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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; explosion on board the Motorboat MISS BUCK X. II off Clearwater, Florida on 29 September 1951

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 C.F., 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.

2. The motor vessel MISS BUCK X. II, propelled by Diesel motor, 12 g.t., 57 feet in length, built in 1941, was engaged in service as a passenger-carrying vessel in the fishing and recreation business in the Florida area. The MISS BUCK X. II, admiring less than 15 g.t., was not subject to statutory Coast Guard annual inspection and certification for seafaring purposes. On the morning of 29 September 1951, the MISS BUCK X. II departed from Clearwater, Florida for the fishing banks with forty-one passengers and two crew members on board. A closed globe valve incorrectly installed between the air tank and relief valve on the line to the air whistle caused such air tank to explode with sufficient violence to hole the vessel, causing her to submerge to deck level and thus necessitating her abandonment. This casualty occurred at approximately 0945 29 September 1951, approximately 12 miles off Clearwater, Florida. The motor vessel SEA RIVER was in close proximity and rescued all the passengers and crew of the MISS BUCK X. II. The weather conditions at the time of this casualty were good. No lives were lost as a result of this casualty. However, one passenger sustained a broken leg, another a heart attack, and several male and female passengers suffered mild shock.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. That the fifty-six point eight feet motorboat MISS BUCK X. II suffered an explosion of its air tank at about 0945 a.m., e.s.t. on 29 September 1951, approximately twelve miles off shore from Clearwater, Florida.

"2. That as a result of this explosion, MISS BUCK X. II submerged to deck level, causing passengers and crew to abandon ship in life jackets."
3. That forty-one passengers and two crew members were rescued by M/V SRA F.Y. without loss of life.

4. That injuries sustained as a result of this explosion consisted of a broken leg by one male passenger, a heart attack by another male passenger and mild shock by several male and female passengers.

5. That the motorboat was in charge of a licensed operator, John Carrick, 1905 North Port Harrison, Clearwater, Florida.

6. That the motorboat MISS BUCKY II was operated in compliance with the provisions of the Motorboat Act of 25 April 1940.

7. That the vessel was not required to be inspected and certificated under the law.

8. That the call for assistance by MISS BUCKY II was answered promptly by Coast Guard Air Station, St. Petersburg, which unit dispatched aircraft to the scene.

9. That life rafts and first aid equipment dropped by these aircraft were utilized in the rescue.

10. That MISS BUCKY II was toed to the Lowe's Marine Ways, St. Petersburg, Florida by the Coast Guard Cutter N.M.S.S.

The Board expressed the following Opinions:

1. That the cause of the explosion was a closed globe valve incorrectly installed between the air tank and relief valve on the line to the air whistle.

2. That this shut-off valve had been accidentally closed by some person unknown to this Board.

3. That there was no culpable negligence on the part of the owner or operator since the air tank installation had been in operation for approximately six years.

4. That the operator of the MISS BUCKY II, John Carrick, and crew member, Michael Mitch, conducted themselves in a seaman-like manner thereby aiding in preventing loss of life.
"5. That the successful rescue of the forty-one passengers and two crew members of the MISS BUCKLE II was due to the prompt and skillful action of William J. Sayers, master of the M/V S.A. F.V. II, combined with the aid of the Coast Guard planes from the U.S. Coast Guard Air Station, St. Petersburg, Florida.

"6. That had MISS BUCKLE II been inspected by Coast Guard Marine Inspection officers the dangerous equipment installation would have been noticed and correction required, thereby preventing such accident.

The Board made the following recommendations:

"1. That no punitive action be taken against the owner or operator of MISS BUCKLE II.

"2. That the owner and master of the M/V S.A. F.V. II, be presented the Silver Lifesaving Medal of the Treasury Department in recognition of his prompt and skillful rescue of the forty-three passengers and crew of MISS BUCKLE II without loss of life or injury while being brought on board the S.A. F.V. II, although there was a moderately rough sea. Without this prompt action on his part there most surely would have been some loss of life.

"3. That if this action fails to qualify for this medal, a letter of commendation for this act be given Mr. _____.

"4. That this incident be used in furtherance of attempts to pass legislation requiring all vessels carrying passengers for hire and therefore under charge of an operator possessing a Motorboat Operator's License, to be inspected and certified as is presently required for motorboats over sixty-five feet in length, or over fifteen gross tons."

6. In connection with recommendation 2 of the Board that the owner and master of the M/V S.A. F.V. II, be presented the Silver Lifesaving Medal of the Treasury Department for his rescue of all the passengers and crew of the MISS BUCKLE II, a copy of the record of
Investigation of subject casualty will be submitted for the recommendation of the "Coast Guard Board of Inquiry" following receipt of the report of subject casualty by the Commandant.

7. Recommendation 4 of the Board, in effect, requires that the existing safety statutes requiring annual inspections of vessels engaged in the carriage of passengers for hire be extended to cover all vessels of 21 gross tons or more engaged in the carriage of passengers for hire. In this connection, the Commandant has prepared proposed legislation to require the annual inspection and certification of all vessels engaged, regardless of tonnage, power or area, on which operated, which carry more than 15 passengers for hire, for consideration by Congress.

8. Subject to the foregoing restrictions, it is recommended that the findings of Fact, Opinion and Recommendations of the Board be approved.

L/F. A. N. O'BRIEN
P. T. O'BRIEN
Acting

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From: Chief, Office of Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

(L. F. A. N. O'BRIEN)
A. C. RICHARD
Acting Commandant

Pet: O: T: DEC 29, 1951

(L/F. A. N. O' BRIEN)
A. C. RICHARD
Acting Commandant

27 December, 1951