

Office of the
U. S. Local Inspectors
Seattle, Wash.

March 13, 1928

INVESTIGATION OF LOSS OF STEAMSHIP CHUKY
6920 GROSS TONS, OFF THE COAST OF JAPAN
ON FEBRUARY 15, 1928 at 7:45 A. M.

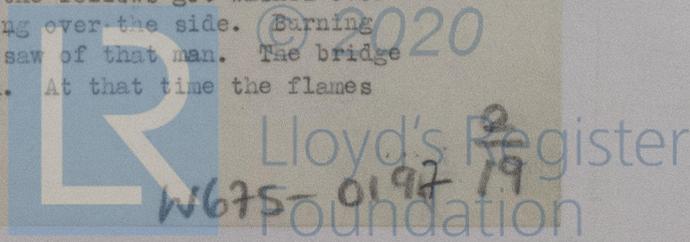
Reported by Lydia Knaak

GEORGE ROBINS, Boatswain on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A George Robins, 89 Broadway, San Francisco, California.
Q What was your position on board the CHUKY?
A Boatswain.
Q How long have you been going to sea in the deck department?
A About 15 years.
Q How long have you been boatswain on the CHUKY?
A This was my first trip, January 18th to February 15th.
Q What was the date of this disaster?
A Morning of February 15, 1928, 7:45.
Q Where was the vessel bound from and to?
A From San Pedro, California, to Tsurui, Japan.
Q What was the ship loaded with?
A Crude oil. .
Q When the vessel left San Pedro, was she fully manned?
A Yes, sir, full crew and officers.
Q As far as you know were they all, including the officers, competent?
A Yes, sir, all competent.
Q Was the ship in good seaworthy condition at the time she left?
A Yes, sir.
Q Was the life-saving and fire-fighting equipment in first class shape?
A Yes, sir, everything complete and in its place.
Q Were all cargo tanks filled?
A Yes, sir, all were full.
Q Do you know of any tanks being in a leaky condition?
A Not at the time the ship left.
Q From that time until the time of the accident, did any leaks develop?
A On the 14th we noticed leakage on the side of the ship.
Q Do you know what tank that leakage came from?
A Tank 5.
Q Was there leakage from any other tank?
A No

- Q On which side did you notice this leakage?
- A On both sides.
- Q Was that leakage outside of the vessel?
- A Under the water line.
- Q Would that indicate by the oil coming to the surface.
- A Yes, sir.
- Q Do you know if anyone was employed in the pump room shortly before or at the time of the accident?
- A The pumpman had not been down in the pump room for the past 3 or 4 days previous to the accident. The reason was this: For the pumpman to go down in the pump room he had to go down the main deck; she was taking the big seas, and for fear that the pump room would fill up with water, he did not go down there.
- Q In other words the entrance to the pump room was closed for 3 or 4 days before the accident for the above mentioned reason, is that right.
- A Yes, sir.
- Q Describe the weather for 3 Or 4 days before the accident.
- A After riding through one typhoon the weather gradually moderated and then on the morning of the 14th we had fairly good weather; then about 11 o'clock in the morning she started blowing, the wind increasing until it was blowing a hurricane at about 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Some time during the night Captain Herne hove the ship to and in the morning, I don't know exactly the time, he decided to get back to its course. The wind moderated slightly but the sea was about the same. At 7 o'clock in the morning of the 15th I went up on the bridge to get my orders for the day, went aft to get my breakfast and wait until 8 o'clock. About 7:45 I should judge, I heard and felt a shock as if the sea hit a ship and stopped her sudden. I rushed on deck and the first thing I saw the midship deck including the fore and aft bridge submerged and oil was on the water and a few seconds later the oil caught fire. The oil gradually spread around the ship and the flames also. At that time the first thing to do was try to launch a boat so all hands rushed on the boat deck. The fellows were very excited and some of the fellows, I don't know who they were, started cutting up the boat falls and everything which had kept the boats in their places. They cut 2 sets of falls on the starboard side and one set of falls on the port side. I noticed officers on the bridge trying to launch the port work boat but as it locked to the stern of the port boat was blown off entirely by the explosion and an old-fashioned davit had the guys leading on the main deck so in order to swing a boat over the side you have to let go the guys which was fast on the main deck. The main deck was submerged at the time and burning oil on the surface. Then I noticed officers rushing to the starboard work boat but at that time flames got unusually high and I suppose they could not stand the heat of the flames and rushed up on the flying bridge, some of them. At that time the ship broke in two and the bridge went down until only the flying Bridge was above the surface.
- Q Where did the ship break in two?
- A Just abaft of the midship house. Some of the fellows got washed over the side. I noticed the third mate swimming over the side. Burning oil surrounded him and that is the last I saw of that man. The bridge after it went down took the lives of 9 men. At that time the flames



