ESSO FLEET NEWS

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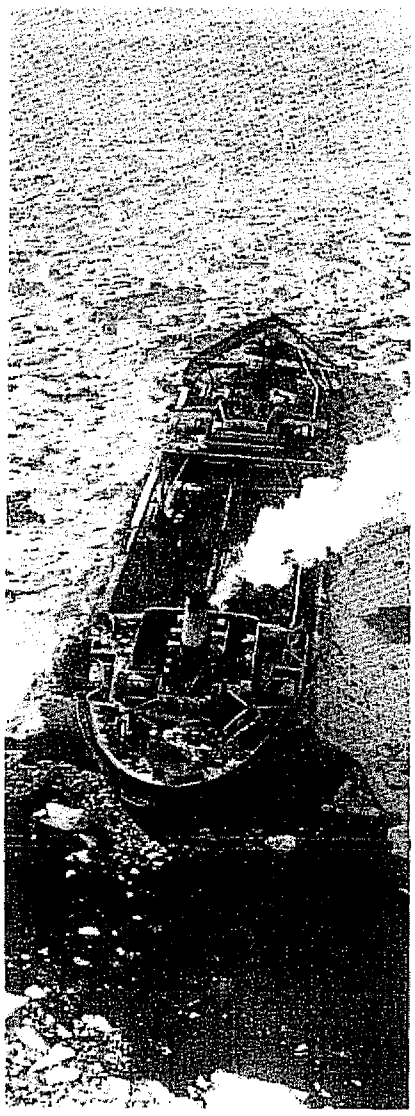
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Mariners' Dream Comes True As Manhattan Opens Passage



HUMBLE'S MAVERICK tanker, the S.S. *Manhattan*, shoulders her way through ice pack in Northwest Passage. She steamed out of the Arctic passageway and into Amundsen Gulf on September 14

(Compiled from news reports filed by Hank Rosenthal, Humble correspondent aboard the S.S. Manhattan.)

The *S.S. Manhattan* has sailed through the Northwest Passage, loaded a symbolic barrel of Alaskan oil, and turned back to make further ice tests before sailing home.

The 500-year-old dream to transit the frozen waterway at the top of the North American continent came true the night of September 14 when Humble's maverick icebreaking tanker slipped quietly into the frigid waters of Amundsen Gulf at the western end of the passage.

The *Manhattan* is the first commercial ship to sail all the way through the Northwest Passage.

The tanker reached her westward destination September 20 at Point Barrow, Alaska, turned east to challenge the ice

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Humble Starts New Arctic Harbor Study

Ever since September 1, Humble engineer W. Joe Bielstein, newly assigned project manager for Arctic harbor studies, has been grappling with a formidable problem few if any men have ever faced.

Asked just what the project involves, Mr. Bielstein said: "It is my understanding that I will coordinate studies that hopefully will result in an economic means of loading large tankers in arctic waters."

Whatever the design and shape the loading facilities finally take, they must be able to accommodate tankers perhaps twice the size of the *S.S. Manhattan* and be capable of moving tremendous quantities of Prudhoe Bay crude.

Manhattan 'Passenger' Unhappy

A post card from Colos J. Bennett, chief engineer of the *S.S. Manhattan*, recently advised Paul J. McEwan, head of the personnel section, of a relucant passenger discovered aboard the icebreaking tanker as she sailed in the Far North. Colos said:

Hi, Paul:

The other night I was making my rounds and upon entering the boiler room, I heard this knocking in the "uptake." When I opened the door, out jumped this pudgy little man all covered with soot, except for a shiny belt buckle.

He was roaring mad and lit into me about this big monster breaking up his runway just as he was starting his sleigh take-off test. He made some remark about the deer mistaking the stack for a chimney. Then I grabbed a hose and offered to wash him off and take him to master and maybe the captain would use asphalt and fix his runway. He yelled at me and took off

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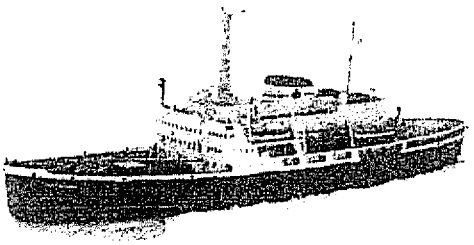

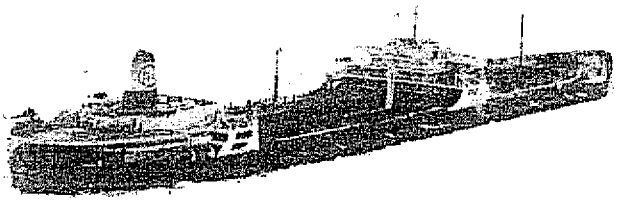

VICE-LIKE GRIP of Arctic ice holds *Manhattan* fast in McClure Strait on westward voyage. The smaller *John A MacDonald* (left), a Canadian icebreaker, freed the Humble tanker.

