

REGISTERED
NO 620217

SECRET

LONDON I.O.F. 10th. 1942.

Op 37-1-Mc
(SC)A4-3/QS1
Serial 010837

APR 16 PM 1 21

In reply refer to Initials and No.

NAVY DEPARTMENT

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

WASHINGTON

April 13, 1942.

SECRET

Subject: SS EL CAPITAN
Managing Operators: U.S. Lines
New York to Archangel.

Dear Sir: John E. Thvik. I am of Norwegian nationality and am Master of the Steamship EL CAPITAN. The Vice Chief of Naval Operations takes pleasure in enclosing for your information and guidance copy of voyage report executed by Master SS EL CAPITAN for the voyage to north Russia.

- 1 Second Officer
 - 1 Third Officer
 - 1 Chief Engineer
 - 1 First Assistant Engineer
 - 1 Second Assistant Engineer
 - 1 Third Assistant Engineer
 - 1 Fourth Assistant Engineer
 - 1 Radio Operator and
 - SS unlicensed members
- M. K. METCALF
Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (Ret)
By direction

War Shipping Administration
Commerce Building
Washington, D. C.

Capitan was formerly a Morgan Line ship and is now under charter to the United States Lines through the U.S. Maritime Commission, and is under Panamanian flag.

c/c
U. S. Coast Guard

She is a steamer of 7,325 d.w.t., gross 5,816 tons and net 4,088 tons; a fuel oil burner, has triple expansion reciprocating engines, 2 scotch boilers and single screw; engines horsepower 8,200.

shelter deck type of vessel, with 12 main deck hatches, having five hatches with two beams of a capacity of six tons each and at No. 2 main beam.

In the States, she was degaized and the re-work on her performed; mounting a 4" gun on deck carrying 100 rounds of ammunition for it. No work was supplied. Two machine guns were

Blackout of the vessel was done in New York and this was inspected, and improved and renewed in Halifax and also in London.

DECLASSIFIED
Authority NN 3-26-83-1
By AV NARA. Date 4/6/17

- (4) My vessel loaded her Archangel cargo at the port of LONDON, 16th. February 1942.
This cargo amounted to 2,500 d.w.t. of which aviation spirit, the remainder being general machine tools, automobile parts, leather, and miscellaneous goods.

I had some pieces of a heavy lift nature but nothing on board W. A. Harriman, Esq., jumbo boom at No. 2 hatch could handle.

The American Embassy,
1, Grosvenor Square,
W.1.
includes some delay in loading the gasolens owing to the fitting of ventilators.

Dear Sir,

- (5) We sailed from New York on October 12th, 1941.
Subject: s.s. EL CAPITAN
Managing Operators: U.S. Lines
New York to Archangel.

(1) My name is John E. Thevik. I am of Norwegian nationality and am Master of the steamship EL CAPITAN.

(2) My crew consists of:

- 1 Chief Officer
- 1 Second Officer
- 1 Third Officer
- 1 Chief Engineer
- 1 First Assistant Engineer
- 1 Second Assistant Engineer
- 1 Third Assistant Engineer
- 1 Fourth Assistant Engineer
- 1 Radio Operator and
- 28 unlicenced members

The crew is of various nationalities.

(3) The steamship El Capitan was formerly a Morgan Line Ship and is now under charter to the United States Lines through the U.S. Maritime Commission, and is under Panamanian registry.

She is a steamer of 7,325 d.w.t., gross 5,216 tons and net 4,055 tons; a fuel oil burner, has triple expansion reciprocating engines, 2 scotch boilers and single screw; engine horsepower 2,200.

She is an open shelter deck type of vessel, with 'tween decks and lower holds, having five hatches with two booms at each hatch of a capacity of six tons each and at No. 2 hatch a 30 ton jumbo boom.

Prior to leaving the States, she was degaussed and the required defence work on her performed; mounting a 4" gun on her poop and carrying 100 rounds of ammunition for it. No gun crew however, was supplied. Two machine guns were mounted on the bridge and ammunition was on board for them.

Blackout of the vessel was done in New York and this was inspected, and improved and renewed in Halifax and also in London.

- (4) My vessel loaded her Archangel cargo at the port of New York. This cargo amounted to 2,596 d.w.t. of which 1671 tons was aviation spirit, the remainder being general cargo in machinery, machine tools, automobile parts, leather, army boots and other miscellaneous goods.

I had some pieces of a heavy lift nature but nothing on board in excess of what my jumbo boom at No. 2 hatch could handle.

My steamer took about six days in loading, which time however includes some delay in loading the gasoline owing to the fitting of proper ventilators.

