

No Trace Found of Seaman

By Mary O Totten
Daily News Staff Writer

The fate of a missing seaman aboard the tanker "Santa Maria" when she was rammed by another oil tanker in Cook Inlet Monday may never be known.

This much appears certain: He did not perish aboard the burning ship.

According to the ship's captain, testifying at a Coast Guard hearing yesterday, a complete search of the ves-

sel has been made with no trace of the missing seaman.

ASKED IF a "complete and thorough" search had been

See Picture, Page 2

made, the captain said, "Yes, we searched everywhere."

The missing man is 35-year-old Eugene Hughes of Portland, Ore.

Richard Henry McCullers,

an oiler on duty in the engine room, was the last man to see Hughes alive. And, ironically, he saw him on a ladder that had Hughes climbed it would have led to the ship's deck and safety.

McCullers, 35, of Harbor City, Calif., also testified at yesterday's hearing.

The obviously shaken seaman told his dramatic tale in barely audible voice and, as the board strained forward to

hear, he told them of those last few moments before the order came to abandon ship.

HE SAID sparks were flying through the vents into the engine room and that the room was filling with a thick, black smoke.

He said that once, in those few hectic moments, he shouted to the engineers: "It's really getting bad down here."

Seconds later, the order came to abandon ship. Immediately, McCullers testified, he ran to a ladder on the port side of the vessel and then, he said, was when he saw Hughes.

HUGHES WAS coming down the ladder and, as he passed McCullers, he shouted, "You can't get out that way" and headed into the smoke on the starboard side of the ship.

The oiler testified that he tried to grab Hughes, hollering, "Don't go that way," but he broke away.

The "last I could see," McCullers said, "was his feet" disappearing into the smoke on the other side of the ship.

AT HIS testimony earlier, Capt. Austin Tomter, whose sailing experience dates back over 40 years, told of the "strange situation" that confronted him as the "Sirrah," an apparently unwatched ship loaded with explosive fuel, bore down on him in the inlet Monday.

"It was a strange situation," the silver-haired captain told board members.

The chain was leading aft—there was a little bow wave. She was underway but I saw no one in the wheelhouse," he said.

THE CAPTAIN told investigating officers that the two ships did not hit with a "severe jolt."

"By that time, my stern was swinging away from her," he said.

However, the ships burst into flame immediately upon impact, he said.

HE SAID the "flames leaped 30 or 40 feet into the air" and by the time he sounded the general alarm and blew the whistle to alert the crew, the "aft was all in flames."

The hoses were broken out in an attempt to fight the fire and the chief engineer turned on the steam smothering system but, the captain said, "It was hopeless."

Asked why, within two or three minutes after the collision, he ordered "abandon ship," the Captain said simply: "To save life."

22 Anchorage Daily Times
Saturday, Oct. 24, 1964

Engineer Got Orders For 'Full Astern'

The chief engineer of the Dutch-registered tanker Sirrah told the Coast Guard board of investigation Friday he had his first orders to maneuver the ship Monday when the call came at 3:59 p.m. for "full astern."

Hendrik Klamde of Leiderdorp, Holland, was one of several officers to testify as the Coast Guard continued its inquiry into the 4 p.m. Monday collision of the Sirrah and the Santa Maria which apparently claimed the life of a Santa Maria crew member.

The hearing is expected to wind up today.

Klamde said he had no orders from the time the Sirrah anchored off Pt. McKenzie until noon Monday when he was told the engines should be ready for movement to the dock that afternoon. At 3:15 p.m., he said the engines were turned over "two or three revolutions and at 3:58 p.m. the order came to stand by."

Questioned about the engine bell book, in which Santa Maria attorney Gilbert Wheat earlier hinted there could have been erasures, Klamde said he had gone over pencil notations Thursday with a ballpoint pen.

Jan de Jong of Glogerand, Holland, second mate of the Sirrah, told the board he was working with the anchor chain when the collision occurred and was not aware of the accident until he went up on deck, after hearing screaming and yelling, and "saw black smoke."

Capt. Robert Phillips of Anchorage, retired Navy officer employed as deputy operations officer for Military Sea Transport Service, told the Coast Guard he had boarded the Sirrah at Homer to act as advisor to the vessel's master.

He said he observed the Santa Maria, which looked as if it would pass the Sirrah on the North, while it was still several miles away. He said when the Santa Maria passed Pt. Woronzof, she appeared to stop or slow and then moved across the Sirrah's bow from starboard to port.