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completely surrounded the ship so it was no use of launching the boats or heaving them over the side. I noticed very excited faces about me and some of the fellows, I cannot place them who they were, jumped over the side. Gradually the force of the wind blew the burning oil to the lee side. Then was the time to launch our life boats, either port or starboard side, but the boat falls were cut so we could not swing them over the side. I called several fellows to get in the starboard boat saying that if the ship goes down we might have a chance, one in a million, to get clear of the ship. Just about that time the ship suddenly went down more or rather the after part of the ship, what was left of it. The fore part of the ship swung right around until it faced us, the bow faced the stern, about 25-30 feet apart. The stern being high above the water drifted faster than the bow until it was about a half mile apart. After I called the fellows to get in the lifeboat, one fellow got in with me while the rest of the fellows hung over the side expecting to jump over the side when the ship started to go down. All of a sudden the lifeboat started sliding from the boat deck and fell on to the deck below. We got out of that boat in a hurry. The ship had listed to about 45° angle at that time. Going aft I looked down the fiddley and I noticed that there was hardly any water in the fire room, so I told the fellows that we might stay up for quite awhile, and I called the fellows to give me a hand to swing the port boat over the side. The port boat slid down from its cradle until it jammed itself in between the ventilator and the railing. I got a handy billy and called for help and told the fellows to give me a hand. Some of the sailors helped; after more swearing I finally got a few more fellows to help me, and in order to swing her over the side we did not have enough power, we started using the after winch, we still had the steam on.

NOTE: The description so far as it has gone appertained to the after end of the vessel where the boilers and machinery were located.

After much struggle we finally managed to swing the lifeboat over the side. We decided to wait as long as we could because the lifeboat was on the weather side of the ship and the seas were running pretty high. Finally we know there was no use waiting any longer and we decided to take a chance of launching the boat. We launched her. There was no accident in launching the boat. We got away from the ship. There were 21 in the lifeboat. The weather was too rough for sailing so we heaved a sea anchor over the side. It was a wooden lifeboat. The oil escaping from the fore part of the after half of the ship naturally moderated the seas a little. In this manner we hove to all night, of course bailing the lifeboat continually. In the morning we set a sail and I shaped the course W x N. Our approximate position at that time was 36 N 143 E. After sailing for a little while we saw a sail in the distance. That was about 11 o'clock of the 16th. We left the ship about 9:30 a. m. on the 15th and sighted a sail about 11 o'clock of the next day on the 16th and were picked up about noon. It was a Japanese fishing boat about 21 tons. It took us 17 hours and that night there was stormy weather also and the lifeboat was battered all to pieces and we said, never mind the lifeboat, and let it go.

Q Were there any provisions in the lifeboat?

A Yes, sir, plenty of provisions and water. I filled the tanks the day we left San Pedro.

Q The other equipment was in the boat also.

A Yes, sir, everything was in the boat complete.

During the night we saw a light and first we thought it was a light house but it happened to be a fishing smack so we used 6 flares, one after the other and there was no response from the ship. We did not worry much because we figured we could sail right in.

Q How was the wind at that time?

A About NE, favorable wind.

So not getting any response, we figured we had to wait until morning. We could not sail that night. It was too rough. It took 17 hours from the time they picked us up until we reached Misaki, a fishing port. There people gave us kimonos and good food, etc., and we rested there about a half day and in the meantime wired the American Consul and he came over there and asked us this and that. The Japanese fishing smack took us to Yokohama, the same fishing smack that picked us up, and put us in a seaman's club there.

Q Did they feed you and treat you all right while on the smack?

A Yes, they fed us good, the best they had on the ship.

Q Now, shortly before or at the time of this accident was there any lightning?

A No.

Q In your opinion, how did the fire originate.

A There might have been several causes. Friction of the metal on the ship while she was bending up and down before breaking might have done it.

Q Was there any fire or any agency that would make heat in that part of the vessel?

A No.

When the ship broke in two, the short circuiting of the wireless might also have started the fire and after the ship started breaking in two the wireless came down and the main mast a little later and this as formerly stated might have caused the fire.

Q Please give a list of those saved.

A Chief engineer, 3 assistants, 2 oilers, the pump man, 2 cooks, 2 firemen, 2 mess boys, 5 sailors, 2 wipers, and myself. 6 men jumped over the side and 9 men went down with the ship. 15 lost.

Name of survivors coming to Seattle:

Erik Truselson	cook
Barney J. Dreyfus	oiler
John L. Leslie	oiler
Henry Schulenburg	Sailor A.B.
Oscar Kaldasann	" "
James Thomas	" "
Harry Marks	" O.S.
Russel Book	" "
Joseph Steffany	fireman
George Robins	boatswain

Q Is there anything you would like to add to what we have asked you?