- (5) We sailed from New York at 12.45 p.m. on October 12th. 1941. My draft on sailing was 17'1" forward and 19'11" aft., mean 18'6".

On leaving New York I had on board 1389 tons fuel oil, 130 tons fresh water and about five months stores weighing approximately 60 tons. With my cargo and stores, my vessel was cubically full and we had on board some deck cargo.

My vessel, with the exception of one tank for boiler water, has no double bottoms. No dry ballast was furnished my vessel prior to sailing.

We proceeded direct to Halifax in accordance with instructions received from the United States Naval Port Officer in New York, where we arrived at 9. p.m. on October 14th. 1941.

There was a convoy leaving for Iceland immediately upon my arrival at Halifax, but owing to certain repairs which were necessary to my evaporator, we were detained at Halifax awaiting the subsequent convoy. We topped off our tanks at Halifax with approximately 200 tons fuel.

We left Halifax in convoy on October 22nd. 1941.

We arrived without incident at Reykjavik at 2.50 p.m. on November 3rd. 1941. We waited at Reykjavik for a convoy until November 9th., leaving Reykjavik in convoy at 1.0 p.m. on November 9th. We proceeded at convoy speed to Archangel right into the mouth of the river, and aside from a couple of hours awaiting daylight on the date of arrival, we proceeded to dock and we tied up at the dock in the river at Bakaritsa at 10.30 a.m. November 24th. 1941.

Immediately upon our arrival an icebreaker was available to assist us through the heavy ice ahead of the convoy and in addition there to there were two icebreaker tugs which assisted us right into the dock.

We had no great difficulty in getting into dock but one or two of the vessels in the convoy got into difficulties and the tugs went to their assistance. On account of the difficulties experienced by some of the vessels in the convoy owing to the ice condition, they were not able to get up to their berths until the next day. After the ice was broken by the "Lenin" it would float around and jam about the vessels, impeding their progress, and this pack ice had to be cleared away in order to give the vessel a navigable channel free of ice.

There were two floating cranes working; one of approximately 15 tons and the other I understand of about 40 tons. With regard to these heavy lift cranes which I saw working on other vessels, they handled the cargo from the ship's hatches either on to the decks of the crane barges or into lighters.

(4) ...

I saw a fair amount of cargo on the dock but as I ...
(6) Discharging of my vessel commenced at 3.15 p.m. on November 24th. 1941 or very shortly after my vessel was tied up to the dock. Stevedores commenced discharging at all hatches and they continued discharging without any interruption 24 hours of the day.

The foremen of the stevedores were civilians but the labourers consisted mainly of soldiers.

My vessel completed discharge of her cargo at 2.30 a.m. on November 29th. 1941; or total discharging time of 4 1/2 days.

In my judgement the stevedoring work done was most satisfactory. The foremen struck me as being experienced and competent men, and while I could not say if all the soldier labour employed were competent stevedore labourers, yet they did a very good job. We gave them a hand with the heavy lifts and my cargo was discharged in good condition.

At the discharging berth where my vessel was, there were no shore cranes employed; therefore our discharging was done entirely by ship's gear.

There were five other vessels of the same convoy in which I came which tied up to the same quay, two ahead and three astern; all six of the vessels tied up to this quay were working simultaneously, and there did not appear to me to be any shortage of labour.

There were two Russian ships working at this river quay, and as far as I could see there was room for an additional two or three more vessels.

I understand that there are some small shore cranes but I could not say if these were employed to discharge vessels. At any rate there were none working at any of the larger vessels at the time I was there.

The method of discharging at this berth is for the ship's booms to take the cargo out of the ship's hatches. Some of the cargo is then swung directly by double rig booms on to the railroad trucks on the quay and some of the cargo is swung on to the quay and taken away by hand back off the apron and into the shed; other cargo is taken from the apron by hand to railroad trucks at the back of the shed, and also cargo is placed into lorries. This was done with some gasoline on board my vessel. I also saw a mobile motor crane lifting cargo on to a railroad truck. This was not a very large crane.

As far as I could see there were a number of sheds along this river front quay and railroad trucks running on the river-side of the quay as well as railroad trucks behind the sheds.

There were two floating cranes working; one of approximately 15 tons and the other I understand of about 40 tons. With regard to these heavy lift cranes which I saw working on other vessels, they handled the cargo from the ship's hatches either on to the decks of the crane barges or into the lighters.

I saw a fair amount of cargo on the dock but as far as I could see the cargo was being despatched from the dock fairly quickly.

- (7) Loading. Upon completion of discharge at 2:30 a.m. on November 29th, 1941 we proceeded down the river at 7.0 a.m. on November 29th. to the loading berth which was seven miles down the river on the south bank. We had the ice-breaking tug to swing around in the river and break the ice, and we proceeded under our own power to the loading wharf. While my vessel got out and swung in the river, yet I understand that some of the vessels had more difficulty in getting out owing to the ice. We tied up at the loading wharf at 11:10 a.m. on November 29th. and commenced loading at 3.0 p.m. on the same day. We loaded 957 standards of lumber and completed at 7:45 a.m. on December 6th. Time occupied in loading 6 3/4 days, working continuously 24 hours a day.

We had women stevedores doing this work and everything was loaded by ship's gear. The lumber which we loaded was for London.

We lay alongside the loading wharf awaiting a convoy and also an icebreaker, which was necessary to enable us to leave the berth, until 7:25 a.m. on December 14th, 1941, when we left the loading wharf.

As I had insufficient tank space on board my vessel for water ballast and as I had no dry ballast on board, it was necessary for me to take this cargo in order to give my vessel proper trim and stability and place her propeller deep enough in the water on account of the ice. No cargo or ballast was obtainable for the United States.

As soon as the icebreaker cleared me, I proceeded out into the river where I lay in pack ice until 8 a.m. of December 26th. The reason why they moved me out into the river and away from the wharf was so my vessel would be in the channel and immediately available for proceeding with the icebreaker out to sea along with the other vessels which had been cleared from their berths.

The loss of time to vessels in getting out to sea is due to the fact that the icebreaker is busily engaged in clearing out other vessels so as all the vessels, say numbering six or seven, can be taken out to sea together. There were six vessels taken out of the river with the icebreaker along with mine.

- (8) It took my vessel from December 6th. until December 26th. awaiting the completion of discharge and loading of other vessels, and getting my own and other vessels clear of ice so that we were all in convoy ready to proceed out of the river into the White Sea.

On December 26th. we proceeded out of the river into the White Sea where we again had to wait on account of ice conditions and the arrival of the icebreaker, and also for other vessels which were to make up our convoy. We remained there until January 1st, 1942 when in company with other vessels in the convoy, we proceeded through the White Sea which was also so thick with ice that it was necessary to retain the services of the icebreaker. It took us from January 1st. to January 5th. on account of the ice condition and stoppages before we reached open water in the convoy.

Our delays owing to the very severe ice condition were due to an insufficient number of icebreakers working. There is one icebreaker, the "Lenin" working out from the River Dvina, and another icebreaker the "Stalin" working out from Molotovsk. Both these icebreakers were doing excellent work; particularly I would mention the excellent work done by the "Lenin". It is not a question of the quality of the work done by the icebreakers, at the disposal of the vessels, but entirely a question of an insufficient number of icebreakers, having regard for the number of vessels to be handled.

On January 5th. 1942 at 3.30 a.m. we proceeded in convoy at a convoy speed, and with escort we proceeded to the east coast of Iceland. Off Bear Island the convoy dispersed and from there on to Iceland we proceeded on our own. We arrived at Seydisfjord, Iceland at 10.40 a.m. on January 13th. 1942 and remained there until January 20th.

Report of John E. Thevik, Master S.S. EL
 We proceeded in convoy to Kirkwall where we arrived at 3.30 P.M. on January 26th. 1942.

Copy of subject report.
 We remained in Kirkwall awaiting convoy and checking degaussing until 7.10 a.m. January 31st. when we left for London, where we arrived 5.30 p.m. on February 3rd. 1942, proceeding into dock the following day, docking at 1.50 p.m.

While proceeding down the Dvina River, I saw some ships lying in the berths at Ekonomiya, amongst which was a tanker.

The damage sustained by my vessel on account of ice was as follows:

- (1) One plate on the port side in the way of the stem was holed to the extent of about 4 ft..
- (2) On the starboard side in the way of the fore peak there is one plate badly buckled.
- (3) On both port and starboard sides from the stem to abreast of the foremast, the plates along the waterline are set in.
- (4) Further plates port and starboard throughout the length of the ship were set in due to ice pressure.
- (5) Bilge keels on both sides of the vessel, mainly on the port, are carried away.
- (6) Rudder stock set out of alignment.
- (7) Propeller plate tips heavily chipped and scored.
- (8) Propeller shaft set down.
- (9) Main Engine strained.

Full damage is being surveyed and will be covered by Surveyor's Report.

Respectfully yours,

Captain J. E. THEVIK
 Master, as. EL CAPITAN