



S4

98

PLEASE CREDIT

OFFICIAL COAST GUARD PHOTO

NUMBER.....

FROM: PUBLIC INFORMATION DIVISION  
U. S. COAST GUARD HEADQUARTERS  
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20226

OCT. 14, 1947

— "BERNINA SKY QUEEN" after  
making a successful ditching  
near Ocean Station "Charlie".

# COAST GUARD

# BULLETIN



ISSUED

MONTHLY

Volume 3

WASHINGTON, NOVEMBER 1947<sup>1</sup>

Number 29

## CUTTER "BIBB" MAKES SPECTACULAR RESCUE OF PLANE "BERMUDA SKY QUEEN"

The Coast Guard Cutter *George M. Bibb*, while occupying a weather patrol station in mid-Atlantic, on October 14 found itself at the scene of the emergency landing of the American flying boat *Bermuda Sky Queen*, and was able to successfully perform one of the most spectacular of recent sea rescues. This was not a chance meeting of distressed aircraft and rescue ship, for the *Bibb* was on her station by design, carrying out an assignment which was a part of the obligation assumed by the United States under the International Civil Aviation Organization. The captain of the plane knew of the *Bibb* and her position and, according to early reports, returned to the vicinity when it became apparent that a rapidly diminishing fuel supply would not carry his craft to land.

The officers and crew of the *Bibb* through skillful seamanship for which the Coast Guard has always been noted, were able to remove all of the passengers and crew of the ditched plane with no loss of life and only minor injuries. The rescue operations conducted during high winds and stormy seas, extended over parts of 2 days.

The rescue operations conducted by the *Bibb* were carried out by means of rafts and small boats, the cutter facilitating the work by the discharge of oil and constant maneuvering to form a lee for the plane. Passengers of the *Bermuda Sky Queen* were first embarked

in a rubber raft inflated by the plane's crew, and in this ferried a short distance to small boats from the Cutter *Bibb*. A second transfer was made from the small boats to the cutter itself. The rubber life raft was an essential piece of equipment in this rescue, as boats could not safely approach the plane in the heavy seas. The commanding officer of the *Bibb* is Capt. Paul Cronk, USCG.

After destroying the plane as a menace to navigation the *Bibb* proceeded to Boston. The American owned plane, making a chartered flight, had taken off from Foynes, Ireland, and was scheduled to make its first landing at Gander, Newfoundland.

The cutter *Bibb* was built at the Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C., and launched in 1937, being commissioned the same year. The ship is 327 feet in length, with a draft of 12½ feet, and has a normal crew of 16 officers and 107 enlisted men. Propelling plant consist of geared turbines supplied with steam from oil-fired boilers and driving twin screws.

First assignments of the *Bibb* after her commissioning was to the Fifth Coast Guard District, with Norfolk as her home port. In 1938 the ship made a special practice cruise with cadets from the Coast Guard Academy, and in 1939 spent about 3 months on temporary duty with the Navy, engaging in joint maneuvers. Later that year the *Bibb* joined a destroyer squadron for the assistance of shipping in the North Atlantic. In the winter of 1939 it was a part of the Grand Banks Patrol. In

<sup>1</sup> Published with the approval of the Director of the Budget.  
Distribution (SDL No. 31) :

A: a, c, d (5 ea) ; e, f, h, m (3 ea) ; remainder (1 ea)

B: c (14 ea) ; e, f, g (7), h, l (5 ea) ; j (3 ea) ; k (2 ea) ; remainder (1 ea)

C: all (1 ea)

D: all (1 ea)

February 1940, the *Bibb* inaugurated the Atlantic weather patrol, taking up station in 35°38' north latitude and 53°21' west longitude. During 1940 and 1941 much of her time was spent on weather patrol.

In 1942 the *Bibb* was cruising and doing convoy duty in the North Atlantic as a part of the Atlantic Fleet. It made numerous underwater sound contacts, and dropped appropriate depth charges. Once two other ships in the same convoy were sunk by enemy action.

On September 24, 1942, 61 survivors were brought aboard the *Bibb*, then under command of Commander Walfred G. Bloom, USCG. They were members of the crew of the S. S. *Penmar*, which was torpedoed about 60 hours before. Also picked up 8 survivors from the S. S. *Tennessee*. All survivors were given food, blankets, and medical care. During the remainder of the year there were other submarine reports, and depth charges were dropped.

By February of 1943 the *Bibb* had acquired a world-wide reputation for giving succor to survivors of enemy action. Setting out for convoy duty on February 1, the *Bibb* had several indications of enemy submarines in the vicinity during the first week of the month.

On February 7, 1943, the *Bibb*, Commander Roy L. Raney, USCG, commanding, began taking aboard survivors of the S. S. *Henry S. Mallory*. Rescue operations continued with feverish pace throughout the forenoon during which time 202 survivors were taken from lifeboats and rafts. The same afternoon 33 additional survivors from the Greek S. S. *Kalliopi* were brought aboard, making a total of 235 for the day.

This date was a record day for rescue work at sea. With heavy seas and such numbers of persons in the water to be rescued, the crew of the *Bibb* were taxed to the limit of their skills and strength. Because of heavy seas, only two or three rafts could be seen at a time, and there was every reason to expedite the work since some men (wounded by the explosion) had already died on the rafts.

Next day another ship in the area was reported torpedoed. Sound contacts caused the *Bibb* to drop a pattern of depth charges which resulted in an oil slick.

