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28 November, 1944

MERCHANT MARINE
INSPECTION DIVISION

U.S. COAST GUARD (11)
35105
DEC 4 1944

CONFIDENTIAL

To: The Commandant (OMP)

Subj: SS J. J. CONEY oil spill in the Columbia River; preliminary investigation

Forwarded, approved.

Joseph Greenspun
JOSEPH GREENSPUN
Acting

DECLASSIFIED
Authority *NW 3-26-83-11*
By *EA* NARA. Date *5/2/7*

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Case No.: MIN S-595

MERCHANT MARINE HEARING UNIT
 ELEVENTH NAVAL DISTRICT
 LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA
 23 November, 1944

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IN THE MATTER OF SS J. J. CONEY,
 OIL SPILL IN THE COLUMBIA RIVER.

SOURCE OF COMPLAINT: U. S. Coast Guard Intelligence,
 Portland, Oregon.

PERSONS INTERVIEWED: Kenneth L. Strawser, second mate,
 SS J. J. CONEY, 6608 1/2 Rugby Street, Huntington Park, Cali-
 fornia.

Lenard A. Losasso, machinist-pumpman, SS J. J. CONEY,
 Box 244, Route 5, Denver, Colorado.

FACTS: On 20 October, 1944, the SS J. J. CONEY, a tank
 vessel of American Registry, operated by the Hillcone Steam-
 ship Company, was tied up at the DuBoise Lumber Company dock in
 Vancouver, Washington. The vessel was engaged in delivering
 gasoline to the Fletcher Oil Company.

At or about 0240 on 20 October, 1944, the discharging of
 gasoline was completed and preparations were made for a line
 wash which was to start at 0300. The intervening 20 minutes
 were spent making the necessary changes in the pump room line-
 up. The second mate, Strawser, who was on watch, went down
 into the pump room to assist Losasso, the pumpman, in making
 the line-up. When all appeared in order for pumping water into
 the line from the sea suction, pumping was started, but shortly
 afterwards the second mate noticed that the pressure gauge did
 not register, which was unusual. He then checked the sea
 suction outlet from the deck and observed gasoline running into
 the river from the outlet. He immediately closed the deck valve
 on the discharge line, went down into the pump room again to
 further check on the line-up and found that a crossover valve
 was open. It is evident that the deck valve on the discharge
 line was not closed prior to opening the sea suction and start-
 ing the pump. Consequently, the gasoline in the line dropped
 and was allowed to run into the river through the sea suction
 as it by-passed the open crossover valve to the pump. After
 correcting this error in the line-up, the line wash was started
 at 0342 and completed at 0350.

As no trouble had been anticipated prior to the line
 wash, the valve from the shore tanks had been left open, and
 consequently, the gasoline in the line flowed back into the
 river because of the oversight in not closing the crossover

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valve previously mentioned.

It was estimated that about 100 barrels of gasoline was lost.

The U. S. Coast Guard was notified and a fire boat arrived at 0430, and this fire boat, in conjunction with the use of fire hose from the SS J. J. CONEY, dispersed the gasoline on the surface and out into the river.

Mr. Strawser, second mate, stated that he had had approximately 4 months experience as a licensed officer on tank vessels.

Mr. Losasso was making his first trip in the capacity of machinist-pumpman.

Mr. A. J. Wilkins, chief mate on the SS J. J. CONEY, gave Losasso a good reference in all respects.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION: It is the opinion of the undersigned Examining Officer that this particular oil spill was not the result of either misconduct or negligence, but rather from lack of tanker experience. Under the circumstances it was decided not to prefer charges, but, both men were advised as to the importance of avoiding oil spills, and of the fire hazards and serious disasters which might result from such spills.

It is recommended that no further action be taken and that the case be closed.

Sverre S. Arnet
SVERRE S. ARNET
Lt. Commander, USCGR
Examining Officer

23 November, 1944
Approved:

Addison S. Elliot
ADDISON S. ELLIOT
Lt. Comdr., USCGR
Officer in Charge