

COMMERCIAL TRADER (September 16, 1942)

"Q. Have you any recommendations or suggestions?

"A. Several of the men were tangled in the net due to the fact that the net floated up and away from the ship as we put it over. I don't know whether it could be worked or not, if there was some way of weighting net down so that it would not float up. As an alternative, that this net should be weighted at the bottom, the lower end over the side, or pad eyes welded to ship's side for each end of net and one in the middle. This net could be made fast to the pad eyes by means of marling, these pad eyes to be welded in correct position when the ship is deep load, that is maximum draft.

I further recommend that all glass above the engine room be protected by screens so that the shattering caused by explosion will not fall down on men escaping from engine room. Shatterproof glass might be used. All glass in skylights is now blacked out and does not serve any purpose of illumination, so recommend that all glass in skylights over engine room be removed and these holes covered over permanently with a suitable metal cover.

BELLINGHAM (September 22, 1942)

"Q. Have you any recommendations or suggestions to offer?

"A. Would suggest more bombs, but we can't handle bombs, depth charges. Would say large lifebuoys, U.S. Navy Standard Life Ring, in addition to what's now on board.

CAMDEN (October 4, 1942)

"Q. Captain, do you have any comments you wish to make relative to the Vaco lifesaving suits?

"A. I think that particular type of suit could be improved on; especially the life jacket arrangement, the sleeve arrangement and the neck arrangement.

The following recommendations, 1 to 5 inclusive, were offered:

"A. He stated that the life rafts were carried on wooden skids, two (2) in the forward rigging and two (2) in the after rigging. They were unable to launch the forward rafts because of fire on deck from burning oil. In the case of the after two (2) rafts, an effort was made to launch these, but they stuck in the wooden skids, which had apparently swollen and become tight against the raft subsequent to their installation. The method employed in securing these rafts was not in accordance with the latest requirements, in that they were permanently secured by lashings and a hatchet provided for cutting them adrift.

He suggested that it would be a good idea to have a painter from each of the lifeboats, leading aft. His reason was that in this specific case, the deck forward was ablaze with burning oil, and that if an after painter had been provided, it would have assisted in pulling the boat away from the fire after being launched.

"A. As for prearranged procedure adopted in case of attack of this kind, he stated that the engine was to be stopped immediately, and reversed, if necessary. The First Assistant was to turn on the steam smothering line in the main cargo tanks. In this particular case, the main stop on the boilers was closed, and the smothering lines opened up, permitting the steam to be discharged into the cargo holds.