

Op-16-B-5

NAVY DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS  
WASHINGTON 25 D C

CONFIDENTIAL

22 Feb 45

MEMORANDUM FOR FILEALL TIMES GCT

SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS HOBART BAKER, American Freighter, 7176 G.T., owned by War Shipping Administration, operated by the General Steamship Company.

1. The HOBART BAKER was bombed by enemy aircraft at approximately 1720 GCT, 29 Dec 44, while at anchor off Bug Bug Point, Mindoro Island, P.I., having sailed from Leyte Gulf, 19 Dec in convoy, arriving off Bug Bug Point 22 Dec. Ship was loaded with 3,000 tons of steel airstrip landing nets stowed in the lower holds and 'tween decks; 300 tons of cargo had been discharged at time of attack; mean draft 16'. At 2300 ship had fully settled by the head and only a portion of the ship from a point midway of #4 hold aft could be seen. Rest of ship was fully submerged and probably resting on the bottom since the part of the stern which remained above water was at a sharp angle.

2. Ship was at anchor in an open anchorage off the Southern coast of Mindoro, Bug Bug Point, bearing 55°, distance about 5/8 of a mile, Armed Guard at general quarters; completely blacked out. The weather was clear; sea smooth; no wind; full moon; visibility good.

3. At 0205 warning of impending enemy attacks was issued by firing 3 red tracers from shore. At about 1715 a Jap plane approached ship from the North, altitude about 3,000' and continued Southward to Sea. About 5 minutes later plane returned, flying at mast height, approached ship from starboard beam as she came over ship; banked and released 2 bombs. One bomb fell into #3 hold. Some survivors stated that the second bomb fell through the engine room skylight while others said the second bomb fell in the water close aboard the starboard side abreast of #3 hold. No. 3 hatch was covered. No guns were fired at plane prior to the attack, either by ships in the harbor or shore installations but, as plane continued over ship one of the aft 20 mm's fired several short bursts with negative results. Survivors disagreed whether or not plane strafed vessel as she approached for the release of her bombs. Bomb that fell in #3 hold caused a terrific explosion and blew out numerous steam lines in the engine room as well as bulkheads between the #3 hold and the engine room. Master stated that the explosions from one or both of the bombs produced a V-shaped crack from 8" to 1' in width in the starboard side of hull abreast of the aft end of #3 hold, extending from the sheer strake to the water line. Fire room, engine room and amidships quarters were flooded with steam and smoke and almost immediately ship started settling by the head. Ship's draft went very quickly to 26' forward and then continued to settle more slowly. About 1740, after ship had been abandoned, the amidship section burst into flames and blazed fiercely. Master believed that the fires probably started from the fuel oil settling tanks. Ship submerged until forward section to #4 hold was resting on the bottom. See paragraph six for information regarding confidential codes.

4. At about 1730 abandon ship signal sounded, all boats were lowered and survivors left in a very orderly fashion. Boats proceeded ashore to a nearby PT base. Entire merchant crew survived except the chief engineer who was fatally injured. Entire Armed Guard survived. Several members of the merchant crew and Armed Guard crew received minor injuries including burns, none of which however, required permanent hospitalization.

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*File in file of  
Survivors (1-2)  
Navy maps (1-2)  
Baker*

*Kill me*

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SS HOBART BAKER, Contd.

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5. The plane was believed to have been a twin-motored Jap bomber.
6. Master stated that on the night of 26 December ship was at anchor with other vessels in the northern part of Ilin Strait, Mangarin Bay, Mindoro. Ships were attacked by a Jap task force with shell fire, aerial bombardment and torpedoes. Shortly thereafter, what seemed to be a Jap destroyer appeared off the southern end of Ilin Strait. Destruction and possibly boarding of the ship seemed imminent. Master therefore decided to dispose of his secret codes. Confidential and secret publications were thrown overboard in a locked metal box, in 17 fathoms of water, position 12.17.55N - 121.04.47E.

BARBARA CONARD  
Lt. (jg) USNR

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