

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
WASHINGTON, D. C.

MVI
16 June 1952
(PAOLINA - A-1 Bd)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation into disappearance of fishing vessel PAOLINA with all persons on board, off Atlantic Coast, 13 February 1952

1. 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 Recommendation, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The M/V PAOLINA, a fishing vessel of 60.39 gross tons, built in 1926, departed New Bedford, Massachusetts, on 6 February 1952, to fish in the vicinity of Nantucket Lightship. On 12 February 1952, the PAOLINA was heard from on two occasions by voice radio and its position established as 32 miles south southwest of Nantucket Lightship. She had on board 30,000 pounds of mixed fish. It was the master's intention to head for New Bedford at midnight to arrive on 13 February. On 15 February, the PAOLINA was reported as overdue. A thorough search of the area resulted in the finding of two sides of a dory marked PAOLINA and other articles reported to be from the PAOLINA. The search failed to disclose any trace of her crew and it is presumed that she foundered with the loss of all persons on board. The PAOLINA encountered heavy seas and winds of whole gale proportions during the night of 12 February which extended through 13 February 1952.

3. As a result of this casualty, it is presumed that the following crew members perished:

Wirtz Holmson, Captain
Armas T. Bagge
Harry Rjur
Timothy Gustus
Martin Bergdinko, Jr.
Wilfred A. Quinton
Reiger Johnson

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

MVI
16 June 1952
(PAOLINA - a-1 Ed)

4. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. The oil screw PAOLINA, official number 225479, length 76.8 feet, depth 8.3 feet, beam 19.3 feet, and 60.39 gross tons was built at Essex, Massachusetts in 1926 and was licensed for the mackerel fisheries.

"2. The PAOLINA was currently owned by [redacted] and [redacted], both of [redacted], each of whom owned one-half of the vessel. [redacted] is the sister of [redacted] who served as mate in the PAOLINA, and the widow of [redacted] master of the PAOLINA.

"3. The PAOLINA sailed from New Bedford, Mass. on February 6, 1952 to fish in the vicinity of Nantucket Lightship.

"4. The PAOLINA was heard by voice radio about 1:00 P.M. on 12 February, 1952 when Captain Hokanson talked with Captain [redacted] of the fishing vessel AGNES & MYRNA. At that time it was established that the PAOLINA had on board about 30,000 pounds of mixed fish and was lying-to about 20 miles west southwest of Nantucket Lightship. The PAOLINA was later heard from by the master of the fishing vessel ORCHLER, Captain [redacted], who talked by radio telephone with Captain Hokanson at about 7:00 P.M., February 12, 1952. At that time it was established the PAOLINA was about 32 miles south southwest from the Nantucket Lightship and was planning to head for New Bedford at midnight to arrive sometime on Wednesday, 13 February so as to make the Thursday, 14 February market.

"5. This was the last official known contact with the PAOLINA which established her to be afloat at that time.

"6. The Coast Guard was first notified at 9:15 A.M., 15 February that the PAOLINA was overdue. This information was furnished by Mr. [redacted] of the Sea Food Producers Association, New Bedford, Massachusetts.

"7. An extensive surface and air search was then placed in operation and continued until ordered abandoned on the morning of February 18, 1952, due to a bad northeast storm, the improbability of the PAOLINA's being afloat and the need for the services of the EASTWIND and UNIMAK in connection with the tankers FORT MERCER and PENNLETON casualties. Exhibits 4-1, 4-2, and 4-3 indicate the extent of this effort. The following units participated each day as indicated:

Chief, NVI Division to
Commandant

NVI
16 June 1952
(PAOLINA - a-1 Bd)

"(a) Friday, 15 February 1952; - EASTWIND in area en route from New York to Boston assigned OTC; LEGARE departed New Bedford 1025R. CG Plane UFIG-1242 from Quonset, R. I. at 1135R; CG Plane UFIG-1241 from Salem at 1105R.

"(b) Saturday, 16 February 1952; - EASTWIND, LEGARE, FREDERICK LEE, UNIMAK, CG Plane UFIG-1243 from Quonset, R. I., CG Plane PBIG from Brooklyn, N. Y., CG Plane PEM-4544 from Brooklyn, N. Y., CG Plane from Salem, Mass., UFIG-1241.

"(c) Sunday, 17 February 1952; - EASTWIND, UNIMAK, FREDERICK LEE, LEGARE. A southeast gale with low visibility prevented plane operations this day.

"(d) Monday, 18 February 1952; - EASTWIND, UNIMAK, FREDERICK LEE, LEGARE. A northeast storm, force 11, beaufort, with poor visibility prevailed this day which prevented flight operations. At 0905R the search was ordered terminated as it was apparent that the PAOLINA was not afloat and the need for the EASTWIND and UNIMAK for the tanker cases as cited above. The 125' WSC's were ordered to return to port as these vessels were here to because of existing weather.

"8. At about 1300R on Saturday, 16 February, the PEM-4544 sighted and the LEGARE later recovered in position 39.16N, 69.23W two sides of a dory marked PAOLINA, and another piece unmarked together with a fishing buoy and a section of a hatch cover. The UNIMAK at 1538 EST, Sunday, 17 February recovered a 7-foot rectangular liferaft and a lifering in position 39.10N, 60.07W, both of which were marked PAOLINA.

