

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

MV

21 November 1951

(MV DAN QUINN - TONNAGE
HESS - 5-4 Ed)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; Collision involving SS MORRIS HESS
 and MV DAN QUINN and tow Mississippi River 5 July, 1951 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. On 5 July, 1951, during daylight the MORRIS HESS, a Liberty type steam tankship 7243 GT fully loaded, was upbound and the tug MV DAN QUINN of 172 GT, fitted with 2 - 200 HP engines pushing 2 empty tank barges was downbound in the Mississippi River in the vicinity of Avondale Bend, Louisiana. The MORRIS HESS was proceeding at a speed of 9 miles and the DAN QUINN at 14 miles per hour. The weather was clear and calm with current at about 2-1/2 miles per hour. Upon approaching each other a normal port to port passing situation existed. For some unaccountable reason probably due to main engine or steering apparatus failure, the DAN QUINN crossed the bow of the MORRIS HESS. The MORRIS HESS took collision avoiding action but to no avail and collided with the DAN QUINN at approximately 1025, mile 109.1 AHP Mississippi River. As a result of this collision, the DAN QUINN capsized and sank with the loss of 5 crew members including the Master. Slight damage was sustained by the MORRIS HESS and the barge ALAMO 700, in tow of the DAN QUINN.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"1. On 5 July 1951, at or about 1025 CST, the SS MORRIS HESS, a Liberty type tankship of American Registry, and the T/B ALAMO 700, one of two barges being pushed ahead by the MV DAN QUINN, were in collision in Avondale Bend, off Twelve Mile Point, approximately mile 109.1 AHP, Mississippi River, as a result of which the MV DAN QUINN capsized and ultimately sank with a loss of five crew members, including the Master.

"2. The vessels involved were:

(a) SS MORRIS HESS (ex-PAUL LUGBAR), a Liberty type tank vessel, Official No. 244595, built in 1943, steel hull, length 422.8 ft., breadth 57 ft., gross tonnage 7243, net tonnage 4334, cargo 10,043 tons of Bunker C fuel oil, drawing 28 feet forward and 28.04 feet aft, owned and operated by Hess, Inc., State Street and Arthur Kill, Perth Amboy, N. J.

(b) T/B ALAMO 700, undocumented, built in 1951, steel hull, length 240 feet, breadth 50 feet, gross tonnage 1056, net tonnage 1056, an inspected tank barge used in the alcohol trade and empty at the time, owned and operated by Alamo Water and Transportation Co., c/o Edgar A. Smith, Jr., 2005 Arbor Street, Houston, Texas.

(c) MV DAN QUINN, a twin screw diesel type pusher tugboat, length 100 feet, breadth 24.1 feet, depth 7.9 feet, gross tonnage 172, powered by two 800 horsepower engines having been re-engined in June, 1949, from two 350 horsepower engines with no structural changes made at that time except to the engine beds, and owned and operated by Patton-Tully Transportation Co., Memphis, Tenn.

"3. At the time of the casualty the weather was clear, wind calm, current 2 to 2½ miles per hour, visibility very good. Avondale Bend is a gradual bend to the right for vessels upbound navigated on easy right wheel orders with vessels upbound following the contour of the left descending bank line, or Twelve Mile Point side, drawing closer to the Point as it is rounded. Vessels downbound keep to the middle so that they are not drawn too deep into the bend side. The river in this area is 1850 feet wide at its narrowest part at navigable depth for the vessels involved. Willow trees run to the bank on the point side but the bend being gradual, the trees do not obscure vision to the extent that a bend signal is required and neither vessel blew a bend signal in this instance. There are no known eddies or boils in the bend with the exception of the witness Schmidt, who resides on the upper side Twelve Mile Point, who stated that an eddy quarters off the Point toward the bend and vessels downbound keep to the center and pull toward the point side to keep from going too deep in the bend.