On March 1 and March 5 the *Bibb's* guns sank floating mines. On the 2d and 8th the *Bibb* received messages

concerning ships torpedoed in the Atlantic. On the 8th a submarine was sighted on the surface by an allied vessel close by. On March 9, another ship in the convoy reported a torpedo crossed her bow. On the same day the *Bibb* sighted a sub on the surface several miles away, and later in the day proceeded to screen the S. S. *Melrose Abbey* as she picked up survivors from another torpedoed ship.

On March 10, the *Bibb*, Commander Roy L. Raney, USCG, commanding, received word that two other ships had been torpedoed. The same day the *Bibb* rescued three survivors from the torpedoed S. S. *Coulmore* and two survivors from the S. S. *Bonneville*. Same day the *Bibb* proceeded to the assistance of S. S. *Rosewood* reported sinking, but did not find this ship due to storm and darkness.

Next day (March 11) the *Bibb* sighted the stern of a tanker that had been torpedoed, and began search for survivors.

On March 12 the *Bibb* sighted the bow of a tanker. Later in the same day sighted and identified an abandoned ship as S. S. *Coulmore*.

Doing convoy duty in April 1943, the *Bibb* made three attacks with depth charges following probable sub contacts. Numerous similar actions in May, one of which followed the sighting of a periscope on the Casablanca route.

In June of 1943 there were probable sub sound contacts on the 15th and 21st, resulting in dropping charges and making emergency turns.

The *Bibb* reported heavy oil and debris following the dropping of a pattern of charges on July 9, 1943. Oil samples were taken from the water that day, and another ship in the convoy fired on a surface target. Dozens of such details in the *Bibb's* record show the frequency of the submarine activities with reference to the convoy of which the *Bibb* was a part.

The year 1944 marked the continuation of the *Bibb's* work in convoy. While escorting to North Africa in July 1944, the *Bibb* underwent an enemy air attack with protection from her smoke screen.

Altogether the *Bibb* made a fine contribution to the allied war effort in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Her routine activities consisted of seeking out and fighting enemy submarines, and performing convoy duty. Her most spectacular achievements consisted of the rescue of survivors from ships sunk

or damaged by enemy torpedoes, and her rescue of 235 persons in 1 day is the high light of the *Bibb* wartime history.

After a fine war record in the Atlantic and some refitting and repairs, the *Bibb* moved into the Pacific where she also gave a good account of herself.

In February 1945, en route to Pearl Harbor the *Bibb* went to the assistance of the *Narragansett*, and took a drydock in tow for 3 days.

Arriving in the Pacific battle zones late in the war, this cutter missed the earlier thrusts, but swung into battle action at Okinawa. She spent most of her time during Okinawa operation in a harbor at Kerama Rhetto and was an almost constant target for Japanese suicide planes. During the operation she was subjected to some 55 air raids. On June 21 shortly after 1830 two Japanese planes flying low entered a blind approach to the harbor. The first plane crashed into a ship anchored 300 yards off the port side of the *Bibb*. The other plane circling high, came in for a dive on a ship 600 yards off her port side. The gun crews on the cutter *Bibb* and two other vessels opened fire and downed the plane just before it crashed into its intended target. During numerous raids the guns of the *Bibb* fired on the attackers, and helped drive them out of range.

#### USE OF LORAN BY VESSELS OF MERCHANT MARINE IS ON THE INCREASE

Loran, which was developed during World War II for the armed forces, is being increasingly used by both commercial surface vessels and ocean aircraft. Since the recent International Meeting on Marine Radio Aids to Navigation, held in New York and New London, both foreign and domestic installations have remarkably increased. Passenger vessels, freighters, tankers, trawlers, and private yachts, are among the types of vessels utilizing loran service. Three firms are known to be manufacturing postwar loran receiver-indicators for commercial vessels, but only one of these is yet in position to deliver in quantity. As these firms approach their production quota, it is to be expected that loran will be utilized extensively by commercial vessels and aircraft operating where loran service is available.

The following information on current users of loran was compiled from the

records available in Coast Guard headquarters. It represents only information received, and may not be complete.

#### MERCHANT MARINE USERS

In addition to the vessels of the U. S. Navy, Coast Guard, British Royal Navy, and Royal Canadian Navy, there are a total of at least 57 commercial surface vessels reported equipped with loran receivers at the present time. Twenty-five of this total are Maritime Commission vessels equipped with converted wartime type loran receiver-indicators. Four more of these vessels, not included in the total presently equipped, will have their installations completed in the near future. This represents only a portion of the Maritime Commission vessels that will be equipped, since the total contract is for 50 vessels.

A few of the better known large ships regularly utilizing loran service are:

- S. S. *America*, United States Lines Co.
- S. S. *Queen Mary*, Cunard White Star Lines.
- S. S. *Queen Elizabeth*, Cunard White Star Lines.
- M. S. *Gripsholm*, Swedish America Line.
- M. S. *Drottingholm*, Swedish America Line.
- S. S. *Matsonia*, Matson Navigation Co.
- S. S. *American Seaman*, War Shipping Administration.

Besides the ships they have presently equipped with loran receivers, Moore-McCormack Lines and the H. Waeg Co., have each purchased four additional sets for further installations on their ships. Commercial fishing trawlers, private yachts, and other smaller ships are also using loran with marked success.

