

3rd Endorsement on Voyage Report
from Lt. (jg) Merle James GRAHAM,
USNR., C.O., Armed Guard Unit,
S.S. ABEL STEARNS, dated 5 June, 1944.

U.S. NAVY PORT OFFICE
Naples, Italy

30 June, 1944

7176
67

From: U.S. Navy Port Officer.
To : Chief of Naval Operations.
Via : ComNavNaw.

1. The comments listed in Paragraph 1 (e) this voyage report were discussed with Colonel HENDERSON, Executive Officer, Port Commandant's Office, 6th Port Headquarters, Naples, Italy.

2. It was his opinion that inasmuch as the loading in question was not the concern of the Port Commandant, Naples, it should be referred to the Port Commandant, Bizerte. This office therefore forwarded a letter to NavPo Bizerte in which attention was invited to the allegations listed in Paragraph 1 (e), this report.

Fourth JUL 5 1944
ENDORSEMENT
FROM: COMNAVNAW
TO : CNO
1. FORWARDED.
W.E.G. Erskine
W. E. G. ERSKINE,
By Direction

GEO. H. Scannell
GEO. H. SCANNELL,
Lt. Comdr., U.S.N.R.,
By direction.

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JUL 15 1944
File No. (36) *Ad-3/Abel Stearns*
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Serial No. *7865*

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ITALY

Serial + end
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JUL 17 1944
RECEIVED
HEADQUARTERS

CONFIDENTIAL

JUNE, 5, 1944.

FROM: LT. (JG) MERLE JAMES GRAHAM, U.S.N.R.
COMMANDING OFFICER, NAVAL ARMED GUARD,
(C/O ARMED GUARD CENTER, S. BROOKLYN, N.Y.)
S.S. ABEL STEARNS, GROSS TONS 7176

TO: THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

VIA: THE NAVAL ^{Port} LIAISON OFFICER, NAPLES, ITALY.

SUBJECT: REPORT OF VOYAGE S.S. ABEL STEARNS FROM BIZERTE, TUNISIA
TO NAPLES ITALY VIA PORT AGUSTA, SICILY.

REFERENCE: (a) GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDING OFFICERS OF
NAVAL ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT SHIPS, PARAG. 4301 TO 4307.

1. IN ACCORDANCE WITH REFERENCE (a) THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IS
SUBMITTED:

(A) TYPE OF VESSEL: FREIGHTER (LIBERTY)
TYPE OF CARGO: AMMUNITION AND ARMY GENERAL
OWNER OF VESSEL: U.S. WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
CHARTERED TO: A.H. HULL & CO. , OPERATORS

(B) PORT OF DEPARTURE: BIZERTE, TUNISIA.
DATE: JUNE 1, 1944.
CONVOYED.
SPEED (AVERAGE) : 8 KNOTS.
ARRIVED PORT AGUSTA, SICILY. JUNE 3, 1944.
LEFT PORT AGUSTA, SICILY. JUNE 4, 1944.
CONVOYED.
SPEED (AVERAGE) : 8 KNOTS
ARRIVED NAPLES, ITALY JUNE 5, 1944.

NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: OUT OF BIZERTE * 52
OUT OF AGUSTA * 52

NUMBER OF ESCORT VESSELS: OUT OF BIZERTE * 6
OUT OF AGUSTA * 3

INTERMITTENT AIR COVERAGE DURING ENTIRE VOYAGE

PORT OF ARRIVAL: NAPLES, ITALY. JUNE 5, 1944.

- see end.*
- (C) THIS VESSEL HAD NO CONTACT NOR ACTION WITH THE ENEMY.
 - (D) THE VOYAGE WAS ROUTINE THROUGHOUT. VESSEL ZIG*ZAGED IN ACCORDANCE WITH INSTRUCTIONS.
 - (E) THE VESSEL WAS DELAYED SOMEWHAT IN PORT DUE TO THE INEFFICIENT MANNER OF LOADING. THE AMMUNITION WAS LOADED EFFICIENTLY BUT THE GENERAL CARGO POORLY HANDLED. DOCK AUTHORITIES WERE VERY UNCOOPERATIVE IN THEIR RELATIONS WITH MASTER. THE #2 HOLD WAS TWICE LOADED IN SUCH A MANNER AS TO PRESENT A FIRE HAZARD AND IT WAS NECESSARY FOR MASTER TO APPEAL TO THE HIGHEST RANKING MILITARY AUTHORITY TO HAVE THE CONDITION CORRECTED. DECK CARGO WAS SO PLACED AS TO PREVENT ACCESS TO THE GUNS. ON INSISTENCE OF AGCO. A CATWALK WAS BUILT AFT AND ONE PROMISED FORWARD BUT NEVER MATERIALIZED. SHIPS CARPENTER FINALLY BUILT A MAKESHIFT STRUCTURE AFTER SHIP HAD PUT TO SEA. LOADING PERFORMED BY ARAB WORKMEN SUPERVISED BY ARMY OFFICERS.
 - (F) THE MERCHANT RADIO OPERATORS APPEARED TO CARRY OUT WARTIME RADIO INSTRUCTIONS PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO KEEPING INTERCEPTED MESSAGES CONFIDENTIAL.
 - (G) THERE ARE NO DEFECTS IN ARMAMENT OR EQUIPMENT REQUIRING IMMEDIATE ATTENTION.
 - (H) THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF THE SHIP WERE DILIGENT ABOUT CARRYING OUT " WARTIME INSTRUCTIONS FOR U.S. MERCHANT SHIPS".
 - (I) THERE ARE NO RECOMMENDATIONS.
 - (J) NO IMPROPER PROCEDURE ON THE PART OF FRIENDLY AIRCRAFT APPROACHING THIS VESSEL WAS NOTED.

Merle J. Graham

MERLE J. GRAHAM,
LT. (JG) D*V(S) U.S.N.R.
ARMED GUARD COMMANDER

FIRST ENDORSEMENT
Confidential.

U.S. NAVY PORT OFFICE
Naples, Italy

10 June, 1944

From: U.S. Navy Port Officer.
TO : Chief of Naval Operations.
Via : ComNavNaw.

1. Forwarded.

G. H. Scannell
GEO. H. SCANNELL,
Lieut. Comdr., USNR.,
By direction.

File No. UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES
A4-3 NORTHWEST AFRICAN WATERS

Serial: 01149 22 June 1944.

SECOND ENDORSEMENT

From: Commander U.S. Naval Forces, Northwest African Waters.
To : U.S. Navy Port Officer, Naples, Italy.

1. Returned.
2. Attention is directed to paragraph (E) of basic report.
3. Comment on the action taken in respect to correction of improperly loaded deck cargo.
4. U.S. Army Port Commanders have standing orders that cargo is not to be loaded in a manner that interferes with the defensive equipment of the vessels. It is the responsibility of the USNAVPO to inform and assist the C.O. of the Armed Guard when the above orders are not carried out.

W. E. G. Erskine
W. E. G. ERSKINE,
By direction