

1 Aug 45  
RECEIVEDMEMORANDUM FOR FILEALL TIMES GCT

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SUBJECT: Summary of Statements by Survivors of the SS JOSIAH SNELLING, US Freighter, 7176 GT, owned by War Shipping Administration, Chartered to SUDDEN and CHRISTENSON.

1. The JOSIAH SNELLING was struck by a Jap plane at 2301 GCT, 27 May 1945 while at anchor in Nakagusuku Bay, Okinawa, about 2000 yards off Katchin Hanto, a long hilly peninsula forming the NE edge of the harbor area. Ship had sailed from Saipan 7 May arriving at Okinawa 14 May, with an Army cargo, consisting of lumber and cement. At time of attack 670 tons of cargo remained aboard. Ship did not sink but returned to San Francisco for repairs.
2. Ship was at anchor with other ships in the harbor, visibility fair, hazy and cloudy - no wind. No other information available.
3. At approximately 2259 a Jap plane was seen approaching from the NE, taking every advantage of clouds and haze for cover. Port 20 MM's and 3" 50 aft gun opened fire whenever plane was visible. At about 2300 she broke through the overcast at about 5000' altitude slightly off port quarter. The 3" 50 aft gun and port 20 MM's commenced firing. Two rounds of 3" 50 were seen to burst below the plane and between it and the ship. Plane winged over and dropped into a power dive directly for the midship house of the vessel. All guns except #1 and #5 20 MM's opened fire. The attacking plane held a steady course for ship's top deck. When the plane was approximately 800' - 1000' altitude, the weight of fire power began to take effect and she began to fade away forward rapidly. At 2301 plane struck at the #1 hold, coming in at an angle between the #2 gun tub and the foremast. Plane sheared off #1 and #2 port cargo booms and #2 port steel-cable mast-stay; #2 ventilator, and #1 starboard and port winches demolished; #2 jumbo lift tackle guys damaged; exhaust line, foredeck damaged; hole 4' in diameter cut in deck between #1 winches; #1 hatch, after coaming pushed forward 2'; #1 hatch beams damaged; main radio antenna down, emergency still working. Plane went through the deck plates at the after coaming of #1 hold and exploded, bursting into flames on the cargo in the bottom of #1 hold. This cargo of sacks of cement and 12 X 12 timbers absorbed the shock and saved the ship's hull from damage. The explosion of the plane and light bomb it carried, threw flaming gasoline throughout the #1 hold and sent a column of fire up mast head high. The shock of the explosion blew the gun crews out of #1 and #2 20 MM gun tubs, down onto the main deck. Vessel was able to proceed but could not unload the remainder of her cargo. No information available concerning confidential codes but it is presumed they were retained on board.
4. Ship was not abandoned. Six members of the 20th USNCB working aboard as stevedores, 2 merchant crew and 3 armed guard were slightly injured.
5. The plane was identified as a Japanese "ZEKE".
6. Approximately one hour before ship was damaged five Japanese planes made suicide attempts on ships in the vicinity. Two merchant ships, the SS BROWN VICTORY and the SS MARY A. LIVERMORE were damaged by two of the planes. An LCT was tied alongside the starboard side of the ship and was also firing her gun at the plane until it crashed.

CONFIDENTIAL

*E. M. Harris, Jr.*  
E. M. HARRIS, Jr.  
Lieutenant, USNR.

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Authority

NNS-26-83-11

By

NARA.

Date

6/6/77

-P-1,16-PT,16-Z(5 cop),Op-20-G,Op-23-L,Op-30-M,Op-39-A-1  
-43,F-45,AFASU,BuOrd,CG(4cop),Coord Res & Dev,DIO 1,3,4,5  
10(2 cop),11(3 cop),12,13,14(4 cop),15NDs, JAG, BuPers-