

MVI  
17 September, 1961  
(L.P. ST. CLAIR -  
MSTS PVT. SADAO S.  
MUNEMORI - C-13 B1)

From: Chief, Merchant Vessel Inspection Division  
To: Commandant

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; Collision involving SS L. P. ST. CLAIR  
and MSTS PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI Strait of Juan de Fuca, 20 May, 1961

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, Opinions and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The steam tanker L. P. ST. CLAIR of 8,066 g.t., was inbound and the MSTS PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI was outbound in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. The weather was overcast, light breeze, fog patches, visibility varying with the density of the position of the fog patches from six miles to one-half mile. Both vessels sighted each other visually before the collision, but due to fog patches lost such contact. Both vessels had each other in sight on their respective radars. Upon closing in each vessel took collision-avoiding action, but nevertheless, both vessels collided at approximately 1719 on 20 May, 1961, four and one-half miles SSW of Sherringham Light, Vancouver Island, B.C. No injuries or loss of life were sustained as a result of this casualty. The damage to the L. P. ST. CLAIR was estimated at \$125,000 and to the PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI at \$10,000.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact;

"1. At 1719 $\frac{1}{2}$  hours, (PDLST) on 20 May, 1961, the Union Oil Company Tanker, L. P. ST. CLAIR, and the MSTS PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI collided in the Strait of Juan de Fuca, four and one-half miles south, southwest of Sherringham Light, Vancouver Island, B. C., with extensive damage to both vessels, but no injuries or loss of life to the personnel of either vessel.

The vessels involved are;

"2. L. P. ST. CLAIR; Official Number 238115; an American inspected Steam, Coastwise Tanker of Los Angeles, California; 8066 gross tons; built of steel in the year 1939 of which Captain Robert F. Bonner, 4323 Via Frascati, San Pedro, California is Master and the Union Oil Company of California, 617 West 7th Street, Los Angeles, California is the owner. The vessel is equipped with radar and same was in use at the time of the casualty.

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"3. PVT. SADAO S. MUREMORI; a public vessel of the MSTS; built of steel in the year 1945 of which Captain James Raymond Ellis, License Number 83180, of 1618 East Lynn Street, Seattle, Washington is the Master and the MSTS, United States Government, Washington, D. C., is the owner. The vessel is equipped with radar and same was in use at the time of the casualty.

The weather conditions prevailing at the time were:

"4. Overcast with light WNW breeze, force 2; fog patches; smooth sea and visibility varying with the density of and position of the fog patches, from six (6) miles to one-half (1/2) mile. Tide was flooding, last of flood.

"5. On 17 May, 1951, in San Pablo Bay, California, at Bay #15, at 1726 hours (PDLST), the L. P. ST. CLAIR, a tanker took departure for Seattle, Washington. On the 20th of May, 1951, at 1454 hours, the L. P. ST. CLAIR rounded Tatoosh Island, being 1.8 miles distant, and entered the Strait of Juan de Fuca, on course 101° true. Course 101° was continued and at 1520 hours, one mile distant, Neada Island was abeam. Vessel was proceeding at "FULL SPEED", at approximately 11.5 knots, 82 RPM's, when at 1628 hours (DLST) the vessel was abeam Slip Point, distance five miles, still on course 101° true, and at "FULL SPEED"; at approximately 1645 hours (PDLST), by use of the radar, two vessels were picked up showing as pips on the radar screen, approximately 13.5 miles distant and bearing about 4° on the L. P. ST. CLAIR's starboard bow. The Master came on the bridge and remained there in charge of navigation. One vessel was apparently heading in and at this time was meeting the other, which was enroute out to sea, as at 1705 hours (PDLST) the vessel enroute out was seen approaching, visually, at a distance of about five and one-half miles, bearing approximately 14° on the starboard bow, by the radar. At this time a fog patch obscured the two vessels. The L. P. ST. CLAIR had sounded fog signals and posted lookout, also placing engines on the "STAND-BY", at 1659 hours, as the fog bank was on her starboard hand. At 1712 hours the L. P. ST. CLAIR, now being in fog, stopped her engines as she heard the fog signal of the approaching vessel, which was still bearing 14° on the starboard bow, by radar, and at a distance of two and one-half miles. At 1715 hours (PDLST) there still being no change in the bearing, the L. P. ST. CLAIR went "FULL ASTERN", as she visually