#### AIR-LINE USERS

In addition to the military aircraft of the Air Transport Command, Naval Air Transport Service, Army Air Force, Navy, and Coast Guard, 10 commercial ocean air lines using loran are listed below, with the scheduled respective number of monthly ocean flights.

United Airlines.....	61
Pan American Airways.....	385
American Overseas Airlines....	235
Air France.....	35
Sabena Airlines (Belgium)....	17
KLM, Royal Dutch Airlines....	26

FROM:  
PUBLIC INFORMATION DIVISION  
U. S. COAST GUARD  
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
15 October, 1947

COAST GUARD CUTTER BIBB HAS LONG RESCUE HISTORY

The U. S. Coast Guard Cutter BIBB, which has just made a thrilling mid-Atlantic rescue of 69 people from a flying boat, made other major rescues both in peacetime and World War II, saving 301 survivors of torpedoed ships and providing an anti-submarine screen for other rescue vessels. In just one day the BIBB saved 235 lives. For military security, details of the wartime rescues were not publicized during the war.

In 1942 the BIBB was cruising and doing convoy duty in the North Atlantic as a part of the Atlantic Fleet. It made numerous underwater sound contacts, and dropped appropriate depth charges. Once two other ships in the same convoy were sunk by enemy action.

On 24 September, 1942, 61 survivors were brought aboard the BIBB, then under command of Commander Walfred G. Bloom, USCG. They were members of the crew of SS PENMAR, which was torpedoed about sixty hours before. Also picked up 8 survivors from the SS TENNESSEE. All survivors were given appropriate food, blankets, and medical care. During the remainder of the year there were other submarine reports, and depth charges were dropped.

By February of 1943 the BIBB had acquired a world-wide reputation for giving succor to survivors of enemy action. Setting out for convoy duty on February 1, the BIBB had several indications of enemy submarines in the vicinity during the first week of the month.

On February 7, 1943, the BIBB, Commander Roy L. Raney, USCG, commanding, began taking aboard survivors of the SS HENRY S. MALLORY. Rescue operations continued with feverish pace throughout the forenoon during which time 202 survivors were taken from life boats and rafts. The same afternoon thirty-three additional survivors from the Greek SS KALLIOPI were brought aboard, making a total of 235 for the day.

This date was a record day for rescue work at sea. With heavy seas and such numbers of persons in the water to be rescued, the crew of the BIBB were taxed to the limit of their skills and strength. Because of heavy seas, only two or three rafts could be seen at a time; and there was every reason to expedite the work since some men (wounded by the explosion) had already died on the rafts.

Next day another ship in the area was reported torpedoed. Sound contacts caused the BIBB to drop a pattern of depth charges which resulted in an oil slick.

On March 1st and March 5th the BIBB's guns sank floating mines. On the 2nd and 8th the BIBB received messages concerning ships torpedoed in the Atlantic. On the 8th a submarine was sighted on the surface by an allied vessel close by. On 9th March, another ship in the convoy reported a torpedo crossed her bow. On the same day the BIBB sighted a sub on the surface several miles away, and later in the day proceeded to screen the SS MELROSE ABBEY as she picked up survivors from another torpedoed ship.

On March 10th the BIBB, Commander Roy L. Raney, USCG, commanding, received word that two other ships had been torpedoed. Same day the BIBB rescued three survivors from the torpedoed SS COULMORE and two survivors

from the SS BONNEVILLE. Same day the BIBB proceeded to the assistance of SS ROSEWOOD reported sinking, but did not find this ship due to storm and darkness.

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On March 12th the BIBB sighted the bow of a tanker. Later in the same day sighted and identified an abandoned ship as SS COULMORE.

Doing convoy duty in April, 1943, the BIBB made three attacks with depth charges following probable sub contacts. Numerous similar actions in May, one of which followed the sighting of a periscope on the Casablanca route.

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The BIBB reported heavy oil and debris following the dropping of a pattern of charges on July 9, 1943. Oil samples were taken from the water that day, and another ship in the convoy fired on a surface target. Dozens of such details in the BIBB's record show the frequency of the submarine activities with reference to the convoy of which the BIBB was a part.

The year 1944 marked the continuation of the BIBB's work in convoy. While escorting to North Africa in July, 1944, the BIBB underwent an enemy air attack with protection from her smoke screen.

Altogether the BIBB made a fine contribution to the Allied war effort in the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Her routine activities consisted of seeking out and fighting enemy submarines, and performing convoy duty. Her most spectacular achievements consisted of the rescue of survivors from

ships sunk or damaged by enemy torpedoes, and her rescue of 235 persons in one day is the high-light of the BIBB wartime history.

#### IN THE PACIFIC

After a fine war record in the Atlantic and some re-fitting and repairs, the BIBB moved into the Pacific where she also gave a good account of herself.

In February, 1945, enroute to Pearl Harbor the BIBB went to the assistance of the MARACANSETT, and took a dry dock in tow for three days.

Arriving in the Pacific battle zones late in the war, this cutter missed the earlier thrusts, but swung into battle action at Okinawa. The Coast Guard Cutter GEORGE M. BIBB spent most of her time during Okinawa operation in a harbor at Kerama Rhetto and was an almost constant target for Japanese suicide planes. During the operation she was subjected to some 55 air raids. On 21 June shortly after 1830 two Japanese planes flying low entered a blind approach to the harbor. The first plane crashed into a ship anchored 300 yards off the port side of the BIBB. The other plane circling high, came in for a dive on a ship 600 yards off her port side. The gun crews on the Cutter BIBB and two other vessels opened fire and downed the plane just before it crashed into its intended target. During numerous raids the guns of the BIBB fired on the attackers, and helped drive them out of range.

