

MVI

20 March 1952

(P & T ADVENTURER -
TULLAHOMA - a-13 Bd)

From: Chief, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division
To: Commandant
Via: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; SS P & T ADVENTURER, SS TULLAHOMA -
collision off Destruction Island, Washington, 4 August, 1951,
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 its Findings of Fact, Opinions and Recommendations has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. On 3 August, 1951, the P & T ADVENTURER, a dry cargo vessel of 7,606 g.t., with a cargo of lumber, departed Port Gamble for Vancouver, Washington. On 23 July, 1951, the TULLAHOMA, a tank vessel of 10,296 g.t., with a cargo of crude oil, departed La Libertad, Ecuador for Vancouver, B.C. On the morning of 4 August, 1951, both vessels were off the coast of Washington and during a dense fog the P & T ADVENTURER by radar sighted the TULLAHOMA off her starboard bow and the TULLAHOMA by radar sighted the P & T ADVENTURER off her port bow. Both vessels assumed they were on parallel courses, and the P & T ADVENTURER changed course slightly to port and the TULLAHOMA changed course slightly to starboard to give each other wider passing distance. Both vessels were on converging and collision courses and collided at or about 0208 4 August, 1951, approximately 10 miles west of Destruction Island. Prior to and at the time of the collision both vessels, though sounding regulation fog signals, were proceeding at an immoderate speed and also had other vessels in sight on their respective radars. The weather conditions at the time of this casualty were light northwesterly airs, dense fog, calm sea, with visibility approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ mile. As a result of this casualty, one person lost his life; the P & T ADVENTURER sustained damage estimated at \$50,000 and the TULLAHOMA sustained damage estimated at \$100,000.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. The SS P & T ADVENTURER and the tankship TULLAHOMA collided in fog, while underway in the North Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Washington, in the vicinity of 124 degrees, 43 minutes West longitude, 47 degrees, 38 minutes North latitude (approximately 10 miles west of Destruction Island), on 4 August, 1951, at about 0208 PDST.

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1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 U.S.C., Part 133, 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 3 August, 1951, the P & T ADVENTURER, a dry cargo vessel of 7,606 g.t., with a cargo of lumber, departed Port Gamble for Vancouver, Washington. On 28 July, 1951, the TULLAHOMA, a tank vessel of 10,296 g.t., with a cargo of crude oil, departed La Libertad, Ecuador for Vancouver, B.C. On the morning of 4 August, 1951, both vessels were off the coast of Washington and during a dense fog the P & T ADVENTURER by radar sighted the TULLAHOMA off her starboard bow and the TULLAHOMA by radar sighted the P & T ADVENTURER off her port bow. Both vessels assumed they were on parallel courses, and the P & T ADVENTURER changed course slightly to port and the TULLAHOMA changed course slightly to starboard to give each other wider passing distance. Both vessels were on converging and collision courses and collided at or about 0208 4 August, 1951, approximately 10 miles west of Destruction Island. Prior to and at the time of the collision both vessels, though sounding regulation fog signals, were proceeding at an immoderate speed and also had other vessels in sight on their respective radars. The weather conditions at the time of this casualty were light northeasterly airs, dense fog, calm sea, with visibility approximately 1/2 mile. As a result of this casualty, one person lost his life; the P & T ADVENTURER sustained damage estimated at \$50,000 and the TULLAHOMA sustained damage estimated at \$100,000.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. The SS P & T ADVENTURER and the tankship TULLAHOMA collided in fog, while underway in the North Pacific Ocean, off the coast of Washington, in the vicinity of 124 degrees, 48 minutes West longitude, 47 degrees, 58 minutes North latitude (approximately 10 miles west of Destruction Island), on 4 August, 1951, at about 0208 PDST.

