

CALIFORNIA (August 13, 1942)

Recommendations from the Captain:

"Q. Under the heading of recommendations from 1 to 5 inclusive, have you any suggestions or recommendations to make?

"A. One suggestion, that is that all boats be supplied with lines and fish hooks in order to provide fish for food, which proved to be plentiful where we were at the time. Also that better blankets be supplied. The blankets we had were practically cotton blankets and the rain got them soaked. We only had one or two woolen blankets, which proved very good. The rain just runs down on them, it does not soak through. The men that had them were able to keep warm.

"Q. Have you any other recommendations or suggestions?

"A. I would like to make a suggestion about the rafts. When we picked up the rafts, the following day, the water breakers and bread tank was absolutely submerged. If anyone had gone on that raft, it would be impossible to get any water or ration from same. I recommend that the water breakers and bread tanks be sufficiently high enough--at least as high as the air tanks.

"Q. And what provisions do you recommend to be increased in quantity?

"A. I think can beans and can meat should be increased."

R. M. PARKER, JR. (August 13, 1942)

Recommendations from the Master:

"Q. Do you have any recommendations for the detection and avoidance of enemy submarines?

"A. Yes. Make every ship on the coast get in convoy, have an escort.

"Q. Have you any recommendations concerning the saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.?

"A. Yes. The two hand grips or pipe put outside the boats at fire and boat drill get caught on the frapping wire and the boat had to be raised and this wire disentangled and hauled up in the boat before we could lower it. And on the end where the pipe comes up against the ship's side it comes to that last clip and catches. I think the grab rails should be taken off and rope used instead to eliminate projections on the lifeboat's hull that would catch on the plate laps of the ship as it is lowered.

"Q. Do you have any suggestions for additional equipment or improvements to existing equipment?

"A. Yes. I think it would be an improvement to take the knots out of the manrope. I would like to see those radio masts taken out of there. We had those two prongs stuck up and a couple fellows fell over them and hurt them some, but I would like to know why the forward mast can't be used as a radio mast and mast for the sail at the same time. It's all wood. They've got three sticks sticking up and it's a job to get them up at sea.

Recommendations from the Chief Engineer:

"Q. Have you any suggestions for additional equipment or improvements to existing equipment, or suggestions for more efficient handling of same?

"A. Well, I don't know. They could move the gear aft and have a liferaft

over the stern, also put a carton of cigarettes in each life raft. There should be some kind of system. There could be an independent line of some kind with a klaxon or horn down below."

Recommendations from the Oiler:

"Q. Have you any recommendations for the detection and avoidance of enemy submarines?

"A. ***Complete blackout.

"Q: Do you have any recommendations concerning the saving of life the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.?

"A. Yes, sir. I recommend that lifeboats be fitted on the inboard side with rollers to prevent the gunwale and any other projection, such as the grab rail, from catching on the plate laps thereby tending to upset the lifeboat as it is being lowered. I also recommend that ship's crew be thoroughly trained in the handling of lifeboats and thoroughly understand proper commands for the handling of same."

Recommendations from Second Assistant Engineer:

"Q. Have you any suggestions for additional equipment or improvements to existing equipment, or suggestions for more efficient handling of same?

"A. Well, I think there should be a life raft directly aft and keep the ship in as slow motion as possible, at slow speed, so in case of fire it is lowered it would have a chance to get away from the vessel."

Recommendations from an Able Seaman:

"Q. Have you any suggestions for the saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.?

"A. They ought to have a way to release rafts from the bridge and from the boat deck aft. All you have to do is run a couple lines from the bridge direct and the Mate on lookout, or anybody, could let them go. And also about the crow's nest. Suppose this torpedo had hit a little further forward. It would have cut loose the mast and the man up there would have had no way to get down. I don't think it's a good idea to have that crow's nest. Chances are it would be knocked down anyway. As for the lifeboats I would think all lifeboats should be equipped with some kind of releasing hook on the boat falls. This type of boat just had a plain hook and you had to drop the boat to the water before you could let go of it. Those boat hooks that the falls set in ought to have some way that you could release them from the center of the boat or from either end. And the painter, I don't think it's a good idea to have any thwart. I think it should be in the bow instead of the forward thwart like they generally have it. That would give much more room for a man to get in there."

Recommendations from the Radio Operator:

"Q. Have you any recommendations for the detection and avoidance of enemy Submarines?

"A. I should think they could put listening devices on a ship and put "Y" guns on the stern. If you had listening devices you could keep the stern to the submarine and at the same time you could send out a warning.

Also the emergency antenna I think that should be confined in as small a place as possible in the rigging."

Recommendations from the Second Mate:

- "Q. Have you any suggestions for the saving of life, the abandonment of ship, handling of boats, rafts, etc.?"
- "A. I have. I tell you, take the rafts, for instance. They should have a trip line on it leading up to the bridge and one leading up to the poop because I just had a practical experience. If we had a trip rope on the poop we could have tripped that up before we even lowered the lifeboat and that would have been all set; that would have been out of the way. All I could see is the oars are too long for rowing. They could have shorter oars."

BALLADIER (August 15, 1942)

Recommendations from the Captain:

- "Q. Under the recommendation, section 2, what may your suggestion be?"
- "A. To fasten two skids from the upper bulwark to the lower bulwark; the boat can slide on them skids."
- "Q. What would you recommend in way of where the boat is launched, two skids?"
- "A. Two skids so the boat could slide on them skids when she has a heavy list."

JOHN HANCOCK (August 18, 1942)

Recommendations from an Ordinary Seaman:

- "Q. Your recommendation would be a more thorough education in the handling of boats, that is, the crews should be drilled more thoroughly, is that what you mean?"
- "A. I think on the releasing gear, how to get one in the water and I think they should study that more. Those reels are one thing I would like to speak of. They back lashed and jammed."
- "A. I was on one ship where they have a box and they take the fall and coil it in there and when you lower the boat it comes out free."

Recommendations from an Able Seaman:

- "A. Ships should not travel so slow in convoy or any other time. We had been going 5 knots but I believe they had stepped it up to 7. Eliminate the rafts being made fast to the ship. I believe all men should carry sheath knives."

Recommendations from the Chief Engineer:

"Place spring door stops on all the doors."

Recommendations from the Second Officer:

"It would be a better idea to have a box on deck to let the rope come out of. The Jacob's ladder is not satisfactory and it would be better to have a long rope ladder lashed up."