S. S. Manhattan

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floes of Viscount Melville Sound and the treacherous McClure Strait. She penetrated 100 miles into the strait on her westward voyage before being turned back by heavy ice.

Ice Tests

The ship arrived in the ice choked passage east of McClure Strait on her eastward sailing Friday, September 26. Extensive ice tests are underway there and plans are to conduct other research in Melville Sound.

Earlier plans called for the *Manhattan* to turn northward from Point Barrow into the Beaufort Sea and Arctic Ocean. But Project Manager Stanley B. Haas said, "We decided not to do any extensive testing in the Beaufort Sea." He explained that testing at McClure and Melville will provide needed data and that the ship will "retain a greater escape capability."

ESSO FLEET NEWS is published every other Thursday for active and retired employees of the Marine Department, Humble Oil & Refining Co.: T. J. Fuson, General Manager; Sydney Wire, Assistant General Manager.

Jim Pitts, Editor

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Mr. Haas called the *Manhattan* the "best icebreaker afloat" on September 17 as she steamed west after a test in "ten-tenths ice coverage"—a term used by mariners to indicate that the surface of the sea is totally ice covered.

"Rotten" Ice

He said the ship cut through "rotten" ice from eight to nine feet thick at an average speed of "about ten knots. More than 200 stress gauges and other instruments in the tanker's hull recorded data for the ship's computers for later study in determining design features of future icebreaking tankers whose size will dwarf even the mammoth *Manhattan*.

Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel complimented Humble and the *Manhattan* crew via radio-telephone message on the successful voyage as the ship steamed to Sachs Harbor on the return leg of the journey. Talking with Mr. Haas, Secretary Hickel said, "Your company individually and the industry as such are to be congratulated for what has been accomplished this month in getting through the Northwest Passage."

"I hope this was only the first voyage of many more to come," Stan Haas replied. "Although the transportation cost of the golden barrel of crude oil we have aboard our ship is rather high, I think that by many more voyages we can reduce the unit cost down to a commercial level."

The gold-painted barrel of oil was presented by Alaska Governor Keith Miller to Capt. Roger Steward, master of the *Manhattan*, when the ship arrived September 19 at Prudhoe Bay, site of one of the major North Slope oil strikes.

Manhattan Holiday

The *Manhattan* dropped anchor at Sachs Harbor September 25 for the second time on her historic voyage. Her arrival there ten days earlier on the westward leg of the trip was occasion for a holiday for school children in a tiny hamlet on the harbor. Shallow waters kept the tanker eight miles off shore but this didn't prevent the youngsters from seeing the largest commercial ship flying the American flag. They were flown over the tanker on a chartered DC-3, which was the first time most of them had ever been in an airplane.

After presenting a bronze medallion to the school to commemorate the *Manhattan's* visit there, Mr. Haas and other crew members visited briefly with weather station personnel and residents of the town — nearly all 120 of them. Scuba divers inspected the ship's rudder and propellers and indicated there was no damage from the tough ice encountered several days earlier in McClure Strait.

McClure Strait—a waterway north of Banks Island—stubbornly prevented the world's

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largest icebreaker from claiming another victory in the Arctic The ship became stuck three times while conducting tests in the strait and was freed each time by the Canadian icebreaker, *John A. MacDonald*. Even then it was tough sailing and took all the steam the *Manhattan* could raise to break free on one occasion

Extra Horsepower

"Breaking out of a tough old floe which held us fast in McClure Strait for some time, we obtained three to five per cent additional horsepower by cutting steam from all auxilliary systems," Stan Haas reported The ship normally produces 43,000 shaft horsepower.

When it became clear that transiting the strait was unlikely, the *Manhattan* turned back and took an alternate route through the Prince of Wales Strait.

Tests now underway in Melville Sound are expected to turn up data that will tell Humble whether or not it is profitable to operate tankers in the Northwest Passage.