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"2. The two vessels involved were:

- a. The P & T ADVENTURER, a U. S. inspected steam screw ocean freighter, official number 247 220, of 7,606 gross tons, a Victory-type, 8500 horsepower vessel, homeport, San Francisco, California, built at Portland, Oregon, in 1945, of steel. This vessel was formerly named the ST. CLOUD VICTORY. It is owned by Pope and Talbot, Incorporated, 320 California Street, San Francisco, California, and at the time of the collision, in command of Eric D. Swanson, age [redacted], license number [redacted], issue 5, 7, of [redacted]. This vessel was sailing under enrollment, being engaged in intercoastal trade, and was equipped with a Raytheon-type radar, a direction finder, a fathometer and a gyro-compass. Captain Swanson held pilotage indorsements for major Pacific Coast ports, Puerto Rico and Chesapeake Bay.
- b. The TULLAHOMA, a U. S. inspected steam screw ocean tankship official number 246 662, of 10,296 gross tons, a T-2 turbo-electric-drive vessel, of 6,000 horsepower, homeport, Wilmington, Delaware, built at Chester, Pennsylvania, in 1944 of steel, owned by Charles Kurz and Company, Incorporated, 1000 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with Keystone Shipping Company the agent-operator. At the time of the collision, the vessel was in command of Robert P. McKeever, age [redacted], license number [redacted], issue 1, 4, of [redacted]. The vessel was equipped with automatic steering (iron mike), a Raytheon-type radar, a direction finder, a fathometer, a gyro compass and loran. Captain McKeever held pilotage indorsement for Delaware Bay and River.

"3. At the time of the collision, there prevailed light northwesterly airs, dense fog, calm sea, with visibility limited to about 1/2 mile. The barometer reading was 30.07, air temperature 56 degrees and sea temperature 52 degrees.

"4. The P & T ADVENTURER departed Port Gamble, Washington (on Puget Sound), at 1730 PDST, 3 August, 1951, loaded with a cargo consisting mostly of lumber, part of which was a 10-foot deck load stowed fore and aft. The vessel's draft then was 12 feet 11 inches forward and 22 feet 6 inches aft. The vessel was manned by a crew of 45, including the Master, and destined for Vancouver, Washington. The Master, Eric Swanson, a duly licensed pilot, had the vessel under his control until she reached Ediz Hook, at 2010 hours,

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at which time, after crossing the line of demarcation, he went below. About 2251, or 5 minutes before the vessel came abeam Waada Island Light, Captain Swanson returned to the bridge, where he remained continuously until after the collision. At 2315 hours PDST, Duntze Rock Lighted Whistle Buoy was abeam, 1.7 miles off. Thereafter, the vessel rounded the Cape, and was abeam Duntze Rock Lighted Whistle Buoy 1.7 miles off for the second time, at 2323. Fog was encountered, and the vessel was put on 196 degrees gyro. The gyro had a 2-degree westerly error, thus giving a True course of 194 degrees. The vessel was traveling at about 18 knots, and was favored with an ebb tide. After rounding Duntze Rock, and steadying on course 194 degrees True, the turbine nozzles were reduced from 16 to 13, and the speed of the vessel slowed to approximately 14 or 15 knots. At about 0016 PDST, 4 August, 1951, same course, Umatilla Light was observed visually abeam, and 1.8 miles off, as determined by radar. At this point, the fog had lifted, and the visibility increased to 5 to 10 miles. At 0018, the course was changed to 169 degrees gyro, 167 degrees True, no change of speed being made. At 0105, the vessel encountered dense fog. At that time, the radar was on the 8-mile scope, and the mate ordered the ordinary seaman, who was stationed on the bridge at that time, to go forward as a lookout on the bow. From both stations, the lookout heard the whistle signal from an aid to navigation, which was apparently James Island Whistle Buoy, which was located approximately 2-1/2 miles to the east of the vessel's courseline. Regulation fog signals were being sounded by the ADVENTURER. Several small fishing vessels were observed at intervals on the radar scope on the 20-mile range. Thereafter, a larger target appeared noteworthy 5 to 6 miles away, bearing 10 degrees, relative, off the starboard bow. The cursor was set on this target on the 8-mile range, and it was observed that the bearing did not change appreciably. When this target was approximately 3-1/2 to 4 miles distant, same relative bearing, Captain Swanson ordered a 5-degree course change to the left. The vessel remained on this course for a few minutes, at which time Captain Swanson ordered another 5 degree course change to the left. At this time, Third Mate [redacted] notified the lookout to keep a careful lookout towards starboard, as there was a vessel in that area two miles ahead. The vessel steadied on 159 degrees gyro, and after she steadied, the lookout rang one bell, reporting a ship on the starboard bow. Burris sighted and reported the vessel at about the same time. The port sidelight of the other vessel, which was later determined to be the TULLAHOMA, the first light sighted by Captain Swanson, appeared approximately 15 degrees off the ADVENTURER's starboard bow, distant about 1/2 mile. At this point, the TULLAHOMA appeared to be crossing the bow of the ADVENTURER. The Master immediately ordered full astern, later followed by 3 blasts of the vessel's whistle. At the same time, the mast and range lights of the TULLAHOMA became visible to the Master. At 0208 and just as the engines commenced going