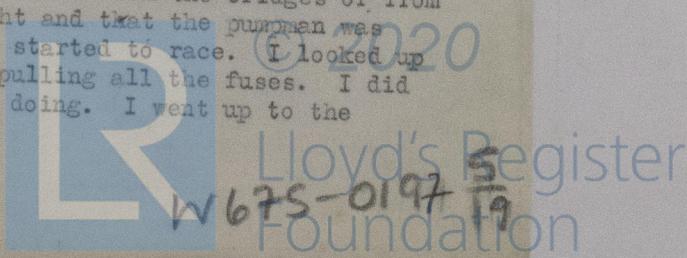
A The reason that the engineers were all aft at the time was because the weather was too heavy to permit them to go to the midship portion of the vessel for their breakfast, the mess room being located in the middle portion of the ship, they would rather eat in the mess room aft than to take the chance of going to the midship

WITNESS DISMISSED

BARNEY J. DREYFUS, Oiler on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A Barney J. Dreyfus, Hilo, Hawaii.
- Q What was your position on board the CHUKY?
A Oiler.
- Q Were you on watch?
A Yes, sir.
- Q What time did you come on watch?
A Four o'clock.
- Q Will you tell what happened from the time you came on watch until the time of the disaster?
A When I came on watch I looked over the log book, we were turning over 45, half speed. Everything went along fine until about 5:23 when we got a full speed ahead bell. We ran full speed ahead, 72 revolutions while running, for about 4 minutes. It was 5:27 by the log when we run down once more to half speed. At 6:19 we received another full ahead bell. We had gone full ahead for about 30 seconds at most and then the ship gave a peculiar lurch and it sounded like something had shifted on its base in the engine or fire room. I made a hurried tour of inspection taking the port side of the engine room and the first assistant took the starboard side, looking over all auxiliaries and main engines with flash light. Everything was fine in the engine room. We were running down to half speed at 6:23 and the first assistant slowed the engine down, then I went into the fire room where the fireman was walking up and down kind of nervous. I was eyeing the bulkhead of the cofferdam. The relief valve on the top of the cofferdam was leaking badly. I also noticed several plates slightly strained and water coming between rivets of the bulkhead. The fireman was very much nervous and asked me what had happened in the engine room but I told him it was all right and I went back in the engine room and reported to the first assistant engineer the condition of the bulkhead. The water was coming in so heavy through the valve that was leaking badly and strained the seams of the boat that the line pumps could not keep on with the water in the bilges while we gave running half speed. I had to use the main duplex pump. At 7:10 I went above to call the next watch. I called the third assistant, oiler, fireman, 2 wipers and then I went to pump to call the pumpman but he was already up so I started back towards the engineroom. As I reached the door the pumpman came running out of the chief engineer's room and told me that the ship had buckled in two places and cracked in one: buckled in the galley and buckled on deck above the pump room and summer tank and cracked on the ship side with cargo oil running out into the sea. I ran below and reported the fact to the first assistant also telling him that the pump man had notified the chief and that the pumpman had told me to also notify the Captain. As we received no word from the bridges or from the chief's room, we thought it was all right and that the pumpman was exaggerating. At about 7:25 the generator started to race. I looked up and saw the pumpman at the upper fuse box pulling all the fuses. I did not tell the engineer on watch what he was doing. I went up to the



generator and turned the governor down two turns and brought her back to normal, 110 volts 7 amps. then I proceeded to go around taking temperatures of the sea water, engine room, overboard discharge and the stack, and as the first assistant was standing by the throttle expecting bells any moment, I filled in the log. My last entry was "Stack 5:30 department O.K." The first assistant looked the log over and signed it and resumed his station at the throttle. I stayed at the log desk. Then the wiper ran out of the fire room pushed me away from the log desk in order to get by me, threw the first assistant on the side away from the throttle and ran up the ladder to the poop deck yelling while he ran, we could not understand. Then the chief engineer yelled down from the poop deck grating and as the engines were pounding we did not hear what he said. The first assistant told me to stand by the throttle while he ran up. He went up and started to talk to the chief and I felt nervous and ran up as far as the first engine grating. Then the first yelled down to me to tell me to tell the fireman to shut off the fires and that I was to shut the engine down. I ran into the fire room but could not find the fireman so I shut down the pressure pumps and the fires died, out, At this time the engine room was full of light gray smoke very acridsmelling. I figured that the stack had fallen down as it was somewhat shaky the day before. I ran back in the engine room where I saw the first shutting down the main engine. I shut down the feed pump. He yelled to me to get up on deck and get my lifebelt while chances were good. We did not shut any more of the auxiliaries off. I grabbed the log book as I went by the log desk. The first assistant and myself were about half way up the first ladder when the generator started to labor throwing an arc from the commutator to the inboard railing of the ladder. We could not pass it. We went back again and stood watching it a moment. I looked at the clock and it was exactly 7:45. That was when the actual breaking in two took place, the deck plates suddenly plunging down and she was at an angle of about 35-40°. The gratings were pretty slippery with oil and water and we had a hard time to make the ladder but we made it and ran up to the poop deck, I going to my room. While in my room, my room mate, oiler McDonald, smashed open the door of the locker and pulled the lifebelts off the top of the locker and ran out on deck. I grabbed the lifebelt and then I happened to look through the porthole and that was my first intimation of fire. I went into the locker, took out some money, papers and revolver and ran on deck. As I reached the poop deck McDonald ran from somewhere by me, climbed the railing and jumped over the side into the burning oil. I never saw him come up. I ran up on the boat deck and started to work on the port boat. There were three of us. We were not enough men to even attempt to raise the boat out of the cradles. The boat had slipped forward and jammed against the davits which were of the old fashioned type. I went over to the starboard boat where I saw the third assistant cutting the falls of the boat. It was his idea that we could not launch the boats and as the ship seemed to be sinking or would sink any moment, it was our best hope to get in the boat and float away from the ship on the water. Several men climbed in the boat with him but I left it as I knew the boat would be sucked down or overturned when the ship sank, having been in a couple of accidents before. So I started to make a raft out of two ladders and several planks, lashing them together.

