

American Consulate, Durban.
September 16, 1943.

196.7/3454

No. 77

In the forenoon of September 11th I received a visit from **THE FOREIGN SERVICE** the S.S. JOHN G. WHITTIER, who had entered his quarters, forced open drawers and stolen some of his possessions; and that following that an **AIR MAIL:** Samuel MESSINA entered his quarters while he was in there, took the key from the inside of the door and insisted on keeping it, with the **AMERICAN CONSULATE** was a sailor Durban, Union of South Africa, November 1, 1943.

SUBJECT: Removal of Samuel A. MESSINA from S.S. JOHN G. WHITTIER for Misconduct.

considerable trouble in it. It was known that there was a good deal of trouble on the ship, probably ultimately stemming from the fact that the Master, Captain E. BROOKING, spent most of his time ashore in an intoxicated condition and had no control over the crew.

THE HONORABLE

With Consul Smith, who was interested in observing the condition of the locks on the drawers in Larson's quarters. Each had **WASHINGTON** and was worthless for future use. The Master apparently wished to pass over the matter lightly, but complied with a request to have Samuel Messina brought in for an interview. Messina

SIR: I have the honor to transmit documents in the case of Samuel MESSINA, A.B., who was removed from the S.S. JOHN G. WHITTIER on September 16, 1943 for misconduct.

From the evidence submitted and the personal observations of the two consular officers on duty at this post, it appears that Messina is a most unpleasant individual to have in a crew, and it is therefore recommended that an investigation be conducted to determine Messina's fitness to continue as a member of the American Merchant Marine. launch, Messina followed me, constantly sleeping on the shoulder and babbling how he respected the American Consul, and **Respectfully yours,** as doing his job in the merchant marine.

On Monday, September 13th, I was notified by the Purser that Messina had created a disturbance on the vessel not long after my departure, and had been arrested at the request of the Chief **E. Talbot Smith** taken to Court and sentenced to five **American Consul** or ten shillings fine. Since Messina had no funds and no one **Enclosure:** nos him any, he was placed in jail. Both the Master and the Purser requested Messina's removal from the **Supporting documents.** vined that all interested parties should present written statements relative to **File No. 886.3,** and that should there be sufficient **RCS/np.** the Consulate would consider removing him.

*File
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locate to Consul Broach
1/43*

COPY:

American Consulate, Durban.
September 16, 1943.

The statements were presented on Wednesday morning, September 15th. Afternoon Messina appeared at 11th I received a visit

MEMORANDUM

In the forenoon of September 11th I received a visit from Jens LARSEN, Chief Steward on the S.S. JOHN G. WHITTIER, who complained that someone had entered his quarters, forced the locks on all of his drawers and stolen some of his possessions; and that following that an able seaman named Samuel MESSINA entered his quarters while he was in them, took the key from the inside of the door and insisted on keeping it, with the result that there was a scuffle.

Although Larsen had obviously had quite a bit to drink, it was considered that his tale doubtless had considerable truth in it. It was known that there was a good deal of trouble on the ship, probably ultimately stemming from the fact that the Master, Captain E. GROETHING, spent most of his time ashore in an intoxicated condition and had no control over the crew.

With Consul Smith, who was interested in observing conditions aboard, I proceeded to the ship and was shown the condition of the locks on the drawers in Larsen's quarters. Each had been forced and was worthless for future use. The Master apparently wished to pass over the matter lightly, but complied with a request to have Samuel Messina brought in for an interview. Messina appeared in an intoxicated, talkative condition. He denied having entered the Chief Steward's quarters at any time, and used considerable disrespectful language in our presence. His quarters contained two empty quart brandy bottles which he admitted were his. The impression he made on Consul Smith and me was most adverse.

Messina was told that the case would be looked into further and that he should quiet down and behave himself. As I went down the stairway on the ship side to enter the waiting launch, Messina followed me, constantly slapping me on the shoulder and babbling how he respected the American Consul, and how he certainly was doing his job in the merchant marine.

