

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
Washington, D. C.

MVI
12 June 1953
(PRINCESS PAT a-11 Bd)

From: Chief, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division
To: Commandant
Via: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; foundering of the MV
PRINCESS PAT, off Essex Point, Galapagos Island,
29 November 1952, with loss of life

1. Pursuant to the provisions of Title 46 C.F.R. Part 136, the record of the Marine Board convened to investigate subject casualty, together with its Findings of Fact, Conclusions, Opinions, and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The MV PRINCESS PAT, a fishing vessel of 238 g. t., built in 1945, was engaged in fishing operations in the vicinity of Galapagos Islands. On 29 November 1952, while en route from the Galapagos Islands for the Peru Bank, the PRINCESS PAT apparently suffered an undetermined structural failure, took a sudden heavy list and foundered, approximately 40 miles ESE of Essex Point, off the SW coast of Isabella Island in the Galapagos group. In abandoning the vessel, one crew member, Andrew Marino, lost his life. The weather conditions at the time of the casualty were: a dark night, overcast sky and a calm sea.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. The MV PRINCESS PAT, official number 248441, of 238 gross tons, was an uninspected commercial fishing vessel, owned and operated by [REDACTED].

The PRINCESS PAT was built of steel at Newport Beach, California in 1945 and was equipped with automatic pilot, fathometer and radiotelephone. The officers on board the PRINCESS PAT were required to be licensed in compliance with the Officers' Competency Enabling Act of 17 July 1939.

"2. On or about 28 September 1952 the MV PRINCESS PAT departed from San Diego, California, with eight U. S. crew members aboard and proceeded southward to Puntarenas, Costa Rica, where five Costa Ricans were added to the crew. From Puntarenas, Costa Rica the PRINCESS PAT sailed to the Galapagos

Islands for a load of bait. Fishing operations were carried on in and about the Galapagos Islands and off the Peru Bank of South America.

"3. The PRINCESS PAT was about half loaded with approximately 120 tons of tuna aboard on 28 November 1952, the last time she left the Galapagos Islands, bound for the Peru Bank. At or about 0100 on 29 November 1952 active navigation of the vessel was turned over to the following unlicensed crew members: [redacted] of Costa Rica on watch on the bridge and [redacted] on watch in the engine room. At or about 0430 on 29 November 1952 when approximately 40 miles ESE of Essex Point, off the SW coast of Isabella Island in the Galapagos group, the MV PRINCESS PAT assumed a sudden unexplained 45° list to port causing all hands to wake up. The vessel began to sink instantly, taking water into the engine compartment through the open door on the port side. All hope of saving the vessel was abandoned due to her sudden erratic behavior and flooding condition. The crew had no time to don life preservers or to salvage any of their personal belongings. The vessel's boats were washed overboard immediately following the severe port list. The master commanded the crew to jump overboard within one minute after he was awakened.

"4. It was a dark night with overcast sky and calm sea. Testimony of the officers and crew revealed that Andrew Marino, the crew member who was lost, hesitated to jump overboard at the master's command. It was established that a few moments after entering the water, several witnesses heard Marino shout for help. At the time the master and crew could render only words of encouragement as each was occupied with saving himself. A few seconds later, the vessel sank in deep water. It is assumed that Andrew Marino went down with the PRINCESS PAT.

"5. The master and crew members of the PRINCESS PAT could merely guess at the cause of the vessel's foundering. No one claimed to have seen or heard anything unusual aboard the vessel prior to the severe and sudden list. It was the stated opinion of the master that a shall plate let go near

the stern on the centerline. This shell plate was removed at the National Steel Shipyard, San Diego, in September of 1952, and there was no evidence of faulty welding or of poor workmanship to support the master's theory of shell plate failure.

"6. The stability characteristics of the MV PRINCESS PAT, as established by the inclining booklet and prints of the vessel, were carefully studied by the members of the Board. The expert testimony of Mr. [REDACTED], Naval architect who performed inclining tests on the PRINCESS PAT, offered the plausible theory that an inboard bulkhead in one of the large fish walls on the starboard side let go. This would set into motion a large volume of water, approximately 29 tons. In the opinion of Mr. [REDACTED], this considerable displacement of water, suddenly removed from the starboard side and flooding the shaft alley, produced a heeling moment that the vessel could not endure. The PRINCESS PAT's machinery continued to operate for a short time after she was listed; but before a radio call for help could be transmitted, the vessel was going down and had to be abandoned.

"7. The master stated that while swimming away from the PRINCESS PAT, looking for something to grasp for support, he swam to a dark object some distance away. This was the vessel's small skiff. Using the skiff to circle around, he picked up all the remaining crew members, but could not find Marino. The search for Marino was continued by all hands, without success. When daylight came, repairs were made to the large skiff and the crew rowed for approximately eleven hours toward Essex Point in the Galapagos Islands.

"8. The crew of four commercial fishing vessels from the Galapagos Islands provided food and clothing for the crew of the PRINCESS PAT. The Costa Ricans were put aboard vessels bound for Costa Rica, while the American crew members were returned to the United States aboard the fishing vessel VICTORIA of San Diego."

b. The Board made the following Conclusions:

"1. It is the opinion of this Board that [REDACTED], master of the MV PRINCESS PAT, exercised good skill and judgment in saving the lives of eleven members of his crew, notwithstanding the loss of Andres Marino who might have been saved had he abandoned the vessel upon the command of the master.

"2. The master of the PRINCESS PAT violated Section 4, R.S. 4438a (46 USC 224a), by having an unlicensed person in charge of the navigation of the vessel and by having an unlicensed person in charge of the watch in the engine room.

"3. The master and owner of the MV PRINCESS PAT violated Section 5, R.S. 4438a (46 USC 224a) by engaging unlicensed persons to navigate the vessel."

5. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"1. It is recommended that [REDACTED], License No. [REDACTED], master of the MV PRINCESS PAT, be charged with negligence for permitting an unlicensed crew member to navigate the vessel and for allowing an unlicensed crew member to take charge of the watch in the engine room.

"2. It is recommended that the master and owner of the MV PRINCESS PAT be cited for violating Section 5 of R.S. 4438a (46 USC 224a).

"3. It is recommended that no further action be taken and that the case be closed."

6. The Board submitted the following supplemental Opinions and Conclusions:

OPINIONS

"1. That probable failure of the inboard bulkhead of a fish well on the starboard side spilled approximately 29 tons of water into the shaft alley, produced a large heeling moment, and resulted in a 45 degree port list in the MV PRINCESS PAT.

"2. That this port list permitted flooding of the engine room through an open door on the port side of the main deck, and allowed progressive flooding of forward compartments until the PRINCESS PAT filled with later, leveled off, and sank."

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Commandant

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CONCLUSIONS

"1. That had the MV PRINCESS PAT been a Coast Guard inspected vessel, the frailty of her bulkheads would have been observed and corrected and this casualty might have been averted.

"2. That no person or persons aboard the MV PRINCESS PAT willfully contributed to the foundering of the vessel."

REMARKS

7. Contrary to the statement in paragraph 1 of the Board's Findings of Fact, the PRINCESS PAT, at the time of her foundering, was owned by [REDACTED] and eight others.

8. It is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Conclusions, Opinions, and Recommendations of the Marine Board of Investigation be approved.

/s/ [REDACTED]

P. A. OVENDEN

FIRST ENDORSEMENT TO MVI memorandum of 12 June 1953

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30 June 1953

From: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ [REDACTED]

H. C. SHEPHEARD

APPROVED: July 2, 1953

/s/ [REDACTED]

MERLIN O'NEILL

Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant