

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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

12 May, 1960
FILE: GH-6-2/4
(F/B LACKAWANNA
SS FOTINI (Greek)
a-3)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; Collision steam ferry LACKAWANNA
SS FOTINI (Greek) Delaware River on 5 January, 1950, with loss
of life.

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 the Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The American steam ferry LACKAWANNA of 1079 gross tons, built in 1905, bound from Bridgeport, N. J. to Chester, Pa., collided at approximately 0814 5 January, 1950 with the Greek steam freighter FOTINI of 7176 gross tons, bound from Philadelphia to sea. The weather was cloudy, smoky and foggy with a light southwest wind. The visibility was less than 250 feet and the tide was ebbing at better than 1 1/2 knots. *owned by Delaware River Ferry Co.*

3. As a result of this casualty, Mr. L. M. Lymburner of [REDACTED] Montreal, Quebec, lost his life.

4. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"(1) At or about 0814, 5 January, 1950, the outbound S.S. FOTINI (Greek) collided with the Ferryboat LACKAWANNA in the Delaware River, enroute to Chester, Pa., from Bridgeport, N.J. The collision occurred near the eastern edge of the main ship channel, approximately 1,200 yards down channel from the Chester Range lighted buoy 4-C. The F/B LACKAWANNA was damaged and one of her passengers, Mr. L. M. Lymburner, believed to be [REDACTED] years of age, of [REDACTED] Montreal, Quebec, was fatally injured as a result of this casualty. The stem of the FOTINI struck the LACKAWANNA on her starboard side, approximately 35' abaft her bow.

(2) Name of vessel:	SS FOTINI
Official Number:	245079
Propulsion:	Steam
Service:	Cargo
Home Ports:	Piraeus, Greece
Owner:	Carras (U.S.A.) Ltd., 24

Chief, NVI Division to
Commandant

12 May, 1960
GHS-2/4
(F/B LACKAWANNA - SS POTINI
(Greek) a-3)

Master:
Gross Tonnage:
Length:
Type:

State St., New York, 4, N.Y.
██████████, Chios, Greece
7176
422.8
Liberty

Name of vessel:
Official Number:
Propulsion:
Services:
Home Port:
Owner:

Ferryboat LACKAWANNA
202588
Steam
Ferry passenger
Philadelphia, Pa.
Delaware River Ferry Co.,
Ft. of Flower St., Chester, Pa.
██████████
Elizabeth, N.J.

Master:

When built:
Gross Tonnage:
When & where last inspected:
Length:
Type:

1906
1,079
28 December, 1949, Phila., Pa.
206.1
Ferryboat

(3) At the time of the collision the weather in the vicinity of the casualty was cloudy, smoky, and foggy with a light southwest wind. Visibility was less than 250 feet when the F/B LACKAWANNA and the S.S. POTINI sighted each other. The tide was ebbing at better than $1\frac{1}{2}$ knots.

(4) The S.S. POTINI cleared and departed from Pier 14, Port Richmond Philadelphia, Pa., at approximately 0630, being conned by Harry D. Lemmon, a Delaware River Pilot. The vessel proceeded down the Delaware River without incident and with good visibility until she approached Thomson Point, N.J., where she started to encounter smog. The ship's speed was reduced to $1/2$, fog signal sounded, and a lookout ordered posted. The Chief Mate was relieved by the 2nd Mate on the bridge, and the former went to stand by the anchors on the master's orders. Both anchors were ready for letting go and had been since the vessel cleared Pier 14. The POTINI continued at half speed and sounded her fog signals. Shortly after the visibility increased and the fog signals were stopped, the POTINI met an upbound Atlantic tanker as she approached the junction of the Tinicum and Eddystone ranges. The two vessels exchanged information as to the weather and the tanker stated that there were no vessels anchored in the channel below. At the intersection of the Tinicum and Eddystone ranges, visibility became much less, particularly to the eastward, and the fog signals were resumed. The pilot was able to guide himself on the ways of the Sun Shipyard, for the change of course down the Eddystone Range and later on the tank of the Scott Paper Company for the change of course to the Chester Range. While on this reach, he was able

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

12 May, 1950
OHS-2/4
(F/B LACKAWANNA - SS
FOTINI (Greek) a-3)

to pick up the black tower on the Chester Ford Plant dock, but was unable to pick up Chester Range lighted buoy 4-C until it was close aboard on the port hand. At about the time the buoy was a beam, visibility was seen to be decreasing so that speed was reduced to slow. After running at slow speed for several minutes, the engines were stopped when whistle signals were heard several times ahead. The vessel continued to steer her course at 281°, (which is the true course for this range), and sound fog signals until the F/B LACKAWANNA was sighted about 10° on the port bow about 40 feet off. The engines were then backed full and hard right rudder applied. The vessel continued forward without noticeable change in course until she struck the ferryboat. The FOTINI sounded backing signal followed by a danger signal after the pilot rang for full astern on the telegraph. The freighter never lost steerage way before striking the LACKAWANNA.

(5) The F/B LACKAWANNA, taking on passengers and vehicles at Bridgeport, N.J. heard the F/B CAPE MAY depart from Chester, Pa. at 0808 and start sounding her fog signals. Then at 0810, having completed loading, the F/B LACKAWANNA departed from her slip at full speed. After sounding her slip signal, she started to sound her fog signal at about 15 second intervals. These signals were answered each time by the CAPE MAY. Less than one minute after departing, the LACKAWANNA decreased speed to slow and started to exchange whistle signals with the other ferry at more frequent intervals. When they sighted each other, the F/B CAPE MAY sounded a two blast signal and the LACKAWANNA replied with a two blast signal. The two vessels then passed each other starboard to starboard, clearing each other by a ship's length. The CAPE MAY having gone by, the master of the LACKAWANNA started to swing right slowly to north by east while continuing at slow speed. Exchanging whistle signals with a ship upstream, and realizing that it was bound downstream, and fairly close, the master of the LACKAWANNA stopped his engines. Almost immediately after stopping the engines, and while still swinging right slowly, the whistle of the FOTINI was again heard very close aboard, and she was sighted more than 65 feet off the starboard bow. Almost simultaneously with the above, the master of the LACKAWANNA reversed his engines full speed, sounded the backing signal and followed this with the danger signal. He then jingled for emergency full astern. Less than one minute after the FOTINI was sighted, the two vessels were in collision. Harry D. Lesson, Pilot of the S.S. FOTINI was aware that the vessel whose whistle signal he heard was a ferryboat even before he sighted her.

(6) In addition to the whistle signals of the three vessels, there was a siren blowing on each ferry slip. These sirens are sounded in a fog to guide the ferries into the slips. They are operated manually by the ticket takers who operate them in a pulsating manner. The ferry slips

12 May, 1950
GH5-2/4
(F/S LACKANANNA - SS
FOTINI (Greek), a-3)

are approximately .8 of a mile from each other and the sirens can be easily heard at a distance greater than this. The sirens are blown only when a ferry is known to be steaming towards the slip from the opposite side, and they are secured when the ferry whistles no longer requires its use.

(7) There was considerable conflict in the testimony of the witnesses in regard to the whistle signals heard prior to the collision. The witnesses on the FOTINI testified that there were numerous fog signals exchanged between the two vessels, and that they were sounded at a rapid rate shortly before the casualty occurred. Whereas, the witnesses on the LACKANANNA, other than the passengers who appeared, testified they only heard two fog signals from the FOTINI prior to seeing her and that there was about a one minute interval between the two signals. The passengers testified that they heard the freighter for several minutes before sighting her, and that's why their attention was called to her and they were able to see her before the collision. The crew members of the CAPE MAY testified that they heard no whistle signals from the FOTINI while crossing the river, but they did hear some ship's whistle up river just prior to their departure from Chester, Pa.

(8) The draft of the S.S. FOTINI was 10' 4" forward, 14' 6" aft.

(9) The angle between the keel lines of the two vessels at the time of impact was approximately 145°. There was some change of course to the right by the ferryboat from the time the two vessels sighted each other to the time of impact.

(10) The S.S. FOTINI's response in r.p.m.'s to designated telegraph speeds is as follows:

Full Speed - 65 to 67 r.p.m.'s

Half Speed - 42 to 45 r.p.m.'s

Slow Speed - 28 to 32 r.p.m.'s

(11) The course from ferry slip to ferry slip is 000 - 180 magnetic or 351 - 101 true.