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"4. On 5 July 1951, at or about 0828 EST, the SS MORRIS RESS, bound up the Mississippi River to Goodhope, Louisiana, Mile 125.5 AHP, exchanged River Pilots below Algiers Point, Mile 91.5 AHP, and Pilot Marion Ketch began conning the vessel to Goodhope. The vessel proceeded without incident through New Orleans Harbor area and under the Huey P. Long Bridge, Mile 106.2 AHP, wedging the main channel span and to the right of the center line dike. The vessel during this period was making good about 9 miles per hour and on the bridge in addition to Pilot Ketch, were Captain Ignatius N. Blas, Third Mate Donald F. K. Chisholm and Tandi Ahamedo, A.B. - Helmsman. Shortly after passing under the bridge, exact time unknown, Captain Blas, observing no traffic in either direction, went to the head on the deck below and after being there about 3 minutes heard a one blast signal from his vessel. About 20 seconds to a half minute later he heard another one blast signal from his vessel and this was followed within a shorter interval by a danger signal immediately followed by another one blast signal. He heard no answering signals. He rushed to the bridge using the starboard outside ladder and observed his vessel to be about 150 to 200 yards off its starboard bank and not making much speed, and before reaching the bridge heard his vessel again blow a danger signal followed by one blast. Upon entering the bridge he observed that the wheel was in midship position and engine telegraph on stop. He also observed a tow of two barges approaching being pushed ahead by a tugboat, about 1/2 point off the port bow about 3 to 4 ship lengths away and on a course crossing the bow at about a 45° angle, and to him appeared to be out of control and drifting or crabbing down on the SS MORRIS RESS. He immediately sent the Third Mate to stand by the anchor and the Pilot blew another danger signal followed by one blast and told the Captain that the tug had given him a cross signal. The Captain observed that at the angle of approach there was no possibility of the barges passing the ship starboard to starboard and the Captain, with the Pilot in agreement, put the engines full astern at 100% and ordered wheel hard left. About 1/2 to 1 minute later with no appreciable change in heading and with the vessel's speed reduced to about 3 miles per hour, the T/B ALAMO 700, which was on the starboard side of T/B ALAMO 800, with the MV DAN QUINN astern of that barge, collided with the stem and starboard bow of the vessel. The Captain estimated the speed of the barges at about 2 to 4 miles per hour, heard no whistles from the MV DAN QUINN during the time he was on the bridge and observed no change in heading. Then he observed the T/B ALAMO 700 and observed no change in heading. When he observed the T/B ALAMO 700 to be a tank barge, he ordered all men away from the bow, and the Third Mate, who reached about #1 hatch, and all other men turned back. He estimated the total time he was on the bridge to impact at 2 to 3 minutes.

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"5. According to Pilot Kotch, substantiated by Third Mate Donald F. K. Chisholm, and in part by Ahamedo, helmsman, after the vessel cleared the bridge he eased the vessel toward the left descending bank not running any landmark or Aid, but judging his position by the contour of the bank line and then began to run parallel therewith. The witness Chisholm stated the Pilot sought the left descending bank and when about 500 feet off and parallel, under the Pilot's wheel orders of easy right, steady, easy right, steady, etc. the vessel was being navigated along the curving bank line. Engines were on full and speed over the ground was not exceeding 8 knots. Approaching Twelve Mile Point, Chisholm observed a tow of two barges and a tug downbound on the upper side of the bend, more to the center or bend side of the river. He continued to watch this tow and saw the tow pass across the ship's keel if a line were extended therefrom and continue out into the bend on a course well clear of his vessel, and as the tow proceeded deeper into the bend, suddenly saw the tow and tug change its heading or course so that a line drawn through the tug's keel and tow was beginning to angle toward his vessel, and though much in the clear of his vessel the change was more of a turn than called for by the bend in the river. He described the tug as spinning on her heel as though to round up. He called this to the attention of Pilot Kotch who had also seen this and was approaching the whistle handle and the pilot gave a one blast passing signal. The tow at this time had not stopped her turning motion and was then about 3/4 mile away and 3 points on the port bow. There was no answer from the tug but the spinning stopped and the tug and tow began to straighten out on a course toward his vessel at an angle of about 33° from his vessel's course line and in about a 20 to 30 seconds interval a one blast signal was blown by the Pilot. The tug was then 5/8 of a mile distant and within 5 to 10 seconds the tug answered with a two blast signal whereupon Pilot Kotch immediately blew the danger signal followed by one blast, to which no answer was received and about 30 seconds later the Pilot again blew a danger signal followed by one blast there being no change in bearing but the distance closing to 1/2 mile and no answering signal from the tug. A third danger signal was blown by the Pilot and no answer heard. He recorded these three danger signals and at the same time received an order from the Pilot to stop the engines which he immediately telegraphed to the engine room and recorded it at 1024. The Captain entered the bridge about this time and ordered him to stand by the anchor. He observed the tug and tow just before leaving the bridge and she was about 3 points on the

