

U.S. Coast Guard File Room
Rec'd JUL 30 1942

REPORT OF MARINE CASUALTY (OR ACCIDENT)

(20 Stat. 164, 18 Stat. 125-128, 38 Stat. 1184; R. S. 4405, 4448, 4450; 14 U. S. C. 91; 33 U. S. C. 361, 362, 363, 365, 366;
46 U. S. C. 375, 234, 239)

CLASSIFIED BY AUTHORITY OF
CHIEF, OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY
29 MAY 1956

Customs District No. 10

Date submitted July 3, 1942

U. S. Local Inspectors, Port of New York

1. Name of vessel S.S. HALO
2. (a) Nationality American (b) Rig Steamer (c) Official No. 220521
3. Type of vessel and trade or service Tanker
4. Home port, or port where numbered, if motorboat New York 5. Gross tonnage (070) 6986
6. Year built 1920 7. Hull materials Steel
(Steel, wood, iron, etc.)
8. Name and residence of master Ulrik F. Moller, 2427 - 14th St. N. St. Petersburg, Fla.
9. Name and residence of owner (or agent) CITIES SERVICE OIL COMPANY, 60 Wall Tower, New York, N.Y.
10. Date and port of last inspection Mobile, Alabama August 11, 1941
11. Radio equipment of vessel: Telephone or telegraph Telegraph
12. Last port of departure Galveston, Texas 13. Date of departure May 19, 1942
14. Where bound New Orleans, Louisiana
15. (a) Number of passengers (0800) None (b) Number of crew (0900) 42 (c) Number of others None
16. Estimated value of vessel (1200), \$ 805,500 17. Value of cargo (1300), \$ 75,000
18. Any deck load? No (Yes or no) 19. Weight of cargo (long tons) 10,246
20. Nature of cargo Panuco Crude Oil
21. Date and exact time of casualty (specify time standard) 1:15 AM, May 20, 1942
22. Exact locality of casualty: Lat. _____ Long. _____ Or distance and bearing (true) from charted object when applicable 21 miles off Southwest Pass, Louisiana (160)
23. Nature of casualty (check one or more of the following—see Note 1):

<input type="checkbox"/> Foundering (1701)	<input type="checkbox"/> Collision with object other than vessel or ice (name object) (1708)
<input type="checkbox"/> Stranding (1702)	<input type="checkbox"/> Collision with ice (1709)
<input type="checkbox"/> Grounding (1702)	<input type="checkbox"/> Masts, sails, and other equipment damage (1711)
<input type="checkbox"/> Collision with vessel (give name and hailing port of colliding vessel) (1703)	<input type="checkbox"/> Waterlogged, leaking, etc. (1714)
<input type="checkbox"/> Fire (1705)	<input type="checkbox"/> Heavy weather damage (1715)
<input type="checkbox"/> Engine or machinery trouble (1706)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Loss or damage from submarines, air raids mines (1716)
<input type="checkbox"/> Capsizing (1707)	<input type="checkbox"/> _____ ()
24. Cause of casualty (explain fully) Torpedoed (18)
25. Wind direction and force, weather, sea, and visibility _____
26. Number lives lost: (a) Passengers (1000) None (b) Crew (1100) 39 (c) Others None
27. Number persons injured: (a) Passengers None (b) Crew 3 (c) Others None
28. Estimated loss or damage—to vessel (see note (2)) (1400), \$ 805,500; to cargo (1500), \$ 75,000
29. Amount of insurance—on vessel, \$ 805,500; on cargo, \$ 75,000
30. State in detail measures taken to avoid casualty:

(a) Navigation, piloting, and use of navigational aids None

(b) Communications _____

31. By whom and to what extent assistance was rendered:

- (a) Communications (name stations) None
- (b) U. S. Coast Guard (name vessels, stations, units, etc.)
- (c) Other means (vessels, etc.)

