

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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

MVI
8 August, 1950
File: (FV FOUR SISTERS
a-1 Bd)

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

Subj: FV FOUR SISTERS, sinking of with loss of life of crew in the vicinity of Nantucket Shoal area during April, 1950.

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 motorboat, FOUR SISTERS, 43 gross tons, 64.6' in length, wood hull, built in 1926, was regularly employed as a commercial fishing vessel out of New Bedford, Massachusetts. This vessel with approximately 700 gallons of scallops on board was proceeding to Pollock Rip in order to make the Woods Hole market and was last sighted at about 0600 on 7 April, 1950, in a position near No. 10 Buoy east of Nantucket. It is presumed that the FOUR SISTERS foundered with the loss of all persons on board. On 7 April, 1950, the wind velocity in the area of the casualty reached as high as 52 miles per hour with occasional gusts of 65 miles per hour.

3. As a result of this casualty the following crew members lost their lives:

Gunnar Pedersen
Martin Johnson
James Lopes, Jr.
Manuel Moniz, Jr.
Louis Boine

Victor Boine
James Morrison
George St. Clair
John Correia, Jr.
Kenneth Dyer

4. The Board made the following Findings of Facts:

"(1) That the FOUR SISTERS of New Bedford, Official No. 225463, of 43 gross tons, was owned and operated out of New Bedford by Abram H. Reservitz, Master Gunnar Pedersen.

(2) That the vessel was a wooden hull built in 1926 in Thomaston, Maine.

(3) That the vessel sailed from New Bedford on March 29.

(4) That the FOUR SISTERS was last sighted on the morning of 7 April at about 0600 in a position near No. 10 Buoy, east of Nantucket.

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- (5) That the FOUR SISTERS, in a radiotelephone conversation with the Fishing Vessel DAGNEY, asked the DAGNEY to pick up the FOUR SISTERS' buoy.
- (6) That the FOUR SISTERS reported to the DAGNEY by radio that he was going to Pollock Rip in order to try to make the Woods Hole Market.
- (7) That when the FOUR SISTERS and the DAGNEY separated at this time, the wind was blowing approximately thirty-five miles per hour.
- (8) That when the FOUR SISTERS started for Pollock Rip, the weather was already too rough for fishing.
- (9) That the FOUR SISTERS had on board scallops in the quantity of approximately seven hundred gallons.
- (10) That the Fishing Vessel FRIENDSHIP was also in the vicinity at the time the FOUR SISTERS departed from the fishing grounds.
- (11) That both the DAGNEY and the FRIENDSHIP ran to the southward and returned safely to New Bedford.
- (12) That Mr. Reservitz, the owner, first informed the Coast Guard that the FOUR SISTERS was overdue on April 9 at or about 1000.
- (13) That on April 9 the Coast Guard searched by planes and vessels 4533 square miles.
- (14) That on April 10, 6497 square miles were searched.
- (15) That on April 11, 8001 square miles were searched.
- (16) That on April 12, 2338 square miles were searched.
- (17) That the total area searched was 21369 square miles.
- (18) That on April 8 the Coast Guard had been engaged in a search in an area extending south from Pollock Rip Light Vessel for the Fishing Vessel WILLIAM LANDRY.
- (19) That the beaches of Monomoy Island and Nantucket Island were kept under observation for several days.
- (20) That the search by air-sea and on the beaches disclosed no wreckage or equipment from the FOUR SISTERS.
- (21) That small craft warnings were hoisted on April 3 at 6:00 a. m.
- (22) That these warnings were kept up continuously until at 10:00 a. m. on April 7 they were changed to northeast storm warnings.

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- (23) That on April 7 at the Weather Bureau Station at Nantucket the wind velocity was as high as fifty-two miles per hour with occasional gusts to sixty-five miles per hour.
- (24) That the Weather Bureau considers their coastal forecast ordinarily to cover water to a limit of about twenty-five miles offshore.
- (25) That a representative of the fishing industry understood the coastal forecast to cover only ten miles offshore.
- (26) That the storm warnings issued by the Weather Bureau are broadcast over commercial radio stations WHDH, WBZ, WNEH and WCOB.
- (27) That northeast storm warnings were continued south of Boston on the morning of April 8.
- (28) That the storm warnings were changed to small craft warnings at 5:00 a. m. on April 9.
- (29) That ships offshore southeast of Nantucket reported winds as high as Beaufort force 11.
- (30) That the Master of the Fishing Vessel FRIENDSHIP reported winds seventy-five to eighty miles per hour, estimated, and seas of sixty to seventy feet.
- (31) That the Master of the Fishing Vessel DAGNEY considered the storm too severe to attempt going through Pollock Rip Slue.
- (32) That the FOUR SISTERS underwent major hull repairs from November 30, 1949, to January 31, 1950.
- (33) That the vessel was hauled out of the water on December 14, her sheathing removed, her old caulking removed, and the vessel was realked.
- (34) That one section of the hull planking about five feet in length was replaced.
- (35) That the planking of the vessel's hull was secured by nails.
- (36) That the vessel's framing was made up of double three by six pieces sawn to shape.
- (37) That the planking was two-inch hard pine.
- (38) That the vessel was equipped with a wooden hatch cover over the fish hold which in turn was covered with a metal cover which fitted over the hatch and lapped down for about five inches, held down by a single hatch bar across the center.

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- (39) That the vessel carried one ring life buoy.
- (40) That the vessel carried two fifteen-foot dories.
- (41) That the vessel carried life preservers for each crew member.
- (42) That the vessel was equipped with radiotelephone, a fathometer and a direction finder.
- (43) That the vessel was equipped with one pump run off the engine plus two hand pumps of the handy-billy type.
- (44) That the following-named men composed the crew of the Fishing Vessel FOUR SISTERS:

Captain Gunnar Pedersen, 923 Pleasant St., New Bedford, Mass.
Martin Johnson, 36 Elm St., Fairhaven, Mass.
James Lopes, Jr., 144 Mott St., New Bedford, Mass.
Manuel Moniz, Jr., 92 Earle St., New Bedford, Mass.
Louis Boine, 32 Clover St., New Bedford, Mass.
Victor Boine, 32 Clover St., New Bedford, Mass.
James Morrison, 199 Ash St., New Bedford, Mass.
George St. Clair, 101 Main St., Fairhaven, Mass.
John Correia, Jr. 256 Chancery St., New Bedford, Mass.
Kenneth Dyer, 85 Laurel St., Fairhaven, Mass."

5. The Board expressed the following Opinions:

- "(1) That the vessel foundered while en route from off Buoy No. 10, east of Nantucket Island, toward Pollock Rip on or about April 7.
- (2) That the nail fastening of planking, including butts, was a poor type of construction in this vessel.
- (3) That the search conducted after the vessel was reported overdue was thorough and adequate.
- (4) That the above-named crew members are presumed to have been lost on or about April 7, 1950."

6. The Board made the following Recommendations:

- "(1) That the Fishing Vessel FOUR SISTERS be officially declared lost at sea.
- (2) That all vessels licensed for commercial fishing be brought under existing regulations for merchant vessels.
- (3) Pending approval by the reviewing authority, no further action be taken and the case be closed."

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REMARKS

7. The Coast Guard has no statutory authority to officially declare the loss of a merchant type vessel at sea. The Coast Guard does have the authority to express its opinion that a vessel has been lost at sea which has been done in Opinion 1 of the Board.

8. Recommendation 2 of the Board states that all vessels licensed for commercial fishing be brought under existing regulations for merchant vessels. The safety requirements applicable to fishing vessels are at variance with those normally applicable to merchant type vessels. This is indicated by the safety requirements applicable to steam-propelled fishing vessels over 65 feet in length which are now subject to full statutory inspection and certification. Congressional bills encompassing legislation suggested by Recommendation 2 of the Board are now before Congress for consideration and are as follows:

- (a) HR 464 - A bill to apply the marine safety statutes and regulations thereunder to all seagoing motor-propelled vessels.
- (b) HR 3264 - A bill to extend the marine safety statutes and regulations thereunder to seagoing motor fishing vessels of 15 gross tons or over.

9. 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/ EDW. C. CLEAVE
EDW. C. CLEAVE

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18 August, 1950
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From: Acting Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ R. L. RANEY
R. L. RANEY

APPROVED

23 August, 1950

/s/ A. C. RICHMOND
A. C. RICHMOND

Rear Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard
Acting Commandant