

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

CONFIDENTIAL

Date 22 December, 1942

Memorandum for - Captain Shephard (1)
Commander Jewell (2)

Subject: Torpedoing of American S/S ANNE HUTCHINSON and movements of survivors.

Enclosure: (A) Communication from American Consul, Port Elizabeth, South Africa, November 23, 1942, No. 21.

1. Enclosure (A) is for your information and appropriate attention.

2. Ultimate return of this correspondence to the Intelligence Section is requested.

F. E. Pollio
F. E. POLLIO

File returned 12-29-43

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INSULATE *(Sanders)*
December 22, 1942.
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almost all signed on at West Coast ports.

Circumstances of the Disaster

The circumstances of the disaster were in brief the following. The ship was torpedoed by an unseen submarine at 1848 GMT (7.08 p.m. ship's time) on October 26, 1942. Its position at this time was 29 deg. 3' N and 33 deg. 18' E, about 80 miles due east of East London. The first torpedo struck the vessel amidships on the starboard side in #4 hold causing extensive damage to ship and machinery and blow-

NO: 21

AMERICAN CONSULATE

(Sander)

Port Elizabeth, South Africa, November 08th 1942.

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SUBJECT: Torpedoing of American s/s ANNE HUTCHINSON
and Movements of Survivors.

THE HONORABLE

THE SECRETARY OF STATE

WASHINGTON.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to my telegrams to the Department Nos. 13 and 14 of October 25, 1942 noon and October 26, 3 p.m. respectively, in regard to the torpedoing by a submarine of the American s/s ANNE HUTCHINSON and to report on the matter in further detail. The Naval Attache at Cape Town was kept currently informed on the matter as were also other interested officers of the Government. Naval forms dealing with sinkings and containing details called for therein have also been filled out and transmitted to the Naval Attache.

The Ship and its Voyage

The vessel was a ship of the Liberty type owned by the United States Maritime Commission, operated by Sudden and Christensen of 516 Sansome Street, San Francisco, California, and its Master was John W. Stralund, a naturalized American citizen of Finnish birth. When torpedoed it was en route from Suez to Cape Town for orders in ballast. The crew were almost all signed on at West Coast ports.

Circumstances of the Disaster

The circumstances of the disaster were in brief the following. The ship was torpedoed by an unseen submarine at 1048 GMT (7.05 p.m. ship's time) on October 26, 1942. Its position at this time was 29 deg. 3' E and 33 deg. 18' S, about 80 miles due east of East London. The first torpedo struck the vessel amidships on the starboard side in #4 hold causing extensive damage to ship and machinery and blowing up three men seated on #4 hatch who were the only casualties. A second torpedo was launched about half an hour after the first and struck the starboard side of the vessel in the boiler room doing further damage, all the crew being in the boats before this.

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All lifeboats were successfully launched as soon as possible after the first attack, the first one some six or seven minutes after, and the ship was abandoned. The submarine was seen soon after the second attack but no communication was held with it and it was not positively identified. There was of course no warning given.

The weather was moderate with night falling. Only a few men were in the water at all and they were soon picked up. The boats remained near the vessel for about two hours. Three boats kept together but the fourth in charge of E. H. Holston, 2nd Officer with ten persons on board was soon separated from the rest, and the occupants were reported to have been picked up by the American s/s STEEL MARINER and landed at Durban on the morning of October 28. The other three boats proceeded under power and sail and arrived off Port Alfred about 9 p.m. (ship's time) October 27. The occupants were taken off by a fishing boat at about 4 a.m. the next morning. The Master and eight others went to the Grand Hotel at Port Alfred and the remainder were taken care of and given food, lodging and medical attention as necessary at the Royal Air Force Station there. The Master, Chief Engineer, and 1st Assistant Engineer were brought to Port Elizabeth on October 29 in the car of Mr. Wood, Manager for Mitchell Cotts and Company, agents of the vessel and the remaining 46 survivors from the three boats with three exceptions arrived here by train on October 31. All their needs were efficiently taken care of by the agents.

Lieutenant (JC) W. J. Lowe, USNR and seaman S/c R. Dunn and L. Clark remained in the Air Force Hospital at Port Alfred until November 16 when they were brought by air to Port Elizabeth. Lieutenant Lowe was suffering from an attack of jaundice and the other two from injuries to limbs which will not have permanent effects. Aside from these three there were no hospital cases among the survivors.