32. Was auto-alarm signal transmitted by your vessel? No

33. Did casualty result from the presence of explosives, inflammables, or other dangerous cargo? (For definition of above see "Explosives or Other Dangerous Articles on Board Vessels" containing the regulations prescribed by the Secretary of Commerce, April 9, 1941) No

34. Remarks (include names of those who lost their lives, if any): See attached list.

CITIES SERVICE OIL COMPANY

(Signed) [Signature]

(Title) Assistant Manager
(Owner, master, or operator)

* Subscribed and sworn to before me, an officer authorized to administer oaths, this 29 day of July, 1942

Signed [Signature]

NOTARY PUBLIC, Kings County
Kings County Clerk's No. 157
N. Y. Co. Clk's No. 301 Reg. No. 31154
Commission expires March 30, 1943

[SEAL]

* See instructions below stating when form must be sworn to.

NOTE.—(1) Report personal accident not involving death on Department of Commerce, Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation Form No. 924e.

(2) Estimated total amount of loss is desired, without regard to what may be covered by insurance or expense incurred in floating; this amount should be expressed in figures.

INSTRUCTIONS

Five copies of this form shall be submitted, without delay, as follows: Three copies to the Collector of Customs at the port of first arrival, who shall forward one copy to the Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard, one copy to the Senior Coast Guard Officer of the Naval District in or nearest which the casualty occurred, and one copy to the Secretary of Commerce (Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation). Two copies shall be submitted to the Board of Local Inspectors, Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation, nearest the port of first arrival, one copy of which shall be retained by the Board and the other of which shall be forwarded with the proper endorsements to the Supervising Inspector of the District. If the person making this report is a licensed officer on a vessel required to be manned by such an officer, he must make the report in writing and in person to the proper Board of Local Inspectors; if, because of distance, it may be inconvenient for such officer to submit the report in person, he may submit three copies properly sworn to and certified by an officer authorized to administer oaths as prescribed in section 16, Rule V, of the General Rules and Regulations Prescribed by the Board of Supervising Inspectors (46 C. F. R. 62.16).

If the first port of arrival is a foreign port, file all copies with the American Consul for transmission and distribution as above.

(To be filled in by local inspectors)

To: THE DIRECTOR, (1701) Foundering
BUREAU OF MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION. (1702) Stranding

Approximate cause of casualty (1703) Grounding
 (1704) Collision with ice
 (1705) Collision with vessel (give name and hulling-port of colliding vessel)
 (1706) Waterlogged, leaking, etc.

Action taken regarding casualty (1707) Fire
 (1708) Engine or machinery trouble
 (1709) Capsizing
 (1710) Loss of or damage from submarines, torpedoes
 (1711) Other

Certificated route if inspected (in brief as ocean, Great Lakes, inland) None

Location of casualty (relative to classified waters, as western rivers, ocean, Great Lakes, etc.) None

(Signed by U. S. Local Inspectors)

Port of None

District No. None

SS HALO

List of Known Dead
(Bodies Recovered)

<u>NAME</u>	<u>POSITION</u>
John S. Gietek	1st Assistant Engineer
Jesse B. Hogge	Cook

List of Missing Men

Ulrich T. Moller	Master
Sigurd O. Hellum	Mate
Bernard M. Shea	2nd Mate
John B.J. Hope	3rd Mate
Isidore Weinstein	Radio Operator
Fred E. Gossler	Carpenter
Phillip J. Krauth	Able Seaman
Bjarne Pedersen	"
William Meecham	"
Paul Wm. Mangett	"
Donald C. Henderson	"
Norton Charles Sanchez	Ordinary Seaman
James E. Costello	"
Edgar J. Sharp	"
William J. Tinsley	Chief Engineer
John C. Winslow	3rd Asst. Engineer
James Glassco	Pumpman
William J. Gordon	Oiler
Fred P. Harker	"
James R. French	"
Michael F. Noonan	Fireman
Stanislaus Juhnik	"
Donald B. Hilton	"
Alexander W. Forbes	Wiper
Luis Rodriguez	Steward
George Van Dewater	Galleyman
Jacob I. Bensingor	Messman
Cornwall Gallacher	"
Paul F. Mahan	"
Milford K. Hulliken	"
Frederick Harris	"
Andrew Radzik	Able Seaman
Harold R. Magnuson	"
Fabien D. Moore	Wiper
William H. Sill	Fireman
Thomas Smith Jr.	Maintenance Man
William J. Conroy	"