This account of the BIBB is based on the WAR DIARIES for 1942, 1943, 1944, and 1945. The records are not now available here for January of '44 or for November and December of 1943; but the account given is sufficiently complete to indicate the type of service performed by this cutter in this war.

The Cutter BIBB was built at the Navy Yard, Charleston, S. C., and launched in 1937, being commissioned the same year. The ship is 327 feet in length, with a draft of  $12\frac{1}{2}$  feet, and has a normal crew of 16 officers and 107 enlisted men. Propelling plant consist of geared turbines supplied with steam from oil fired boilers and driving twin screws.

First assignments of the BIBB after her commissioning was to the Fifth Coast Guard District, with Norfolk as her home port. In 1938 the ship made a special practice cruise with cadets from the Coast Guard Academy, and in 1939 spent about three months on temporary duty with the Navy, engaging in joint maneuvers. Later that year the BIBB joined a destroyer squadron for the assistance of shipping in the North Atlantic. In the winter of 1939 it was a part of the Grand Banks Patrol. In February, 1940, the BIBB inaugurated the Atlantic weather patrol, taking up station in  $35^{\circ} 38'$  North Latitude and  $53^{\circ} 21'$  West Longitude. During 1940 and 1941 much of her time was spent on weather patrol.

REPORT OF ASSISTANCE

First CG

District

Serial No. 5-47

Unit USCGC BIBB (WPG-31) Particular activity \_\_\_\_\_, 14 October, 1947  
(Date of casualty)

Other units assisting None

\*SOURCE-0 \_\_\_\_\_ \*NATURE-1 \_\_\_\_\_

Vessel assisted BERMUDA SKY QUEEN; NC 18612

\*DEGREE-2 \_\_\_\_\_ \*EQUIPMENT-3 \_\_\_\_\_

Home port New York, N. Y.

Nationality United States (4)

Cargo None

Rig Boeing 314A (5)

Bound from Foynes, Ireland

Class \_\_\_\_\_ (6)

To New York City via Gander Days out 18 hrs.

Tonnage 42 tons (7)

Names and addresses of—

\*Classification of assistance (major or miscellaneous) \_\_\_\_\_ (8)

Master Charles M. Martin, 1440 Broadway,  
New York, N. Y.

Persons on board:

Owner America International Airways

Crew 7 (901)

Casualty:

Passengers 62 (902)

Nature Gasoline shortage

Persons actually saved from drowning:

Cause Severe head winds  
(See footnote 6)

Crew 7 (1001)

Passengers 62 (1002)

Time and source of first information 0852, GCT, 14

Persons rescued from positions of peril:

Oct. 1947, from Canadian Aircraft KCC

Crew \_\_\_\_\_ (1101)

Passengers 62 (1102)

Time district commander was notified 1318 GCT

Persons lost:

Date and hour proceeded 0852 GCT, 14 Oct. 1947

Crew 0 (1201)

Passengers 0 (1202)

Arrived 0852 GCT Distance 0

Coast Guard crew:

Where found Weather Station "Charlie"  
(Local name)

Injured 1 (1301)

Lost 0 (1302)

Lat. 52° 45' N. Long. 35° 43' W

Value of property involved:

Was vessel in danger of extensive damage or loss? Yes

Vessel \$ 765,000 (1401)

Weather:

Wind 250<sup>0ft</sup> T, 28-43 kts Sea 4-7

Cargo \$ 0 (1402)

Temperature 51° F Visibility 8

Value of property lost:

Equipment used:

Vessel \$ 765,000 (1501)

Boats Motor Surfboat, Pulling Boats,

Cargo \$ (1502)

Gig.

Breeches buoy

Persons succored 69 (1601)

Persons resuscitated 0 (1702)

Vehicle

Miles towed \_\_\_\_\_ (1904)

Ordnance 30 Cal. line-throwing gun,

Coast Guard property damaged (description):

20-MM machine gun

1 Motor Surfboat

Other Rubber life rafts

1 Rubber Liferaft

Cordage, crockery, etc.

Value \$ 5,100.00 (2005)

\*This line to be filled in by headquarters.

Was service equipment satisfactory? \_\_\_\_\_ If not, make full report and recommendation for improvement in a separate communication.

### REMARKS

Among other remarks, state specifically:

1. Did any deficiencies in aids to navigation, either as to number of aids or their arrangement or functioning, have anything to do with the occurrence?
2. Indicate whether any change in the number, type or arrangement of aids to navigation seems desirable.

See inclosures and supplementary pages.

Prepared by P. B. CRONK

Rank Captain, USCG

P. B. CRONK

(Commanding officer)

Rank Captain, USCG

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Reports shall be submitted in all cases of actual or attempted assistance.
2. Reports shall be typewritten and numbered serially for each fiscal year. Reports of assistance to, or searches for, derelicts shall be similarly numbered in a separate series.
3. Under "Remarks" give an account of operations, including list of deaths or serious injuries, any unusual delays, difficulties, outstanding performances of duty, and details of professional or public interest. Use additional sheets if necessary.
4. The numbers after certain words are code numbers for headquarters' use only.
5. "Persons actually saved from drowning" include those who in all probability would have been drowned if Coast Guard assistance had not been rendered. "Persons rescued from positions of peril" include those whose lives were endangered by possible drowning or other cause.
6. State opinion as to whether or not casualty was partly or wholly due to unseaworthiness, inadequacy or lack of equipment, or incompetency of personnel, and, if so, elaborate in "Remarks."