Increase Seen In Use of Port Oil Facilities

Port Commission Chairman Wally Martens yesterday predicted a 20 per cent increase in use of the Port of Anchorage Petroleum-Oil-Lubricant facility.

He made the prediction at a work session with the City Council.

Martens said the facility would bring in about \$300,000 in 1964, on a "thru-put" total of 4.8 million barrels.

BY 1966, Martens estimated the port would handle 66 tankers and six million barrels. At the current six cents a barrel rate, the port would earn \$360,000 from the POL facility.

In April the U.S. Army, Alaska asked for a reduced rate for military POL products crossing the temporary POL dock operated by the port but built with federal funds following the March 27 earthquake.

The Port Commission turned down the request after getting advice from its consultant and the port's trustee. Both said they could not consider a rate reduction at the present time.

Anchorage Daily News, SAT

Port Needs \$2.8 Million Bond Issue

Wednesday, October 21, 1964

The Port Commission advised the City Council yesterday that \$2.8 million bond issue would be necessary to finance proposed Port of Anchorage expansion programs.

At a joint work session, Commission Chairman Wally Martens recommended in strong terms that machinery be put in gear immediately to secure bond funds.

Martens said \$1.8 million was needed for a permanent petroleum-oil-lubricant facility including a 100-foot extension connecting it with the dry cargo dock.

AN ADDITIONAL \$1 million would go for lengthening the north end of the dry cargo dock 300 feet, Martens said.

The subject of port expansion came up during discussion

of preferential berthing rights which the port had agreed to extend to Sea-Land Service, Inc.

The Military Sea Transport Service (MSTS) and Dulien Steel Co. have lodged complaints with the Federal Maritime Commission in Washington, D.C., over the Sea-Land agreement.

THE PORT officials described MSTS and Dulien as "occasional shippers at the Port of Anchorage."

Sea-Land has been requested to submit to FMC a revision of the preferential berthing agreement which would allow MSTS, in effect, to use rights, according to City Manager Robert H. Oldland.

Sea-Land is preparing to submit a brief to FMC explaining that it cannot comply with the request to relinquish berthing rights to MSTS, Oldland said.

OLDLAND SAID Sea-Land asked the city to co-sign the brief.

At the suggestion of Mayor Imer Rasmussen, the city will make arrangements to have its own representative appear before FMC to plead the city's side of the case.

Acting Port Director Don Valters said, Capt. Jacobsen of Los Angeles, was retained by the Port to represent it before the FMC.

JACOBSEN is to be notified of the situation.

MSTS opposes the Sea-Land preferential berthing agreement on the basis of what City Atty. Farland Davis termed "the national interest."

The city maintains that the berthing agreement with Sea-Land, which guarantees the Port \$290,000 annually, is essential to the Port's financial health to the entire railbelt, according to Davis.

The city manager said that MSTS was concerned that the POL facility might be washed out to sea and both tankers and dry cargo ships would have to use the single dry cargo berth.

AT THIS point Martens made his recommendation for immediate action on the \$2.8 million port facility expansion.

He said the Sea-Land was considering the possibility of increasing service to two ships a week.

"We must satisfy Sea-Land or we'll lose them," Martens said.

THE COMMISSION chairman added that the port felt it could "pick up" oil exploration business.

He pointed out that Par American Oil Co. was seeking to secure three acres in the port's industrial park for age space.

12 Anchorage Daily Times
Saturday, Oct. 24, 1964

Santa Maria To Unload On Wednesday

Union Oil's tanker, the Santa Maria, is scheduled to unload the fuel remaining in her tanks at the Port of Anchorage next Wednesday.

The Santa Maria was inbound Monday when she and the Shell Oil Tanker Sirrah collided in the channel. The resulting fire destroyed part of the Santa Maria's cargo but a later inspection indicated some of the fuel tanks were undamaged.

The tanker now is anchored off Point Woronzof.

The Santa Maria is one of five tankers scheduled to unload in the next seven days.

Others are the J. L. Hanna, Standard Oil, due in today; Standard's Chevron Transporter, due Sunday; the J. L. Hanna due back in port Monday; Texaco's North Dakota, due Tuesday.

Sea-Land's SS Seattle, carrying general cargo, will dock at the municipal terminal Monday.

