

SS PELICAN STATE
MV ERRIA (Dan.)

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

Address Reply to:
COMMANDANT
U. S. Coast Guard
Headquarters
Washington 25, D. C.

10 January, 1951

File: (MV ERRIA (Dan.))

SS PELICAN STATE

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation; collision MV ERRIA and SS PELICAN STATE
approximately 3 miles south of Ambrose Lightship on 22 October 1950,

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

2. The American Steam Freighter PELICAN STATE of 7,613 g.t. was inbound and the Danish motor passenger vessel ERRIA of 8,766 g.t. was outbound from New York. The weather was dense fog; both vessels were using their radar for navigational purposes; the ERRIA was sounding 2 blasts as a fog signal and the PELICAN STATE was sounding 1 blast. At approximately 0715 on 22 October 1950, the SS PELICAN STATE and the MV ERRIA collided approximately three miles south of Ambrose Lightship. As a result of this casualty, no lives were lost, nor were any injuries sustained by any persons. The total damage to both vessels as a result of the collision was estimated at \$450,000.00 to the ERRIA and \$8,000.00 to the PELICAN STATE.

3. The Board made the following Findings of Fact:

"(1) The American freight vessel PELICAN STATE and the Danish passenger vessel ERRIA collided approximately three miles south of Ambrose Lightship at 7:15 A. M. on 22 October, 1950.

(2) The SS PELICAN STATE is a Victory-type freight vessel of 7,613 gross tons, official number 245354, 439 feet in length, built in 1944, owned and operated by the States Marine SS Corp., 90 Broad St., New York, N. Y. The vessel is single screw of 8,500 H. P. and is also equipped with radar as well as gyro compass and course recorder. The vessel was in command of F. B. Mitchell, 101 Hudson St., Hoboken, N.J.

(3) The MV ERRIA is a passenger vessel of Danish registry, 8,766 gross tons, 463 feet long, built in 1930, owned and operated by the East Asiatic SS Co. of Copenhagen, Denmark. The vessel's propelling plant is twin screw, diesel, with a total horsepower of 9,300 on both engines. The vessel is also equipped with radar as well as gyro compass and three repeaters, but no course recorder. The master was Einar Michael Mouritzen, c/o East Asiatic SS Co., 21 West St., New York, N.Y.

(4) At the time of the collision, dense fog prevailed with visibility estimated at between 300 and 600 feet.

(5) The PELICAN STATE had departed from Brownsville, Texas, on 17 October, 1950 carrying a load of general cargo, destined for Mediterranean ports, but routed for New York, as the final port of call before clearing foreign. Her draft was 27' 6" aft and 25' 4" forward. On 22 October, Arnegat Lightship was passed abeam 3 miles off at 4:05 A. M. and the visibility at that time was clear. A course of 002 degrees true was then set for Ambrose Light Vessel. At 5:41 A.M., fog set in and the telegraph was placed on standby. The Master was on the bridge and in charge of navigation assisted by the officer on watch, who was also operating the radar, and a lookout was stationed on the forecastlehead. At 5:44 A. M., speed was reduced to $\frac{1}{2}$ due to decreasing visibility and at 6:01 A. M. the vessel commenced sounding regular fog signals. At 6:58 A. M., the course was changed to 005 degrees true or 3 degrees to starboard. This change was made as a result of a target, which later proved to be the ERRIA, being sighted in the radar scope at the range of 8 miles bearing one degree on the PELICAN STATE's port bow. Course and speed was maintained until 7:08 $\frac{1}{2}$ A. M., at which time the speed was further reduced to 20 revolutions per minute or approximately 4 knots. At that time the radar bearing of the ERRIA to port had broadened to 342 degrees, and the range had closed to $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The ERRIA was shortly thereafter heard to sound fog signals, consisting of two long blasts, at one-minute intervals, which indicated that she was stopped, and had no way upon her. In the meantime, the range had closed to $\frac{3}{10}$ of a mile, from which point the ERRIA was no longer observed in the PELICAN STATE's radar screen. Inasmuch as the fog signals sounded by the ERRIA appeared to be bearing considerably on the port bow of the PELICAN STATE, and further, as the Master considered that the ERRIA was dead in the water, he continued at slow speed, to pass the ERRIA to port. However, one minute before the collision, which occurred at 7:15 A. M., the ERRIA was sighted ahead, crossing from port to starboard, her bow approximately in line with the bow of the PELICAN STATE and also apparently under headway. At that time, the distance between the two vessels was estimated at 600 feet, and the PELICAN STATE's engine was reversed at full speed and her wheel put hard right. The ERRIA continued to draw across the bow of the PELICAN STATE until the bow of the latter ultimately contacted and holed the starboard side of the ERRIA in way of her engine room at almost 90-degree angles. After the vessels cleared each other, the PELICAN STATE remained in the vicinity in order to render assistance. A lifeboat was also lowered from the PELICAN STATE and dispatched to the ERRIA, in order to obtain the necessary information as to the extent of the damage. When it was learned that the ERRIA's engine room was flooded but that she was in no danger of sinking, the Coast Guard was requested to render assistance and subsequently the Cutter TAMAROA arrived on the scene and took the ERRIA in tow into New York Harbor. The PELICAN STATE, which had sustained only minor damage above the water line and required no assistance, proceeded into New York under her own power.

(6) The ERRIA departed from Sixth Street Pier, Hoboken, N. J. at 4:00 A. M. on 22 October, in light trim, drawing 13' 11" forward and 18' 6" aft, destined for Baltimore, Maryland. The Master was on the

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bridge with the Mate on watch, as well as an apprentice and a seaman at the wheel. A seaman was also stationed on the forecathhead as a lookout. The vessel was in charge of Full Branch Sandy Hook Pilot George H. Seeth. After entering Ambrose Channel, fog was encountered and the vessel's speed was reduced to slow. After clearing the entrance to Ambrose Channel, a true course of 115 degrees was set by gyro for the fairway buoy, in order to contact the pilot vessel. The pilot boat was located by radar, and the vessel was brought to stop at 6:35 A. M., at which time the pilot was disembarked. The engines were again put slow ahead, estimated at 6 1/2 knots, and the vessel continued on course 115 degrees true, to a position where Ambrose Light Vessel bore 32 degrees true, distance off 4/10 mile. At this point, the course was changed gradually to 170 degrees true, and slow speed was continued, and fog signals sounded at one-minute intervals. Shortly before 7:00 A. M., a vessel was observed in the radar screen to starboard and her fog signals were also heard. This vessel subsequently passed clear by dropping astern. After clearing the vessel to starboard, the PELICAN STATE was observed in the radar, approximately 15 degrees on the ERRIA's starboard bow within the five-mile range, remaining in this position until approximately 7:10 A. M., when the target vessel appeared to be altering course, as the bearing had changed from 15 degrees to 10 degrees on the starboard bow. At that time, the PELICAN STATE appeared to be 2 1/2 miles away in the radar screen, and the ERRIA's both engines were then stopped. Simultaneously, the PELICAN STATE's fog signal of one long blast was also heard on the ERRIA's starboard bow and this signal was returned by the ERRIA. At about 7:02 A. M. the ERRIA commenced blowing two long blasts, the bridge watch having decided that the vessel was now dead in the water, and the fog signals of the PELICAN STATE continued to be heard on the starboard bow, apparently closing in. Approximately 8 minutes after the ERRIA had sounded her first two-blast signal, the PELICAN STATE hove into sight 3 or 4 points on the ERRIA's starboard bow close aboard, approximately 250 to 300 feet off. At that time both engines were ordered full ahead and the wheel put hard right. The engines were, however, again stopped approximately 25 to 30 seconds after the full speed ahead signal had been given. The collision occurred as described above, except that the ERRIA recorded the time as being 7:20 A. M., or five minutes later than the time given by the PELICAN STATE. The electrical power on the ERRIA failed as soon as the engine room was flooded, which was a matter of seconds after the collision. Subsequent examination of the gyro repeaters found them to have stopped on a heading of 155 degrees. Immediately after the collision, inspection of the damage was made by the Mate, who reported to the Master that the vessel was in no danger of sinking, as the engine room was the only compartment flooded and the bulkheads were holding. There were no injuries nor other casualties, and the damage to the ERRIA is estimated at \$450,000.00 and the damage to the PELICAN STATE estimated at \$8,000.00.

4. The Board expressed the following Conclusions:

"(1) The testimony as to the ERRIA's heading is inconclusive, and it is believed that the Danish vessel was on a course substantially crossing the PELICAN STATE at the time of the collision and shortly prior thereto. In this connection the following observations must be taken into consideration:

(a) That the gyro repeater of the ERRIA indicated 155 degrees true when power failed, and shows her heading to be at least 15 degrees to the eastward of her intended course.

(b) That the ERRIA's bridge watch, for some reason, did not see fit to observe or check the vessel's heading at any time after the engines were stopped about 10 minutes before the collision. Under the circumstances, and especially in considering the location, good seamanship would certainly demand a close and continuous check of the ship's head.

(c) The angle of contact was estimated up to 90 degrees, and the heading of the PELICAN STATE, both by testimony as well as that shown on the course recorder, was anywhere between 10 and 19 degrees true.

although sounding the 2-blast fog signal.
(2) The Board does not fully concur that the ERRIA was dead in the water as contended. In the absence of any astern maneuver, a vessel of this burden can reasonably be expected to carry her headway for a considerable distance, even after her screws had been stopped, and her appearance to be crossing the bow of the PELICAN STATE upon being sighted ahead close aboard is significant and cannot be discounted.

(3) As to the PELICAN STATE, the Master, after he had observed the ERRIA in his radar, and also after her fog signals had been heard, cannot, beyond the possibility of erring in judgment, be considered remiss in his duties. Although the approach of the ERRIA was not plotted by the PELICAN STATE's radar observer, the Master had reasonable information as to the other vessel's approximate progress, particularly in view of the locality, where no cross traffic exists, and all vessels in the area underway should be either south or north-bound. The slight change of 3 degrees to the right, which obviously was made in order to give the other vessel a wider berth, is not under the circumstances criticized, nor is considered grounds for action under R. S. 4450, as amended. The Master's action in maintaining headway under slow speed, after he heard the ERRIA's two-blast fog signals on his port bow, was in order, as he had a right to believe that the vessel, which was sounding these signals, was in reality stopped and dead in the water, and in compliance with the governing Rules."

5. The Board made the following Recommendations:

"(1) Since there appears to be no grounds for further action against either certificated or licensed personnel of the PELICAN STATE,

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and further, in view of the nationality of the ERRIA, which precludes jurisdiction, it is recommended that the case be closed."

REMARKS

6. It is noted that the testimony in the record of subject casualty consists of 351 pages. In view of the limited purposes for which marine casualties and accidents are investigated by the Coast Guard, the repetitious questioning of witnesses covering the same ground, and particularly the argumentative examination and cross-examination of witnesses on hypothetical propositions by parties in interest should be discouraged.

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

/s/ EDW. C. CLEAVE
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From: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ H. C. SHEPHEARD
H. C. SHEPHEARD

APPROVED: 17 January, 1951

/s/ MERLIN O'NEILL
MERLIN O'NEILL
Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Commandant