On Monday, September 13th, I was notified by the Purser that Messina had created a disturbance on the vessel not long after my departure, and had been arrested at the request of the Chief Mate, had been taken to Court and sentenced to five days imprisonment or ten shillings fine. Since Messina had no funds and no one would advance him any, he was placed in jail. Both the Master and the Purser requested Messina's removal from the vessel. They were advised that all interested parties should present written statements relative to Messina's conduct, and that should there be sufficient evidence the Consulate would consider removing him,

the Police Jail, here at Durban, with a Court decision of judgment against him for an offence committed aboard this vessel at 3 P.M. on Saturday, Sept. 11, 1943, I wish to state as follows:

The

The statements requested were presented on Wednesday morning, September 15. That afternoon Messina appeared at the Consulate in company with a member of the crew of his ship, Harold HAINES, who had paid Messina's fine and released him. Both were sent to the Immigration Officer and arrangements made for their detention; Haines for the night only, since his vessel was at the outer anchorage, he could not reach it until the next day, and he had no permission to be ashore; Messina for an indefinite period since I had decided to remove him from the vessel for misconduct.

By mistake Messina was on Thursday, September 16, placed on board his vessel with Haines by the 6.00 a.m. tugboat; but he subsequently was returned ashore with his belongings. Following his discharge from the vessel in the usual manner he was placed in the Immigration Detention Depot. Messina protested his innocence of any misconduct and said that he should not be treated so unfairly for having "a little fun". Since the vessel was scheduled to leave early Friday morning, September 17, and it was at the outer anchorage, no informal hearing in the presence of witnesses was possible, and action was taken on the written statements presented and on my personal observations of Messina. The Master was requested to make a full report on the case upon his return to the United States.

Messina is 35 years of age and bearer of Seaman's Certificate of Identification No. Z.17058. His home address is given as 3217 Bank Street, New Orleans.

(Signed) ROBERT C. STRONG

Robert C. Strong
American Vice Consul

COPY:

S.S. John G. Whittier
Durban, U.S.A.
Sept. 14, 1943.

United States Consul,
Durban, U.S.A.

Dear Sir,

In the case of Seaman Samuel Messina, an O.S. who held an emergency rating as A.B. on this vessel, whom we have discussed before, and who is now incarcerated in the Police jail, here at Durban, with a court decision of judgment against him for an offence committed aboard this vessel at 3 P.M. on Saturday, Sept. 11, 1943, I wish to state as follows:

The

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COPY:

The offence committed was considerably more than just drunk and disorderly conduct and was in fact a mild mutiny, because of his calumnizing everybody aboard and resisting not only the ship's officer's but also the Harbor Police Officer's who came to arrest him and even tried to escape them.

There is in addition to this against him the suspicion of having broken into the Steward's room and demolished the locks of drawer's etc. the effects of which you yourself have witnessed. At this moment I have not the statements of the witness's as to these acts. However I can give briefly my own knowledge and impression as to the character and disposition of this man, and the reason I do not wish to carry him on my ship. As to the duplicity of his nature, his very grovelling before your feet as you look at him while you know that as soon as you turn he might plunge a knife into your back; also his dirty and slovenly habit's; his cringing and at same time objectable ways without any direct acts of insubordination that he knows he could not get away with; in addition to his unpopularity with the crew and officer's all of this might not be sufficient to demand his discharge,, But there are stronger reasons for my wanting him off this particular vessel.

In the persian Gulf area he stole 20 cartons of cigars. He is known as one of these minor agitators, and his recent assumption of delagateship has made him feel like a big shot. Yet the most serious reason is the fact that in the past a number of minor acts of sabotage have occurred on this ship, such as smashing of locks, both to the stewards store room and the cargo holds with cargo in them, cutting of ropes, and stealing things out of the life boats, all of which I consider Messina quite capable of committing. Now then, feeling possibly more spiteful towards the officer's, who he knows despises him, if it is true that he had during the voyage indulged in these more or less, so far, harmless passtimes, just to annoy us he might well in the future so things of more serious consequence.

Lastly the vessel is at present anchored, for orders, on the high seas, ready to proceed at any moment, in which case a full complement of crew is absolutely necessary at any time, and I cannot be bothered waiting for jailbirds to be released. It is therefor I ask for your consent to his release now at once so that a substitute can be signed on and I can be fully ready to go as any emergency might arise.

Yours very sincerely,
(Signed E GROETHING)
Master.

COPY:
to send for the police. They came and I had them take
Messina ashore.

AMERICAN MAIL LINE

740 Stuart Building, Seattle, Washington.

(Signed)
George
S.S. John G. Whittier
Durban, Natal, U.S.A.
September 13, 1943.

United States Consul
Durban, Natal, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:-

In regard to Sam A. Messina, Able Bodied Seaman aboard this vessel. I have found him to be untrustworthy from the very beginning of this trip. He has caused considerable trouble since the very beginning, starting in New York when he was one of the ringleaders in attempting to prevent the ship from sailing. They claimed it was an argument with the Chief Engineer over the quantity of hot water they had to wash with.

