

still afloat and afire the next day.

There was no gun and no gun crew aboard the vessel.

It took approximately 10 minutes to launch the boats. The vessel was equipped with four life rafts. The two after ones were launched. The oars were lashed on the sides of the rafts, so that no matter what side they fell on, they always could be obtained.

The Second Mate testified that all the life-saving gear was in good shape, except for two life rafts on the forward deck, which would not launch when the lines were cut. He stated that they were mounted on skids, but that apparently after the lashing was cut the angle of inclination was insufficient for them to release readily. He stated, "It seems that it was all rough lumber, and it probably had settled down to the point where it was just enough friction to hold."

"In the case of those rafts, I believe that the angle of incline should be increased in some cases. If those skids had been at a higher angle on the inboard side, it would have been better for those rafts to get off.

"Q. Do you think if they had had dressed lumber, it would have helped?

"A. Yes, sir. It more than likely would. Those things were built in Argentine, and in my opinion it wasn't a very good job. The rafts themselves were very rough, and the work of the raft was rough."

The engineers had apparently received previous instructions as to their duties in such a situation, and they put the engines astern and then stopped them and so permitted the boats to be launched safely. The smothering line was also turned on.

All boats were in their chocks at the time of the attack.

ESSO NASHVILLE (March 21, 1942)

Vessel was loaded with 78,000 barrels of fuel oil and was making about 13 knots. Visibility poor, sea choppy. Ship was completely blacked out, was unarmed and was not in convoy. On March 21, 1942, at about 0015 EDT, the vessel was about 16 miles N 50° E true from Frying Pan Lightship Buoy, when the first torpedo struck, about 5 feet from the stem on the starboard side, without exploding. Less than a minute later, a second torpedo struck amidships, just below the water line. This torpedo broke the vessel's back and she sank amidships, with bow and stern out of water. She was still in this position when last seen, and the after end was later brought into Morehead City.

When the second torpedo struck, the general alarm was sounded and the engine room was signalled full astern. All four lifeboats were lowered

satisfactorily and the ship abandoned at 0030 EWT, all of the crew managing to leave the ship with the exception of the Master, who was subsequently taken off by the Coast Guard. It was not stated why none of the four boats in the water could not either pick the Master out of the water or return and take him off the ship after he had clambered back aboard. There were no casualties caused by the explosion of the torpedo. The radio operator reported that he was unable to send a distress message because of the fumes and smoke making it impossible to remain in the radio room.

Master stated there was no defective equipment and the crew all behaved in a good manner. The Master stated that the engines were stopped at the time of the torpedoing as a result of a previous arrangement they had that if the communications between the bridge and engine room became disrupted and they did not get any other signal from the bridge, they should stop the engines immediately, and in this instance the signals were disrupted at once, all communications being carried away.

When the second torpedo struck the vessel, the vessel rocked from starboard to port, and it appeared that she was going to turn over. Oil shot up like a geyser and saturated the whole ship.

The following statements were made by the Master in response to a question by Ensign Reed:

"Q. The torpedo wasn't seen?

"A. No, sir.

"Q. Did you feel that you had sufficient lookouts?

"A. Well, we run kind of short-hand. I only have 39 men including myself.

"Q. You had no gun crew?

"A. No gun crew, no, sir.

"Q. Ten on your deck crew?

"A. No, there is 7 A.B.'s, 3 ordinary seamen, and boatswain, but I was one man shy.

"Q. So you had 10?

"A. Yes. Ordinarily I have 39 crew, but I only had 38. There was one A.B. short leaving Port Arthur.

"Q. Did you feel that you were in dangerous waters at this time?

"A. Not at that time, no. I was figuring from Lookout on up.

"Q. That is about 50 miles farther?

"A. That would be about 60 miles.

"Q. Did you make any check of the lookout on the bow to see if he actually was lookout?

"A. He strikes the bells from the bridge at 12:00 and 12:30. At that time, I was in my room when the crash came. I was asleep in my bed. I left orders not to be called until 4:00.

"Q. In what you considered dangerous waters, would you feel justified in asking the crew to stand additional lookouts?

"A. Up to the present time that I was on board there, we didn't do that.

"Q. Do you feel that you have the authority to do that if you considered it necessary?

"A. I would have the authority all right, but the way conditions are today with the crew, well, if I thought I was in danger, why, sure, I would have the men go on watch.

"Q. But you have never done that?

"A. I have never done that, no, sir.

"Q. What would you think of lookouts 4 hours on and 4 hours off?

"A. I think 4 on and 4 off is all right as long as we have sufficient men to relieve one another. You can't very well keep a man on 4 hours at one stretch.

Captain Lid: "He means 4 hour watches.

"A. The way it is, we have 2 hours. You see, the A.B. and the wheel, and then he is relieved by the ordinary seaman, who goes to the wheel. He has his coffee and smoke. I don't think it is advisable to keep a man up there for 4 hours. I think 2 hours is sufficient, especially in the trying conditions that we have today. There should be more men to relieve one another, and the same thing, they ought to have more men to relieve the captain. In the last 3 months before I got torpedoed, I was tired; making port, and coming ashore; sometimes ashore with the Navy authorities and the Coast Guard for about 6 hours and then I have to take the ship out and pass by the coast and make buoys and up early in the morning, all the routine and patrol work, making out payrolls. To make a payroll for one of our ships, that's a job. We got plenty of routine. We got plenty of it with the Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey.

"Ensign Reed:

"Q. If you had a gun crew, would you feel that relieved the ship's crew of any responsibility?

"A. If you are being attacked or shell-fired, that would be quite a relief. If you have a gun crew, you have more protection.

"Q. As far as lookouts are concerned.

"A. I don't know. I think it is the same procedure. They have lookouts there too.

"Q. But merely in addition to the ship's---

"A. I have heard that they put 12 men on board as a gun crew. What they do on board, I don't know. I don't know if they are all handling the guns or they are standing as lookouts too. At night, these devils are waiting for you when you are passing these buoys. That is when they see you. It is just light where you pass at night, even on a very dark night. They can see that light for 20 miles at sea if you are passing close, and every time that light goes on, it lights up the ship.

"Q. Do you have any recommendations to make, Captain?

"A. I hear now that the crew has a training before every port you go into and they learn to man the boat. Of course, I found that they had a little bit trouble in getting away from the ship. If they have a little more experience where they can get into that routine and lower the boat and try to get away as quickly as they can, it will be quite a help. We had the boats swung out, so when the torpedo struck the whole boat, our oars and everything was plastered with oil. The mate told me afterwards that is why they had the trouble. They had to cut the blankets to wipe off the oars, so that they could row properly.

"Q. Your recommendation, captain, is then to leave the covers on, is that right?

"A. I wouldn't suggest to leave the covers on with the lashings, but some arrangement where they could have the covers over the inside of the boat.

"Q. Captain, what kind of a light is installed in lieu of the Frying Pan Light? What kind is there now? You say there is a buoy there; a lightship buoy. Is that a strong light?

"A. Fairly good light. When I picked it up, I think I was around 10 miles from it. It was a very good light.

"Q. You passed that light how far off?

"A. I would figure three-quarters of a mile.

"Q. A submarine, in your opinion, would have been able to see you while passing that light?

"A. If he was right close, I think so.

"Q. Did you have that in mind at that time?

"A. No, I didn't have that in mind. I was pretty cock-sure, but when you get around Lookout, from Lookout up north, that's different, but I had never heard of them being torpedoed around Frying Pan.

"Q. You don't believe that the submarine could have followed you from the time you passed Frying Pan Shoal Lightship?

"A. I think he was standing by there and that is when he followed me, and that is when he got me.

"Q. When did you come to think of that?

"A. Since I have been ashore. Sometime at night when we got nothing to be thinking of, things I should have done and what I didn't do."

Master also suggested that all the officers should have a flashlight strapped around their belts at all times. "I was looking for a flashlight trying to get down in my quarters in the dark. I had a flashlight in my office, in my bedroom, but when you want to get down there, it takes a lot of time. I suggest that we should have it strapped on ourselves at all times, and I was fortunate enough to have a pocket knife with me. A lot of the men haven't got a pocket knife."