

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

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

AVI  
5 June 1951  
File: (GUDRUN a-1 Bd)

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

Subj: Marine Board of Investigation into disappearance of fishing vessel  
GUDRUN with all persons on board off Atlantic Coast January, 1951.

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, Opinions, and Recommendations, has been reviewed and is forwarded herewith.

2. The M/V GUDRUN, a trawler of 245 g.t., departed from Gloucester, Massachusetts on 3 January 1951 for the fishing grounds on Grand Banks of Newfoundland. On 12 January she was sighted in an approximate position 43° N, 60° W and had 240,000 pounds of fish on board. On 13 January she took on board at least 20,000 pounds more of fish and departed for home. At 0825, 14 January 1951 the GUDRUN sent a radiophone message that she was a distress and sinking. She sent additional distress messages from position 43° 30' N, 53° 45' W, but no radio station, however, was able to establish communications with the vessel. After a thorough search, no trace of the GUDRUN or any of her crew has been found, and it is presumed that she foundered with the loss of all persons on board. A storm center passed close to the position of the GUDRUN during the night of 13-14 January and vessels in the vicinity reported heavy weather during this time.

3. As a result of this casualty, it is presumed that the following crew members perished:

Johann Axel Johannsson, Captain	James Cavanaugh
Matthew Whalen, Mate	Augustus Hill
Daniel Meagher, 1st Engineer	Harry W. O'Connell, Jr.
Albert Moulden, 2nd Engineer	Daniel Williams
Wilfred Mello, Cook	Frank B. Nickerson
Alphonse Sutherland	John Johnson
Frank Cavanaugh	John Koslowski
Krisjon Johanneson	

4. The Board made the following Findings of Facts:

"1. That the trawler GUDRUN of Gloucester, Mass., official number 228023, was owned and operated by Trawler Gudrun, Inc., of 16 Priscilla Lane, West Medford, Mass., and that the General Motors Corporation held mortgages on the vessel.

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2. That the GUDRUN departed from the Gorton-New Wharf at Gloucester, Mass., on January 3, 1951 for fishing grounds on the Grand Banks of Newfoundland.
3. That the GUDRUN was last sighted on the evening of January 12, 1951, at which time she was fishing for rosefish in company with the trawler BLUE FOAM, of St. John's, Newfoundland, in position approximately forty-three degrees north latitude, fifty degrees west longitude, and that, at the time, the GUDRUN had on board approximately 200,000 pounds of flounder and 40,000 pounds of rosefish.
4. That the master of the GUDRUN advised the master of the BLUE FOAM by radio telephone at approximately 7:00 p.m. on January 12, 1951, that he was leaving the vicinity to steam sixty or seventy miles to the westward and intended to fish for rosefish on the following day.
5. That the master of the BLUE FOAM overheard the master of the GUDRUN tell another vessel by radio telephone at approximately 6:00 p.m. on January 13, 1951, that the GUDRUN had caught 20,000 pounds more rosefish that day and had a total of 260,000 pounds of flounder and rosefish on board; and that the GUDRUN had finished fishing and left for home about 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock that afternoon.
6. That the last position of the GUDRUN while fishing for rosefish on January 13th was approximately 43° 20' north, 51° 22' west.
7. That at 0835Z on January 14, 1951, Coast Guard Radio, New York (NMY) received a distress message from the GUDRUN on 2670 kilocycles, stating that she was sinking.
8. That between 0823Z and 0851Z the GUDRUN broadcast distress messages by radio telephone on at least four different frequencies (211, 2182, 2670 and 2738 kilocycles) and these messages were received by Canadian radio station VAU at Yarmouth, Nova Scotia, Coast Guard Radio Boston (NMF), Coast Guard Radio New York (NMY), the Coast Guard cutter ACUSHNET, commercial radio station WOU at Green Harbor, Mass., and others, but no one was able to establish radio communication with the GUDRUN although numerous attempts to do so were made.
9. That the position broadcast by the GUDRUN in her distress messages was 43° 30' north, 53° 45' west.
10. That coordination and control of search and rescue operations in this case were exercised by Commander Eastern Area, U. S. Coast Guard, acting through the Area Rescue Coordination Center at New York, N. Y.
11. That Commander Eastern Area promptly alerted facilities in a position to be of assistance, including the Canadian Rescue Coordination Center at Halifax, Nova Scotia, the Coast Guard Air Detachment at Argentia, Newfoundland, the Commander Eastern Sea Frontier, U. S. Navy, the Coast Guard Cutters CASCO and COOS BAY, the U. S. Navy destroyers POWERS and LARSEN, the merchant vessels SS MAURETANIA, SS AMERICAN PLANTER AND SS

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AMERICAN SCOUT, and the fishing vessels ISABELA SPINDLER and JEAN FRANCIS.

12. That two Coast Guard aircraft arrived over the reported position of the distress prior to 1600Z January 14th, and that a U. S. Navy aircraft, a Royal Canadian aircraft, the two U. S. Navy destroyers, the merchant vessels SS AMERICAN PLANTER and SS AMERICAN SCOUT, and the fishing vessels ISABELA SPINDLER and JEAN FRANCIS all arrived within the immediate vicinity during daylight hours that day and commenced search as indicated on Exhibit 3(1).

13. That, thereafter, an exhaustive search by aircraft and surface vessels was conducted, lasting five days; and that the results thereof were negative (See Exhibit 3(1) to 3(6) inclusive).

14. That synoptic weather charts indicate that a storm center passed close to the position of the GUDRUN during the night of 13-14 January and vessels in the vicinity reported heavy weather.

15. That the visibility during the search averaged eight to ten miles except on January 16th, when it was reduced to one to two miles at times, due to heavy rain, and on January 17th when it averaged six to eight miles.

16. That a lifeboat from the GUDRUN was found by the trawler BLUE SURF on or about February 13, 1951, in position of approximately 43° 55' north, 52° 20' west which is sixty-six miles on a bearing of sixty-nine degrees true from the reported position of the GUDRUN at the time of the distress call; and that the lifeboat, when found, was floating right side up, in an undamaged condition, partially filled with water, with one rowlock shipped on the starboard side, the emergency food containers intact, and the lower block of the forward boat fall still in the boat (See Exhibit 11(2)).

17. That the GUDRUN was a steel hulled vessel of 114.0 feet registered length, 23.0 feet registered breadth, 11.4 feet registered depth, 245.75 tons gross tonnage and 115 tons net tonnage, and was built in 1928 by the Bath Iron Works Corporation, Bath, Maine.

18. That the GUDRUN was enrolled and licensed for the fishing service and assigned official number 228023.

19. That the GUDRUN was purchased by the present owners from the U. S. Government in early 1946.

20. That extensive repairs and alterations, at a total cost of \$68,068.50 were made to the vessel at the General Ship and Engine Company, East Boston, during the period February, 1949, to July, 1949, as outlined in Exhibit 5 (1) to (18), this work including the installation of a new

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General Motors diesel main engine of 1200 horsepower.

21. That the GUDRUN was drydocked in February, 1950, at the Atlantic Yard, Bethlehem Steel Company, and work performed as indicated in Exhibit 7 (1) to (3) at a total cost of \$4,521.00.

22. That the GUDRUN was drydocked in August, 1950, at the Atlantic Yard, Bethlehem Steel Company, and work performed as indicated in Exhibit 6 (1) and (2) at a total cost of \$4,858.78.

23. That an American Bureau of Shipping surveyor surveyed the GUDRUN in early 1949 and again in February, 1950; that recommendations made by him were carried out by the owners of the GUDRUN; and that the GUDRUN was classified A-1 by the American Bureau of Shipping and maintained that classification from the completion of the survey in 1949 until the vessel was lost.

24. That the GUDRUN carried two conventional merchant vessel type lifeboats and one life raft.

25. That the lifeboats were carried on top of the deck house aft, one on each quarter, with the davits swung inboard, and the boats resting in chocks and secured by chain gripes equipped with pelican books.

26. That the life raft was carried on top of the deck house immediately forward of the mainmast.

27. That the GUDRUN carried an adequate number of life preservers.

28. That the GUDRUN was equipped with radio telephone equipment, lantern receiver, radio direction finder, and fathometer.

29. That the capacity of the GUDRUN'S fish hold was approximately 270,000 pounds of fish.

30. That two exterior doors which gave access to an athwartship passageway in the deck house were not watertight.

31. That two exterior doors, which gave access to the space under the whaleback forward and thence, via an open companionway, to the crew's space below the main deck, were habitually left open at sea and that this practice permitted ingress of sea water from the main deck forward to the crew's space in heavy weather."

6. The Board expressed the following opinions:

"1. That the trawler GUDRUN foundered at sea in heavy weather on the morning of January 14, 1951, in position approximately 43° 30' north, 53° 45' west.

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2. That the following persons were on board the GUDRUN at the time it foundered and that all perished:

CAPTAIN: Axel Johannson  
16 Friscilla Road, West Medford

MATE: Matthew Whalen  
57 Moore Street, Somerville

ENGINEERS: Daniel Meagher (1st)  
10 Spencer Avenue, Saugus  
Albert Moulden (2nd)  
73 Billings Street, Gloucester

COOK: Wilfred Mello  
18 Elwell Street, Gloucester

CREW: Alphonse Sutherland  
11 Pew Street, Gloucester  
Frank Cavanaugh  
Sargent Street, Gloucester  
James Cavanaugh  
27 Lincoln Street, Gloucester  
Augustus Hill  
25 Eastern Avenue, Gloucester  
Harry W. O'Connell, Jr.  
35 Riverdale Park, Gloucester  
Daniel Williams  
238 Main Street, Gloucester  
Frank B. Nickerson  
124 Melbourn Road, Braintree  
John Johnson  
Auburn Street, Cambridge  
John Koslowski  
Tolland, Connecticut  
Krisjon Johanneson  
19 Belvidere Street, Boston

3. That the foundering was initiated by heavy seas flooding the crew's space forward through an open forecandle door and that leakage through and around the deck house doors aft might have been a contributing factor.

