

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address Reply to:  
COMMANDANT  
U. S. Coast Guard  
Headquarters  
Washington 25, D. C.

LVI  
2 March, 1951  
File: (ELTON HOYT II -  
ENDERS M. VOORHEES C-9 Bd)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; SS ELTON HOYT II - SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES  
- collision, Straits of Mackinac, 24 November, 1950.

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 CFR, Part 136, the record of the Marine Board convened to investigate subject casualty, together with its Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The American bulk freighter SS ELTON HOYT II of 6939 gross tons was eastbound and the American bulk freighter ENDERS M. VOORHEES of 10,294 gross tons was westbound in the Straits of Mackinac. Both vessels were in a snow-storm, visibility one-fourth mile to one mile and (a) were sounding regulation fog signals, (b) efficiently manning their radars, and (c) exchanged safety calls for passing purposes. Upon sighting each other, both vessels were confused as to the course and intention of the other and collided at about 1417 on 24 November, 1950, approximately 249° true, 4.5 miles from St. Helena Island Light. At the time of the collision the ENDERS M. VOORHEES was proceeding at full speed, 14½ m.p.h. and the ELTON HOYT II had considerably reduced speed. No injuries were sustained nor were any lives lost as a result of this casualty. The damage to the ENDERS M. VOORHEES was estimated at \$20,000 and the ELTON HOYT II, \$100,000.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. On or about 1417, 24 November 1950, the SS ELTON HOYT II navigated by [redacted] Master, and the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES navigated by [redacted] Master, were in collision in the Straits of Mackinac at an approximate point 249° true 4.5 miles from St. Helena Island Light. Weather conditions: wind S-SW fresh, snow, moderate sea, visibility varying one-quarter mile to one mile.

2. The SS ELTON HOYT II, Official No. 202859, gross tons 6939, a steel bulk freighter, built 1906, 530' register length propelled by a 3000 horsepower Skinner Unaflow Single screw engine, owned by the Interlake Steamship Company, Cleveland, Ohio, departed South Chicago, Illinois, 23 November, 1950 on or about 1105 bound for Two Harbors, Minnesota, in light condition, draft 14' forward, 19' aft.

3. On 24 November 1950 the SS ELTON HOYT II passed White Shoal Light in the Straits of Mackinac on or about 1335, weather conditions, south, fresh, snow, steering a course 97° true sounding fog signals, radar operating. An approaching vessel was met and passed and shortly

thereafter at approximately 1345, two vessels were observed on the radar scope on approaching courses, one slightly on the starboard bow or to the southward, the other 3° or 4° on the port bow or to the northward at an approximate distance of 10 miles, the vessel to the southward a short distance nearer than the one to the northward.

4. The courses of the approaching vessels were watched on the radar scope until approximately 1408 at which time the Master of the SS ELTON HOYT II altered course to 92° true and placed a radio phone call to the vessel nearest ahead. He contacted a vessel which he identified as the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES and from the resulting conversation assumed the vessel to the southward to be the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES, a much faster vessel than the other vessel, identified as the SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON, a small Canadian freighter and that the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES would pass to starboard of the SS ELTON HOYT II.

5. Shortly after this conversation the engines of the SS ELTON HOYT II were placed at half speed. This was continued for approximately two minutes when an approaching vessel, the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES, was sighted on the starboard bow approximately one and one-quarter mile away. At this point a one blast signal was heard from this vessel, and it was noted that the vessel had hauled toward the SS ELTON HOYT II and was swinging to the right.

6. On seeing this action the Master of the SS ELTON HOYT II ordered hard right rudder and full speed astern. The full astern signal was repeated twice, but approximately three minutes later on or about 1417 the two vessels collided, the stem of the SS ELTON HOYT II in contact with the port side of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES, between #14 and #15 cargo hatches at an angle of 45°.

7. The damage to the bow of the SS ELTON HOYT II was located below the chain locker deck from the stem to the collision bulkhead involving 29 shell plates and internals in way of same. Amount of damage estimated at \$100,000.

8. No one on the SS ELTON HOYT II was injured in the collision.

9. After the collision occurred the SS ELTON HOYT II followed the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES to an anchorage one mile east of Mackinaw City, Michigan. The vessel was examined and then permitted to proceed to the Great Lakes Engineering Works, River Rouge, Michigan, for repair and lay-up.

10. The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES, Official No. 242023, gross tons 10,294, a steel bulk freighter, built 1942, 622' register length, propelled by a 4000 horsepower steam turbine, single screw, owned by the Pittsburgh Steamship Company, Cleveland, Ohio, departed Two Harbors,

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Minnesota, 22 November 1950 on or about 1550 bound South Chicago, Illinois, loaded, cargo iron ore, draft 21' 11" forward, 22' 1" aft.

11. On 24 November 1950 the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES passed St. Helena Island, Michigan, in the Straits of Mackinac, on or about 1359 steering 280° true, weather: wind SW 17 M.P.H., snowing.

12. To the southward about four points on the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES port bow and an estimated mile farther west was a small Canadian freighter, later identified as the SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON, proceeding in the same direction. The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES being a faster vessel was overhauling the SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON.

13. Soon after passing St. Helena Island the snow became heavier and visibility was reduced. A lookout was posted, fog signals were sounded, radar turned on and the Master notified. The Master arrived on the bridge on or about 1403 and took charge of navigation. At this point he was notified of the presence of an approaching vessel detected by radar, the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was proceeding at full speed. The Master, looking at the radar scope, noted an approaching vessel one to two degrees on the port bow 5 miles away and another to the southward and approximately one mile to the westward proceeding in the same direction.