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port bow and no change in direction. He proceeded down three flights of ladders and had reached No. 1 hatch when he heard the Captain order everybody to get back and he had returned to about #2 hatch when the impact of collision was felt. After leaving the bridge he heard no further signals from his vessel and none from the tug. He estimated that his vessel's speed over the bottom at the time he left the bridge at 6 knots and slowing down. He returned to the bridge and noted the telegraph was on full astern and received an order to stop the engines which he did. He stated it would have been impossible to change the ship's heading to the right because it would have run up on the bank and that at any time through the first danger signal the tug could have avoided the collision by stopping or helm movement but to his observation no action was taken by the tug.

"6. Pilot Marion Kotch, SS MORRIS HESS, a licensed River Pilot, testified he favored the right side of the channel under the main span of the Huey P. Long Bridge and made right easy rudder changes to ease the vessel toward the left descending bank, and when approximately 500 to 600 feet off steadied to run parallel with the bank. At this time the SS MORRIS HESS was under Twelve Mile Point and opposite or slightly above Avondale Shipyard, Mile 108.2 AHP. Engines were full ahead and no traffic was observed. At the angle Pilot Kotch approached Twelve Mile Point he described it as forming 2 points, an upper and lower and when he reached approximately abeam of the Standard Oil Dock and still about 500 feet off the left descending bank he observed a tow about midstream downbound from behind the upper part of Twelve Mile Point, well in the bend and about 1 mile away, or about .6 of a mile above Waggaman Light, Mile 109.1 AHP and he blew a passing signal of one long blast. The tow was then dead ahead and continuing into the bend going about 1/2 to 1 point past the bow, which put the tow on the port bow, distant about 3/4 of a mile and receiving no answer, he again blew a passing signal of one long blast which was answered by the tug a few seconds later with a two blast signal. The tug and tow was still crossing the ship's bow from starboard to port and well clear proceeding down river, but when the tug blew the two blast answering signal it appeared to him as though she was turning on a left wheel as if to round up. He blew a danger signal followed by one long blast and received no answer waiting long enough to give the tug a chance to reply. He still thought she was trying to round up but the tug was

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on a course toward the ship's bow and at about a 45° angle of approach with a starboard to starboard passage impossible because of the MORRIS HESS being so close to its starboard bank. No answer was received from the tug and the Pilot again blew a danger signal followed by one blast and ordered the engines stopped. The Captain entered the bridge at this time and sent the Third Mate to stand by the anchor. The engines had been stopped about one minute with the tow and tug being about 1/2 mile away and closing rapidly without making any change of course when another danger signal was sounded followed by one blast and the engines put full astern and hard left rudder ordered. The tow was then about 2 ship lengths, 800 feet, away and the ship was making good about 3 miles per hour. The vessel was close to its starboard bank and the hard left rudder and full astern began to take effect so that at the time of impact the angle had changed from about 45° to 30° and speed over the bottom to about 1 knot. He stated the collision occurred about abeam of Waggaman Light and about 400 feet off the left descending bank.

"7. The witness Francis J. Duffy, Third Assistant Engineer, testified he was on watch from 8:00 to Noon on 5 July 1951 and handled the throttles during this period and answered all bells promptly and that the casualty was not due to any failure of machinery. He heard two separate whistle signals from his vessel and then at 1022 by the engineroom clock, received an order to "stop" which he immediately executed. Before receiving an astern bell he opened the throttle valve a little in case he was ordered to go full astern and when receiving a full astern bell at 1023, immediately complied by pulling up the lever on the reversing gear and estimated that in 20 seconds the engine reached about 60 revolutions. He then received at 1024 stop, 1026 full astern and 1027 finished with engines. The witness Houdek, oiler on the 8 to 12 watch, testified he heard several short blasts and the engine was on full ahead, he then received a series of bells which he recorded promptly, using the engineroom clock, beginning with 1022 stop to 1027. He felt the impact of collision after the engine was placed on full astern at 1023 and observed that the engine was making good speed astern. He related that the 1024 stop entry was received after he felt the impact.

"8. The witness Calvin E. Hightower, Pilot, MV DAN QUINN, had the Midnight to 0600 watch on 5 July 1951 and had boarded her at Memphis and Barges ALAMO 700 and ALAMO 800 were at that time strung out ahead.