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astern, the ADVENTURER struck the TULLAHOMA on the port side, in way of the forward end of the poop deck, at approximately a 90-degree angle, and raked aft. The ADVENTURER, at the time of the impact, had considerable forward way. Two minutes later, 0210, the engines of the ADVENTURER were stopped, the vessels having drifted apart.

"5. On 23 July, 1951, the SS TULLAHOMA departed La Libertad, Ecuador, enroute to Vancouver, B.C., with a cargo consisting of 16,543 tons of crude oil, with a mean draft of 30 feet 9-1/2 inches. The vessel was carrying a crew consisting of 38 men and the Master. At 0120, 3 August, 1951, the ship was abeam Northwest Seal Rock (St. George's Reef), 12 miles off. At 1330, according to the log, the vessel was abeam Yaquina Head. The vessel continued north off the Oregon coast on automatic steering, on course 360 degrees True. There was no gyro error. At 0042 hours, 4 August, 1951, the Second Mate, James R. Giblin, who was on watch with an Able Seaman on wheel watch and a lookout on the bow, obtained a bearing on Destruction Island Light. At 0142 hours, the vessel still being on a full ahead bell, Giblin obtained another bearing of Destruction Island, which he figured put the vessel off said Island some 19 miles at that time. At 0143 hours, he put the engines on standby, and through the speaking tube, advised the engineer on watch that he did so as he thought the vessel was approaching fog, and probably would have to maneuver to avoid the vessels whose lights he had previously sighted ahead and off the starboard bow. A surface mist had developed at this time, and the visibility was decreasing. The vessel proceeded northward with no change in course or speed, and at 0202 hours, the radar was turned on by Giblin, as the vessel was encountering a dense bank of fog. Visibility to the northeast at this time was good, but to the north and west, fog had set in. Targets were observed on the radar when it warmed up at 0204. In all, there were 3 targets, two small ones off the starboard bow, the other 10 degrees off the port bow, at a distance of some 1-1/2 miles. The targets on the starboard bow appeared to be the vessels which the TULLAHOMA had been gradually overtaking. The other target, and by far the largest, appeared unexpectedly, as no lights had been observed from that area. Giblin watched this large target for about 30 seconds, and when the distance closed to about 1 mile, he changed course 10 degrees to the right, and called the Master on the speaking tube. Giblin informed the Master that he had a ship on his port bow, distant about 1-1/2 miles, and also that it was getting foggy. While talking, both men heard a fog whistle off to port in the direction of the target. The Master, Captain McKeever, was asleep when called by Giblin in his cabin directly below the bridge. McKeever ordered the mate to stop the vessel's engine, and stated that he would be right up. Giblin then simultaneously rang a stop bell, and sounded one prolonged blast on the whistle. He ordered a second 10-degree course change to the right a few seconds later.

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Thereafter, and upon hearing 3 short blasts from the other vessel, Giblin ordered another 10-degree course change to the right. At the same time, he observed through the open wheelhouse door, a green light close aboard. The TULLAHOMA being at this time on a heading of 030 degrees True, he ordered the rudder put hard right. The loom of the lights of the other vessel, which was later ascertained to be the ADVENTURER, indicated to Giblin that said vessel was heading directly for his port beam. Thereupon, he ordered hard left, in an attempt to throw his stern away from the oncoming vessel. Within seconds, and at about 0208, the bow of the ADVENTURER rammed the TULLAHOMA on the port quarter, as previously described. Following the impact, in a matter of seconds, Captain McKeever ran from his room to the bridge. Due to the fact that the ADVENTURER's engines were working astern, and since the forward speed of the TULLAHOMA at the time of impact was approximately 10 knots, the vessels parted at once, and soon drifted beyond sight in the fog.