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sighted the bow of the oncoming vessel through the fog and sounded three (3) blasts on her whistle to indicate her engines were going full astern, and at 1716 gave a "JINGIE" to the engine room. At 1717 another "JINGIE" and again another at 1718. The vessel's bow was now falling off to the left. At 1719, on heading of 57°, the impact occurred and engines were stopped. This vessel was equipped with a gyro course recorder, which was in operation throughout.

"8. The USFR PVT. SADAO S. MURAMORI departed Seattle, Washington, bound for sea, on 20 May, 1951. At 1650 hours (PUSST), at Port Angeles, Washington, the Pilot was discharged and the vessel put on course 292° true, "FULL SPEED", of approximately 14 knots. At this time visibility was excellent. The Third Officer, Mr. Earl Ores, was in charge of the watch and the Master left the bridge, going to his room, where he remained approximately an hour, then went to the dining room for his supper. At 1659 hours, (DLST), the Second Officer, Mr. Case, relieved the watch, taking over from Mr. Ores, at which time the vessel was proceeding on course 292° at "FULL SPEED". The vessel still proceeding at "FULL SPEED" on course 292° true, but now encountering fog. The vessel is equipped with radar and was in use, a check of which was made by Mr. Swanson at 1659 or 1657, approximately, and a target or pip was sighted ahead, a distance of about seven miles. The vessel continued at "FULL SPEED" and at 1704 a "STAND-BY" was indicated on the engineering telegraph and the engineers alerted. Fog patches appeared and fog signals were commenced and a lookout posted on the bridge. The target had now closed to three miles, with no change in bearing. Visibility was estimated at two miles. The approaching vessel was visible through the binoculars, bearing just a shade on the port bow. At this time, 1713, course was changed on order of the Pilot to 300° true and visual contact was lost in the fog. The engines were put on "STOP" and the lookout was sent for the Master at 1714 and engines were "STOP" and the look of the other vessel seen through the fog, and at 1715 the rudder put "HARD RIGHT" and the engines were rung "FULL ASTERN", immediately followed by a "JINGIE". At 1718 impact was had with the tanker L. P. ST. CLAIR. The PVT SADAO S. MURAMORI's heading being 080° true. Contact was estimated to be at right angles, but was actually at an angle of 40° abaft the beam of the L. P. ST. CLAIR, on her starboard side of Number One lifeboat, just aft of the bridge, the PVT. SADAO S. MURAMORI's bow penetrating the hull of the L. P. ST. CLAIR. Both vessels proceeded to Seattle, Washington area, under their own power. There were no casualties, injuries or loss of life to any of the personnel on board either vessel.

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"7. The damage to the L. P. ST. CLAIR was estimated at \$125,000.00 plus demurrage and \$50,000.00 to her cargo. The damage to the PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI was \$10,000.00 plus demurrage, delay etc.

"8. The testimony of the L. P. ST. CLAIR's witnesses indicated that the L. P. ST. CLAIR was stopped dead in the water at the time of the impact. The L. P. ST. CLAIR's witnesses claim they were navigating parallel to a fog bank in clear weather until at 1712 hours fog patches set in. They also testified the vessel was sounding regulation fog signals. That the vessel held course of 101° true until steerageway lost, when heading changed to left. Current was caused by flood tide, flooding in an easterly direction. Light breeze from the NNW caused the vessel to back in a straight line. The L. P. ST. CLAIR's witnesses also testified that their vessel stopped in one-half the visible distance. They further testified that all that could be done, according to the Rules of the Road was done and no blame should attach to them for this casualty.