July 28, 1942

CONFIDENTIAL REPORT ON U. S. FLAG TANK VESSELS ATTACKED AND LOST

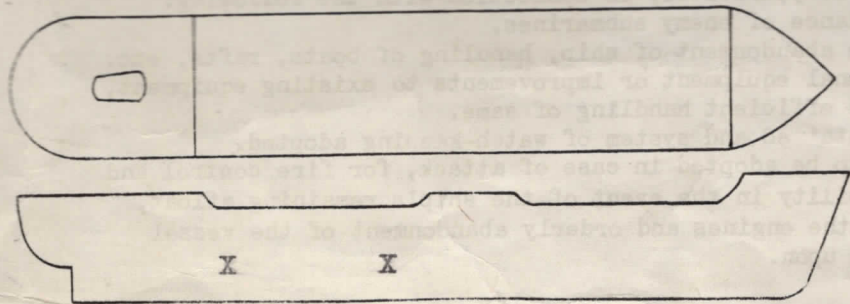
To: Commandant, U. S. Coast Guard, Washington, D. C.

SHIP: S/S HALO DATE OF ATTACK May 20, 1942

COMPANY Cities Service Oil Co. INFORMATION FURNISHED BY Wiper and boatswain

Line No.	SHIP DATA - QUESTIONS, ETC.	NATURE & RESULTS OF ATTACK OR LOSS	EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCES
1	Year Built	1920	
2	Gross Tonnage	6986	
3	D.W.T. (Emergency Coastwise L.L.)	11,146	
4	Type of Propulsion	Steam	
5	Cargo (42's)(Total Capacity)	80,000	
6	Total Carried	64,103 bbls	
7	Draft Loaded (Maximum allowed)	27'-1-1/4"	
8	Speed (Normal)	10.4 Knots	
9	Kind Cargo or Tanks Ballasted	Panuco Crude oil	
10	Was Ship Gas-free(See diagram below)	LO	
11	Date and Time of Attack	Date: 5/20/42 Time: 12:20 a.m.	
12	Time: Fire, Abandoned and Sunk	Fire: 12:20 Aband: Immed. Sunk: 12:25 AM	
13	Position	Lat.: not known Long.: not known	About 27 mi. off South Pass, La.
14	State of Weather	Clear, no wind	
15	State of Sea	Calm	
16	Speed (When attacked or lost)	not known 10.4	
17	Draft (When attacked or lost)	26'-8-1/2"	
18	Ship Bound For	St. Rose, La.	
19	Were Routing Orders Followed	not known YES	
20	Any Criticism of Routing Orders	----- NO	
21	If at Night, were Navig. Lights on	no	
22	Was 'SOS' Sent	not known	
23	Was Enemy Sighted (Before, during or after attack - Give data)	no	
24	Was Ship Armed (Type armament)	no	
25	Was Armament Used (State which and results)	-----	
26	Any United Nations' Craft in Vicinity	no	
27	Nature of Attack (Give data)	Torpedoed	
28	Number of Hits	two P+S PAR. BOLD	
29	Location of Hits (See diagram below)	one amidships, port. one aft, starboard bunker	
30	Did Cargo Fire (Give location, etc.)	yes	Vessel caught fire immediately
31	Did Tanks Explode (" " ")	yes	
32	Was Deck Ruptured	not known	

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED
 BY AUTHORITY OF
 CHIEF OFFICE OF MARITIME SAFETY
 29 MAY 1956
 SIGNATURE *[Signature]*
 BANK *[Signature]*
 MVL/DN