"9. The following weather conditions prevailed in the vicinity of Nantucket Lightship as recorded from the relief Lightship (WAL-536) which was on that station at the time:

"February 12, 1952:

Time	Wind	Bar.	Temp.	Weather	Vis.	Sea	
						Dir.	& hgt.
0400	NW-8	29.45	40	c	8	NW	16
0800	NW-8	29.49	41	bc	8	NW	16
1200	NW-10	29.52	35	b	8	NW	18
1600	WNW-11	29.54	32	bc	8	NW	20
2000	NW-10	29.62	30	b	8	NW	20

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

MVI
16 June 1952
(PAOLINA - a-1. B1)

"February 13, 1952:

"Time	Wind	Bar.	Temp.	Weather	Vis.	Sea Dir. & htsft.
"0000	NW-9	29.64	28	b	8	NW 20
0400	NW-9	29.64	33	bc	7	NW 17
0800	NW-8	29.72	32	bc	8	NW 15
1200	NW-9	29.74	36	bc	8	NW 15
1600	WNW-9	29.75	35	b	8	NW 14
2000	WNW-9	29.78	35	b	8	W 8

"February 14, 1952:

"0000	NW-7	29.79	32	b	8	NW 8
0400	NW-7	29.79	32	c	8	NW 10
0800	WNW-8	29.79	32	c	8	NW 10
1200	WNW-7	29.75	30	c	8	NW 10
1600	NW-6	29.78	32	c	8	NW 5
2000	NW-6	29.75	32	b	8	NW 5

"10. The PAOLINA had undergone extensive hull repairs at the Kelley Shipyard, Fairhaven, Mass., between December 6, 1951 and January 9, 1952 at an approximate cost of \$5,700.00. The owner at that time complained that the vessel was "working a lot in the forecabin" and that he desired to examine the planking and fastenings. The shipyard removed eleven planks from the starboard side and thirteen from the port side and renewed the fasteners as the latter were rusty and gone in places. In addition to the foregoing, fasteners for the keel, various frames and forefoots were renewed. The vessel was recaulked and bottom painted.

"11. The PAOLINA was encountering heavy weather during the night of 12 February which extended through 13 February 1952.

"12. The PAOLINA foundered at sea in the vicinity of Nantucket Lightship sometime subsequent to 7:00 P.M., 12 February 1952. The exact time and date cannot be determined as a fact.

"13. The following persons made up the crew of the PAOLINA when she sailed on 6 February 1952 and are lost with their vessel:

Fritz Hokanson
Arnes T. Bagge
Harry Bjur
Timothy Gushue
Martin Berdina, Jr.
Wilfred A. Quinton
Helger Johnson."

16 June 1952
(PAOLINA - a-1 Bd)

5. The Board expressed the following opinions:

"1. That with so many planking fasteners found to be defective and which were replaced, and with no evidence introduced that all of the planking fasteners were examined throughout the hull, it is believed that the cause of foundering of the vessel was the excessive working of the hull planking or failure of old fasteners, thus opening compartments of the hull during that long period of bad weather which the PAOLINA encountered.

"2. That the date of the foundering was probably not later than 13 February 1952.

"3. As temperatures were not sufficiently low on February 12, 13 and 14 to create a serious icing-up problem, it is not believed that the loss of the vessel was due in any part to icing and thereby loss of stability.

"4. It will be noted that northwest winds of whole to strong gale force prevailed from 2000 on 12 February and mostly throughout 13 February with high seas. These conditions, particularly the high seas, would subject the PAOLINA to heavy buffeting and the probable opening up of the vessel where fasteners might have been defective as indicated in the first opinion."

6. The Board made the following recommendations:

"It is recommended that no further action be taken and that the case be closed."

7. The following bills to amend the inspection laws relating to fishing vessels are now before Congress for consideration:

(a) H. R. 1761 - A bill for the safety of life and property by making all commercial fishing vessels subject to the rules and regulations of the United States Coast Guard Marine Inspection.

(b) H. R. 1762 - A bill for the safety of life and property by making all commercial fishing vessels subject to the rules and regulations of the United States Coast Guard Marine Inspection

- (c) H. R. 2316 - A bill to extend the requirements for fixing the minimum number of deck officers on steam vessels to certain additional vessels of the United States, and for other purposes.
- (d) S. 866 - A bill to extend the requirements for fixing the minimum number of deck officers and licensed engineers on steam vessels to certain additional vessels of the United States, and for other purposes.
- (e) S. 1286 - A bill to amend the Act of June 20, 1936, so as to broaden the application of laws governing the inspection of steam vessels to vessels propelled by internal-combustion engines.
- (f) S. 2617 - A bill to provide for the safety of life and property by establishing certain rules and regulations for certain vessels engaged in commercial fishing.

8. It is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendation of the Marine Board of Investigation be approved.



To: **Commandant**

Subj: **Marine Board of Investigation into disappearance of fishing vessel PAOLINA with all persons on board, off Atlantic Coast, February 1952.**

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ [REDACTED]
Acting

APPROVED: July 16, 1952

/s/ [REDACTED]
MERLIN O'NEILL
Vice Adm. U.S. Coast Guard
Commandant