"9. The PVT SADAO S. MUNEMORI's witnesses testified that their vessel was almost dead in the water, with only little way on. They testified that the L. P. ST. CLAIR was crossing their bow from port to starboard and they were the privileged vessel. They further testified that no blame should be attached to them as they sounded proper signals, reduced speed and maintained a lookout, that the casualty was due to fog."

4. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

It is the opinion of the Board that this casualty was caused by:

"1. The failure of the PVT. S. MUNEMORI to observe Article 16 of the Rules to Prevent Collision of Vessels in International Waters, 'Failure to stop her engines when she heard the fog signal of another vessel forward of her beam'.

"2. The failure of the PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI to maintain a lookout at or near the bow during fog or obscured visibility.

"3. The failure of the PVT. SADAO S. MUNEMORI to reduce speed during obscured visibility when radar observations indicated a vessel forward of her beam.

- "4. That the Third Officer of the PVT. SABAO S. HUNEMURI failed to notify the Master that he was encountering fog.
- "5. That the said Third Officer failed to notify the Master of a change in course.
- "6. That the said Third Officer failed to maintain a lookout as required by law during a period of low visibility.
- "7. That the Master of the PVT. SABAO S. HUNEMURI failed to act as a prudent man would under similar circumstances, to wit: Failed to exercise command and direct the crew of his vessel in their duties when his vessel was in extremis.
- "8. The failure of the L. F. ST. CLAIR to reduce speed during reduced visibility when radar observations indicated a vessel forward of the beam."

5. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"1. In view of the above facts and opinions, action under R. S. 4410, as amended, is recommended and has been taken in the cases of the Master of the PVT. SABAO S. HUNEMURI, James R. Ellis (See Seattle WHI Case 628-5615); the Third Mate of the PVT. SABAO S. HUNEMURI, Iona E. Swanson, (See Seattle WHI Case 628-5616) and the Master of the L. F. ST. CLAIR, Robert P. Bunker, (See Seattle WHI Case 628-5614). It is further recommended that the rules of the road to prevent collision be amended so as to require that it be mandatory, when radar is depended upon as an aid to navigation, that all targets appearing forward of the beam be plotted and the courses and speed of moving targets be ascertained. It is further recommended that this case be closed."

REMARKS

6. The Board recommended that the rules of the road to prevent collision be amended so as to require that it be mandatory, when radar is depended upon as an aid to navigation, that all targets appearing forward of the beam be plotted and the courses and speed of moving targets be ascertained. The International Conference on Safety of Life at Sea, held at London from 23 April to 10 June, 1949, gave extensive consideration to the adoption of mandatory

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requirements with respect to the use of radar in marine navigation. This Conference, in its formal Recommendations, concluded as follows:

"19. Navigation of Ships Equipped with Radar, etc.

The Conference, while recognizing that the recent advances in radar and electronic navigational aids are of great service to shipping, is of the opinion that the possession of any such device in no way relieves the master of a ship from his obligation strictly to observe the requirements laid down in the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea, and in particular, the obligations contained in Articles 15 and 16 of those Regulations."

Records of investigation contain substantive evidence to indicate that had certain of the vessels involved in serious collisions complied with the applicable provisions of the statutory and administrative collision regulations rather than relied upon the radars on board, such collisions would have been avoided. Due to this fact and other factors such as technical qualifications of operators, manning, maintenance, etc., the "Radio Technical Commission for Marine Service," consisting of government and industry representatives has undertaken, and is now in the process of making, a study for the determination of preventing collisions of vessels fitted with radar installations.

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

/s/P. A. OVENDEN  
P. A. OVENDEN  
Acting

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17 December, 1951

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

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/R. A. SMYTH  
R. A. SMYTH  
Acting

APPROVED: DEC 18 1951

/s/MERLIN O'NEILL  
MERLIN O'NEILL

Vice Adm., U.S. Coast Guard  
Commandant