U. S. C O A S T G U A R D  
OFFICIAL DISPATCH

Unit U.S.CGC BIBB

Date 18 October, 1947

INCOMING HEADING

NR 4 A LINE 172336Z SLUG W HIPS NRDS GR 58 BT

TEXT

SRA X IN ADDITION TO REPORT OF ASSISTANCE RENDERED FORM NCG 2628 RPT 2628  
REQUEST AMPLIFYING INFORMATION CONCERNING METHODS TECHNIQUES AND  
PROCEDURES INCLUDING ADEQUACY OF FACILITIES AND EQUIPMENT USED THROUGHOUT  
OPERATION INVOLVING SUCCESSFUL RESCUE OF SURVIVORS FROM AIRCRAFT NO 18612  
X DESIRE INCLUSION IN COMMENTS ON OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF RESCUE  
EQUIPMENT AND PROCEDURES FOR BOTH AIRCRAFT AND VESSEL BT 172336Z

Operators Record TOR/MMH/0556/FV3/LG

From COMDT CG

To (For Action) COMEASTAREA

To (For information)

CCGD ONE  
CGC BIBB

## PLANE REPORT

No. 160

Identification CEO Time 1820Z  
Position 53° 50' N 37° 30' W Time 1807Z  
Course 072 Sp. 205 Alt 9000  
Departed GANDER Destination PRESTWICK  
Rq Bn Rq Fx YES ETA 2247Z  
Freq 118.1 TOR 1820 Date 10/12/47 Op RHB  
@ 1821Z  
338° T - 65.8 Mile

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY.

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

## PLANE REPORT

No. 161

Identification CEM Time 2010Z  
Position 52° 58' N 34° 52' W Time 2006Z  
Course 065° Sp 260 Alt 10000  
Departed SHANNON Destination GANDER  
Rq Bn Rq Fx YES ETA 0030Z  
Freq 118.1 TOR 2006 Date 10/13/47 RHB  
@ 2011Z  
360° T 6.0 Mile

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

## PLANE REPORT

No. 162

Identification CLIPPER - 868

Time 2145Z

Position 53° 15' N 30° 00' W

Time 2158Z

Course 268° T

Sp 186

Alt 6000

Departed SHANNON

Destination GANDER

Rq Bn

Rq Fx YES

ETA 0210Z

Freq 118.1

TOR

Date 10/13/47

ROF

© 2200Z

084° T 30.6 Mile

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/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

## PLANE REPORT

No. 163

Identification SC-BBC

Time 0012Z

Position 54° 10' N 36° 25' W

Time 0015Z

Course 071°

Sp 225

Alt 9000

Departed GANDER

Destination PRESTWICK

Rq Bn

Rq Fx YES

ETA 0526Z

Freq. 118.1

TOR 0020

Date 10/13/47 Op HWW

© 0011Z

333° T - 78.0 Mile

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

## PLANE REPORT

No. 164

Identification NC 288

Time 0130Z

Position

Time

Course

Sp.

Alt

Departed

Destination

Rq BN

Rq Fx

ETA

Freq

TOR

Date 10/13/47 Op HW

# Unable to contact

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

## PLANE REPORT

No. 165

Identification NC-612

Time 0205Z

Position 52° 55' N 35 00' W

Time 0200Z

Course 260° T

Sp 100

Alt 6000

Departed FOYNES

Destination GANLER

Rq Bn NO

Rq Fx YES

ETA 0900Z

Freq 4220

TOR 0230

Date 10/14/47 Op DEE

@ 0155Z

080° T-68.0 Mile

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

COMMUNICATION BETWEEN "NMMC" & "BERMUDA SKY QUEEN"

At 0155, GMT, on the morning of Tuesday, October 14, 1947, received a series of calls from aircraft, NC-288, NC-612, and Speed Bird-GAHEN. Immediately turned on transmitter and made efforts to reply. At 0157 GMT gave a general call to all three aircraft. Speed Bird-GAHEN replied, giving the necessary check-in information and requested a Radar Fix, weather, gave same. Signed off clear of ship at 0205 GMT. Gave another call for NC-288 and NC-612, with the latter answering up. Received the necessary information and in turn replied with a radar fix, winds aloft at his altitude of 6000 feet, was also asked for the winds at 4000 feet, altimeter, and ceiling. Since nothing else was required, signed off clear. Gave a call for NC-288, with no reply. During the conversation there was no sign or symbol of any trouble. At approximately 0900 GMT, on the morning of Tuesday, October 14, 1947, TRANSCANADA-CEM checked in with the weather ship. Signed him clear. Approximately five (5) minutes later TRANSCANADA-CEM called NMMC on 118.1 Megs. and notified the weather ship that KFG, (NC-612), was calling NMMC, and it seemed to be a distress call. Within a few minutes KFG (NC-612) called in on 4220 Kcs., stating that he was returning to the weather ship for a landing. Was asked for the surface weather, winds and velocity seas, and swells, barometer, altimeter, and temperature. At this time TRANSCANADA-CEM called in on 4220 Kcs. and asked if there was any assistance he could render. Cleared TRANSCANADA-CEM from the air to handle the distress case. At approximately 1000 GMT, KFG (NC-612), called in and stated that he would be landing in the vicinity of the ship in approximately 20 minutes. A short time later he was located visually coming in for his landing.