Fill in this diagram to show gas free tanks, attack hits, fires, etc.
9-4199

Line No.	SHIP DATA - QUESTIONS, ETC.	NATURE & RESULTS OF ATTACK OR LOSS	EXTRAORDINARY REMARKS
33	Was Oil Sprayed Over Ship	Yes	
34	Did Ship Break in Two	not known	
35	Were Wood Doors or Ports Blown in	Wood Doors: not kn Ports: U	
36	Other Damage to Vessel	SUNK	
37	Number of Life Boats Carried	4	
38	" " " " Used & Which	none	
39	" " " " Lost & How	4 FIRE	
40	" " " Rafts Carried	4	
41	" " " " Used & Which	1	1 caught fire. 2 survivors remained on wreck of raft and were rescued.
42	" " " " Lost & How	3 FIRE	
43	Were Boats or Rafts Attacked	no	
44	If 'Yes' to #43 Any Casualties	--	
45	Any Casualties Due Exposure	U: not known	
46	Any Casualties Due Lack of Food	U: no	
47	How Long in Boats or on Rafts	1-7 days	
48	Picked Up By: & Where:	British SS OTINA - ALLIED SHIP	
49	Speed of Ship When Abandoned	not known STOP	
50	Ship Re-Boarded, Towed-in, or Salvaged	No	
51	If Brought in, Approximate Damage		
52	No. U. S. Naval Gun Crew Carried	Officers: - Enlisted Men: -	
53	No. Ship's Officers Carried	Officers: 8 Radio Oprs.: 1	
54	No. Unlicensed Crew Carried	33 TOT 42	About 40 total crew
55	U. S. Naval Gun Crew Injured	Officers: - Enlisted Men: -	
56	U. S. Naval Gun Crew Lost	" : - " " : -	
57	Ship's Officers Injured	Officers: 1 Radio Oprs.: 0	
58	" " " Lost	" : 7 " " : 1	
59	Unlicensed Crew - Casualties	Injured: 2 Lost: 31	
60	Total Casualties: Officers & Men	Injured: 3 Lost: 39	
61	Officers and Men Lost By:	Drowning: V Fire: U cannot separate	
	" " " " " "	Shell or Torp.: U Suffocation: U	
62	Saved (Including Naval Crew)	Offrs.: 1 Unlic'd.: 2 Total: 3	
63	Officers and Men Saved By:	Lifeboats: 0 Life Rafts: 2	
	" " " " " "	Life Preservers: 1 No Aid: 0	
64	No. Eng. Room Watch Below	3	
65	No. " " " " Lost	2	
66	No. of Lookouts	2 (in addition to man at wheel and Mate)	
67	Any Defective Material	No	
68	Any Fault on Part of Personnel	No	

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enter on a separate sheet any recommendations or comments made, either by the survivors from whom you obtain statements, or yourselves, in connection with the following:

- (1) The detection and avoidance of enemy submarines.
- (2) The saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.
- (3) Suggestions for additional equipment or improvements to existing equipment, or suggestions for more efficient handling of same.
- (4) Number of lookouts maintained and system of watch-keeping adopted.
- (5) Prearranged procedure to be adopted in case of attack, for fire control and for maintenance of stability in the event of the ship's remaining afloat, or for the handling of the engines and orderly abandonment of the vessel in case that is decided upon.

JUN 6 1942

Rec'd

~~DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE~~

IN REPLY REFER TO

~~STRENGTH~~

FILE NO. MIN-4476

~~MARINE INSPECTION AND NAVIGATION~~UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA

OFFICE OF SUPERVISING INSPECTOR

313 Customhouse
2 June 1942

From: U. S. Supervising Inspector, Fourth District
To: Commandant

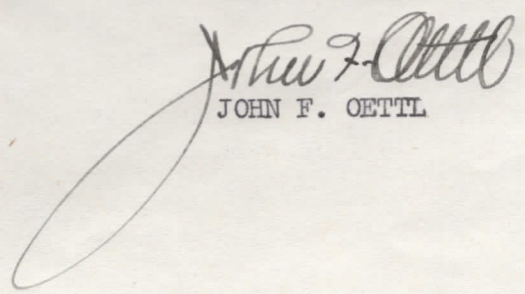
Subject: Statements of survivors of S.S. HALO

Inclosures: (A) Form 924d, in duplicate, submitted by John J. Traubel,
S.S. HALO
(B) Form 924d, in duplicate, submitted by Rolf Helland,
S.S. HALO

1. Inclosures (A) and (B) have been received from the U. S. Local Inspectors at Port Arthur, Texas, and are herewith submitted for the information and files of Headquarters.