The after part of the ship sank deeper at the forward end and the starboard lifeboat slipped out of the cradle, fell on the poop deck, injuring several of the men. At that time it looked hopeless. The fire was raging midships all the way from fore to aft on our port. The bow was sticking up at a normal angle. The forward houses were intirely submerged, all but the flying bridge. The bow and stern were working as if on hinges, rising and falling, held together by the deck and filling lines. These finally broke and the bow swung to port. The heavy seas and wind at this time blew the burning oil and flames away from the ship until about half a mile away and Robins, the boatswain, yelled that we had a chance and to get busy at the port boat. We had three injured men, two men refused to leave their positions at the outer railing, leaving 16 men to try to pull the boat up. We could not lift either end of the boat; it was too much for us. She was jammed tight. The chief engineer then noticed that the lights were still burning and told the pumpman to see if he could turn the steam on deck, if there was any left, and we tried to run the after capstan. The pumpman went into the engine room and opened the steam and exhaust valves which were located by the steering engine and he came up and told us she registered about 45 lbs. pressure. The boatswain then ran several lines and blocks between the boat falls and the after capstan and the pumpman started the engine going and we finally lifted the after end of the boat out of the cradle. Then someone called our attention to the bow. It was swinging around until the stern was facing the bow. It was plunging and rolling it seemed it was going to plunge right on top of us but it missed us and drifted away for about a mile. Then the bow rose straight up into the air and sank slowly backward, turning over leaving the stem and part of the keel showing. A ring buoy with night light attached floated clear and we saw it ignite. This set fire to the oil on the water once more and the oil immediately surrounded the ship on all sides except a small part of the starboard quarter. It looked like the finish then but after about 5 minutes the seas once more carried the fire away from us. Then we got busy again and raised the boat entirely out of its cradles. We could not swing the davits around by hand on account of the list of the deck but with the aid of the winch managed to do so. At about this time one sailor, named Gardner, slipped from the boat deck and fell into the sea. We saw him float away face up, arms outstretched, but he must have been unconscious or dead. Then we lowered the boat to the ship's rail. I took several pictures while we were doing this. It was the general opinion of everybody then to stay by the ship as long as we could. It was 9:30 when the boat was even with the rail. About quarter to 10 the ship started to plunge and roll and the seas commenced to break over the skylight. The chief engineer went down in the engine room and came up and reported that the fire room was already flooded and that there was about 2 feet of water in the forward end of the engine room. The engine room deck plates were about 4 feet higher than the fire room deck plates. It then seemed advisable to get away as fast as we could. We all got into the boat except 4 men, Robins, Leslie, Steffany, and Schulenberg, who stayed up on top and lowered us down. Then they slid down the falls and painter and joined us. We had a hard time feeding away from the ship, broke several oars, used a couple of lifevelts as fenders, and then managed to pull away clear, getting away about a half a mile.

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The seas were very high then, the wind had gone down a bit, and the boatswain decided it was best to cast out the sea anchor and heave to. We made the best of it as far as we could and made shelter with the sail and jibs. About 5:30 we saw the ship last, the stern, it was still above water but a good deal lower in the water. Our lifeboat leaked a bit and we shipped seas frequently but bailed out immediately. At about 10:00 p.m. while dumping a bucket of water during bailing, the chief sighted a light. We all looked to see if it was a light or star, decided it was a light. The boatswain ordered a flare lit, two of them were lit but no reply. We got back under shelter once more after bailing out the boat and felt pretty good that anyhow there was someone near us who we could possibly see in the morning. We bailed about every 50 or 60 minutes. Just before daylight another light was sighted, very bright, and seemed very near. The boatswain ordered flares lit. We lit four, one after another, stood up and waved them, but could not get no answer. We thought it was a lighthouse, the light was so bright, and figured that no one was out on watch looking to sea. The boatswain took a reading off the compass and decided that as soon as the seas did die down after daybreak, we would start rowing in that direction. When it grew light again we saw the bow of the tanker about 3 miles off rolling and the seas breaking over it. The boatswain ordered us to break out the oars and we started rowing. We rowed for about an hour in the direction which we thought the lighthouse had been. It started to rain heavily and we pulled in the oars and got under shelter of the sails once more. Then we gave out a little water, a gill all around, and instead of eating biscuits we ate some bread which we carried off the ship with us. We stayed under cover until about 9 o'clock. Then the boatswain decided that even though it was raining the rain was keeping the seas down and we started to row once more. At 10:45 the rain stopped and we decided to put up the sail and try. It was only a couple minutes work stepping in the mast and set the sail and as the breeze was good, it carried us along at fairly good rate of speed.

