

LIHUE (Feb. 22, 1942)

Rafts on boat (Form 840-A, dated Baltimore, Maryland, February 1, 1942, inspection report in the case) "rafts were of the catamarin type built by the Lane Lifeboat and Liferaft Company, builders numbers were E-292, E-293, E-295 and E-298. The cylinders were filled with kapok on February 22, 1942.

Rafts were placed on board by the Maryland Drydock Company, Fairfield, Maryland.

These rafts were installed before any approved life rafts were available. Rafts were of the type which were manufactured for the British Ministry of Shipping.

Master says he recommends doing away with chocolate and also malted milk tablets and some of the canvas work. Now carry so much gear it is hard to get even an oar out.

(NOTE) Q. What part of the raft started to go to pieces?

A. The top plants on the raft. The one I was on, the nails were sticking out over two inches. One of the crew had on leather heels on his shoes and he had to take them off and use them for a hammer to hammer the nails back again." He stated that one raft fell to pieces all together when she was dropped about twelve feet from the ship into the water.

Capacity of the master's lifeboat was 37 and there were 23 men actually in it.

Prior to being torpedoed the boats were swung almost all the way over the side with a strap over them so all they had to do was kick the pelican hook loose and they would hang over the side.

There is a good deal of discussion in this case about Public 808 and the amount of watches which would be stood by the crew as lookouts. (See pages 10, 11 and 12 of Captain Leithead's testimony.)

MARORE (Feb. 26, 1942)

Master says "all hands acted in calm and orderly manner. No. 3 boat contained Captain, Chief and 2nd mates as Captain and mates saw all boats in water before leaving and No. 3 waited while others pulled away as ordered. No transfers made later as men in charge Nos. 1 and 4 considered perfectly capable and rough sea made handling of boats under oars awkward. After getting out of range of shell fire hove to with sea anchors till day light when boats set sail. Boats 1-4 picked up by ship (Dill - Tanker)