The state ferry Tustumena is due next Friday.

Port of Anchorage records show that one cargo ship, seven oil exploration vessels, two oil tankers, one tug, one barge and the Tustumena berthed at the terminal during the past week.

Commissioners Ask Port Bonding Okay

Anchorage City Council approval of a \$2.8 million port improvements bonding program was to be requested by the Anchorage Port Commission in a late afternoon meeting with the council.

The meeting had been originally scheduled to discuss the Sea-Land Services, Inc., preferential berthing agreement with the port and a Military Sea Transport Service protest to the agreement.

Wally Martens, commission

chairman, said he felt "it is high time" that the council take steps to obtain voters approval for the port's bonding program.

The \$2.8 million would be used for a 300-foot extension to the north of the existing dock to allow for berthing two ships at one time and for construction of a permanent petroleum dock. Cost of the petroleum dock is set at \$1.8 million.

In addition, the commission will request a step-by-step policy for leasing port lands.

Commission members Monday night, expressed dissatisfaction over delays in drawing up leases for Pan American Petroleum Corp. and Union Oil Co. of California.

Pan American seeks to lease three acres in the port's industrial park. The area, to be fenced, would be used for storage of pipe and oil drilling equipment. A 3,000-square foot warehouse also is desired.

Lease fees being considered are six cents per square foot per year.

The commission was warned that Pan American also was studying two other sites and unnecessary delays might result in loss of the lease.

Union Oil is seeking to lease city tidelands to the north of its recently approved tidelands grant.

The council and the commission were to meet at 4 p.m. in the City Council Chamber.

Anchorage Daily News, Saturday, October 24, 1964



CHARRED AND DAMAGED in the bow, the "Sirrah" discharges part of its cargo at the Port of Anchorage POL facility before being moved to Cold Bay to unload the remaining cement patch will provide temporary repair of the damage caused by the collision of the "Sirrah" and the "Santa Maria" last Monday.

The darkened portion of the hull is where flames burned off the paint. Plans are also being made to unload the unburned petroleum products from the "Santa Maria." It is estimated that 75 per cent of the original 110,000-barrel cargo is still intact.

(Daily News photo)

Anchorage Daily News, Saturday, October 24, 1964

Inquiry Verdict May Hang on Anchor Chain

By Mary O Totten
Daily News Staff Writer

The crux of who was at fault in a collision between two tankers in Cook Inlet Monday may lie in testimony surrounding the direction an anchor chain was tending when the fuel loaded vessels struck.

Crew members of the Dutch-owned ship "Sirrah" including its captain, say that the chain on their ship was "tending forward" when it collided with the U.S. owned "Santa Maria" — crew members of the "Santa Maria" say it was "tending aft."

Five crew members off the "Sirrah" appeared at a Coast Guard hearing yesterday to tell the part they played in the collision that shook the inlet Monday.

CAPT. JAN Hendrik Van Klinkenberg, skipper of the 560 foot "Sirrah" disputed that the chain was "leading forward and tending to starboard."

Without faltering, the scholarly looking captain told his tale of the collision late Monday afternoon.

HE SAID THAT his ship was weighing anchor when he saw the "Santa Maria" approaching at a distance of "about a mile."

His ship was dead in the water, he said. Two tugs, the "West Wind" and the "Arctic Wind," were tied at her starboard side.

"We saw the Santa Maria approaching."

"WE DISCUSSED her movement in the water and thought she was probably going to anchor."

"She appeared to be moving crabwise through the current—more or less sideways."

But, the Captain told the board, "I was not worried about the ship's movement until she approached to a distance of about a half mile."

"I BEGAN getting worried" when "I saw the wash behind her" indicating that "she was turning to port" and was, possibly, preparing to "cross our bow."

In testimony produced earlier at the hearing, Capt. Austin Tomter, skipper of the "Santa Maria," said that, in approaching the "Sirrah," there appeared to be no one in the wheelhouse. Capt. Van Klinkenberg refuted that testimony yesterday, stating that there were three men in the pilot house besides himself—the master and two pilots.

Just before the ships struck, the captain said, he ordered a series of short blasts to alert his crew of impending danger and that a few seconds later, when it became apparent the ships would collide, he and the pilot, possibly simultaneously, ordered "Full Astern." Within a few seconds, he ordered "extra astern" but it was too late and the ships struck.