2. These survivors had been landed in Port Arthur, Texas, by the British tank steamer OTINA on 28 May 1942. This vessel picked these men up at sea on 27 May 1942 after being on a raft for seven days without food or water.

3. These men were interviewed by the U. S. Local Inspectors of Port Arthur, Texas, while in the St. Mary's Hospital, Port Arthur, Texas, and are reported by the attending physician as rapidly recovering from their experience on the life raft. To the best of their knowledge they are the only two survivors from the subject vessel.


JOHN F. OETLE

JUN 8 - 1942

N.C.G. 924d
(April 1942)

U. S. Coast Guard

REPORT OF WAR CASUALTY
(To be submitted in duplicate)

Name of vessel SS HALO Official No. 220521 Gross tonnage 6986

Class O. T. V. Name of owner Cities Service Oil Company

Date and time of casualty About 12:20 a.m., 20 May 1942 Location About 27 miles off South Pass, Louisiana

Weather: Wind No Wind Sea Calm Visibility Very clear.

Sunk or brought into port Sunk If brought in, approximate damage, \$ ---

How brought in ---

Type of enemy action (torpedo, bomb, gunfire, etc.) Torpedo

Was a gun crew aboard? No, sir. If so, state number in crew ---

Total crew (including gun crew) About 40 Total passengers --- Total complement 40

Lives lost: Crew (including gun crew) Unknown Passengers ---

Seriously injured: Crew (including gun crew) --- Passengers ---

Length of time to abandon ship About five minutes.

Number saved by: Life boats None Life rafts raft damaged Other means ---

What happened after abandoning ship The vessel caught fire immediately after torpedoed,

and we managed to get a life raft overboard, and the raft caught fire, and the top of it

was burned away, so that when we finally got clear we just had the wreck of the raft to

keep us afloat, and were on it for seven days without food or water until we came to

aboard the English ship.

Which boats were used, how were they loaded, and who was in charge of each ---

Statement(s) obtained from* John J. Traubel, Wiper, U. S. Avenue, Gibbsboro, N. J.

Name of master Elrick Mueller Any defective material? None, Good material.

The life preservers held up wonderfully.

Any fault on part of personnel? No. Everybody did all they could do.

*Obtain statement from master or senior surviving officer. Obtain additional statements if deemed advisable. (over)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enter below any recommendations or comments made, either by the survivors from whom you obtain statements, or yourselves, in connection with the following:

- (1) The detection and avoidance of enemy submarines.
- (2) The saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.
- (3) Suggestions for additional equipment, or improvements to existing equipment, or suggestions for more efficient handling of same.
- (4) Number of lookouts maintained and system of watch-keeping adopted.
- (5) Prearranged procedure to be adopted in case of attack, for fire control and for maintenance of stability in the event of the ship's remaining afloat, or for the handling of the engines and orderly abandonment of the vessel in case that is decided upon.

Comments and recommendations pertaining to the above numbered items made by John J. Traubel, 30 May 1942, to U. S. Local Inspector, Port Arthur, Texas.

(1) The only way I could say to do is have a better convoy, and of course that would be impossible as far as that goes, but maybe they could use more airplanes. They were doing the best they could on the vessel.

(2) Only one way I could say, after she blew up the oil scattered all over the deck, and it made it so slippery to stand up on, but that is something that is unavoidable. I know no better way to handle the boats and rafts. The Captain had two boats swung out on the side all the time, one on the starboard side aft and one on the port side forward, and there were two in all the time, too. I know of no better way to handle.