THIS IS CERTIFIED TO BE A TRUE COPY

/s/ J. H. MacDONALD, Ensign, USCG

REMARKS

(Form NCG 2628 - Report of Assistance, dated 14 October 1947)

COMMUNICATIONS:

First contact with KFG (BERMUDA SKY QUEEN) was on 500 kcs. CW at 0929 and shortly thereafter on 4220 kcs., voice frequency. Landing and rescue procedure was discussed. Voice contact was maintained until about 1900. Thereafter, blinker and bull horn was used by cutter and plane responded with landing lights and voice. Radio communication was kept at a minimum to conserve plane's batteries. At 0205, while eastbound, plane had checked in and received radar position and weather for 4,000 and 6,000 feet; communication was loud and clear.

LANDING:

While circling ship various landing methods were discussed. It was finally agreed that ship would drift and plane would use such lee as this method provided. Plane made a number of circles from 0941 until 1000, then made landing approach, missed and approached again and landed at 1004. Landing was into a 32-knot wind, with which plane was able to approach at very low speed. Just past a wave crest, plane appeared to pull into a full stall, landing went deep into the oncoming trough, shook off the next crest, which largely covered it, and rode high and apparently undamaged. Passengers were uninjured. Location of landing was from one to two miles to leeward of ship. An 8 sea was running. The wind had been blowing gale force from about 240° for 36 hours and from strong to moderate gale force from about 270° for the preceding 24 hours. Crests were above the ship's deck in height and about 200 feet from crest to crest. This is in keeping with past experience. During mid-winter, with steady winds above forty knots, it has been noted that about three days are required for crests to space 400 feet.

As the plane approached this vessel, a second plane was observed accompanying him: This plane hovered over him during the period of circling and added considerably to the dramatic effect, but in addition it is believed that this was the plane that relayed the distress messages.

PREPARATION FOR RESCUE:

1. After landing it was agreed to try to hold plane in position on a painter. A six-inch line was buoyed with life preservers every few feet. The lee pulling boat was manned and the plane approached amidships and stopped his engines while about 100 feet from the ship. As soon as the eddying effect of the ship's lee was felt, the plane went out of control. With the breaking effect of the wind lost, the plane skimmed ahead and came alongside. The ship was backed clear at once. It was apparent that plane and ship must remain unhampered by lines or by each other.

## REMARKS

(Form NCG 2628 - Report of Assistance, dated 14 October 1947)

PREPARATION FOR RESCUE (Cont'd)

2. The plane crew manned flight stations, kept plane headed into wind and sea. Plane pitched violently, but was reported dry. Frequent soundings and inspections were made. Pilot desired at first to abandon ship in his 9 five-person life rafts, but agreed to wait. Plane experimented with launching a raft, but it flew like a kite or flapped about crazily in the sea. Over the radio the pilot could be heard retching, nevertheless he remained poised and calm.
3. The ship had the same experience with small rafts as the plane had had. A pulling boat remained near the plane for over an hour, the ship meanwhile furnishing such lee and oil slick as it could. The plane was found to be drifting at about 1.2 knots per 10 knots wind, the ship 0.8 knots per 10 knots wind. The boat dared not approach the plane from leeward, from windward it was hard put to keep up with the plane's drift. Pitching was such that the boat was in danger of being surf boarded under the fuselage and being crushed or of being smashed up against the sponsons. This boat returned with its crew exhausted and when partly hoisted was lifted by a sea at deck level, unhooked forward and spilled its crew. All hands had a hold of life lines and were brought on board. The boat officer, Lieut. (jg) C. S. Hall, hooked on and the boat was hoisted.
4. The ship worked down/ <sup>wind</sup> of the plane at 15 knots making oil slicks. The plane drifted through them quickly. The oil did not spread fast enough for the fast-moving plane. It was found that oil could be spread downwind by wind action. The picture in current LIFE Magazine shows the oil slick effect.
5. Rescue gear was assembled and tested. Opinions were invited from all hands. Schemes were discussed. Ship approaches practiced.
6. At 1715, Pilot advised that plane was lurching, sponsons were doubtful, and requested removal of all hands. Remaining further in the plane was beyond endurance for many therein. No one could know if or when a sponson would give way and allow the plane to capsize or if or when someone would open one of the many escape doors and lead a lurching procession into the sea. Less uncertain was the fate of the very young and the very old. They would not survive the night.

THE RESCUE:

1. The pilot was instructed to launch a life raft and, using the strongest men, to attempt to man it. Three men volunteered. The pilot inflated a raft, but it burst when a second charging flask was used. A second attempt succeeded. The volunteers tumbled in somehow and as the plane drifted away, the ship was drifted into the raft and its occupants were taken on board with bowlines. First, however, they were coached by bull-horn on procedure alongside. However brave any of these men may have afterward pictured themselves as being, when taken on board they confessed, that while adrift, they had not believed the attempt would end in success, and no one blamed them.