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At Helena, Arkansas the barges were doubled up. These barges were empty drawing about 18", while the MV DAN QUINN had approximately 2 feet of freeboard midships, was pilothouse controlled, twin screw with two 200 horsepower engines and carrying a crew of 9. When he was relieved at 0600 by Captain Wilkerson the tug was between Union Light and Orange Grove Light, Mile 169 AHP, and between Memphis and Baton Rouge the average speed was 17 miles per hour, but he began to slow down below Baton Rouge. After being relieved he had breakfast, went back to the pilothouse and talked with Captain Wilkerson and then went to his cabin located on the port side second deck, read awhile and fell asleep. He was awakened by the impact, started to leave his bunk but did not have time as water rushed in pushing him against the bulkhead and then carried him around the room. He managed to get through the small passage leading to the Captain's cabin on the starboard side and shot to the surface. He came up facing the SS MORRIS HESS and its crew members threw liferings but he could not reach them. A lifeboat from the SS MORRIS HESS came to his aid and he was then put aboard the tug CHAMPAGNE. He heard no whistle signals blown by the MV DAN QUINN prior to the impact. He further stated that while he was on watch the MV DAN QUINN handled her tow well because she was powerful and was not sluggish in answering rudder changes. He stated that she was equipped with liferings with lights contained in racks along the main deck house, preservers in pilot house and quarters.

"9. The witness Samuel L. Glascott, 2nd Mate, MV DAN QUINN, had a watch from 0600 to Noon 5 July 1951, and had been assigned no definite duties that morning except routine duties of cleaning up the DAN QUINN, securing the running lights and minor jobs. He does none of the steering, but made several visits to the pilothouse that morning and went on the barges twice, the last time shortly before the collision. He stated the DAN QUINN was astern of Barge 600 and about in the center of the barge. While on the barge with Fred Haney, deckhand, Captain Wilkerson asked Haney to come up to the pilothouse which Haney did, and Glascott went aft to the galley and it was then after 1000. He obtained a drink of water and after a few minutes walked out on the stern starboard side just outside the galley door. While there he saw a ship but could not say what part he saw but then about 200 to 300 feet off and heading in their direction. He heard no whistles from the DAN QUINN or the ship he saw but he noticed vibration and believed this was caused by the rudder being hard over. He observed no change in engine speed then

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its previous full sheal and stated the DAN QUINN had been making about 14 to 15 miles per hour that morning. On the stern near him were the cook, Mrs. Edwards, and deckhand, Jerry Cannon and he heard someone say they were going to hit. He climbed the ladder leading to the second deck and as he reached the top of the ladder he was struck by water and he held on to the mast, went under, struggled out from under the overturned DAN QUINN and came up seeing the MORRIS HESS, sank and came to the surface again and was pulled aboard the hull of the DAN QUINN by Herman Joyner, and subsequently taken ashore by the lifeboat from the SS MORRIS HESS. While he was on the barges and in the pilothouse during the morning he noticed no alcohol fumes from the barges or the hatches were not open. When he talked with Captain Wilkerson he seemed in good spirits and there was no indication of illness. The barges did not obscure vision from the pilothouse and he stated the DAN QUINN had about 2 feet freeboard, with main deck house 9 feet high, second deck 9 feet high and wheelhouse 7 to 8 feet high.

"10. The only two remaining survivors from the MV DAN QUINN were incapacitated and in lieu of appearance their statement upon interview was stipulated in the record at page 194. Mrs. Edwards, cook, heard no whistle signals from either vessel from her position on the stern at the time of collision, that the DAN QUINN was about mid-river making standard speed and noticed no change in speed prior to collision. The witness Herman A. Joyner, Jr. was asleep, heard no whistle signals and was first aware of the collision when water entered his room.