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4. That it would have been extremely difficult for the crew of the GUDRUN to have successfully launched a lifeboat under the conditions existing at the time of the foundering.
5. That the search conducted for the GUDRUN and possible survivors was prompt and adequate.
6. That no person in the Coast Guard or other Government agency contributed to the casualty."
6. The Board made the following Recommendations:
  - "1. That legislation be supported to subject all vessels of fifteen gross tons or over, licensed to engage in commercial fishing, to marine safety statutes and regulations thereunder.
  2. That legislation be supported to require the master of every vessel of fifteen gross tons or over, licensed to engage in commercial fishing, to keep an accurate written list of persons on board on each trip to sea and to mail a copy of such list to an appropriate Coast Guard Unit immediately prior to sailing.
  3. That the desirability, from a search and rescue viewpoint, of painting lifeboats and life rafts International Orange be stressed to the fishing industry upon every appropriate occasion."

REMARKS

7. Recommendation 1 in effect suggests that the marine safety statutes and regulations thereunder with respect to the annual inspection and certification of steam vessels be extended to require the annual inspection and certification of all commercial motor fishing vessels of 15 gross tons or over. In this connection the following bills are now before Congress for consideration:

- (a) H.R. 1762 - A Bill for the safety of life and property by making all commercial fishing vessels subject to the rules and regulations of the United States Coast Guard Marine Inspection.
- (b) S. 1286 - A Bill to amend the Act of June 20, 1936, so as to broaden the application of laws governing the inspection of steam vessels to vessels propelled by internal-combustion engines.

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8. Recommendations to extend or amend marine safety statutes or regulations should be supported by a showing in the record of the requirements of the statutes or regulations, which, if complied with, could be calculated to prevent the occurrence of the casualty under investigation. In the subject investigation, the Board might have considered the requirements of the the Load Line Regulations, 46 CFR 43.30, with respect to area of freeing ports, of bulwarks on the weather deck of the GUDRUN, and whether or not compliance with such requirements could have been reasonably calculated to prevent her foundering.

9. Section 6 of the Act of March, 1915, as amended (46 USC 660-1) which provides that crew spaces shall be securely constructed, properly lighted, drained, heated, ventilated and securely and properly protected from weather and sea, is applicable to fishing vessels constructed after March 4, 1915, and accordingly applicable to the GUDRUN. The record indicates that, due to inadequate crew space ventilation, the doors leading to such space from the weather deck were required to be left open for ventilation purposes and, therefore, the GUDRUN did not comply with the requirements of the above-cited statute. This violation created conditions for the movement of large masses of water from the weather portions of the vessel into the crew accommodations and thus contributed to her foundering.

10. It appears probable that full compliance with the requirements of Section 6 of the Act of March 4, 1915 and 46 CFR 43.30 might have prevented the loss of the GUDRUN.

11. Recommendation 2 suggests legislation to require masters of fishing vessels to submit to the Coast Guard an accurate list of persons on board prior to each departure on a fishing voyage. This requirement is contained in Section 9 of H.R. 1762.

12. Recommendation 3 of the Board with respect to the desirability of painting lifeboats and life rafts International Orange would also be covered by the above cited proposed legislation.

13. Since there is no present legal authority to require the submission of written lists of persons on board fishing vessels before departure on a fishing voyage or to require the fishing industry to paint boats and rafts International Orange, desirable action in accordance with the Board's recommendations should be brought to the attention of the fishing industry by appropriate personnel under jurisdiction of the District Commander.

14. The Act of July 17, 1939 (46 USC 224a), and the Officers' Competency Certificates Convention, 1936, of which the United States is a member, provide that deck and engineer officers in charge of a watch of seagoing vessels, including fishing vessels of 200 gross tons or over, shall be licensed by the Coast Guard. The records and information at Headquarters indicate that the mate, Matthew Whalen, did not possess any license and that the engineer, Albert F. Moulden, was serving on a vessel with 1,200 H.P. while in possession of a license for a vessel of not over 750 H.P.

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15. 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/ P. A. OVLINDEN  
Acting

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21 June 1951  
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From: Chief, Office of Merchant Marine Safety  
To: Commandant

Forwarded, recommending approval.

/s/ H. C. SHEPHEARD

APPROVED: June 22, 1951 ,

MERLIN O'NEILL

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Vice Admiral, U. S. Coast Guard  
Commandant