Since that time there have been frequent occurrences where he has tried to turn the crew against the officers.

In the persian Gulf area he stole 20 cartons of cigarettes from his roommate Charles Binz (who is no longer on this ship) and peddled the cigarettes to the natives. He was caught going through Binz's locker by Binz himself, who came to me the next day and asked to be changed to another room and another watch, saying that if he stayed with Messina in the same room he'd probably break Messina's neck if he caught Messina going through his locker again.

Whenever Messina was given an order he did so with a "go to hell" attitude and very grudgingly, and it was just short of absolute refusal to do as he was told.

The climax came on the afternoon of September 11, 1943. I was in the cargo hold overseeing repairs when the 3rd Officer Mr. J.J. Malone came to me and told me that Messina was acting up and wouldn't obey orders to go to his room and that Messina was attempting to kick down the door leading into the messboys room, and that Messina had urinated over the table in the gun crew messroom. When I got back to the crew's quarters I found Messina kicking on the door and using obscene language, calling everybody obscene names. I ordered him to go to his room which he did, but as soon as I turned my back he was out again and kicking on the messboy's door. I ordered him back to his room, this time he went in and closed the door. He threw a couple of coffee cups and a water glass out of the port and over the side and started throwing a stool around the room. I then decided

picked by Police launch.

to

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) LERO P. SOLICHO

Second Mate

to send for the police. They came and I had them take Messina ashore.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) GEORGE R. ELB
George R. Elb, Chief Officer.

P.S. The Third Officer just gave me a master key that fell out of Messina's pocket when he was in the police boat. At the time Mr. Malone thought it was they key to Messina's room and forgot about it. It is a master key to all the officers quarters. It had been in Chief Steward's possession.

On Friday the 10th G.R.E. at 12:15 P.M., I saw Sam A. Messina enter the Chief Steward's room while the Chief Steward was in the Officer's Saloon. Messina came out in a very short time with something hidden inside his shirt that was not there when he went in. I notified Mr. Larsen but he could not get to his room.

AMERICAN MAIL LINE
740 Stuart Building, Seattle, Washington.

On Saturday the 11th, s.s. John G. Whittier after Mr. Larsen had left the ship I saw Sam A. Messina open the door to Mr. Larsen's room, enter, and close the door after him. A few minutes later he came back and again he had something hidden under his shirt. He closed the door and left without looking it.

Dear Sir:-

Respectfully your,

Reagarding to Sam A. Messina's behaviour aboard this ship I have to report: During ship's stay in New York Hbr., at beginning of this trip he was one of ringleaders in dispute on crew's walkout because of some argument with Chief Engineer about quantity of hot water they are entitled to have.

In Persian Gulf he stole 20 cartoons of cigarettes from his roommate C. Binz.

On September 11.th 1943 he got intoxicated and early in the afternoon started kicking down the door leading into messboys room. At my and Third Mate's repeated orders to Messina to keep quiet, he would disappear temporarily, then as soon as I went to my room start kicking again and in meantime urinated over the table in Guncrew's Mess. Chief Mate was called from No. 1 hold to quiet down Messina. At Chief's orders he went to his room responding with profane words and throwing coffee cups and glasses over the side.

Police was called. They came aboard the ship, and after Chief Mate's statement, they took Messina ashore. Going down the ship's gangway Messina dove overboard, but was picked by Police launch.

The night of September 11, 1943 at about 11 P.M. he came to my room and kicked so heavily that I had to get up and open it. In the door

Yours respectfully,
(Signed) LUKO P. SOLETIC
Second Mate

stood
COPY:

stood Sailor Sam Messina. Before I had a chance to get it closed he was inside my room and had taken the key to my door. I wrote him a note and told him to leave my room immediately. He did not do. Furthermore he said if he didn't get this he was going to my room. After half an hour I finally succeeded in getting the key of my room. I am positively certain that the guilty person who broke into my room, took on my drawers, beneath my desk, and took some of my private property and private papers. There (Steward's Department) bills and regulations missing.

COPY:
AMERICAN MAIL LINE
 740 Stuart Building, Seattle, Washington
 S.S. John G. Whittier
 Durban, Natal, U.S.A.
 September 13, 1943.

United States Consul
 Durban, Natal, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:-

Yours respectfully,

On Friday the 10th., 1943 at 12:15 P.M., I saw Sam A. Messina enter the Chief Steward's room while the Chief Steward was in the Officer's Saloon. Messina came out in a very short time with something hidden inside his shirt that was not there when he went in. I notified Mr. Larsen but Messina had left before he could get to his room.