(12) There were no failures in equipment on either vessel.

(13) Passengers who were sitting in their cars had sufficient warning of an impending collision and the direction from which the other ship was coming so that they were able to get out and proceed to the port bow prior to the two vessels coming into contact with each other. Orders were given, word was passed on board the ferry to issue life jackets when it was realized that collision was then unavoidable.

12 May, 1950
GHS-2/4
(V/S LACKAWANNA - SS
FOINI (Greek) a-5)

- (14) The ferryboat continued backing until after impact. The master of the ferryboat stopped backing when he saw that more damage was being done as a result of the movements of his engines. He then stopped and came ahead slow until a report was received from the engineer that they were all right below. He then attempted to back away, but gave this up when he saw that this was causing additional amounts of the deck house to be torn loose.
- (15) The pilot on the FOINI stopped her engines immediately after striking the LACKAWANNA and then came ahead slow, attempting to hold the vessel into the breach. The crew of the FOINI then made preparations to take the ferry alongside if this was necessary and to take aboard the personnel from the ferry. The two vessels then parted and the freighter dropped her anchor.
- (16) When the FOINI penetrated the ferryboat it pinned Mr. Lyburner against the side of the car that was ahead of the one in which he was riding. His groans were heard by other passengers, and Mr. [REDACTED], a passenger, and daily commuter, went to his assistance and called for first aid. Mr. [REDACTED] attempted to reach him over the hood of the car, but was unable to do much more than touch him with his fingertips. The vessels then separated and Mr. Lyburner slipped into the water along with the debris. Mr. [REDACTED], without hesitation, jumped into the water after him. He swam towards the unconscious Mr. Lyburner, who was being carried away from the ship's side face down. Mr. [REDACTED] turned the victim face up and was able to swim back to the ferry with him that way and grasp a strut for support. Three life rings with lines attached were thrown to him. He was able to get a hold of two of them and using them to support himself while he held Mr. Lyburner across his body keeping his face above water. He was unable to do anything further as his hands started to become numb from the cold water and he was unable to tie one of the lines around the person he was assisting. Mr. [REDACTED] jumped into the water fully clothed, including an Army O.D. sweater.
- (17) "Man overboard" was sung out as soon as the late Mr. Lyburner was seen to fall into the water. The master of the ferry then ordered the lifeboat lowered. Approximately 8 to 10 minutes later, the starboard lifeboat was lowered with three members of the crew in the boat. Part of this delay was due to the necessity of issuing life preservers to the passengers and insuring the safety of the vessel. Before they could pick up the man out of the water two truck drivers jumped into the boat from the vehicle deck. Their assistance wasn't requested, but

Chief, MWI Division to
Commandant

12 May, 1980
SIS-2/a
(F/S LACKAWANNA - SS
FOINI (Greek) a-3)

it was of great value in getting the men out of the water. The unconscious Mr. Lymburner was taken aboard first and laid across the bow and then Mr. [REDACTED] was taken aboard. The boat then rowed to the stern of the ferry where Mr. [REDACTED] was placed aboard as he was showing the effects of his immersion in the cold water for 15 to 20 minutes. The master, who could then see sufficiently to make his slip, towed the boat towards the dock until just off the dock, where he cast them loose to row into the adjacent slip. At about the same time, he blew a special whistle signal indicating assistance was required to the wharf personnel. In the meantime, attempt was made to apply a tourniquet to the leg of the unconscious victim, but his leg was so badly crushed it was deemed useless. The man was placed in an ambulance about five minutes after reaching the dock and taken to the Chester Hospital, where he died shortly thereafter.

(18) The FOINI lowered their lifeboat as soon as a man was known to be in the water, but before they could be of any assistance they were informed that the man had been recovered. Their boat immediately returned and was tied up alongside.

(19) The bow penetrated the ferry approximately 14' through the overhang of the car deck to the main hull and opened up the hull slightly where the sheer strake joins the main deck.

(20) There were no other injuries to personnel on either vessel except those received by the late Mr. Lymburner.

(21) Both vessels were adequately manned for the conditions prevailing.

(22) Harry D. Lemmon, pilot of the S.S. FOINI, was acting under authority of his State Pilot's License at the time of the casualty."

5. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

"(1) It is the opinion of the board that both vessels were aware of each other and their approximate relationship with each other for some time prior to the casualty.

(2) The Ferryboat LACKAWANNA more or less ignored the approaching downbound freighter until she had cleared the F/S CAPE MAY, which she deemed her most immediate danger. Then after that danger was over, turned their attention to the FOINI. It is believed that if the LACKAWANNA was unaware of the FOINI she would have increased speed after passing the CAPE MAY, and the master would not have stopped his engines upon hearing what he testified was the first

12 May, 1960

ONS-2/4

(P/S LACKAWANNA - SS

FOTINI (Greek) a-5)

whistle signal heard from that vessel and which he thought was a tug boat up river at the American Dredging Company's operations. Further, his backing the ferry at the time he did can only lead the board to believe that the above is not only true, but that he realized that the other vessel was close by and prompt and immediate action must be taken if collision was to be avoided.

(3) His entire actions from leaving the slip were those that a prudent pilot would have taken analyzing the situation that was developing from the whistle signals being blown by the other vessel and were appropriate under the circumstances. It is the firm belief of the board that the Ferryboat LACKAWANNA had stern way on at the time of the collision.

(4) The actions of the pilot on the S.S. FOTINI can only leave the board to believe that from the whistle signals being blown, plus hearing the sirens being blown on the ferry slips, that he was well aware of the movements of both ferries. He did not stop the engines of his ship when he first heard the whistle signal of the ferry ahead, but went to slow speed. Knowing that he was on the port side of the channel and that the ferry had departed Chester for the Jersey side ahead of the ferry bound for the Pennsylvania shore, he decided to remain on that side of the channel and anticipated he would pass astern of the Pennsylvania bound ferry, whereupon the Jersey bound ferry would have already passed clear of him. He adjusted his speed to do so, but the LACKAWANNA, instead of proceeding at her expected speed steamed at slow speed and had not crossed the bow of the freighter before being sighted.

(5) The Whistle signals of the ferry should have indicated to Pilot Lannon that emergency action was necessary if collision was to be avoided. He delayed backing his vessel and/or dropping his anchor for fear of his vessel being swept aground by the ebb current, although one or both of these measures were called for. It is realized that he was well aware of the type of vessel he was encountering and the seriousness of a vessel of this type being struck under the conditions existing at the time. The speed of the S.S. FOTINI at the time of impact was not less than four knots over ground.

(6) Mr. [REDACTED] without thought of his own safety or without hesitation, plunged into the cold waters of the Delaware River fully clothed to rescue what to him at the time was an unknown person who had fallen overboard. His efforts were successful, but the person died approximately three hours later as a result of his injuries.

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

18 May, 1960
GHS-2/4
(P/B LACKAWANNA - SS
POTINI (Greek) a-5)

there can be no doubt that Mr. [REDACTED] did so at great risk of his own life when the temperature of the water, the strength of the current, the confusion existing at the time, and the fact that he had neither life preserver nor ring buoy to assist him for some time after he was in the water are taken into consideration. The attending dangers of such action on his part should have been apparent to him, as he is a daily commuter on the ferry."

6. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"(1) The American Pilots' Association be furnished a copy of the report for action against Pilot Lemmon, who was acting under authority of his State License, and that he be charged with failure to exercise the prudence and caution in the piloting of the POTINI required under the conditions existing at the time.

(2) Mr. [REDACTED] be awarded the Treasury Department Silver Life Saving Medal."

REMARKS

7. This Division fully concurs with the recommendation of the Board that Mr. [REDACTED] be awarded the Treasury Department Silver Lifesaving Medal and for this purpose, it is recommended that after approval by the Commandant, the record of subject casualty be referred to the Coast Guard Board of Awards.

8. Subject to the foregoing remarks, it is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendations of the Marine Board of Investigation be approved.

EDM. C. CIRAVE

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

12 May, 1950
GH5-2/4
(F/B LACKAWANNA - SS
FOTINI (Greek) a-3)

Ind-1


15 May, 1950
GH5-2/4
(F/B LACKAWANNA - SS
FOTINI (Greek) a-3)

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

Forwarded, recommending approval.



APPROVED: 17 MAY 1950


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