"6. Thereafter, the Masters checked the condition of their respective vessels. It was found that the lower part of the ADVENTURER's forepeak was pushed in some 20 feet, and the TULLAHOMA's hull had been penetrated 25 feet, in the vicinity of the break of the poop, between frames 41 and 45. Each attempted to contact the other vessel, the Coast Guard, and their respective owners. Captain McKeever was notified that the First Assistant Engineer, John J. Ilic, was trapped in his quarters, said quarters being in the vicinity of the damaged area of the TULLAHOMA. He proceeded to the scene and with assistance, cut away the debris in order to free the First Assistant Engineer. It was evident at once that said man was dead, and such fact was pronounced by the Master after he could feel no pulse or revive the man with artificial respiration. Three crew members of the TULLAHOMA were reported to have been injured, but the injuries proved minor. The TULLAHOMA thereafter maneuvered towards the beach until an electrical failure necessitated her anchoring at about 0309 hours. The ADVENTURER stood by and kept a constant watch on her radar. After daylight, and on request of the TULLAHOMA's Master, his ship was taken in tow by the ADVENTURER until relieved by a commercial salvage tug. This tug towed the TULLAHOMA to her port of destination, Vancouver, B.C. After being relieved by the commercial tug, the ADVENTURER made her way to and up the Columbia River. The Coast Guard Cutter NAUGATUCK, which, among other Coast Guard vessels which had promptly gone to the rescue, took the body of Ilic ashore when the TULLAHOMA was off Port Angeles.

"7. As a result of this casualty, the ADVENTURER suffered some \$50,000 in damages to her hull and equipment. The vessel was repaired at the Swan Island Shipyard, Portland, Oregon. The TULLAHOMA incurred some

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\$100,000 in damages to her hull and equipment, repairs being made at the Todd Shipyard, Seattle, Washington. One man lost his life, First Assistant Engineer J. J. Ilic, of the TULLAHOMA, which also had 3 crew members slightly injured. There was no cargo loss to either vessel, though the TULLAHOMA did lose approximately 600 barrels of bunker fuel, as a result of ruptured inner plating. NAVCG Forms 2692 have been previously forwarded to Headquarters, copies of which are a part of this record by reason of their being exhibits. The death certificate of First Assistant Engineer Ilic is herewith attached to this report.

"8. Considerable discrepancy appears in the record as to the point of collision. The position as determined by the Board was approximately 77 degrees True, distance 10 miles from Destruction Island, in latitude 47 degrees 38.2 minutes and longitude 124 degrees 43.7 minutes. This was arrived at by computations from and testimony within the record which indicated that the TULLAHOMA was moving in excess of the 13.8 knots as estimated by McKeever, and by the positions as determined by both vessels shortly after the collision. Actually, the TULLAHOMA, which had been trimmed to an even keel of 29 feet 10 inches, fore and aft, averaged 14.02 knots from Northwest Seal Rocks (St. George's Reef), abeam 12 miles off at 0120 on 3 August to Yaquina Head, which was abeam at 1530, 3 August, and averaged 14 knots from there to the point of collision. The ADVENTURER's speed was calculated to be 17.32 knots between Dumtre Rock Buoy and Umatilla Light."

4. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

"1. It is the opinion of the board that the primary cause of the collision was that both vessels were proceeding at an immoderate rate of speed for the weather conditions then existing, and that the Masters of the two vessels and Second Mate James R. Giblin, of the TULLAHOMA, were responsible for operating at such speed.

"2. The board further opined that both vessels easily could have avoided the collision, even going at excessive speed, had they both used their vessel's radar as called for by the conditions, and properly evaluated and acted upon the information obtainable therefrom. In this connection: (a) When Second Mate Giblin put the TULLAHOMA's engines on standby, he knew or should have known that since his vessel was encountering limited visibility and nearing other vessels, he should have turned on the radar and called the Master, particularly in view of the standing orders of the Master in regards to turning on and using the radar. His failure to do so until his vessel plowed into a really thick bank of fog caused both vessels to be placed in

extreme jeopardy, whereas proper precautionary use of the radar would have exposed the presence of the ADVENTURER in ample time for him to avoid this situation. (b) The Master of the ADVENTURER was derelict in failing to ascertain the position, course and speed of the TULLAHOMA on the radar prior to altering his course, and having failed to do this, in his awareness of the other vessel's near approach, he should have stopped his vessel as quickly as possible, or at least reduced his speed radically so as to have his ship under better control.