Casualties

Fortunately casualties were relatively light and consisted of only three men who were seated on #4 hatch when it was blown up by the first torpedo explosion. Nothing more was seen of them and it is considered that they were certainly killed at that time. All three men were American citizens and their names together with certain details as taken from the crew list were the following:

John Rueda, Z27565, birthplace, Spain, Deck Engineer,
Name and address of next of kin: Mr. Mrs.
Garric Rueda, 519 Roosevelt Avenue,
Sunnyville, California.

Elmer Hehegan, Z164661, Birthplace U.S.A., WT and
FM (stated actually to have been officer).
Name and address of next of kin: Mr. Mrs.
J. Foley, 1231 Pierce Street, San Francisco.

Jack C. Gottsman, Z24551, birthplace, Australia,

Hessman.

Name and address of next of kin: Sis. Mrs. Betty Lehman, 1976 S W 40 (7), Portland, Oregon.

As previously stated all other members of the crew and all the gun crew have been accounted for, there were no serious injuries and only three persons, members of the gun crew, required hospitalization. All have now left Port Elizabeth with the exception of the Master who is remaining for the present in connection with the ship's business. A full list of the crew is enclosed with this despatch.

Disposition of Survivors

A total of 27 survivors of the vessel's crew and 17 of the Navy gun crew were brought to Port Elizabeth, 44 in all and an additional 10 were landed at Durban. Of these 24 of the vessel's crew embarked on the Panamanian S/S LOOKOUT on November 13 which was sent to Port Elizabeth for the purpose of repatriating survivors leaving only 3 of them behind. These were the Master, R. F. Rowland, fireman, who was at the time in hospital under treatment for an accident occurring on shore, and Leo A. De Marteau, 2nd cook who missed the vessel. Both these men left for Cape Town on November 18. Only the Master still remains here.

The 17 members of the Navy gun crew left on different dates as follows: E. Hamrick and A. D. Miller joined the gun crew of the S/S JOSEPH NEWES and B. Saltzman and J. Cunningham that of the S/S PLICMAN; 9 others left on November 11 and 13 by train for Cape Town and 4 more including Lieutenant Lowe also left for Cape Town on November 19 and 21 so that all are now on their way home.

Conduct of Master and Crew

It appears that on the whole the conduct of the crew at the time of the disaster was satisfactory though not outstanding. The successful lowering and manning of the boats seems to bear out this impression. The gun crew obeyed orders and were the last to leave the ship. There was some criticism of the Master who appears not to have been popular with his crew some of whom allege that he entered the lifeboat too promptly. Others stated that he did his job all right. He was certainly not the last to leave the ship but he claims that he left only the gun crew on board who acted under the orders of their officer. It is clear that he failed in his duty in one respect as he did not destroy the codes and confidential papers which were later found and safeguarded by the South African Naval Forces which boarded and brought in the floating portion of the vessel. The matter of the codes has been fully taken up with the Naval Attache at Cape Town and the entire position is fully understood by him.

Fate of the Ship

Although twice torpedoed and probably believed by the attackers to be a total loss, the ship did not break in two before the next day and the fore part of it to the extent of

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Wmch Jewell

about two-thirds of its length was brought in to Port Elizabeth on November 1 having been towed by a South African Navy minesweeper and a harbor tug. It was for some time held in the custody of the Naval Forces who did not allow the Master free access to it. It is now provisionally in charge of the Harbour Administration which is taking such measures as it thinks necessary for the protection of the interests of the Harbour and the owners or those having an interest in it. While in charge of the Naval Forces considerable pilferage took place and this matter is being dealt with by the Police.

The status of the hulk seems to be uncertain at this time and the South African authorities are apparently waiting for a decision from the United States Government. They seem not to be clear as to its legal status and the question as to whether claims for salvage will stand under the circumstances. The attitude now is to do as little as possible pending a further clarification of the situation. The universal opinion is that the fore part of the ship has no value as a ship and that it would be quite impracticable to rebuild it in South Africa but that materials on board of it would be of great use and value here in connection with the war effort. It therefore appears probable that its eventual fate will be dismantling here with the values obtained credited as decided upon later. The present attitude of the South African authorities seems to be entirely correct and practical while that of the Naval Forces was apparently hasty at first, then dilatory, and lacking in judgment. It is quite probable that conflicting orders may have been received. An effort was made after difficulties arose to turn the hulk over to the Collector of Customs but he refused to accept it on orders from Pretoria. The present temporary policy was decided upon by the System Manager of Railways and Harbours at a meeting held on November 21 at which I was present. It was apparently the only possible course as the interests of the Harbour had to be safeguarded by him and the hulk as it was presented dangers for sanitary and other reasons. Anything removed from the ship while under his jurisdiction will I am confident be fully accounted for. No doubt this whole matter will be amicably settled taking into account all legitimate interests concerned.

Summary

The ANNE HUTCHINSON is another ship lost as a result of U-boat activities off the South African coast. Fortunately loss of life was limited to three persons and there were no serious injuries. All survivors but one have left this port. While the Master seems to have directed affairs with success after the torpedoing he completely forgot to safeguard the codes and confidential material and he has been much criticised for this. It is also a question whether he should have returned to the ship when it was seen to stay afloat. From a practical standpoint the situation has been complicated by the fact that the fore part of the ship remained afloat and was brought in to Port Elizabeth where it

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presents a number of problems.

Respectfully yours,

Frank A. Henry
American Consul

Enclosure:

List of crew of s/s ANNIE HUTCHINSON.

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To the Department in original and histograph.

at Port Elizabeth, South Africa, dated November 25, 1942, on the subject "Torpedoing of American s/s ANNE HUTCHINSON and Movements of survivors".

CREW LIST OF S/S ANNE HUTCHINSON.

Owners: Sudden & Christensen, 310 Sansome Street, San Francisco.

Torpedoed on October 26th, 1942, 7.03 P.M.

Position of torpedoing: 29 deg. 3' E, 33 deg. 12' S
60 miles due East of East London.

List of members of crew landed at Port Alfred.

Deck Department

| | | |
|----|---------------------|------------|
| | J. W. STENLUND | MASTER |
| 1. | John D. Pearson | Ch. Mate |
| 2. | Peter J. Strachola | 3rd Mate |
| 3. | Edgar E. Wickman | Radio Opr. |
| 4. | Floyd F. Burgess | Carptr. |
| 5. | Luke A. Torry | Boat. |
| 6. | Philip Macomber | A.B. |
| 7. | John J. Osborne | A.B. |
| 8. | Gordon V. McObeaney | Cadet |

Engine Department

| | | |
|-----|-----------------------|-------------|
| 9. | Bende Bondesen | Ch. Engr. |
| 10. | Selvio G. Leonardini | 1st. Asst. |
| 11. | Alexander Luft | 3rd. Asst. |
| 12. | Robert F. Rowland | Oiler |
| 13. | Charles Mears | Fireman |
| 14. | Henry A. Schacht | Cadet Engr. |
| 15. | Joseph J. Pecker | Steward |
| 16. | Sam A. Ursin | Ch. cook |
| 17. | Willard C. Carstensen | Messman |
| 18. | Kenneth L. Schumacher | " |
| 19. | Donald K. Hoster | A.B. |
| 20. | Robert C. Cooke | A.B. |
| 21. | Stanley B. Brennan | Wiper |
| 22. | Lee A. De Marteau | Asst. Cook |
| 23. | William C. Weigel | O.S. |
| 24. | Ernest Sadler | Wiper |
| 25. | Cornelius Foods | Fireman |
| 26. | Anton Martinsen | Oiler |

List of members of crew landed at Durban.

| | | |
|-----|--------------------|-----------------|
| 27. | Howard W. Kauffman | Asst. Cook |
| 28. | Ralph W. Carlson | Messman |
| 29. | James W. Coates | A.B. |
| 30. | Glee E. Holloman | O.S. |
| 31. | Elmer H. Holston | 2nd Mate |
| 32. | Roy T. Kennedy | Wiper (fireman) |
| 33. | Orlyn H. Moore | 2nd Cook |
| 34. | Edward L. Mostert | O.S. |
| 35. | Wilfrid F. Halte | 2nd Asst. |
| 36. | Eugene Almon | A.B. |

Missing members.

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|-----|-------------------|-----------|
| 37. | John Ruoda | Ok. Engr. |
| 38. | Elmer Mehegan | Oiler |
| 39. | Jack C. Gottesman | Messman |