On Saturday the 11th., 1943 at approximately ten A.M. after Mr. Larsen had left the ship, I saw Sam. A. Messina open the door to Mr. Larsen's room with a key, enter, and close the door after him. A few minutes later he came out and again he had something hidden under his shirt. He closed the door and left without locking it.

Respectfully your,

United States Consul
 Durban, Natal, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:-

(Signed) THEODORE COLVIN

Theodore Colvin, Saloon Messman

In regard to Sam. A. Messina, A.B. on board this ship. I first met Messina last April in New York on board this ship. The day before sailing he and two other men who are no longer with this ship were ring-leaders in an attempt to break out by the crew. It was a dispute over the quantity of hot water that they should receive. Their attempt should have tied the ship up indefinitely had it not been prevented.

740 Stuart Building, Seattle, Washington.

Messina has been lazy at work and although he obeys orders he does so grudgingly. He is not suit him he usually has some rebellious spirit of mutiny.

S.S. John G. Whittier
 Durban, Natal, U.S.A.
 September 13, 1943.

While we were in the Persian Gulf one of our A.B.s, left there in the hospital, reported Messina stealing twenty cartons of cigarettes from him and on another occasion going through

United States Consul
 Durban, Natal, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:-

Sailor, Sam Messina, has several times before this thing happened been warned to stay away from the Steward's stateroom. The night of September 9th, 1943 at about 11 P.M. he came to my door and knocked on it so heavily that I had to get up and open it. In the door

stood

stood Sailor Sam Messina. Before I had a chance to get it closed he was inside my room and had taken the key to my door I wrested it from his hand and told him to leave my room immediately which he would not do. Furthermore he demanded the storeroom keys and said that if he didn't get them he was going to knock my brains out. After half an hour I finally succeeded in getting him out of my room. I am positively certain that Sailor Sam Messina is the guilty person who broke into my room and broke the locks on my drawers., beneath my desk, bunk and sofa, and took some of my private property and private papers. There were also some ship's (Steward's Department) bills and requisitions missing.

and at the Point Docks Harbour Police Station he was extremely offensive to everyone in the boat and at the station. Yours respectfully,

He was put in jail, (Signed) Jans Christian Larsen.
to five days or ten. Jans Christian Larsen. Chief Steward.

He is disliked by the crew ***** that they understand him and it would be to his advantage as well as ours if he were removed from this ship.
COPY:

Yours respectfully,
AMERICAN MAIL LINE

740 Stuart Building, Seattle, Washington.

(Signed) J. JOSEPH MALONE
J. Joseph Malone
S. S. John G. Whittier
Durban, Port Natal, U.S.A.
September 13, 1943.

United States Consul
Durban, Natal, U.S.A.

Dear Sir:-

In regard to Sam. A. Messina, A.B. on board this ship. I first met Sam. A. Messina last April in New York on board this ship. The day before sailin he and two other men who are no longer with this ship were ring-leaders in an attempted walkout by the crew. It was a dispute over the quantity of hot water that they should receive. Their intended action would have tied the ship up indefinitely had it not been prevented.

Messina has been lazy at work and although he obeys orders he does so grudgingly and if they do not suit him he usually has some retort which is just short of mutiny.

While we were in the Persian Gulf one of our A.B.s, Charles Binz, who was left there in the hospital, reported that he had caught Messina stealing twenty cartons of cigarettes from him and on another occasion going through his locker.

On Saturday September the 11th, 1943, Messina was intoxicated beyond reason. After lunch he started a commotion which lasted for over two hours. He attempted to

kick

kick down a door to the room occupied by members of the Steward's department. which he had no right to enter. He urinated on the messtables in the Navy messroom. He refused to quiet down and remain in his room. He smashed cups in his room and threw others overboard. The orders of the Chief Mate, Second Mate and myself brought only more profanity of the most vulgar sort.

The harbour police were called. Messina refused to dress decently to be taken ashore. When the police were taking him down the gangway he dove overboard but was picked up by the police launch.

On the way to, and at the Point Docks Harbour Police Station he was extremely offensive to everyone in the boat and at the station.

He was put in jail, tried this morning and sentenced to five days or ten shillings. He is still in jail.

He is disliked by the crew now that they understand him and it would be to his advantage as well as ours if he were removed from this ship.

Yours respectfully,

(Signed) JOHN JOSEPH MALONE Jr.
J. Joseph Malone Jr 3rd Officer.
