000 to 0400 watch on the CORNHUSKER MARINER while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea, failed to exercise the ordinary practices of good seamanship, which failure contributed to the stranding of the vessel.

"3. That Third Assistant Nangle be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by a specification alleging:

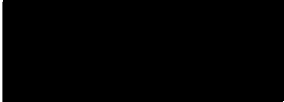
- a. while serving as Engineer in Charge of the 0000 to 0400 watch on 7 July 1953, while the CORNHUSKER MARINER was at anchor in Pusan, Korea, he failed to promptly respond to a half ahead order received from the bridge which failure contributed to the stranding of the vessel."

Chief, MVI Division, to
Commandant

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4. The above recommendations, to the extent that the Master, Third Mate, and Third Assistant Engineer may be charged with negligence, are approved. The specifications as set out under each charge in the Board's report are subject to proper proof in suspension and revocation proceedings, which are separate and distinct from the proceedings of the Marine Board of Investigation. Any action in approving or disapproving such specifications in the Board's report would create confusion and interfere with the orderly procedures of the subsequent legal proceedings for the proper consideration of such specifications. Accordingly, such specifications should not be included in a report of a Marine Board of Investigation. All action with respect to such specifications are deferred to the proper legal proceedings pursuant to the provisions of R.S. 4450, as amended, and regulations thereunder, provided for the proper consideration of such specifications.

5. Subject to the foregoing remarks, it is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Opinions, and Recommendations in the report of the Marine Board of Investigation, dated 8 September 1953 (A25 (MMIS-011774)) be approved.


P. A. OVENDEN

FIRST ENDORSEMENT ON MVI memorandum of 18 November 1953

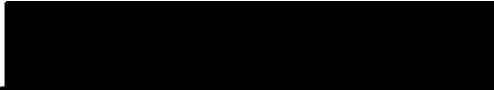
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30 November 1953

From: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.


H. C. SHEPHEARD

APPROVED: 3 DEC 1953


A. G. RICHMOND
Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Acting Commandant

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

ADDRESS REPLY TO:
COMMANDER X OCHI
3RD COAST GUARD DISTRICT
80 LAFAYETTE ST.
NEW YORK 13, N. Y.



• 8 September, 1953
A25 (EMIS-011774)

From: Marine Board of Investigation
To: Commandant (IVI)

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; stranding of the SS CORNHUSKER
MARINER, off Pusan Harbor, Korea, on 7 July, 1953

- Findings of Fact -

1. At about 0342, 7 July, 1953, (zone -9), the SS CORNHUSKER MARINER stranded on Oryuk To, an island that marks the northern side of the eastern approach to Pusan Harbor, Korea.
2. The SS CORNHUSKER MARINER, official number 264736, is an inspected steam vessel of 9217.3 gross tons engaged in the carriage of freight. It is owned by the U. S. Government, represented by the Maritime Administration, and acting as agent is the Seas Shipping Company (Robin Line) of 39 Cortlandt Street, New York, N. Y. The main machinery is a steam turbine, cross compound type. At the time of the casualty the Master was Captain Nicholas Telesmanic of [REDACTED]. The Captain holds an unlimited license as master, issue 2 - 5, serial number [REDACTED].
3. The SS CORNHUSKER MARINER, bound from Inchon, Korea toward Pusan, Korea, made her arrival off Pusan Harbor at 1530, 6 July, 1953, and proceeded under direction of her master to an anchorage selected by him in the outer harbor.
4. At 1642, 6 July, 1953, the vessel anchored using her port anchor, six (6) shackles on the windlass, in eighteen (18) fathoms of water, in position 35° 04' 39" N., 129° 07' 09" E., established by visual bearings taken on the signal tower H E C P on Mokto Island, a northern tangent of Cho Do Island, the lighthouse on Oryuk To, and the flashing red break-water light at Choe Roe.
5. Anticipating a shift to a berth, the Master left the telegraph on "STOP" at 1648, 6 July, 1953, but for administrative purposes "Finished with engines" was entered in both the engine and deck bell books.
6. The Master and Chief Engineer discussed the vessel's status and it was decided, with the Master's consent, to secure the port boiler for cleaning purposes; that the steam would be off the main unit; that the engine would be turned by the jacking gear; that full vacuum would be maintained; and that the electric motors to the steering gear be turned off.

