

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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

MVI
5 January, 1951
File: (NOTTINGHAM-ROCKWOOD a-9 Bd)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation into the capsizing of the NOTTINGHAM, with loss of life, in the vicinity of Cleveland Harbor, Ohio, on 17 October, 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, Opinions and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. On 17 October 1950 during the nighttime, for the purpose of stationary mooring over a pipeline to discharge sand, the SS ROCKWOOD, a sandsucker type vessel of 1,290 G.T., passed her after port mooring cable to the Motor Tug NOTTINGHAM, 14 G.T., for securing to a port quarter anchor buoy. The NOTTINGHAM made two unsuccessful approaches to the anchor buoy. Apparently on the third approach, the NOTTINGHAM fouled the cable of the anchor buoy with the mooring cable from the ROCKWOOD and as the ROCKWOOD had way on, her mooring cable tautened, upending or turning and capsizing the NOTTINGHAM, which resulted in the drowning of her 3 crew members in a position 1 mile south of Nottingham Red Buoy, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles off Cleveland, Ohio. The weather conditions were light southwest wind, light swells, dark, and clear visibility. As a result of this casualty, the following 3 crew members of the NOTTINGHAM lost their lives:

Edward T. Hertz
Paul Glazier
John Kazimer

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"(1) That the vessels involved in this casualty were the Motorboat NOTTINGHAM, a work tug, Official Number 255455, 14 gross tons, owned and operated by the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation, 1648 Standard Building, Cleveland, Ohio, an uninspected vessel, and the SS ROCKWOOD, a sandsucker-type vessel, Official Number 77362, 1290 gross tons, owned and operated by the Kelley Island Lime and Transportation Company, Cleveland, Ohio, last inspected on the 14th of April, 1950 at Sandusky, Ohio.

(2) That the SS ROCKWOOD was carrying a cargo consisting of 1300 tons of sand.

(3) That the weather conditions at the time of the casualty were: Wind SE, Light; Sea, light swells; Dark, clear and good visibility.

(4) That the following named crew members of the NOTTINGHAM lost their lives by drowning: Edward T. Hertz, [REDACTED], Paul Glazer, [REDACTED] and John Kazimer, [REDACTED].

(5) That at or about 0215, 17 October, 1950, the SS ROCKWOOD completed loading her cargo of sand at the pumping grounds, which are located North of Fairport Harbor, Ohio, and in Lake Erie. She then left the pumping grounds and proceeded to the Nottingham Tunnel Intake Area.

(6) That the Nottingham Intake Tunnel is a Public Utilities Project, contracted for by the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation, who are now engaged in laying a pipeline from the shoreline, to extend out into Lake Erie for a distance of three miles, and as the various sections of pipe are placed and secured on the lake bottom, they are covered with sand. That this is the operation in which the sandsucker ROCKWOOD was engaged. The Nottingham Intake Tunnel Area is nine and a half miles Northeast of the Cleveland West Pierhead Light.

(7) That the ROCKWOOD arrived in the vicinity of the Tunnel Area at 0410 EST, and at approximately 0430, the MB NOTTINGHAM came alongside and Mr. [REDACTED] a Merritt, Chapman and Scott civil engineer, boarded the ROCKWOOD and went up to the pilot house of said vessel. That while in the pilot house, the master of the ROCKWOOD and Mr. [REDACTED] discussed the various maneuvers necessary in the placing and mooring of the ROCKWOOD, preparatory to discharging her cargo of sand into a hopper and subsequently over the pipeline.

(8) That in this particular operation, four anchor buoys are placed two on each side of the pipeline and spaced 500 to 600 feet apart, and the sandsucker's four mooring cables are secured to the anchor buoys and the vessel is then properly placed and stationary. The four mooring cables aboard the ROCKWOOD are three-quarter inch steel cables, 500 feet in length, two forward and two aft.

(9) That after the master of the ROCKWOOD decided to use the after cable first, Mr. [REDACTED] left the pilot house and walked aft towards the fantail. The MB NOTTINGHAM then went to the stern of the ROCKWOOD and hauled the ROCKWOOD's cable aboard. Three men comprised the crew of the NOTTINGHAM. The end of the cable with the eye was left lying on the deck and then the cable was secured to the towposts of the NOTTINGHAM. When Mr. [REDACTED] arrived on the fantail, he found the first mate and a watchman of the ROCKWOOD stationed on the fantail and on duty. After the tug NOTTINGHAM had the mooring cable secured to her towposts, which were located amidships, the first mate of the ROCKWOOD stood by and operated the deck winch, and Mr. [REDACTED] placed himself at the after bulwarks to be in a proper position to see and direct the maneuver or operation. The first mate was also in a position where he could see the tug NOTTINGHAM while said tug was attempting to attach the mooring cable to the buoy.