## REMARKS

(Form NCG 2628 - Report of Assistance, dated 14 October, 1947)

THE RESCUE (Continued)

2. At this point the pilot, having seen the handling of the 15-person rafts expressed his dissatisfaction with the performance alongside the plane of the small rafts and requested the use of ship's rafts. A small raft was released on a painter for the plane. The motor surfboat and a raft were launched with some difficulty. The large raft, loaded with cordage, was made fast to the painter and the small raft cut adrift.
3. Prior to the first operation, several practice approaches were made, consisting of a fast dash for two or three miles downwind, zigzagging and releasing oil (3,500 gallons of diesel oil were used altogether), then a close approach to windward of the plane, laying to to form a lee for the boat and raft, and spraying oil. As the ship lay to windward of the plane, the debarkation to the raft was effected. The above procedure was followed in general throughout.
4. The operation at 2339 was effected by dropping a pulling boat with a raft in tow some two miles downwind of the plane. This boat had to dodge the oncoming plane, approach quickly with a cumbersome raft in tow and pass the raft's painter by shot line while the plane was blowing away. The boat then had to stay nearby for an hour waiting for the raft to be loaded. Quite likely the people remaining in the plane were by now exhausted, for no attempt was made to load the raft or to signal. (Radio had by now failed). Eventually the boat was picked up and the plane spoken to by bull-horn. All the response obtained was a faint "We have the raft," and in response to "How do you feel about waiting until daylight?" an affirmative from the landing lights at 0130 GMT, 15th.
5. During the night the wind had subsided to force 6 and then force 5. The plane pounded heavily and its drift became erratic. Once collision was narrowly averted. With daylight the rescue was completed without too much trouble.

PLANE DESTROYED AS DERELICT AND MENACE TO NAVIGATION:

1. In the midst of the previous day's operations the likelihood of fueling the plane later and flying it or towing it was presented to the pilot by voice radio. His unqualified response was that the plane could not be flown or towed. On board ship he stated that repairs would exceed original cost and the plane could never be repaired to fly again; that the tail section was coming loose, the sponsons about to give way. Three officers besides the Commanding Officer will depose to the above statements having been made.
2. As the plane burned, the tail section came loose in one piece. The main horizontal keel member floated, but sank after a few pistol shots. Had the plane, while partly submerged, have fouled a vessel, serious damage could have ensued.

U. S. Coast Guard Cutter BIBB  
17 October, 1947

RESCUE OPERATIONS

FLYING BOAT - BERMUDA SKY QUEEN (NC18612)

Sequence of Events

14 October, 1947 (GCT):

Received at 0852 from Canadian plane KCC and at 0911 from Valencia Radio notice that NC 18612 with 69 souls returning to Weather Station "C" for landing.

0938 Plane sighted; cutter drifting.

0941 Plane came up and established communications and circled. Landing relation of plane and ship discussed on 4220 kc.

1004 Plane landed undamaged.

1025 Pilot desired mooring line be passed, came close to in lee of cutter with slight collision and damage to port wing, tip and nose. Plane and cutter drifted close to, released oil as needed.

1037 -1152 Surfboat surveyed behavior of plane and practiced approaches. Cutter advised plane that special weather forecasts and local conditions indicated moderating wind for 15 October afternoon, and recommended waiting, but placed decision to abandon ship or begin boat operations at plane's discretion. Plane advised to test and try flotation of life raft. Plane and cutter floated rafts on retrieving lines. Rafts in each case blew into air and spun about on lines.

Cutter conducted test maneuvers about plane.

Plane set watches on controls and kept plane steered into wind with excellent results.

Plane made leeway at 4.2 knots, cutter at 3.4 knots, wind being 30 knots.

1715 Plane stated deemed desirable to make transfer by some means, as plane showed some weakening. Plane directed to test flotation of raft with human cargo, using strongest men, and, if satisfied with results, to cast raft loose and cutter would retrieve.

1740 5-person raft launched with three men, cutter was drifted onto raft, and men retrieved at 1757. Plane requested large rafts.

1916 15-person raft was passed to plane using buoyed line by motor surfboat, and plane directed to secure same as debarkation platform. Wind 30-39 knots.

USCGC BIBB - - 10/17/47 - - RESCUE OPERATIONS, BERMUDA SKY QUEEN (NC 18612)

Sequence of Events (Cont'd)

14 October, 1947 (GCT):

- 1930 - 1954 Seven passengers jumped from plane to raft, taken off raft, by boat, and passed on board cutter. Cutter made oil slick down wind of plane, then laid across wind ahead of plane to form lee. Used searchlights.
- 1958 - 2017 Operation repeated with ten passengers.
- 2020 - 2037 Operation repeated with eleven passengers.
- 2100 Raft broke painter; adrift with sixteen passengers; motor surfboat departed ship.
- 2130 Boat and raft swamped; boat coming apart.
- 2145 Ship drifted into boat and raft and retrieved passengers and boat crew. Boat and raft cut adrift. Boat tanks were flooded; raft had multiple punctures.
- 2339 Monomoy surfboat towed 15-person raft to plane and passed painter by line. Boat remained near plane. Plane Captain deemed further debarkation unjustified, as raft provided means of quickly abandoning ship.