14. Shortly after this the approaching vessel called on the radio phone. The call was taken by the Second Mate and the time recorded as 1408. The Second Mate advised the Master that the SS ELTON HOYT II, the approaching vessel, was calling and was asking which side the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES wished to take. The Master indicated his desire to pass on the one whistle side, port to port. Within a minute the Master advised the Second Mate to call the SS ELTON HOYT II to make sure she understood the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES' intention. While attempting to contact the SS ELTON HOYT II, the Second Mate heard a conversation between the SS ELTON HOYT II and the SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON and from that understood the SS ELTON HOYT II thought the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was the vessel to the southward. The SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON was advising the SS ELTON HOYT II that the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was to the northward of him so the Second Mate interrupted and told the SS ELTON HOYT II that the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES is to the north on the one whistle side. At this time the Master checked the approaching vessel's position by radar and the distance away was 3.5 miles. Hereafter the radar image of the SS ELTON HOYT II was lost.

15. On or about 1411 the Master of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES ordered right rudder and sounded a one blast passing signal intended for the SS ELTON HOYT II. No answer was received. Approximately three minutes later another one blast passing signal was sounded by the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES which was not answered and the rudder was placed hard right.

16. Within seconds the SS ELTON HOYT II was sighted and to two points on the port bow approximately 1300' away. As the bows of the two vessels passed each other the Master of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES changed rudder from hard right to hard left in an endeavor to clear his stern from contact with the bow of the SS ELTON HOYT II. This maneuver was not successful, and the two vessels collided, the port side of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES between #14 and #15 hatches in contact with the bow of the SS ELTON HOYT II. Immediately after the contact the engines of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES were reversed full speed.

17. The damage to the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES is located in #7 port side tank between #14 and #15 cargo hatches and involves 4 shell plates and internals in way of same. Amount of damage estimated at \$20,000.

18. No one on the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was injured in the collision.

19. After the collision occurred the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES proceeded to an anchorage in the vicinity of Mackinaw City, Michigan, and later to St. Ignace, Michigan, where temporary repairs were begun.

20. On 3 December 1950 when temporary repairs were completed the vessel proceeded to Conneaut, Ohio, where the cargo was discharged and then to Lorain, Ohio, for permanent repair and lay-up."

4. The Board expressed the following Conclusions:

"1. A Marine Board of Investigation with Commander George P. Kenney, Chairman, [redacted] Member, and Lieutenant Commander Lloyd R. Morrison, Member and Recorder, was convened.

2. On 1 December 1950 at the Marine Inspection Office, Detroit, Michigan, the Board began the investigation, interrogating the personnel of the SS ELTON HOYT II. From the testimony obtained from the personnel of the SS ELTON HOYT II, it is evident that:

- (1) The SS ELTON HOYT II was sounding fog signals of a vessel underway from 1330 to the time of collision.
- (2) No other whistle signals other than fog signals were sounded.
- (3) The SS ELTON HOYT II reduced to half speed 5 minutes prior to the collision.
- (4) The SS ELTON HOYT II sighted the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES when that vessel was one mile to one and a quarter miles away bearing one to one and a half points on the starboard bow, 3 minutes prior to the collision. When the

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SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was sighted and blew a one blast passing signal, the SS ELTON HOYT II did not reply to this signal or sound a danger signal as required. However, he did order his engines double full astern.

3. As a result of and the conclusion of the board investigation conducted in Detroit, Michigan, 1 December 1950 while witnesses were available and upon approval by the Board, Mr. [REDACTED] Master of the SS ELTON HOYT II, was charged with Inattention to Duty with two specifications. Form CG 2639 is attached.

4. On 7 December 1950 at the U. S. Coast Guard Lifeboat Station, Lorain, Ohio, the board continued the investigation interrogating the personnel of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES.

5. From the testimony obtained from the personnel of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES it is evident that:

- (1) The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES was proceeding at full speed from the time visibility was reduced on or about 1400 until the time of collision.
- (2) The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES had radio phone communication with the SS ELTON HOYT II on or about 1408 and was aware that the SS ELTON HOYT II was approaching both by radio phone and radar observation.
- (3) The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES on or about 1411 sounded a one blast signal to the SS ELTON HOYT II and received no answer but did not reduce speed.
- (4) The SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES failed to navigate with caution in that while being unable to hear fog signals of the SS ELTON HOYT II, she failed to sound the danger signal and to reduce speed when uncertain of the SS ELTON HOYT II's course or intention even though it was known from radar observation and radio phone communication that a vessel was approaching on a course so as to bring the vessels close to each other.

6. As a result of the investigation while the witnesses were available and upon approval by the Board, Mr. [REDACTED] the Master of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES, was charged with Inattention to Duty with three specifications. Form CG 2639 is attached.

7. The accident is attributed to failure on the part of the Masters of the two vessels to obey the Pilot Rules for the Great Lakes.

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8. In regard to the conflicting testimony concerning the radio phone conversation, it appears that the person in charge of the SS ELTON HOYT II confused the position of the SS ENDERS M. VOORHEES with that of the SS NORMAN B. McPHERSON, the Canadian vessel which he did pass to starboard.

9. There was no failure of material or gear involved."

5. The Board made the following Recommendation:

"1. Since charges were preferred against both masters involved in this casualty as previously stated, no further recommendations are made."

6. It is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Conclusions, and Recommendation of the Marine board of investigation be approved.

/s/ [REDACTED]

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

M  
13 March, 1951  
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Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ H. C. SHEPHEARD  
H. C. SHEPHEARD

APPROVED: March 15, 1951

/s/ MERLIN O'NEILL  
MERLIN O'NEILL  
Vice Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard  
Commandant