"3. The board further opined that: (a) McKeever, as Master of the TULLAHOMA, being responsible for the safety of his vessel and crew, should have been on the bridge of his ship prior to the collision, since his vessel was in waters strange to him and the Mate on watch, making an important landfall near the entrance to the Straits of Juan de Fuca, during fishing season, and at a time of the year when fog prevails, particularly since his vessel had actually encountered impaired visibility for a period of some 25 minutes prior to the collision. (b) That, furthermore, just prior to the collision, Captain McKeever failed to get up to the bridge when called, as rapidly as he was able, which action he knew or should have known was warranted by the circumstances which had been brought to his attention by Giblin's call and by the sound of the ADVENTURER's whistle.

"4. It is the board's further opinion that the Coast Guard rescue operation was performed promptly and efficiently.

"5. It is the board's further opinion that the collision was not caused by or contributed to by any structural defect or any failure in the operation of the equipment aboard either vessel.

"6. It is the board's opinion that action under R.S. 4450, as amended, is deemed appropriate as to the licenses held by Captain Swanson, Captain McKeever and Second Mate Giblin, but none is indicated as to any other personnel aboard the vessels.

"7. It is the opinion of the board that vessels equipped with radar and using radar should in no way be excused for running at speeds greater than justifiable for vessels not so equipped; that one of the primary causes of collisions of this nature under conditions of limited visibility is excessive speed as a result of reliance upon the vessel's radar to avoid situations of danger, and to extricate the vessel from a dangerous position which has arisen from moving at such excessive speed, such reliance frequently completely ignoring all other means of discovering and avoiding danger and often in violation of the well-established Rules of the Road, as well as other applicable laws and regulations."

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5. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"1. It is recommended that charges of negligence be preferred under R.S. 4450, as amended, against the licenses of Captain Swanson, Captain McKeever and Second Mate Giblin, on the various grounds mentioned in the foregoing opinion of the board. In this connection, it is to be noted that none of these men are at present available for service of charges in this jurisdiction.

"2. It is the further recommendation of the board that further study be made (on local, national and international levels), in regard to the application of the Rules of the Road to vessels equipped with radar with a view of strengthening the rules to insure compliance by such vessels, at least by requiring them to operate and use the radar when navigating under conditions of limited and obscured visibility.

"3. It is recommended that no further action in this case be taken by the board."

REMARKS

6. With respect to the navigation of ships equipped with radar, attention is invited to the statement adopted at the International Conference for Safety of Life at sea, which was held in London from 23 April to 10 June 1948, which is as follows:

"The Conference, while recognizing that the recent advances in radar and electronic navigational aids are of great service to shipping, is of the opinion that the possession of any such device in no way relieves the master of a ship from his obligation strictly to observe the requirements laid down in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, and in particular, the obligations contained in Articles 15 and 16 of those Regulations."

7. The record fully establishes that both vessels were proceeding at excessive speed in fog. At the time such vessels sighted the other on their radar, each should have been proceeding at a moderate speed and though still too far apart for their respective fog signals to be heard and therefore not specifically required to stop their engines, both vessels, in the exercise of good seamanship, were required to navigate with extreme caution under the circumstances until all danger of collision was over. Both vessels failed in this duty.

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8. Failure of the master on the P & T ADVENTURER and the Second Mate on the TULLAHOMA to proceed at a moderate speed and to navigate with caution during dense fog which resulted in the subject collision and caused the First Assistant Engineer on the TULLAHOMA to lose his life constitutes evidence of criminal liability within the meaning of 46 USC 526 1 and 2, 18 USC 1115 and 18 USC 2196. As required by the provisions of 8.S. 4450, as amended, (46 USC 239 (h)), the record of investigation of subject casualty will be referred to the U. S. Attorney General for investigation by and prosecution through the Federal District Attorney of the district having jurisdiction under the provisions of the Criminal Code.

9. 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/P. A. OVENDEN
P. A. OVENDEN

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25 March, 1952

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

Forwarded, recommending approval.

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

APPROVED: MAR 26 1952

/s/A. C. RICHMOND
A. C. RICHMOND

Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Acting Commandant