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(10) That the SS ROCKWOOD arrived at the pipeline area from the eastward and proceeded to the southward of the four buoys, and after the cable was attached to the NOTTINGHAM, the ROCKWOOD turned and headed in between the four buoys, keeping the southwest buoy close aboard. The speed of the ROCKWOOD at this time was between one and two miles per hour, a bare steerageway. The NOTTINGHAM then hauled away on the cable as it was being payed out from the deck winch on the ROCKWOOD. When this maneuver started, the stern of the ROCKWOOD was approximately fifty feet to the eastward of the southwest buoy. This distance kept increasing due to the forward motion of the ROCKWOOD. The NOTTINGHAM towed the cable to the southwest buoy and as the boat approached the buoy the crew of the motorboat attempted to secure the cable to the buoy, the first attempt being unsuccessful as was the second attempt. During these maneuvers, the NOTTINGHAM's searchlight was used continuously and was being played on the buoy. That at the third attempt to secure the cable to the buoy, the sandsucker ROCKWOOD was 350 feet away from the buoy and the cable on the winch drum had reached its bitter end. During this time Mr. [REDACTED] was giving the first mate the signals and when the cable reached the bitter end the signal "stop" was given and he waved his flashlight and yelled to the crew of the NOTTINGHAM to let go the cable. Just at this moment the NOTTINGHAM's searchlight pointed upward momentarily and then disappeared from sight.

(11) That there was no definite or positive code of signals used between the two vessels for this operation.

(12) That the Motorboat NOTTINGHAM capsized at or about 0515 EST, 17 October, 1950. That at this hour of the morning it was still dark and due to the distance the sandsucker was off from the motorboat, 350 to 400 feet, it was impossible for the men standing by on the stern of the ROCKWOOD to ascertain as to what was happening or had already happened to the motorboat.

(13) That the master of the ROCKWOOD was then notified of the accident and an anchor was lowered a short while after. After the vessel was at anchor, a lifeboat was lowered and the Coast Guard Lifeboat Station, Cleveland, Ohio, was notified by the radio phone. This message was intercepted by two of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott tugs, and they arrived on the scene within fifteen minutes of the accident. The lifeboat, which was manned by the crew of the ROCKWOOD started to search the area of the accident, and upon reaching the southwest buoy the MB NOTTINGHAM was found floating bottomside up, alongside the buoy. That one of the crew members of the NOTTINGHAM was found floating in the water a short distance from the buoy. The body was taken aboard the lifeboat and artificial respiration was applied. The lifeboat crew then rowed back to the ROCKWOOD and the body was taken aboard. The Coast Guard picket boat then came alongside and two Coast Guardsmen continued applying artificial respiration to the drowned man. After all efforts of resuscitation failed, the man was pronounced dead. The search for the remaining two men was continued for the remainder of the day.

(14) That the MB NOTTINGHAM sank shortly after it was discovered floating alongside the buoy bottomsides up.

(15) That at daybreak, the following steps were taken to raise the NOTTINGHAM: The cable was slipped off the drum of the deck winch of the ROCKWOOD and was hauled aboard a tug, and when the cable lead was straight up and down, a derrick scow was placed over the spot. Two divers were then sent down and when they reached bottom they saw the sunken NOTTINGHAM. An examination was made and it was noted that the mooring cable of the ROCKWOOD was still secure to the towposts of the NOTTINGHAM and the eye of the cable and the hook attached to the eye was also secured and fast to the towposts. The motorboat was then raised out of the water. It was noted that the end of the cable had slipped back to the towposts of the NOTTINGHAM and the hook in the eye of the cable was hooked to the cable that was passed around the towposts. It was also noted that the motorboat was resting on the concrete anchor of the northwest buoy and the buoy itself was pulled under water by the cable of the ROCKWOOD.

(16) That the other two bodies were found several days later, and at the Coroner's inquest it was revealed that all three deaths were due to drowning.