15 October, 1947 (GCT):

- 0045 Boat returned and hoisted; operations suspended.
- 0913 - 00931 Operation repeated using gig; eight passengers. Wind 13 knots, slight sea, heavy swell.
- 0946 - 0958 Operation repeated with six passengers using Monomoy surfboat.
- 1010 - 1033 Operation repeated with six passengers, raft adrift.
- 1035 Gig brought two passengers. Total sixty-nine. Operations completed.
- 1320 Fired incendiary bullets into plane.
- 1345 Plane burned and sank except sponson section and tail section.
- 1430 Remnants sunk with gun fire.

42 Broadway, N.Y.4, N.Y.  
Commander, Eastern Area, USCG  
601-607  
Serial No. 717

17 November, 1947

From: Commander, Eastern Area, USCG  
To: Commanding Officer, RIBB (WPG-31)

Via: Commander, First Coast Guard District

Subj: Study of Bermuda Sky Queen Ditching and Rescue of Survivors

1. A Question Study of the Ditching of the Bermuda Sky Queen and Rescue of Passengers which has been prepared by the Search and Rescue Agency is forwarded herewith with the request that it be carefully studied and answers supplied to as many of the questions as practicable.
2. Answers, prepared by the staff of Commander, Eastern Area, to certain of the questions are also forwarded. It is requested that these be studied and any additional comment or difference of opinion be noted.
3. Upon conclusion of study return inclosures 3 to 7 inclusive, together with answers prepared by you.
4. This study will take the place of the informal critique originally planned.

W. R. RICHARDS,  
Chief of Staff.

- Incls: 1. Question Study  
2. Answers prepared by Eastern Area  
3. SAR 2nd Session Final Report (ICAO)  
4. Draft Ocean Weather Station Handbook (ICAO)  
5. Landplane Staff Ditching Manual  
(Air Sea Rescue Agency)  
6. Air Sea Safety, Nov. 46, p. 45  
7. DOC/RJ/116, SAR/RJ/17, 25/7/47  
Recommendation 4.1 (ICAO)

CC: THE COMMANDANT (CRA) -- with inclosure 2 only.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD  
Boston 13, Massachusetts

Copy of the attached  
letter has also been  
forwarded to the following  
responsible stations:

7-17-97-2  
7-37-7

12 November, 1947

Bal 1-2

5 copies

Address reply to  
Commander, First Coast Guard District  
Refer to file: o-601-65

From: Commander, First Coast Guard District  
To: All Vessels, First Coast Guard District, except Lightships and  
83 ft. Patrol Boats.  
Subj: USCGC BIBB (WPG-31), Report of Assistance; case of Bermuda Sky Queen  
Ref: (a) Form NCG 2628, Report of Assistance, Serial No. 5-47, dated  
14 October, 1947

1. A copy of reference (a) is forwarded herewith for study and re-  
commendations.

/s/ A. G. HALL  
Chief of Staff

Incl:  
Copy of reference (a)

CC:  
Comdt. CG (10)  
ComEastArea (5)  
Comdr. 3rd CG Dist. (5)  
Comdr. 5th CG Dist. (5)

FORMAL STATEMENT OF THE SURVIVORS  
OF THE LOSS OF THE FLYING BOAT  
BERMUDA SKY QUEEN

1. In the opinion of the undersigned passengers on the Bermuda Sky Queen the 'plane was grossly overcrowded. Furthermore it is believed that the reason why the aircraft of the type used took the air on a North Atlantic route at this time of year calls for an investigation.
2. Captain Charles Martin's skill in landing the aircraft on a heavy sea was in part responsible for preventing a major accident. This landing, we believe, was a major achievement.
3. We, the undersigned, also declare that the behaviour and skill of the Captain and crew of the USCG cutter George M. Bibb and the efficient manner in which they evacuated all passengers and crew from the aircraft without loss of life or apparent serious injury of any kind in heavy seas and under conditions which can only be described as hazardous in the extreme are worthy of the greatest commendation. This particularly applies to the members of the voluntary lifeboat crews. We are also eternally grateful for the limitless hospitality and welcome which have been extended to us by every man on the Coastguard Cutter.

Signatures: /s/ W. H. Bostock & 36 other passengers

TESTIMONY OF THE SURVIVORS OF THE  
FLYING BOAT, "BERMUDA SKY QUEEN"

The undersigned passengers unite in expressing their deepest gratitude to Captain Quinn and members of the U. S. tanker "Chisholm Trail", namely OS Currie, QM Brown, AB Harmon, QM McNeil, Fireman Miller, Oiler Rivera, Oiler King, and Assistant Cook Crenshaw together with Unattached Seaman Cook for the manner in which they behaved in the disaster of the Bermuda Sky Queen.

1. For the upholding of morale throughout the day and night and the manner in which they assisted passengers, particularly the women and children.
2. The initiative and extreme courage shown by Captain Quinn and crew members Brown and Harmon in risking their lives in making their way to the Coastguard Cutter in a four-man rubber life-raft to acquaint the Captain of the Cutter with the need for immediate assistance in view of the desperate conditions prevailing in the aircraft.
3. For the able manner in which Oiler King organized the crew members Currie, McNeil, Miller, Rivera, Crenshaw and Cook and carried out with complete calm and remarkable efficiency the evacuation of the plane under appalling weather conditions. It should be mentioned here that King remained aboard the doomed aircraft until he had seen the completion of his self-imposed task and left in the life-raft.

Signatures: /s/ W. H. Bostock and signatures  
representing 47 passengers