"11. There were a number of independent witnesses before the board among whom were Alfred L. Oglesbee, Mate, and Justin Terrebonne, Master, of the tug CHAMPAGNE which was moored at the main dock of the Standard Oil Company, Svondalo, Mile 103.7 MRP unloading a barge. Oglesbee testified that he heard the SS MORRIS HESS blow one blast and she was then about abreast of the tug CHAMPAGNE, and at the same time he saw the DAN QUINN coming around Twelve Mile curve with her barges at an angle. He heard no answer from the DAN QUINN, and after an uncertain interval of time in which the SS MORRIS HESS moved upstream, he heard the SS MORRIS HESS "blow down" the DAN QUINN, and thereafter heard the ship repeat the "blow down" and repeat it a third time. He stated if the DAN QUINN blew he did not hear it. He prepared Exhibit 16 and stated the "tugboat looked like it was coming this way swinging to the left hand side of the river coming down. As the QUINN came around, looked like she was swinging toward the bank. I don't know whether it was in danger or not, or out of control." The SS MORRIS HESS was more off to the other side a little bit than to the center of the river. When the

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first danger signal was blown by the SS MORRIS HESS he described the MV DAN QUINN as heading toward the left descending bank at about a 45° angle. The witness Justin Terretbonne stated he saw the SS MORRIS HESS pass upbound. He heard the SS MORRIS HESS blow one blast and she was then above where he was and on the right hand side of the river going around the point. He described the MV DAN QUINN as coming down crosswise in the river to cut to the point and coming across the bow of the ship. He heard the ship blow 4 followed by one blast a couple of minutes after the one blast signal and heard this repeated by the ship twice and at the third time they collided. He heard no whistle signals from the MV DAN QUINN. Both witnesses saw the DAN QUINN turn over immediately upon collision and they unmoored the tug CHAMPAGNE and proceeded to the overturned DAN QUINN. They stayed off the DAN QUINN about 50 to 100 feet and the witness Oglesbee jumped over the side and brought Mrs. Edwards, the cook, to the CHAMPAGNE. They also picked up another crew member and another crew member swam from the QUINN to the CHAMPAGNE. They then put the three survivors ashore and returned to the DAN QUINN and placed a line around the pipe housing the starboard rudder stock, which rudder was missing and they towed it in to the left descending bank opposite Avondale Marine Ways and made it fast to trees. While towing and doing this the witness Oglesbee heard tapping on the hull and a voice call out that there were 3 in the hull still alive. The tug LEO arrived as well as the U.S. Engineer's tug BURUNDY and the tug BURUNDY was dispatched to Avondale for burning equipment which she delivered to the scene. The DAN QUINN was slowly losing her air and sinking before the burning started. The witnesses also observed when towing the QUINN that a log about 6" in diameter was jammed between the port rudder stock and the propeller and against the rudder. The tug CHAMPAGNE, after pulling it as far inshore as possible, stayed until the DAN QUINN sank and upon striking the line ashore did not part.

"12. The witness Fred J. Schmidt lives on the left descending bank on the upper side of Twelve Mile Point across from Loggans Light. On the morning of the collision Schmidt was at his camp and saw the MV DAN QUINN coming down the river pushing two light barges abreast, rake end forward, about the middle of the river and making Twelve Mile Point at a speed estimated by him of 20 to 24 miles per hour. He estimated the rate of current to be 6 miles per hour. He stated there was an eddy on the point

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side coming up as far as camp and quartering across the river and below the point is slack water. When he first observed the DAN QUINN she was coming out of the Kenner Bend, a little above his camp, and had started a normal swing in the center of the river to make Twelve Mile Point. He watched her go out of sight and about that time he heard a boat blowing in the distance and not long after that heard the DAN QUINN blow a danger signal of 4 short blasts and a few seconds thereafter heard a crash. He states he knew it was the DAN QUINN's whistle and heard no other whistles. He rode down the levee in his car and through the willows lining the bank, saw the masts of a vessel very close to shore. He went to the bank and observed a barge laying across the bow of the SS MORRIS HESS. He waited until the current swung the barge along the starboard side of the ship and was told by someone on the ship to tie it up to the trees. He estimated the ship to have been 200 feet off the bank and anchored, and about 1200 feet down from his camp by straight line or a third of a mile below Mile 110 AMP. He received a heaving line from a man on the barge, pulled the line ashore and made the line fast to trees along the bank. He then proceeded to the MV DAN QUINN and observed that her starboard main rudder was missing and only the pipe for the stock was there and trash was in the port wheel. When the DAN QUINN was raised, he went aboard and in the engine room he found the port engine lever was in full forward position and the starboard engine lever was in neutral. He further stated that normally downbound vessels come down about the center of the river and pull hard for Twelve Mile Point holding to the center of the river because of the cross current which would swing them into the bend and ships and tows upbound ran close along the shore of the point side. This same manner of running this point was described by the witness Hightower who stated that when downbound in upper Twelve Mile Point he generally holds to the middle of the river until he reaches a position where he can see clear around the point, then he pulls her down toward the bridge running the channel lights. He does not run the point side if it is clear but holds to the middle of the river until the tow breaks down and around the point.

