

EFFICIENCY OF COAST GUARD APPROVED
LIFE-SAVING APPLIANCES AS
REFLECTED IN WAR ACTION CASUALTIES

VESSELS
November, 1940 - December, 1945

When the scarcity of naval protection and supporting craft during the early months subsequent to America's entrance into hostilities is recalled and thoughtfully considered, the urgent need for improved and adequate life-saving equipment to preserve the lives of our merchant seamen and the necessity for better subdivision of cargo ships to lessen their chances of sinking after merely one hit had particular significance. Additional complications to that foreboding situation were contained in the recent revelations during the Nuremberg Trial of Hitler's directive to Grand Admiral Doenitz relative to the Axis Powers' determination not only to sink as many Allied merchantmen as possible, especially American ships, but also to annihilate the seamen manning such ships in a concerted attempt to disrupt and destroy the vast network of Allied supply lines. A careful consideration of these facts will underscore the magnitude of the responsibility for the efficient construction, equipping, and manning of all U.S. merchant ships delegated to the Coast Guard by Executive Order 9083.

The cases contained herein, although a small cross-section of many other war action casualties involving U. S. merchant ships, factually reflect the unquestionable excellence and effectiveness of Coast Guard approved life-saving appliances under actual service conditions as well as the unsurpassed fortitude of American merchant seamen. Were these numerous cases compiled into chronological sequence, a unique aspect of the war would undoubtedly be reproduced spotlighting the valiant manner in which U. S. merchantmen transcended every war time expectation in the prosecution of the war effort. Such an historical revue would, in no small way, emphasize the instrumentality of the Coast Guard's capable administration of the laws governing marine inspection in the triumphant success of the American Merchant Marine.

From the time the SS CITY OF RAYVILLE struck a mine southwest of Australia in November, 1940, through December, 1945, the Coast Guard conducted investigations into 796 cases in which U. S. merchant vessels were involved in war action casualties; of this number 273 ships involved were not declared a total loss. Of these 796 cases, 590 concerned vessels which were actually abandoned and the attached table of statistics concisely illustrates the effectiveness of the principal items of Coast Guard approved life-saving appliances on board these 590 abandoned vessels.

ALL OTHER MEANS

Number of persons saved by all other means:

4,014

Per cent saved by all other means:

12.29

Encls. of letter to
Lt. S.H. Bell,
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and 14 lifeboats used as temporary refuge.