8 September, 1953
A25 (MMIS-011774)

7. The decision to disengage the steering engine upon arrival was to obviate the maintenance of a wheel watch while at anchor.
8. The throttle was not locked, but the latches were in place.
9. With the engines secured in this manner the necessary steps required to answer a maneuvering bell would consist of shutting off the jacking engine; disengaging that gear; opening the bulkhead valve to put steam on the main engine; and clearing the throttle. This operation can be done in three to four minutes. The steering engine is readied by switching on the motor in the steering engine room aft.
10. The Chief Officer, Mr. [REDACTED], secured the port anchor, with six shots on the windlass, tightening the brake, and putting the pawl down, and reported that fact to the Master, whereupon the Master issued verbal night orders to the Chief Officer. These night orders consisted of instructions to check the anchor every fifteen (15) minutes, check the vessel's mooring lines against possible pilferage, and to call the Master if there was any change in the bearings or the weather.
11. The Chief Officer verbally relayed these orders to the watch-standing officers, Mr. [REDACTED], Second Officer in charge of the four to eight watch; Mr. [REDACTED], Fourth Mate in charge of the eight to twelve watch; and Mr. John McCarthy, Third Officer in charge of the twelve to four watch; with further instructions to pass these verbal orders on to their reliefs.
12. There were no written night orders except for certain standing orders posted in the chartroom.
13. The Second and Fourth Officers acknowledged that they had received these verbal night orders from the Chief Officer, but Mr. McCarthy, the Third Officer, could not specifically recall the order but did remember the Chief Officer telling him something about the anchor prior to his going on watch.
14. The vessel anchored during a period of inclement weather, with moderate southerly winds, force four to five, Beaufort scale, with an estimated rough southerly sea and swell.
15. Weather information concerning the Korean theatre of operations is under the control of the U. S. Navy and regularly scheduled broadcasts relay forecasts of impending storms and their movements. The master and the watch-standing officers kept these reports on file in the chartroom (Exhibit 14) and had graphically plotted these reports on a weather chart of the area (Exhibit 13) to indicate the tract of a typhoon reported in the area.

8 September, 1953
A25 (AMIS-011744)

16. Specifically plotted as part of the typhoon by the Master was a storm warning broadcasted at 060653 GCT, which predicted strong winds and a forecast position of 38° N., 126° E. at 061800 GCT (070300 -9 zone). Because the forecast position plotted about two hundred (200) miles to the north of Pusan, the report of the storm warning was dismissed in error as passing clear. As a matter of fact, the indicated storm radius informed the Master that the southeastern sector of the storm was extensive and severe.

17. The 1600 - 2000 watch was uneventful but saw a moderation in the weather, with the sea moderating to a low swell and the wind reducing to about force two. The Second Officer in charge of that watch checked the anchor bearings frequently and found these bearings constant but, contrary to the night orders, did not think it necessary to check the anchor physically or cause it to be attended by any members of his watch. Recorded by that officer in the vessel's log was the 2000 weather entry, which included a barometric pressure of 29.66 inches, a fall of .07 inches since the last entry.

18. The 2000 - 2400 watch attended the anchor and checked the bearings at regular intervals. The officer in charge of that watch recorded in the vessel's log an increase in the wind to force four (4) Beaufort, occasional light rain, and a 2400 barometer reading of 29.63 inches.

19. Relief of the 2000 - 2400 watch was effected by Third Mate McCarthy at about midnight, and the particulars of relief consisted only of the objects the bearings were taken on, the vessel's plotted position on the navigation chart, and the fact that the vessel was moored on six shots of chain and holding.

20. Third Mate McCarthy made a round of the bridge and took his anchor bearings at 0030, 7 July, 1953, which plotted correctly, and at about this time noticed the wind had increased and was now gusting between force four (4) and six (6), accompanied with driving rains. These facts he entered in the log book as a midnight entry showing the wind at force six (6). At about the same time as the bearings, he checked the anchor from the bridge with binoculars and saw the six-shot mark on the windlass.

21. At about 0100 the wind continued to increase in intensity and the vessel began to yaw 45 to 60 degrees around her anchor. Successive rain squalls became heavier and on occasion obscured and impaired the taking of visual bearings.

22. Third Officer McCarthy at no time left the bridge and did not cause his watch to make any checks of the anchor or the deck, nor did any of his watch make any reports to him. His instruction to the single man on lookout watch on the bridge was to report any light from the signal tower which relayed docking instructions.

8 September, 1953
A25 (MMIS-011744)

23. Anchor bearings were checked at 0130 and at 0230 and, when plotted, confirmed the ship's position. After 0300 the visibility was reduced further as fog patches accompanied the driving rain. The lookout reported to the watch officer at about 0330 that the signal tower light was no longer visible.