Then we noticed the first assistant's dog was setting up on a bench and looking in one direction. We remarked that he must be seeing something or smelling land. We all got up and looked that way and the seas were pretty high and we were usually in a trough and we could not see anything, but the dog kept on looking. About 5 minutes later Schulenberg the seaman who was on lookout, shouted, "There she is, there is a sail". We all got up and looked. The sail was just in the direction the dog had been looking all the time. It was a Japanese fishing sampan and she was coming under sail and power. We altered our course towards her, straight for her, and in a few minutes the boatswain told us to drop the sail as they had already seen us and in less than no time we were alongside and got aboard. We headed down below in the fo'castle and they furnished us with dry clothes and several bottles of saki. No one could speak English but they had several English-Japanese dictionaries aboard and the chief engineer of the sampan managed to explain to us that they had sighted us while we were rowing before we had set sail and that they were taking us to a town called Misaki. It took us about 18 hours to get there. About 10 o'clock the next morning all the paper work connected with our entrance in Japan was completed and they took us ashore to the hotel. The whole town was out there, no one was doing any work, and there they gave us a bath and a couple of battles of Scotch whiskey and a good meal. We were also photographed several times and then we went to sleep.

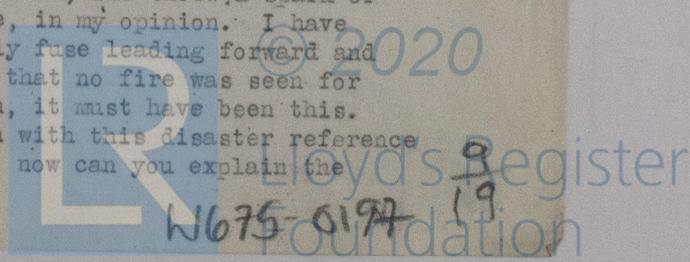
At about half past two the American Vice Counsel came down there and arranged for our transportation to Yokohama. The mayor of Misaki and the city council came down and presented us each with a heavy padded man's sleeping kimono.

INSPECTOR SHORT:

- Q Have you a license of any kind?
A Second assistant engineer, unlimited.
- Q How many boilers in the vessel?
A Three Scotch boilers, one 3800 triple expansion engine.
- Q Was the machinery in good operating condition?
A The boilers and machinery were in the best of operating condition with the exception of the thrust shaft which was running a little warm but it was nothing serious. We had trouble with the ice plant but not with the main engines.
- Q Have any trouble with the dynamo?
A The generator functioned perfectly, When we were about 5 days out from San Pedro we developed a bad leak in the after peak tank and all water turned salty overnight.
- Q Was there any leakage in the bilges?
A No, with the exception of the last day the bilges were always very low, never more than 5 inches of water.

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Now it has been stated that shortly after the vessel broke in two, the oil on the surface caught fire; do you know how the fire originated?
A I think I can give a logical explanation. As stated before all fuses had been pulled from all the lights forward. It was the pumpman's statement to myself, the chief engineer, first assistant and third assistant that the captain had ordered him to pull all fuses leading forward, navigation lights, wireless and all, because he stated that the captain stated there was danger of immediate explosion; he forgot to pull the wireless switch or did not run down to the engine room to pull that which, of course, the first assistant would not have allowed him to do anyhow without orders, I stated that when the ship sank that there was an arc from the generator to the inboard grating of the ladder. We had had a little bit of trouble with the wireless switch; every time we started the wireless we blew a fuse or threw a circuit breaker. That only happened the first night at sea. We had no heavy fuse wire, it was English porcelain fuse that you have to thread with fuse wire, so the wireless operator put in several pieces of heavy wire that was aboard ship.
- Q What were those wires made of?
A Lead composition, made especially for that purpose.
- When the ship broke in two, it broke the wireless leads going forward and as the heat and the water naturally formed a short circuit, on account of salt water being a heavy conductor, she threw a spark or flare and that was what set the oil afire, in my opinion. I have seen it do that before. That was the only fuse leading forward and as eye witnesses of the explosion stated that no fire was seen for about a minute after the second explosion, it must have been this.
- Q Now it has been stated that in connection with this disaster reference has been made to explosion or explosions; now can you explain the



nature of those explosions?