(17) That the sandsucker ROCKWOOD had delivered and discharged fourteen cargoes of sand previous to the 17th day of October, 1950, and had used the same tactics and maneuvers as were used on the morning of the accident."

4. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

"(1) That the master, mate, and various crew members of the ROCKWOOD who were on watch, were at their proper stations and performing their tasks in a seamanlike manner and giving complete co-operation to Mr. [REDACTED], the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation representative.

(2) That the personnel of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation, who were directly in charge of the pipeline operation, did not use sufficient safety precautions or foresight in allowing the crew of the NOTTINGHAM to secure the mooring cable of the ROCKWOOD to the motorboat's towposts in such a manner that it would be almost impossible to release the cable quickly.

(3) That since this operation was performed in darkness and since the distance between the two vessels at the time of the accident was 350 to 400 feet, it was impossible for the witnesses to see what was actually happening aboard the MB NOTTINGHAM or what caused her to capsize.

(4) That since all the crew members of the NOTTINGHAM perished, the Board lacked complete knowledge of what happened on board the NOTTINGHAM causing her to capsize.

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(5) It is also the opinion of this Board that the employees of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation were directly responsible for the accident.

(6) That the estimated monetary damage to MB NOTTINGHAM is \$3,000.00."

5. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"(1) It is recommended that a letter of admonition be sent to the master of the SS ROCKWOOD for his dereliction in not assuring himself of a clear and concise understanding of the direct responsibility of this maneuver or operations, and also for not establishing a definite code of signals which would provide for a quick and ready release of the cable in an emergency.

(2) It is recommended that a letter be sent to the management of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation pointing out that more thought should be given to safety precautions, and that this casualty clearly indicates that a positive means for a quick and ready release for cables as used in this and similar operations should be established.

(3) It is recommended that no further action be taken with respect to the preferment of charges against personnel involved, pursuant to Title 46 CFR 136.09-35."

REMARKS

6. It is noted that a copy of the precept convening the Board is appended to the record of the subject investigation. The original precept is to be forwarded to Headquarters and made a part of the record in lieu of the copy as submitted.

7. The Board designated the Travelers Insurance Company as a party in interest to the investigation and accorded [REDACTED] of McKenney, Merrick, Artig and Stuart all the statutory rights and privileges of a representative of a party in interest. In general a party in interest to an investigation of a marine casualty is any person who caused or contributed to the cause of the casualty including owners, charterers, and agents involved in vessel operation. An insurance company concerned only with the economic results of a casualty has no direct interest in the investigation, and accordingly, does not meet the requirements of a party in interest.

8. Opinion 2 of the Board refers to "personnel" of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation who were directly in charge of the pipeline operation, and opinion 5 refers to "employees" of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation as responsible for the subject casualty. Additional information should have been submitted by the Board indicating the specific person or persons who, in their opinion caused or contributed to the cause of the casualty.

9. Opinion 4 of the Board states that the Board lacked complete knowledge

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of what happened on board the NOTTINGHAM causing her to capsize. This statement should have been elaborated on, as required by the provisions of RS 4450, as amended, and the regulations thereunder, by indicating the cause of the casualty insofar as such cause was ascertainable.

10. Opinion 1 of the board states that the master and certain other crew members onboard the ROCKWOOD were at their proper stations and performing their tasks in a seamanlike manner and gave complete cooperation to the representative of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation. Recommendation 1 of the Board states that a letter of admonition be sent to the master of the ROCKWOOD for his dereliction in connection with the subject casualty. This seeming inconsistency should have been resolved by the Board.

11. The recommendation of the board that a letter be sent to the management of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation pointing out that more thought should be given to safety precautions is disapproved. There is no evidence in the record which would indicate the lack of appropriate safety precautions in operations under the jurisdiction of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation, aside from possible improvement in the mooring cable release arrangements on small towboats. The Commander of the 9th Coast Guard District is to furnish the person in charge of the project under the jurisdiction of the Merritt, Chapman and Scott Corporation in which the subject casualty occurred with a copy of the Board's report, together with the Commandant's action thereon following approval.

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

/s/ EDW. C. CLEAVE
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From: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

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

APPROVED: January 17, 1951

/s/ MERLIN O'NEILL
MERLIN O'NEILL

Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant