

CG-MIN-JEREMIAH
VAN RENSSELAER
2 June, 1944

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MEMORANDUM FOR CHIEF, MERCHANT MARINE INSPECTION

Subj: War action casualty involving the JEREMIAH
VAN RENSSELAER on 2 February, 1943.

1. With respect to your direction for additional information with respect to the type of raft and the rubber lifesaving suit used on the JEREMIAH VAN RENSSELAER, the following pertinent facts are submitted:

(1) On 2 February, 1943, the JEREMIAH VAN RENSSELAER was torpedoed in Mid-Atlantic, (latitude 54° 50'N, longitude 28° 55'W.). The crew immediately abandoned ship in a very disorderly manner. The sea was very rough, and the weather intensely cold. Two boats were launched successfully and two capsized.

(2) After considerable difficulty, the Chief Engineer, a messman, an oiler, an A.B., and several members of the Gun Crew boarded a raft wearing the following clothing:

(a) Chief Engineer - ordinary clothes and heavy overcoat.

(b) Messman - ordinary clothes and rubber lifesaving suit.

(c) Oiler - ordinary clothes and thin sweater.

(d) A.B. - ordinary clothes.

(e) 1 Gun Crew - ordinary clothes and thin sweater.

(f) Gun Crew - regulation heavy clothes.

2. This raft was adrift for approximately 5½ hours before rescue and the condition of the personnel on this raft was as follows:

(a) Chief Engineer - Frozen numb, pulled up by line.

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- (b) Messman - dead, (apparently frozen and the first to die).
- (c) Oiler - Dead, apparently frozen
- (d) A.B. - Frozen numb, pulled up by line, (not known if dead).
- (e) 1 Gun Crew - With ordinary clothes - dead, (apparently frozen).
- (f) Gun Crew - Frozen numb, pulled up by line.

3. The subject raft was undoubtedly of the prewar type, as the Chief Engineer, a survivor, stated that it was of wood with metal cylinders.

4. While adrift, the sea being rough, and the weather intensely cold, the survivors were too cold and stiff to enable them to let go of the raft long enough to put a hand in their pocket for warmth, or to get at the raft equipment.

5. It is to be noted that the Messman, with the ordinary clothes and wearing a rubber lifesaving suit, was the first one to perish on the raft, apparently being frozen to death.