"13. The starboard side of T/B ALAMO 700 collided with the stem and starboard bow of the SS MORRIS HESS at about a 30° angle, the stem indenting the side of T/B ALAMO in the way of tanks 3 and 4, raising the deck plating. According to witnesses of the SS MORRIS HESS, upon impact the entire starboard side of T/B ALAMO 700 rose up about 4 feet and the raised deck plating in the way of the indentation caught on the flukes of the starboard anchor ripping a

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large hole in the aforesaid tanks. T/B ALAMO 700 then fell back on an even keel and hung on the stem and starboard bow of the ship. Upon impact the lines between T/B ALAMO and T/B ALAMO 800, which was made up to and on the port side of T/B ALAMO 700, parted and T/B ALAMO 800 went down river between the bank and starboard side of the ship. The MV DAN QUINN which had been made up directly astern of T/B ALAMO 800 was observed to turn over to port and was next seen floating off the stern end of T/B ALAMO 700 and down the port side of the SS MORRIS HESS bottom side up. Damage to the MV DAN QUINN's starboard side and T/B ALAMO 700 port stern corner as portrayed by the photographic exhibits and survey by the board and witness Lt. Comdr. Ernst indicate that the MV DAN QUINN heeled over as a result of this contact. Lifelines were thrown by crew members of the MORRIS HESS toward one person seen drifting downstream (light-tower). Pilot Ketch ordered the ship's engines stopped while Captain Elms ordered the port anchor dropped at 1027 and life-boat launched, which was in the water at 1031.

"14. Five crew members including the Captain of the MV DAN QUINN were lost and their names, rates and addresses are as follows:

Robert W. Wilkerson, Jr., Master, Memphis, Tenn.
Fred Haney, Deckhand, Joyner, Arkansas.
Francis L. Thomas, Engineer, Memphis, Tenn.
Thomas Lovett, Jr., Engineer, Jonesboro, Ill.
Jerry Cannon, Deckhand, Memphis, Tenn.

"15. Damage to the ships involved were as follows:

(a) SS MORRIS HESS - #1 and 2 hull frame and plate near upper and lower end of starboard hose pipe about 6" above deck in upper forepeak slightly distorted and set in approximately 2". Stem doubler set in approximately 3" with no leakage and damage to be repaired at owner's convenience.

(b) T/B ALAMO 700 - starboard side in way of #3 and 4 tanks indented for a distance of about 30 feet and about 2 1/2 ft. deep and deck plating fractured and torn. No. 6 port tank and aft void compartment at corner holed and indented.

(c) MV DAN QUINN - small fracture 20" x 3" lengthwise in sheer strake just under deck starboard side about 8 feet from stern and sheer strake corrugated slightly in area for about 15 feet;

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8' x 3' lengthwise fracture amidship starboard side in way of starboard fuel tank beginning about 12" below deck which is set up; 35 feet of superstructure starboard overhang deck set in and rails twisted and fractured, 8 feet of superstructure port overhang deck set in and rails twisted and fractured; pilot house deck set down in shape of scoop facing forward with deepest point being 12" where pilot would stand at controls.

"16. The starboard main rudder of the MV DAN QUINN was observed by a number of witnesses to have been missing. The witnesses Oglesbee and Terrebonne observed this when they proceeded to the scene and placed a line around the pipe forming part of the starboard main rudder. This was not bent and according to Lt. Comdr. Ernst, a witness, the plating was sheared off from stock showing an even degree of corrosion on ruptured edge when examined by him in drydock on 9 July 1951. The remaining rudders were in hard right position with debris entwined in the port rudder. The bridge controls were found to have 15 notches in the ahead position with the port engine lever set on 5 notches from idle or about 1/3 ahead and starboard control set on 7 notches or nearly 1/2 speed ahead.

"17. Both the SS MORRIS HESS and the MV DAN QUINN were equipped with radar; this apparatus was not in use in conning the SS MORRIS HESS prior to the collision and it is not believed that the MV DAN QUINN was making use of her radar set."

4. The Board made the following conclusions:

"1. That the SS MORRIS HESS on an upstream course was on the right hand side of the channel as prescribed both by the Rules and by accepted local practice.