- A In the engine room we felt nothing other than the ordinary jar of the ship. We knew nothing until it was yelled down from above. As much as I know there was no explosion because I could not swear there was one. Men have stated to me that they saw the sides of the ship blow out and at the second explosion the deck go up in the air, but I know of no explosion occurring myself.
- Q Was the lifeboat amply provided with water and provisions?
- A Yes, sir, it had two buckets of water and also they stated it had a tank of water.
- Q Was all other equipment supposed to be lawfully in the boat in it?
- A Yes, sir.
- Q When the boat left the ship, who took charge?
- A The chief engineer and everyone else stated that the boatswain was the only one fitted to take charge as he knew navigation and he was the man.
- Q Was any fault found with the actions of the boatswain?
- A No, sir.
- Q He used good judgement?
- A Very much. In my estimation if it had not been for the boatswain pushing the men along, we would have all practically jumped overboard or made a raft or something of that kind, but we never would have got the boat overboard. We never would have been saved if it had not been for him and everyone knows it.
- Q Is there anything more you would like to add?
- A No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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HARRY MARKS, being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

Q Your name and address?

A Harry Marks, 30 Amboy St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

Q What was your position on board the CHUKY?

A Ordinary seaman.

Q Were you on watch at the time of the accident?

A No, I was a day man.

Q Where were you shortly before the accident?

A I just came out of the mess room.

Q Had you had breakfast?

A Yes, sir.

Q Was the mess room in the after end of the vessel?

A After end on port side.

Q Will you tell what happened?

A. On the 14th the boatswain told me to take some sawdust and spill it over No. 5 summer tank. I spilled it all over No. 5 and the deck and the oil was leaking from that tank, that was why I was putting sawdust on. They put it there because people walking there were bringing all the oil up on deck. While dumping the sawdust a sea come over full of oil that washed the sawdust off again. The boatswain says, Never mind, and I went to work at something else. The following day, the 15th, I had breakfast at 7:30, went into the fo'castle, looked around and seen three day men sitting there, two A. B. and one O.S. besides myself. Just went up from my morning walk, went up on the starboard side and walked aft and turned and walked forward again to go down below again to get heavy clothes on to go to work. Just as I came down the companionway to go below the ship took a sudden plunge into the sea; the next thing I have seen is the bow coming up and a plunge of oil, the summer tanks plunged out of the oil. The next thing I hollered down below "All hands on deck". and I ran around to the port side and as my back was against the explosion I fell hitting the deck, kind of gasping from the fumes and the next thing I knew I was trying to get my breath. I ran aft and as I got aft I looked over the side, could not see fire for a few seconds. Next thing I ran to the lifeboat and started cutting both covers off and started from aft cutting forward and the boatswain was on the boat deck, he was coming from forward aft to me cutting the boat covers off and the next thing while I was cutting someone pulled the knife on me and I was stabbed below the heart. For a few seconds I did not know what happened to me until I looked down and saw blood: thought I had killed myself; opened my shirt and it was just like a fountain of blood. I went below on the lower deck hanging on aft ready to jump. Since then I don't know what happened.

Q When you became conscious, where were you?

A I was hanging on aft, that was before we left the ship. I managed to get into the boat and they pushed off and went along with them until we reached Japan.

Q Is there anything more you would like to state?

A No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED

JOHN L. LESLIE, Oiler on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

INSPECTOR SHORT:

- Q Your name and address?
A John L. Leslie, 101 Harbor Blvd. San Pedro, Calif.
- Q What was your position on the CHUKY?
A Oiler.
- Q Do you hold any license?
A No, sir. Q. How long have you been going to sea in the engine Dept? A. 5 years.
- Q How long have you been oiler in the CHUKY?
A Since January 18th, first trip.
- Q Where were you at the time the vessel broke in two?
A I was sound asleep.
- Q What watch were you on?
A 12 to 4.
- Q The last watch you stood was everything in good working condition?
A Yes, sir, as far as I know. When I came down below at 12 o'clock the telegraph stood at half ahead and we were turning 30-35 revolutions per minute; at about 12:30 the second mate came down below and gave us our time change of 18 minutes and he told us then to turn 45 rev. per min. which we did for the remainder of the watch. Twice during the watch I had gone on deck to turn the ventilators, the wind was changing all the time as we were in a typhoon and the seas were very high at this time.
- Q Was that the reason the engines were slowed down, on account of the heavy weather?
A Yes, sir. At 4 o'clock I turned in. That is the last thing I knew until the crash.
- Q Is there anything more you would like to state?
A No, sir.

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HENRY SCHULENBURG, Able Seaman on the S. S. CHUKY, being duly sworn first, testified as follows.:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A Henry Schulenburg, Seamens Institute, San Pedro, Calif.
Q What was your position on the CHUKY?
A Able seaman.
Q Where were you at the time of the accident?
A I was down below in the mess room eating breakfast.
Q Will you tell briefly what occurred from that time until time of the accident?
A My partner and myself were eating breakfast; all of a sudden the ship went down, we heard a crash and somebody said "All hands on deck" and we went on deck and I looked up forward and saw the bow was coming up and the water was going over amidships and I went up on the boat deck and went over to the starboard boat. All of a sudden I heard an explosion and oil and smoke was all over the ship and there was fire all around the ship.
Q Now do you know where that explosion occurred?
A Right abaft the bridge, I think it was No. 5 tank or summer tank.
Q At that time were you on the after end of the ship?
A Yes, sir, We tried to launch the starboard lifeboat and could not do it because the falls were broken. I went on the poop deck and we waited until the smoke went away and fire and went up on the port deck again and started working on the port boat. She was jammed. We got the port boat over the side and everybody went in the boat and we made away from the stern.
Q Is that really all you know about the actual disaster?
A That is all I know about it.
Q Is there anything more you would like to say?
A No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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RUSSELL BOOK, Seaman on the S. S. CHUKY, Being first duly sworn,
testified as follows.

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A Russell Book, 2058 N. Waterloo St., Philadelphia, Pa.
Q What was your position on the CHUKY?
A Ordinary seaman.
Q Shortly before the accident where were you?
A In my quarters, reading.
Q Had you had breakfast?
A I got up 10 minutes after 7, went to the mess room, had breakfast,
and it was about half past 7 when I came up to the fo'castle.
Q Will you tell what happened?
A All I know that I was in the fo'castle looking over a magazine and I
heard a noise and then heard somebody yell "ALL hands on deck". I
grabbed a lumberjack and life preserver and ran up on deck and there
seen oil all over the deck, couldn't hardly stand up for slipping and
fire on the water both port and starboard side but the heavy seas and
wind carried it away. I signed on the ship January 19th at San Pedro
to make a round trip from San Pedro to Tsurumi, Japan and back. The
day before the accident, the 14th we had a little rough weather. I
got wet once going over the flying bridge, the waves came over the fly-
ing bridge. We were washing paint work that day, on the 14th. The ex-
plosion happened about 7:45 on the 15th.
Q Where did that explosion seem to come from?
A I don't know, I was down in my quarters.
Q Where were you when you heard the second explosion?
A On deck.
Q Where did that seem to come from?
A From the after end of the midship house.
Q Were you injured in the accident?
A No.
Q Is there anything more you would like to state?
A No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED



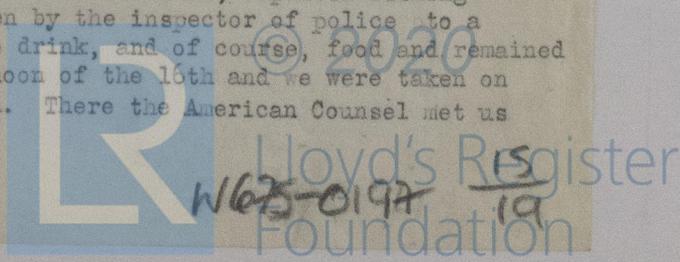
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JAMES THOMAS, Able seaman on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A James Thomas, Yellowstone Hotel, San Pedro, Calif.
Q What was your position on the CHUKY?
A Able seaman.
Q Shortly before the accident where were you?
A I was coming from my breakfast, going to my quarters and someone hollered "Everybody on deck".
Q Describe the condition of the weather.
A I could not see any material difference from the day before, the 14th you might say a light hurricane. It was not what I thought was alarming at all for seaworthy ship.
Q Had it been blowing harder than that a few days previous to this time?
A The day before it was blowing harder but could see no material difference in the seas, they were still very rough.
Q It has been stated that explosions took place, did you hear any?
A When I came on deck the ship was sinking in the middle, probably 4-5 feet of water on the deck between the poop and midship house and then as soon as I came on deck and saw this the explosion took place and I looked and saw water shoot into the air probably 100 feet and ran aft to escape the hot oil and fire which was burning in patches on the deck and also to escape the fumes of fire which was burning on the starboard side on the water probably 100 yards.
Q At any time while you were on deck could you see anybody on the midship deck?
A I did not see anybody on the deck until after the ship had only broke in two or probably had broken in two. At that time the midship dipped into the water and when it came up the bridge and the house amidship was missing and there were two men clinging to the stanchions on the bridge but I was not able to recognize from my position on the boat who they might have been.
Q Did you see them finally disappear?
A Yes, when the ship took the second dip into the water I saw them no more. The bow separated from the after end of the ship and after drifting probably $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the after end it stood completely up on end and turned over and remained in that position until the following morning when we sighted it again in that same position. Of course we had been rowing during the night a little, most of the time, of course, we were drifting and early the next morning we commenced to row, about daylight after the boatswain had set a course as near as he could reckon and about 11 o'clock we hoisted the sail and almost immediately afterwards I sighted the Japanese fishing boat and called the boatswain's attention to it and in about 20 minutes they were alongside taking us all on board and gave us liquor, food and necessary clothing. Had about 17 hours run to their home port which was Misaki, Japanese fishing village. From there we were taken by the inspector of police to a hotel given a hot bath, plenty to drink, and of course, remained there until about 5 in the afternoon of the 16th and we were taken on the same fishing boat to Yokohama. There the American Counsel met us



at the dock taking us to the Seaman's Y. M. C. A. where we remained until we left on board the PRESIDENT JACKSON on March 1st.

