

OFFICE OF U. S. NAVAL OBSERVER

H. M. C. DOCKYARD

HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA

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C-O-N-F-I-D-E-N-T-I-A-L

FIRST ENDORSEMENT

18 January 1944.

To : The Chief of Naval Operations.

Subj: Voyage Report of SS ABEL STEARNS - Forwarding of.

1. Forwarded.

7176 BT

*Malcolm N. Stanley*  
MALCOLM N. STANLEY.

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24 JAN 1944

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Office of the Chief of Naval Operations  
FLEET MAINTENANCE  
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NAVY DEPARTMENT

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JANUARY 16, 1944

FROM: ENSIGN EDWIN ANTHONY GEHRING, 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 VICE SHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

VIA: 1) U.S. NAVAL OBSERVER, HALIFAX, N.S.

SUBJECT: REPORT OF VOYAGE OF S.S.ABEL STEARNS FROM  
NEWPORT, ENGLAND TO HALIFAX, N.S.

REFERENCE: (A) GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMMANDING  
OFFICERS OF NAVAL ARMED GUARDS ON MERCHANT  
SHIPS, 1943 EDITION, PARAGRAPH 4301.

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

(A) TYPE OF VESSEL: FREIGHTER (LIBERTY)  
TYPE OF CARGO: BALLAST  
OWNER OF WESSEL: U.S.WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION  
CHARTERED TO: A.H.BULL & CO., N.Y. (OPERATORS)

(B) PORT OF DEPARTURE: NEWPORT, ENGLAND  
DATE OF DEPARTURE: DECEMBER 28, 1943  
CONVOYED  
SPEED (AVERAGE): 8 KNOTS  
NUMBER OF SHIPS IN ESCORT: MOST COUNTED AT ANY  
ONE TIME WAS 12, ONE  
MERCHANT CARRIER AND  
ONE RESCUE SHIP. FRE-  
QUENT PATROL AIRCRAFT  
WERE SIGHTED.  
NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: 58 (ACCORDING TO  
CRUISING PLAN)

✓ PORT OF ARRIVAL: HALIFAX, N.S.  
✓ DATE OF ARRIVAL: JANUARY 16, 1944

(C) THIS VESSEL HAD NO CONTACT NOR ACTION WITH THE  
ENEMY.

✓ (D) THE VOYAGE WAS ROUTINE THROUGHOUT. RATHER SEVERE  
ROUGH WEATHER WAS ENCOUNTERED FOR ABOUT TEN DAYS. FRE-  
QUENT SEAS WERE TAKEN OVER THE FOREPEAK; THE FOREDECK WAS  
CONSTANTLY UNDER SPRAY. THE BOW POUNDED AS THE SHIP PITCHED  
AND THE SCREW VIBRATED, THE EFFECTS OF WHICH WERE FELT  
SEVERELY THROUGHOUT THE SHIP. TWO READY SERVICE BOXES  
WERE LOOSENED AS A RESULT. THE VESSEL ROLLED INCESSANTLY.  
ONCE THE STEERING APPARATUS WAS RENDERED INOPERATIVE AND  
THE SHIP CIRCLED INSIDE THE CONVOY AND GRADUALLY DROPPED

DECLASSIFIED

Authority WND 750161

ASTERN OF IT BUT REGAINED HER POSITION BEFORE DUSK.  
THE CREW ENGAGED IN FIRING PRACTICE ON LEAVING MILFORD HAVEN AND WAS COMPLIMENTED ON ITS MACHINE GUN FIRING BY THE D.E.M.S.'S "DRIFTER" (WHICH SUPPLIED THE TARGET FLARES) AS FOLLOWS:- "GOOD SHOOTING; YOU CUT FLARE FROM PARACHUTE.)

(E) THIS VESSEL LAY AT ANCHOR AT BARRY ROADS FROM 1358 DECEMBER 28 TO 0905 DECEMBER 29, 1943 AS PER INSTRUCTIONS RECEIVED FROM NAVAL CONTROL AT NEWPORT, ENGLAND. THIS VESSEL ANCHORED AT MILFORD HAVEN AT 1607 DECEMBER 29, 1943 AND REMAINED THERE UNTIL 1600 DECEMBER 30, 1943. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STOP WAS TO ATTEND CONVOY CONFERENCE AT MILFORD, WALES.

(F) THE COMMERCIAL RADIO OPERATOR APPEARED TO CARRY OUT WARTIME RADIO INSTRUCTIONS PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO KEEPING INTERCEPTED MESSAGES CONFIDENTIAL.

✓(G) THE PORT READY SERVICE BOXES AT THE FORWARD AND AFTER GUNS ARE LOOSE FROM THE DECK AND REQUIRE WELDING IN PLACE.

THE ARMED GUARD COMMANDER'S CABIN IS ENTIRELY TOO SMALL FOR LIVING QUARTERS AS WELL AS THE CONDUCT OF THE BUSINESS WHICH A CREW OF 27 MEN ENTAILS. HIS CABIN IS AS SMALL AS THE SMALLEST CABIN OCCUPIED BY A LICENSED MERCHANT MARINE OFFICER ABOARD.

THE ARMED GUARD CREW'S QUARTERS AND LOCKERS ARE ESPECIALLY CROWDED AS APPEARS FROM THE COMPARISON WITH MERCHANT PERSONNEL FACILITIES BELOW:

SPACE IN LIVING QUARTERS PER MAN:

MERCHANT- - - - - 225 CUBIC FEET

ARMED GUARD - - - - 133 CUBIC FEET

LOCKER SPACE PER MAN:

MERCHANT- - - - - 13.6 CUBIC FEET

ARMED GUARD - - - - 6.4 CUBIC FEET

IN THAT COMPARTMENT WHICH IS LOCATED IN THE FORWARD PART OF THE DECK HOUSE ON THE PORT SIDE AND WHICH IS OCCUPIED BY SEVEN MEMBERS OF THE ARMED GUARD, MOISTURE CONDENSES ON THE BULKHEADS AND FREEZES TO ICE. THE COMPARTMENT IS ALWAYS RATHER FRIGID AND UNCOMFORTABLE.

(H) THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF THE SHIP WERE DIDIGENT 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.

*Edwin A. Gehring*  
EDWIN A. GEHRING,  
ENSIGN, U.S.N.R.,  
ARMED GUARD COMMANDER