"2. That the MV DAN QUINN and tow of two barges, while on a downstream course, first was in a position to effect a port to port passage with the upbound vessel then - for some unaccountable reason - proceeded on a course crossing that of the MORRIS HESS.

"3. That the testimony in regards to whistles blown by the MORRIS HESS is definite insofar that it established two one-whistle blasts followed by three sets of danger signals.

"4. That the testimony concerning the whistle signal stated to have been given by the DAN QUINN is not incontrovertible in that some witnesses maintain that a two blast signal was heard coming from the towboat while one witness asserts hearing a danger signal therefrom.

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"5. That there was no failure of equipment, machinery or material in the SS MORRIS HESS, a vessel duly inspected by USCG Marine Inspection.

"6. That the evidence adduced indicates probable failure of the starboard engine, steering ability impaired due to loss of starboard rudder, and likelihood of failure of air supply to the air whistle of the MV DAN QUINN.

"7. That there is no indication of inattention to duty, misconduct, negligence, or wilful violation of any law, rule or regulation on the part of either the licensed or unlicensed personnel of the SS MORRIS HESS and of the personnel of the MV DAN QUINN.

"8. That the HESS' pilot could have taken positive preventive action other than the repeated blowing of the danger signal a few seconds sooner than was the case but that this would not have necessarily averted the collision.

"9. That the MV DAN QUINN could have avoided the collision by maintaining her original position for a port to port passage. The reason this was not done has not been determined by the Board due to the death of the principal witnesses. It, therefore, follows that any description of the events on the MV DAN QUINN is mainly speculative.

"10. That no personnel of the U. S. Coast Guard or any other U. S. Government agency were connected directly or indirectly or contributed in any manner to the casualty.

"11. That no aids to navigation were involved.

"12. That no uncharted or incorrectly charted area or objects were involved.

"13. That no U. S. Government property of any character was damaged or destroyed.

"14. No suggestions for the prevention of a similar marine casualty was actually made by any of the witnesses interviewed with a letter to that effect was received from the Captain, U.S. Marine

Chief, MVI Division to
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MVI
21 November 1951
(MV DAN QUINN - MORRIS
HESS - a-8 Bd)

of the Masters, Mates, Pilots and Engineers of the U. S. Engineers. According to this letter it is the unanimous opinion of that association that all ships navigating the Mississippi River be equipped with ship-to-ship radio telephone and stand-by on Channel Four (Freq. 2738 Kc.) with any information that might add to safer navigation."

5. The Board expressed the following opinions:

"1. That the actual events on the MV DAN QUINN as well as the reason for her actions will never be known because of the demise of the witnesses who could furnish the facts. Since it is known that the Master was well experienced in handling towboats and tows in these waters, and inasmuch as he appears to have enjoyed an excellent reputation as a reliable and competent man it cannot be reasonably conceived that he deliberately set the DAN QUINN's course across the other vessel's bow when, at first, a perfectly normal situation for a port to port passing existed.

"2. That after considering the facts on hand the only plausible conjecture one can arrive at is that the DAN QUINN was in some difficulty concerning her maneuverability. It may be that the starboard rudder was lost upon sighting the MORRIS HESS, or shortly thereafter. Also that the branches found jammed in her port rudders interfered with her handling. Again, the fact that her starboard engine control was found in the "neutral" position may indicate that there was engine failure at a critical time. The reported finding of three bodies below decks in the vicinity of the engines definitely tends to support the likelihood of machinery trouble at or near the time of the collision. Any of these conditions, or all of them together, would have caused loss of proper control over the movements of the tow at least temporarily and most certainly enough to have contributed to if not actually caused the collision.

"3. That in weighing actions of the principals in this case it could be stated that Pilot Ketch exercised somewhat less than good judgment when he used precious seconds to repeat the danger signal twice after failing to receive any answer to his initial danger signal. Taking the way off his ship immediately upon seeing that the tow had assumed a crossing course would most certainly have been the more prudent thing to do even if it had not averted the collision.