24. The storm increased in intensity and at 0315 the SS GOLDEN STATE, anchored on both her cables one-quarter (1/4) mile to the north, found it necessary to maneuver her engine to ease the strain on her anchors.

25. Third Officer McCarthy, taking bearings every hour on the half-hour, took and plotted two lines of position at 0330 (Exhibit 12, marked "A"). These bearings plotted the vessel's position about 750 yards from its anchorage.

26. Third Officer McCarthy was not sure that he had taken the bearings correctly and decided to check the vessel's position by the vessel's radar which was not in operation and which required about four (4) minutes to warm up and indicate images.

27. The radar, on the four-mile scale, confirmed that the vessel was not at her anchorage. At that time, 0340, the watch officer signalled standby on the bridge telegraph and sent the bridge lookout forward to drop the starboard anchor. The standby signal was immediately answered by the engineroom watch.

28. At 0341 the winds were about force 7 - 8, stranding the vessel about fifteen to twenty yards off the rocks of Oryuk To.

29. Third Officer McCarthy shouted below for the Master and went to the port wing to see the lighthouse of Oryuk To on a bearing of just forward of the house. At 0341 McCarthy rang half ahead on the bridge telegraph. This signal was not answered by the engine room.

30. The Engineer in Charge, Mr. Francis T. Nangle, was on the floorplates at the time of the standby bell which was answered by the Oiler of the watch. Seriously doubting the validity of the bell, both the Engineer and the Assistant Engineer, Mr. Nicholson, called the bridge.

31. Third Officer McCarthy informed the Engineers that the vessel was dragging and the Engineer in Charge, [REDACTED] felt a slight jar. On the half-ahead signal, the watch engineers began to ready the engine for maneuvering, Mr. [REDACTED] opening the bulkhead steam valve and Mr. Nangle disengaging the jacking engine. Mr. Nangle required the assistance of Mr. [REDACTED] in disengaging the jacking gear. At 0346 steam was on the engine.

8 September, 1953
A25 (MHIS-011744)

32. Mr. Nangle attempted to contact the Chief Engineer by phone and, receiving no answer, assumed the Chief Engineer had been alerted in some manner and was aft starting the steering engine.

33. The steering engine motors have "on - off" indicators on the operating platform. Mr. Nangle waited until he saw the indicator show such motors to be in operation before answering the half-ahead bell. The half-ahead was answered at 0347 $\frac{1}{2}$.

34. The seaman ordered to drop the starboard anchor did so at about 0345, but at this time it had no appreciable effect on the vessel. At that time, due to the vessel's dragging, the port anchor cable was slipping over the wildcat, paying out chain. The pawl, although down, was jumping due to the vibration of the chain under strain.

35. Third Officer McCarthy, after the half-ahead bell, attempted to put the rudder hard right, but as the system was not engaged, such attempts had negative results.

36. The Master, the Chief Officer, and the Second Officer arrived on the bridge shortly after the starboard anchor let go. The Master issued orders to the Mate to steer from the aft station and for the Third Officer to take soundings. The Boatswain was sent forward to heave in the anchors. Both anchor chains were under strain and had between seven and eight shackles out. The engines were left on half-ahead for forty-nine(49) minutes and did ease the strain on the cables, but this maneuver failed to free the vessel.

37. Subsequent maneuvers with the engine, rudder, and anchors failed, and outside assistance, rendered in the form of towing vessels at various times, failed to dislodge the grounded vessel.

38. Due to the extensive damage to the bottom of the ship and the cracking sustained, the ship must be considered a total loss except for that salvageable cargo aboard.

39. No failure of inspected equipment was involved or contributed to the casualty.

40. No Coast Guard personnel or any representatives or employees of any other Government agency caused or contributed to the grounding.