(3) No, sir, I don't know of any. They were very well equipped.

(4) Yes, sir, there was one look out on the fore-castle head, one on the bridge, and one on top of the wheel house. There were three men on look out all the time besides the Mate, which made four men on watch all the time.

(5) Every two or three days we had life boat drill and were told to go to our stations immediately. I was on the forward boat No. 2, and there was a hatchet and the Captain gave me orders every day to cut the boat loose. Someone was assigned to turn on the steam smothering lines in case of fire. I don't know anything about the engine rooms. They told us to go to our boats in case the vessel had to be abandoned.

Statement(s) obtained from: John J. Traubel, U. S. Avenue, Gibbstown, N. J.

Name of master: Erick J. Keller

The life preservers held up wonderfully.

Any fault on part of personnel? No. Everybody did all they could do.

Obtain statement from master or senior surviving officer. Obtain additional statements if deemed advisable. (over)

N.C.G. 924d
(April 1942)

U. S. Coast Guard

REPORT OF WAR CASUALTY
(To be submitted in duplicate)

Name of vessel SS HALO Official No. 220521 Gross tonnage 6986

Class O. T. V. Name of owner Cities Service Oil Company

Date and time of casualty About 12:20 a.m., 20 May 1942 Location About 27 miles off South Pass, Louisiana

Weather: Wind No Wind Sea Calm Visibility Very clear.

Sunk or brought into port Sunk If brought in, approximate damage, \$

How brought in

Type of enemy action (torpedo, bomb, gunfire, etc.) Torpedos

Was a gun crew aboard? No If so, state number in crew

Total crew (including gun crew) About 40 Total passengers Total complement 40

Lives lost: Crew (including gun crew) Unknown Passengers

Seriously injured: Crew (including gun crew) Passengers

Length of time to abandon ship About five minutes.

Number saved by: Life boats None Life rafts Damaged Other means

What happened after abandoning ship (Right after we were torpedoed, the crew managed to

get a life raft overboard, the vessel caught on fire, and so did the life raft, and the

top of the raft was burned away. We finally managed to get clear on the wreck of raft,

and were on it for 7 days without food or water, and were unconscious when picked up by

the English vessel.)

Which boats were used, how were they loaded, and who was in charge of each

Statement(s) obtained from* Rolf Helland, Boatswain, 866 North 21st, Philadelphia, Pa.

Name of master Elrick Mueller Any defective material? None.

Any fault on part of personnel? No fault whatsoever.

*Obtain statement from master or senior surviving officer. Obtain additional statements if deemed advisable. (over)

U.S. MARINE INSPECTION & NAVIGATION
SUPERVISING INSPECTOR
RECEIVED
JUN 1 - 1942

RECOMMENDATIONS

Enter below any recommendations or comments made, either by the survivors from whom you obtain statements, or yourselves, in connection with the following:

- (1) The detection and avoidance of enemy submarines.
- (2) The saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.
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- (5) Prearranged procedure to be adopted in case of attack, for fire control and for maintenance of stability in the event of the ship's remaining afloat, or for the handling of the engines and orderly abandonment of the vessel in case that is decided upon.

Comments and recommendations pertaining to the above numbered items made by Rolf Helland, 30 May 1942, to U. S. Local Inspector, Port Arthur, Texas.

(1) More protection by convoy is all I know of.

(2) They couldn't handle the boats any better than they do now.

(3) They have everything they could have on the boats. They are well equipped.

(4) Yes, sir, there were four look outs all the time. There was always a Mate on watch, and a look out on the forecästle head, one on the bridge, and one on top of the wheel house.

(5) They gave us orders all the time on what to do in case of attack. Everybody was to go to their stations when the alarm sounded. They had a certain man assigned in case the vessel caught on fire to turn on the steam smothering lines. I don't know about the engine rooms. We had boat drills and everything about how to abandon the vessel.

Statement(s) obtained from Rolf Helland, Postwar, 666 North Star, Philadelphia, Pa.

Any defective material? None.

Any fault on part of personnel? No fault whatsoever.

Obtain statement from master or senior surviving officer. Obtain additional statements if deemed advisable. (over)

CLASSIFICATION CANCELED
BY AUTHORITY OF
CHIEF OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY
29 MAY 1956
SIGNATURE *RMAH* RANK *CDR.*
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON

CONFIDENTIAL

June 19, 1942

MEMORANDUM FOR FILE

Subject: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS HALO, American Tanker, 6986 G.T., owners Cities Service Oil Company of New Jersey.

1. The HALO was torpedoed without warning at 0115 CWT, May 20, 1942, at 28.42 N- 90.08 W, approximately 50 miles from S.W. Passage of Mississippi River while enroute from Tampico, Mexico and Galveston, Texas to New Orleans, La., with a cargo of 63,000 barrels of crude oil, average draft 23 feet. The tanker sank by the bow, with propeller still turning, approximately 3 minutes after the attack. (It was also stated that it took 15 minutes for the ship to sink).
2. She was on a course from Galveston, Texas to S.W. Passage of Mississippi River, speed about 8 knots, zigzagging very rapidly, and had been zigzagging all the time from Tampico, Mexico. Completely blacked out, number of lookouts not known at time of attack but before that three men stationed; one forecastle, one top bridge, and one wing of bridge. The weather was clear, sea calm, very little wind, visibility good, moonlight, no ships in sight.
3. A torpedo struck with terrific force, starboard side, under the bridge and blew that part of the ship to bits. Ten seconds later a second torpedo hit starboard side, aft of bridge, but forward of engine room and tore the ship apart. It also has been stated that one torpedo struck on the starboard side and one on the port side. The tanker's engines were still running when it plunged to the bottom. Radio transmitter was turned on which gave out a long dash. Tanker was unarmed, confidential codes went down with ship.
4. (23 out of a total crew of 42, mostly from engine room and after part of ship, abandoned the tanker. The men grabbed life preservers and jumped over the side, swimming away from the wreckage as it went down. The position of the sinking was ablaze with bunker oil for about 6 hours. The survivors huddled together in the water throughout the night and next day. The survivors then commenced dying. On the third day wreckage commenced coming up from the tanker and 7 remaining survivors tied

boards together with strips of canvas torn from life preservers. The crude oil came up and laid in a film 4 inches thick around and on the survivors. On May 25, 1400 CWT the Mexican cargo ship, OAXACA picked up the 3 remaining survivors. One was dead and given a burial at sea. Two were delivered to Tampico hospital about 0230 CWT, May 28. One died after $\frac{1}{2}$ hour in the hospital leaving only one survivor. Two additional survivors were picked up from a life raft at 1122 CWT, May 27 by the British tanker SS ORINA and taken to New Orleans, La. Out of a total crew of 42, three were rescued. (While the survivors were struggling in the water for 5 days, 50 miles from S.W. Passage of Mississippi River, patrol planes were observed every day with the exception of May 23 and 24. Some of these ① planes were at an altitude so low that the star could be seen on the ship. Also two twin-engine planes passed over, about 2,000 feet altitude, each day about one hour after dawn heading westward and each day, about one hour before sunset, heading eastward; yet these planes at no time came down to investigate the tremendous oil slick. The Captain of the OAXACA reported the oil slick visible 10 miles from the bridge of his ship, On May 25 a destroyer having two smoke stacks aft circled the 2 survivors three times but did not pick them up.)

5. After the tanker went down, two submarines (one large and one small) surfaced and moved into a distance of about 100 yards of where the survivors were and exchanged blinker signals. Survivors were unable to give a description of the submarines. The subs were last seen at 0145 CWT, May 20.

6. (It was suggested that life rafts on merchant vessels ② be left free to drift.)

A. J. POWERS
Lt. (JG) USNR

WAR SHIPPING ADMINISTRATION
WASHINGTON

July 7, 1942

Captain H. C. Shephard
United States Coast Guard
U. S. Coast Guard Building
13th & E Streets, N. W.
Washington, D. C.

U.S. Coast Guard File Room	by	16K	16K	16K
Rec'd JUL 8 1942				

Dear Captain Shephard:

We are attaching hereto copy of a letter received in this Office from Mr. R. C. Hillyer of the Mexican Gulf Oil Company, Tampico, Mexico. In this letter Mr. Hillyer has set forth the circumstances surrounding the sinking of the SS "HALO" and subsequent rescue of two survivors, one of whom has since died.

It is respectfully requested that you note the suggestions contained in the attached letter and let us have your comments on same. We shall appreciate hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely yours,

J. F. Devlin
J. F. Devlin
Marine Superintendent
Division of Operations

Attachment



CLASSIFICATION CANCELED
BY AUTHORITY OF
CHIEF OFFICE OF MERCHANT MARINE SAFETY
29 MAY 1956
SIGNATURE 1944 RANK CDV
MVL-DV

JUL 10 1942

C
O
P
Y

MEXICAN GULF OIL COMPANY
TAMPICO, MEXICO

Tampico, Tamps.
May 30, 1942.

Admiral Emery S. Land,
Maritime Commission,
Washington, D. C.

Dear Sir:

Through the American Consul in Tampico you have probably already been advised of the details of the sinking of the Cities Service tanker S/S "HALO" some 60 miles off the mouth of the Mississippi River on or about May 19.

The crew consisted of 42 men, including 12 student apprentices. The ship was attacked about 2 o'clock in the morning and was hit by two torpedoes amidship and sank immediately. It was loaded with Panuco Crude Oil from Tampico and bound for New Orleans. Apparently 18 of the crew, including the captain, were either killed or went down with the ship. It was not machine-gunned but two submarines took part in the sinking. (The remaining 24 of the crew, through the help of life preservers and floating wreckage, stayed afloat for several days in the immediate vicinity of the sunken ship. After three days, probably due to the pressure at the bottom of the sea, which I understand at this point is about 500 feet deep, the tanks were crushed one by one and the oil came to the surface, covering the floating survivors.) One by one these men died until finally on the sixth day they were discovered by the Mexican steamship "OAXACA". Only two of the crew remained alive: Joe Shackelford of Norfolk, Virginia and John Giesseck (spelling doubtful) of Massachusetts. These two men were brought to Tampico alive by the steamship "OAXACA" but John Giesseck died the following morning. Joe Shackelford is still alive and apparently has all of his faculties and is on the way to a speedy recovery in a hospital here in Tampico. He was the second engineer of the ship and was on duty at the time of the torpedoing. All this information was given by Joe Shackelford. ①

(Naval patrol ships flew over these men every day but at such tremendous heights that they did not discover them floating in the water and the sailors were unable, by any means at their disposal, to attract the patrol's attention. After the chapopote rose to the surface and blackened their hands and bodies, their chances to make themselves visible to the patrol ships were greatly lessened. The oil slick must certainly have been visible to the patrol but they did not come down to investigate, nor were surface craft sent out for that purpose, although they lay only about 60 miles off the Southwest Pass of the Mississippi delta.) ②

(This thought occurs to me for your proper consideration and disposal; a simple mirror, no larger than 3 inches in diameter, furnished each sailor and ③

Admiral Emery S. Land, #2, --/

Tampico, May 30, 1942

graph? = a flower
and used as a heliotrope might have saved the lives of 24 men. Any civil engineer acquainted with triangulation or geodetic surveys knows the use of this simple device. The reflection from the sun at distances as great as 10 or 15 miles will blink ones eyes and cannot be mistaken. I have observed the reflection at distances as great as 50 miles with the naked eye. Twenty-four men using these mirrors could not fail to attract aerial patrols.

As an engineer who has used heliotropes and as a former officer in the Engineering Corps of the U. S. Army during the past war, I respectfully submit this suggestion for your due consideration.)

Very truly yours,

R. C. Hillyer (Sgd.)
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