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(BY DAN QUINN - KETCH
HRES - 1-4 H)

"4. That it cannot be rightfully denied that the KETCH HRES was by this time practically in extremis and that her Pilot in approaching the fast developing situation was only attempting to warn the other vessel that a starboard to starboard passing was not feasible. The time element should also be closely scrutinized in arriving at a fair opinion as to possible alternate actions of the pilot; only a brief period of time elapsed between the moment the vessel sighted the tow and the impact. During the first part of this interval Ketch had no reason whatever to become apprehensive. The tow was on his port bow holding the middle of the river, heading downstream. His ship was as close as safety permitted to his own right hand; every custom and usage he was cognizant of during some twenty-five (25) years of coming ships called for both vessels to hold to a port to port passing and was exactly what the applicable Pilot Rules indicated. Then, without any reasonable warning and for no apparent good reason, to Ketch, the tow suddenly veered to port on a crossing course. Just a few seconds before had been a perfectly normal condition became transformed to the jaws of a collision. Meanwhile, the ship and the tow had closed on each other perilously and Pilot Ketch faced the predicament of electing to go hard left and thus jeopardize his own ship through her stern getting caught in a snarl from the nearby bank or holding his course and reducing speed.

"5. That it is the opinion of the Board that Pilot Ketch should not be censured for his decision. His failure to take more positive preventive action a few seconds sooner than he did can only be attributed to the human element involved. In other words, had his reflexes been quicker than average he would have realized that something had gone wrong on the towboat and stopped the KETCH HRES some thirty seconds or so before the time he did. It is almost beyond doubt that this would not have averted a marine casualty inasmuch as the DAN QUINN had too great headway to allow her to straighten her bow before striking the left descending bank. One must also consider another possibility and that is that an earlier reduction in the HRES' speed may have resulted in her bow colliding directly with the QUINN with, perhaps, still more disastrous consequences.

"6. That at the combined speed of the vessels, namely, approximately 9 miles per hour for the ship and 13.7 for the tow, it was only a matter of possibly 2 to 3 minutes from the time of the alteration of course by the DAN QUINN until the vessels were in collision.

Chief, XVI Division is
Commandant

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21 November 1951
(BY CAPTAIN - M HESS
METS - 8-4 121)

The question then to be decided is what action did Pilot Kotch or Captain Elms take to avoid or minimize the danger of collision. Unquestionably, Kotch blew a series of danger signals and after the second danger signal ordered the engine stopped. About one minute thereafter another danger signal was blown and engines ordered full astern by the Captain. From 9 miles the speed was believed reduced to about 2 miles per hour at time of collision by these changes and this, together with hard left rudder when in extremis was about all that could be reasonably expected from Pilot Kotch and Captain Elms under the circumstances. The most forceful point in arriving at this opinion is the very minor damage suffered by the MORRIS HESS. The damage to T/G ALMO 700 shows no evidence of the HESS' stem having penetrated into the thin starboard side plating. The large hole in the indented side and deck plating was probably caused by the flukes of the starboard anchor.

"7. Finally, it is the opinion of the Board that the capsizing of the MV DAN QUINN resulted from the port side corner of T/G ALMO-700 striking and pushing against her starboard side immediately following the initial impact between the MORRIS HESS and this barge."

6. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"1. That since the MV DAN QUINN does not come under the supervision of this Service as to her construction and factor of stability no recommendation in the way of remedial or safer measures can be made in this respect.

"2. That under the circumstances no further action is indicated and the case be closed."

CONCLUSION

7. Conclusion is reached that the Master, Mate, Pilot and Engineer of the U. S. Engineers recommend that all ships navigating the Chesapeake be equipped with ship-to-ship radio telephony for safety purposes. Ships out of the vessels navigating the Chesapeake River are not subject to annual inspection and certification pursuant to the marine safety statutes under the jurisdiction of the Coast Guard. Copy of the Board's report together with a copy of the

WFI
21 November 1951
(BY THE CHIEF - MARINE
MESS - 2-3 Bd)

Chief, MVI Division to
Commandant

letter from the Masters, Mates, Pilots and Engineers of the U. S. Engineers, will be furnished to the Federal Communications Commission, Washington, D.C., as the subject matter in question is more appropriately under the jurisdiction of that agency.

8. Subject to the foregoing remarks, it is recommended that the Findings of Fact, Conclusions, Opinions and Recommendations of the Marine Board of Investigation be approved.

/s/ P. A. O'NEILL
P. A. O'NEILL
Acting

RE
29 November 1951

End-1

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

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ R. A. SMITH
R. A. SMITH
Acting

APPROVED: NOV 29 1951

/s/ MURKIN CANNON
MURKIN CANNON
Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant