

THE RED STREAK
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Navy Saves Crew of 15 From Missing Freighter

LONG BEACH, Calif., Dec. 17. (AP)—A navy ship today rescued 15 seamen who abandoned their sinking freighter in the Pacific.

The U. S. S. Watchman, a navy picket boat, found two lifeboats after hours of searching. All the crew was rescued and there were no injuries.

The coast guard here said it was presumed that the freighter, S. S. Guam Pioneer, laden with scrap iron, had gone down.

The crewmen were to be transferred to another navy ship, the U. S. S. Picket, for return to San Francisco.

Earlier the agents of the freighter said they assumed it had gone down as there had been no messages since an SOS was received. The distress message from Capt. Mablon Boese said there was flooding in the shaft alley of the hold.

The 300-foot, 3500-ton freighter sailed from San Francisco Sunday headed for Honolulu and then for Japan.

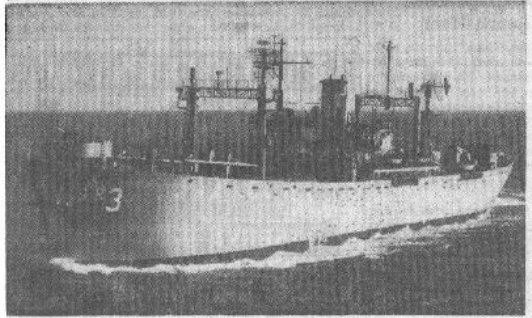
The ship's agent, Transmarine Navigation company, said four Americans were aboard: Captain Boese; Capt Harry Drew, one of the ship's owners; Hubert McCall of Honolulu, being broken in as the chief engineer, and Aubrey Corbett, believed to be from Texas, radio operator and second mate.

"Hard Luck" Ship

The Guam Pioneer had been plagued with bad luck. Just last October 20 it went aground off Honduras but was able to pull itself off. Then it put in at San Pedro here for inspection and repairs and had to leave because of an impending shipyard strike.

The freighter then sailed to San Francisco for the repairs and left there with the cargo it had picked up in Central America.

The ship is of Liberian registry, with its home port Guam. It was being transferred to American ownership.



Calling it a career? The radar picket ship, USS Skywatcher. —Navy Photo

Grueling Duty Will End Soon on 11 Picket Ships

By JOHN N. RIPPEY

SOME of the most grueling but unglamorous duty in the U. S. Navy will soon end for eight tired Liberty ships and three slim destroyer escorts that now operate from Narragansett Bay.

They are radar picket ships that will be deactivated after a decade of service as part of the electronic barrier against bomber attack.

The eight converted Liberties operate from Davisville and the three destroyer escorts from Newport. They steam to positions 360 to 380 miles off the coast. The Liberties are 1,000 ft from Cape Cod to South Carolina, the destroyer escorts reportedly farther south.

Until recently, the veteran World War II Liberties remained on their sea stations for three and a half weeks, then came back for two weeks in port.

In bad weather, the three sea could seem interminable, especially for the radar destroyer escorts, which bob like corks in heavy seas.

Lt. (jg.) Richard M. Hardy, operations officer for Radar Picket Squadron Two, which consists of the eight converted Liberties, said in comparison to typical destroyer duty, the old freighters had the advantage of always returning to their home port where families and girlfriends wait, while destroyers are not at sea for such long periods but are away from home port for longer periods of time, frequently on foreign duty.

Lieutenant Hardy said the Liberties also have the advantage of more space for individual crew members and for communal activities.

For instance, he said they have libraries and in one hold they have a woodworking shop for those so inclined. In another hold is a gymnasium laid out with a basketball court. The men can also play volleyball.

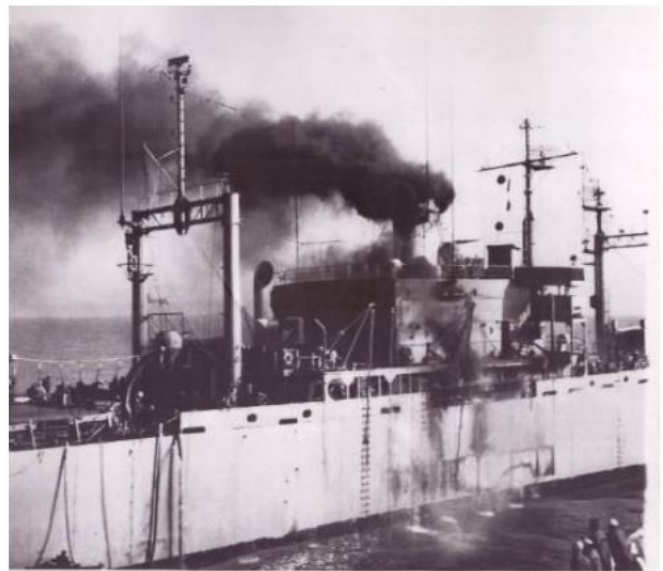
The operations officer said some of the hold space is filled with ballast so that the Liberties will not roll so much. The ships must be relatively stable for maximum efficiency of the radar, he said.

The old Liberties have had

their troubles, however. For instance, the Searcher was damaged by a six-hour fire in 1955. In 1953 one of her boilers was disabled by leaking tubes and she had to be towed to Boston. Last year the ship lost a propeller at sea and had to be towed to New York.

Life aboard a radar destroyer escort is much more restricted, and it can be much more uncomfortable.

At one time many more radar destroyer escorts operated out of Newport, but in 1960 the Navy dropped a line of pickets that operated much farther to seaward than the present ships, as technology advanced. The missile age and further technological advances have not put the carrier forces out of business, the Navy announced yesterday.



(NY14-NOV.14) BURNING NAVY RADAR SHIP—Smoke pours from ventilating stacks as rescue boat approaches the burning "navy radar picket ship, the Searcher, yesterday after explosion ripped the craft southeast of New York City. Most of the blaze appeared confined to ship's engine room section. The Searcher is one of a number of surface craft spotted off the coast to signal the approach of unidentified planes. This picture was made by Coast Guard Warrant Officer W.H. Becker of the cutter Ingham which removed three sailors from the Searcher. (U.S. Coast Guard Photo via AP Wirephoto) (see story) (pr/hm20610usog)1955