8 September, 1953
A25 (HMIS-011744)

- Opinions -

1. It is concluded that the negligent manner in which the 0000 - 0400 watch was stood was the primary cause for the stranding of the SS CORNHUSKER MARINER on 7 July, 1953.
2. In the opinion of the Board, the weather conditions were sufficient to warrant the calling of the master in accordance with the verbal night orders given.
3. Further, that the Third Officer did receive the verbal night orders from the Chief Officer.
4. That the Third Officer knew or should have known the status of the engine and that of the steering gear.
5. That compliance with the verbal night orders, as such, would have prevented the stranding.
6. In the opinion of the Board, the weather prompted the taking of more frequent bearings of the landmarks and the Third Officer was remiss in his duties by his failure to utilize the methods of navigation available and by failing to safeguard the vessel. His failure to properly check the anchor prevented the discovery of the vessel's dragging.
7. The yawing of the vessel, as indicated by the headings of the vessel recorded on the course recorder, was sufficient to alert McCarthy that the vessel's anchorage position was being imperiled.
8. The stranding may have been averted at 0330 had not the Third Officer decided his bearings needed confirmation on the secured radar.
9. It is concluded, from the testimony adduced as to the ship's position off Cryuk To at about 0341, that the vessel grounded at about 0342.
10. The answering of the standby bell by the engineroom was an error in that it gave to McCarthy a false sense of security as to the readiness of the engine for instant maneuvering.
11. The delay in readying the engines was not unreasonable for it is not unusual to experience difficulty in disengaging the jacking gear.
12. The action of Third Assistant Nangle in delaying his response to the half ahead order, after the engines were ready, until he was assured that the steering engine was engaged, was unwarranted.
13. The storm that struck the vessel was the storm described in the warning received and plotted aboard the vessel.

8 September, 1953
A25 (MMIS-011744)

14. Captain Telesmanic was culpably negligent in determining that the severe storm which struck his vessel, and of which he had adequate advance warning, would clear his selected anchorage.
15. Captain Telesmanic was culpably negligent in permitting his vessel to be anchored on such short stay with her engines secured in the light of the weather information available.
16. Second Mate Babbitt's failure to obey the verbal night orders to check the anchor at frequent intervals during his watch was unwarranted.

* * *

8 September, 1953
A25 (HMIS-011744)

- Recommendations -

1. That Captain Telesmanic be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by specifications alleging:

- a. failure to properly evaluate the storm warning received upon the arrival of his vessel at Pusan Harbor, Korea, on 6 July, 1953, which failure contributed materially to the stranding of the SS CORNHUSKER MARINER;
- b. failure to issue written night orders in the night order book as to the manner in which the deck officers were to perform their watch duty while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea;
- c. permitting the securing of the engines of the CORNHUSKER MARINER and the disengaging of the vessel's steering engine contrary to the accepted practices of good seamanship in an anchorage situation, thus contributing to the stranding of his vessel.

2. That Third Mate McCarthy be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by specifications alleging:

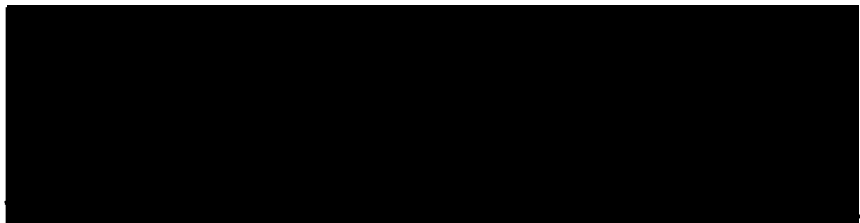
- a. failure to properly determine the position of the CORNHUSKER MARINER while standing the 0000 to 0400 watch while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea on 7 July, 1953, thus contributing to the stranding of the CORNHUSKER MARINER;
- b. failure to obey the verbal night orders given to him by the Chief Officer of the CORNHUSKER MARINER as to the manner in which he was to stand the deck watches while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea in that he failed to call the Master when he was in doubt as to the vessel's position or a change in the weather;
- c. while serving as deck watch officer on the 0000 to 0400 watch on the CORNHUSKER MARINER while the vessel was at anchor in Pusan, Korea, failed to exercise the ordinary practices of good seamanship, which failure contributed to the stranding of the vessel.

3. That Third Assistant Mangle be charged under 46 USC 239 with negligence supported by a specification alleging:

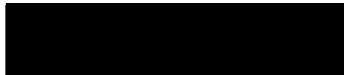
8 September, 1953
A25 (MMIS-011774)

- a. while serving as Engineer in Charge of the 0000 to 0400 watch on 7 July, 1953, while the CORNHUSKER MARINER was at anchor in Pusan, Korea, he failed to promptly respond to a half ahead order received from the bridge which failure contributed to the stranding of the vessel.

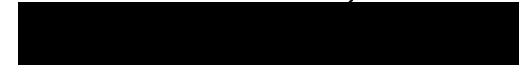
4. That Second Officer Babbitt be admonished for his failure to obey the verbal night orders which he received from the Chief Officer to check the anchor.



F. P. VETTERICK, CAPT., USCG, Chairman



F. K. ARZT, CDR., USCG, Member



LT., USCG, Member and Recorder