

Tanker "Chuky's" Tragic Voyage.

THE *Bulletin*, of the Standard Shipping Company, of New York, contains graphic particulars of the loss of the American tanker *Chuky*, of 6,921 tons gross, built in this country in 1922, which left San Pedro on 19th January with a cargo of Californian light crude oil for Tsurumi, Japan, and "broke in two parts and became a total loss, involving the sacrifice of 15 lives, including all the deck officers, when about 200 miles east of Yokohama." According to the account the vessel, which had nine main cargo tanks, and was provided with summer tanks, commenced to leak and gave other signs of disintegration a few days previous to the disaster. On 14th February, after having encountered five days of extremely heavy weather of the typhoon variety, with strong winds, during which time she was continuously pooping heavy seas, she was hove to, but, so it is stated, she behaved badly and was constantly pounding; weather during this time being extremely adverse, with heavy rains. At daybreak on the morning of 15th February she was shipping green seas clear over the fore and aft bridge.

WHEN a few days out from San Pedro the after peak had commenced to leak, and on 14th February, the day before she broke in two, a leak was observed on both sides of the ship in way of No. 5 tank under the waterline, the oil coming to the surface and at times being carried back on board in considerable volume by the heavy seas and sprays. At 6.19 a.m. on the 15th the engines were put full ahead, after running at about half speed during the night, and shortly afterwards "the fire room bulkhead at the cofferdam began to leak badly and showed signs of distortion." Various members of the crew observed that the ship was buckled in the galley and on deck over the pumproom and adjacent summer tank, which is located just forward of the machinery space, and also cracked on one side above the water line further forward with the oil cargo running into the sea. Evidently, it is stated, the vessel had broken in two below the water line in way of No. 5 tank, and this occurrence was immediately followed by a violent explosion, flames, water and burning oil shooting about 100 ft. into the air, some of which oil spreading aft about 150 ft., set on fire the clothes of the men on the poop deck, which was also clouded with dense volumes of acrid fumes, smoke and oil vapour.

THE main well deck did not break until about ten minutes after the explosion, and the forward portion was swung around by the seas until it drifted, plunging and rolling, and seemed as though it would plunge upon or collide with the stern portion, and imminent horrors of another explosion were threatened. With the exception of one man, who escaped by fighting his way aft through the seas of oil and water on the well deck after the first fracture, all officers and men on the forward portion were lost. The "hectic struggles" of the survivors in launching the boat in which they were saved, and the terrible experiences of those who were lost, are vividly told by the *Bulletin*. No information is given as to the cause of the disaster, and, seeing how unusual it is nowadays for a properly designed vessel to break in two, some efforts presumably will be made to ascertain how it was brought about; the need for this being more apparent in that other vessels built on the same system are afloat, and one was reported missing in December, 1926.

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