Q Now it has been stated that after this disaster the boatswain was cool-headed and used good judgment and was very helpful to you all during the trying ordeal while remaining on and after leaving the wreck, is that so.

A Yes, sir, that is true. We all owe our lives to the presence of mind of the boatswain and his ability to lead a crew.

Q Is there anything more you would like to say?

A I could say that quite a number of us seemed to have a premonition of the coming disaster, just exactly why I was not able to tell. We very often talked of it on the ship, in fact, 15 minutes before I made the remark that I had given up all hopes of ever reaching Japan but I cannot say why as there did not seem to be any immediate danger.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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OSCAR KALDASAUN, Able Seaman on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A Oscar Kaldasaun, Seaman's Institute, San Pedro, Calif.
Q What was your position on board the CHUKY?
A Able seaman.
Q Shortly before the accident where were you?
A On the poop deck.
Q Were you on watch?
A Yes, sir, I was on watch.
Q When you were at the wheel, what was the condition of the weather?
A The seas were high and the wind strong but not so strong as the day before.
Q Did the ship's steering gear work all right while you were at the wheel?
A Yes, sir.
Q What happened just before the accident from that time on?
A I was working on the bridge cleaning out the chart room and wheel house. At 7:20 I went aft to call the other watch. When I came back again I seen the deck light switch was leaking and as I was looking in, the first officer he seen me down there and asked me what was wrong there. I went up to the bridge and told the first officer that the switch was leaking and he told me to go aft and pull out the fuses for that light. After that he says to me, No use to work no more, just stay here up on the bridge. About 20 minutes to 8 the first officer went to the chart room. Then I came down, I thought I would go aft and jump up on the fresh water tank and take a smoke. I did not tell the mate that I was coming down, so I thought I better stay on the boat deck in case he blows the whistle I am handy there. I was standing there about 5 minutes when she gave a heavy lurch down and the next instant saw oil and fire go up from the No. 5 tank on the port side. After that I ran up to the boat deck and on the port boat, my station. That is all there is to tell.
Q Is there any more you would like to say?
A No, that is about all.
Q Do you know the restrictions in regard to smoking on board the vessel?
A No smoking on deck.
Q We could smoke in our quarters. Had special signs distributed to that effect.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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JOSEPH STEFFANY, Fireman on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn,
testified as follows:

INSPECTOR SHORT:

Your name and address?

Joseph Steffany, Pago Pago, Samoa.

What was your position on board the CHUKY?
Fireman.

How long have you been going to sea?

About 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ years.

Have you been firing all that time?

Yes, sir.

How long have you been on the CHUKY?

About 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ months; made 2 trips and laid off 2 trips.

What watch were you on

8 to 12.

How many fireman on watch?

One fireman.

Where were you at the time of the disaster?

In my room.

What do you know about this disaster?

I don't know nothing about it. The only thing I saw was the second explosion.

Where did that occur?

After part of the bridge on the starboard side.

Have you any idea what caused the explosion?

No, I don't know.

What did the explosion look like?

Flames of fire came up from aft of the bridge.

What did you do after this explosion happened?

I was in the lifeboat trying to launch it when the second explosion came.

Did you go down in the engine room at all after the explosion?

No, sir.

Is there anything more you would like to say?

No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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ERIK TRUJELSON, Second Cook and Baker on the S. S. CHUKY, being first duly sworn, testified as follows:

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Your name and address?
A Erik Truelson, Box 54, San Pedro, Calif.
Q What was your position on the CHUKY?
A Second Cook and baker.
Q Shortly before the accident where were you?
A In the galley.
Q What was the condition of the weather?
A Little high seas but not very much wind.
Q Will you tell what happened from that time until the time of the disaster?
A I came in the galley about 10 minutes after 6. When I came in there the first cook was already in there for some time, kind of nervous. He showed me a place where the tiles in the galley had buckled up and looked up and did not know what to make of it so did not pay much attention to it and started to work. Breakfast was pretty near over and I heard a crash. I went out of the galley and looked out on the well deck and says, Well, we are gone. I looked down too and saw a whirlpool of oil just coming up from the tanks and while I was standing there it started to burn and within a couple minutes after the bow started to come up and the stern started to raise up also. The seas kept bending the ship up and down until she was completely in two parts and the wind finally turned the bow around until she was facing us, heading right into the stern and after a while the bow was straight up in the air and then turned over. The stern drifted farther and farther away from the bow and the only thing I could see after we got in the lifeboat was the stern floating. On the well deck was a couple of davits: I took mark on them and I could see that she was getting lower and lower down in the water.

INSPECTOR SHORT:

- Q Did you see or hear any explosion?
A Heard the crash when she broke just before I stepped out of the galley.
Q Did you see oil on fire on the surface of the water?
A Yes, sir.

INSPECTOR AMES:

- Q Where is the galley located.
A On the after portion of the ship extending from side to side.
Q Is there anything more you would like to say?
A No, sir.

WITNESS DISMISSED



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