

UNITED STATES FLEET

UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES IN EUROPE
20 GROSVENOR SQUARE
LONDON, W.1

Please refer
to file :

Serial 02852
CONFIDENTIAL
End--2

OCT 12 1943

7176
BT

From: Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe,
To : Vice Chief of Naval Operations.
Subj: Report of Voyage, ABEL STEARNS.

1. Forwarded.

J. G. Bray

J. G. BRAY, JR.,
BY DIRECTION

RECEIVED S-C FILES
Room 2055

18 OCT 1943
ROUTE 70-23

Op File No. A4-3 / Abel Stearns
Doc. No.
Copy No. 1 of 1
23611

*See Indorsement part 4
Report for C, d, & f*
CC
EST

Please refer
to file:

Serial No. 1999

UNITED STATES FLEET

UNITED STATES NAVAL FORCES IN EUROPE

PORT LIAISON OFFICE
GOUROCK—THE CLYDE

7 October, 1943.

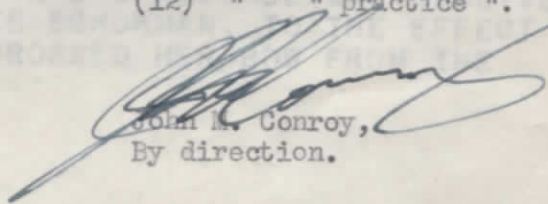
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FIRST ENDORSEMENT

From: The U.S. Naval Port Officer, Gourock-The Clyde.
To : The Vice Chief of Naval Operations.
Via : The Commander, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe.
Subj: Report of Outward Voyage S.S. ABEL STEARNS.
Ref : (a) Chap. IV, Sec. 3, Par. 4301 of General Instructions for Commanding Officers of Naval Armed Guards on Merchant Ships, dated 26 April, 1943.

1. Forwarded.
2. Special attention is invited to paragraphs 1(c) and 1(d).
3. The alterations requested in paragraph 1(e) were not made in this port in view of their nature and the limited facilities here. It was believed that they could best be made in a U.S. port.
4. SMITH, Floyd Edward, 832 62 42, Slc USNR and STRAIT, Lyle Wylie, 829 79 26, Slc USNR were transferred to the U.S. Navy Hospital, Base Two, the former with hernia and the latter with appendicitis. Neither was returned to the ship. LUCAS, R., 611 85 43, GM3c, USNR was transferred to the ship from the Armed Guard pool, Londonderry.
5. The following additional services were rendered in this port.
 - (a) Mail from the Fleet Post Office, London, was delivered aboard.
 - (b) Ten (10) Navy ratings and two (2) Merchant seamen took the D.E.M.S. Course.
 - (c) Twenty-three (23) men were paid by our disbursing officer.
6. The following supplies were issued:

(10) smoke floats	(2) OE 1613 punches
(12) igniters	(5) port fires
(12) parachute target rockets	(20) rds. 4"50 HEFP amm.
aircraft charts	(12) " " practice "


John H. Conroy,
By direction.

SEPTEMBER 22, 1943

FROM: ENSIGN EDWIN ANTHONY GEHRING, USNR,
COMMANDING OFFICER, NAVAL ARMED GUARD,
(C/O ARMED GUARD CENTER, BROOKLYN, N.Y.)
S.S. ABEL STEARNS, GROSS TONS 7176

TO: THE VICE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

VIA: 1) THE U.S. PORT OFFICER, GOUROCK-THE CLYDE
2) THE COMMANDER, U.S. NAVAL FORCES IN EUROPE

SUBJECT: REPORT OF VOYAGE, S.S. ABEL STEARNS,
FROM ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA TO GLASGOW,
SCOTLAND, VIA HALIFAX, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA.

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

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

- (A) TYPE OF VESSEL: FREIGHTER (LIBERTY)
TYPE OF CARGO: GENERAL - GRAIN
OWNER OF VESSEL: U.S. WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
CHARTERED TO: GENERAL AGENTS: A.H. BULL & CO.
SUB-AGENTS: U.S. LINES (OPERATORS)
- (B) PORT OF DEPARTURE: ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA
DATE: SEPTEMBER 8, 1943
CONVOYED
SPEED (AVERAGE): 11 1/2 KNOTS
NUMBER OF SHIPS IN ESCORT: 1
ARRIVED AT HALIFAX, N.S.: SEPTEMBER 9, 1943
LEFT HALIFAX, N.S.: SEPTEMBER 11, 1943
CONVOYED
SPEED (AVERAGE): 9 1/2 KNOTS
NUMBER OF SHIPS IN CONVOY: OUT OF HALIFAX - 15
OUT OF N.Y. - 49
NUMBER OF ESCORT VESSELS: OUT OF HALIFAX - 3; COULD
NOT ASCERTAIN TOTAL NUMBER
OF ESCORT AFTER JOINING
MAIN CONVOY BECAUSE OF
POSITION AND FOG.
PORT OF ARRIVAL: GLASGOW, SCOTLAND
DATE OF ARRIVAL: SEPTEMBER 22, 1943

(C) THIS VESSEL HAD NO CONTACT NOR ACTION WITH THE ENEMY.
HOWEVER, ON SEPTEMBER 15, ABOUT 1300 RADIO MESSAGE WAS RECEIVED
FROM VESSEL NUMBER 75, THE S.S. JAMES SCHURMAN, TO THE EFFECT
THAT WHAT APPEARED TO BE A TORPEDO CROSSED HER BOW FROM THE

STARBOARD SIDE. AT THE TIME THERE WAS A MODERATE FOLLOWING SEA AND DENSE FOG, PERMITTING A VISIBILITY OF 300 YARDS AT MOST. THE INCIDENT OCCURRED AT LATITUDE 48 DEGREES 8 MINUTES NORTH, LONGITUDE 46 DEGREES 55 MINUTES WEST.

ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1943 AT 1646 THE S.S. WILLIAM PEPPERELL, VESSEL NUMBER 15 EXPLODED A TORPEDO ON HER PORT SIDE BY MEANS OF HER MARK 29 GEAR. AT THE TIME THE SEA WAS CHOPPY, THE SKY WAS HEAVILY OVERCAST AND VISIBILITY ABOUT 3 MILES. THE INCIDENT OCCURRED IN APPROXIMATELY LATITUDE 53 DEGREES 42 MINUTES NORTH, LONGITUDE 29 DEGREES 36 MINUTES WEST.

ON SEPTEMBER 20 AT ABOUT 1615 IT WAS THOUGHT THAT THE PEPPERELL HAD HAD ANOTHER SUCH EXPERIENCE BECAUSE A HUGE GEYSER OF WATER WAS OBSERVED AMIDSHIPS. HOWEVER, NO CONFIRMATION WAS RECEIVED BY ANY MEANS OF COMMUNICATION AND THE PEPPERELL MAINTAINED HER COURSE AND SPEED.

(D) THE VOYAGE WAS ROUTINE WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE INSTANCES MENTIONED IN (C) AND THE FOLLOWING OCCURRENCES:

SEPTEMBER 8, 1943: ABOUT 1000 THIS VESSEL NARROWLY ESCAPED COLLISION WITH CANADIAN CORVETTE, S-12. THE ABEL STEARNS WAS IN TOW OF TWO TUGS FROM DOCK NUMBER 1, WEST ST. JOHN, N.B., CANADA. AS SHE APPROACHED DOCK NUMBER 2, THE CORVETTE CAME FROM BEHIND THE DOCK SHED AND RAMMED THE TUG ON OUR STARBOARD BOW. THE TUG SUFFERED LITTLE DAMAGE; THE CORVETTE'S STEM APPEARED TO BE BROKEN. APPARENTLY THE CORVETTE MADE NO EFFORT TO CHANGE HER COURSE OR SPEED NOR TO SIGNAL HER APPROACH.

Collision

SEPTEMBER 9, 1943: ABOUT 0240, THE ONLY ESCORT VESSEL, HMS ANTARES, RAMMED THE S.S. ABEL STEARNS ON HER PORT SIDE IN THE WAY OF NUMBER TWO HATCH. A DENSE FOG HAD PREVAILED ALL NIGHT; FOG SIGNALS HAD BEEN EXCHANGED BY BOTH VESSELS AT REGULAR INTERVALS. SHORTLY BEFORE THE COLLISION THE STEARNS HAD SIGNALLED AND AN ANSWER WAS RECEIVED FROM THE ANTARES. THE ARMED GUARD WATCH FORWARD HAD BEEN UNABLE TO MAKE OUT THE ANTARES BUT HAD BEEN ABLE TO SEE HER PHOSPHORESCENT WAKE FOR SOME TIME ON A PARALLEL COURSE ABOUT 200 YARDS OFF THE PORT SIDE. AFTER GIVING THE ABOVE MENTIONED ANSWERING SIGNAL SAID WATCH OBSERVED THE ANTARES IMMEDIATELY TURN SHARPLY TO THE RIGHT WITHOUT ALTERING SPEED. THE ANGLE AT WHICH HER BOW STRUCK THIS VESSEL WAS ABOUT NINETY DEGREES. THE STEARN'S SIDE WAS DENTED (PLATE CRACKED AND RIVETS LOOSENED ABOVE WATER LINE) AND HER BULWARK, NUMBER TWO LIFE BOAT AND BOAT DECK RAIL DAMAGED. THE COLLISION OCCURRED IN LATITUDE 43 DEGREES 15 MINUTES NORTH, LONGITUDE 66 DEGREES 3 MINUTES WEST. THIS VESSEL WAS GIVEN TEMPORARY REPAIRS IN HALIFAX. NO TIME WAS LOST.

VESSEL NUMBER 43, THE SUN, A TANKER, LEFT A BROAD TRAIL OF OIL FOR SEVERAL DAYS.

(E) THE COMMERCIAL RADIO OPERATOR APPEARED TO CARRY OUT WARTIME RADIO INSTRUCTIONS FOR MERCHANT VESSELS, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO KEEPING INTERCEPTED MESSAGES CONFIDENTIAL.

(F) 1. VENTILATION OF THE FORWARD MAGAZINE IS INADEQUATE TO KEEP THE TEMPERATURE WITHIN A SAFE RANGE DURING WARM WEATHER.

2. QUARTERS, LOCKERS AND ESPECIALLY STORAGE SPACE ARE CROWDED.

✓3. FOUR OF THE OERLIKON GUNS CAN BE TRAINED ON PARTS OF THE SHIP.

✓4. STOPS ON THE 3"50 GUN PREVENT ADEQUATE COVERAGE OF THE AIR. (DEPRESSION RAILS WOULD CORRECT NUMBERS 3 AND 4.)

5. THE ARMED GUARD PERSONNEL INCLUDES ONLY ONE SIGNALMAN. THE NEED IS FELT FOR A PETTY OFFICER WHO IS COMPETENT AND WHO CAN EXERT AUTHORITY.

(G) THE MASTER AND OFFICERS OF THE SHIP CARRIED OUT "WARTIME INSTRUCTIONS FOR UNITED STATES MERCHANT SHIPS". BLACKOUT REGULATIONS WERE RIGIDLY OBSERVED.

Edwin A. Gehring

EDWIN A. GEHRING
ENSIGN, USNR