The Melville tests also provide an opportunity to check out the ship's heeling system. Common in government-operated icebreakers, it is the first one ever used in a commercial vessel.

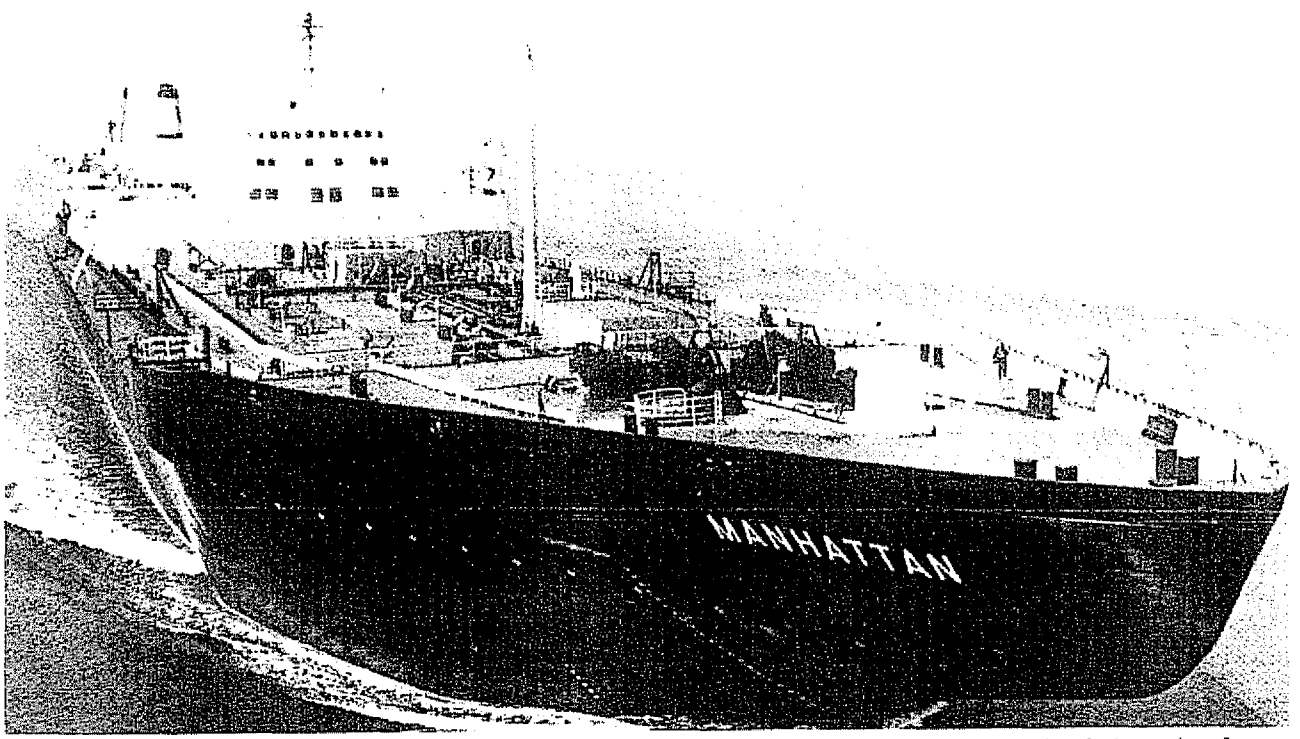
Heeling System

The system transfers 2,000 tons of ballast from six port wing tanks to six starboard wing tanks, or vice versa, in 75 seconds. (Heeling systems in most icebreakers handle much less water.) Moving the water from side to side causes the ship to heel, or list, three degrees. It creates a rocking action designed to free the tanker from ice

The *Manhattan's* system is made up of two bow thrusters, normally put in a ship's bow to beef up maneuverability in restricted waters and in docking operations. They are similar to the ones in the *Esso Houston* and the *Esso New Orleans*. Vertical, variable pitch blades provide thrust in the bow either to the left or to the right. The ones in the *Houston* and *New Orleans*, however, are powered by steam whereas the *Manhattan's* heeling system is operated by diesel engines.

The bow thrusters in the *Manhattan* are set in 10-foot diameter pipes connecting starboard and port side wing tanks. The variable pitch blades propel the ballast water in the tanks either to the left or right. Seventy-five seconds later, the pitch of the blades is reversed and the water is moved to the opposite side.

Third Assistant Engineer Michael Crosskill, Chief Pumpman Ernest Hardin, Able Seaman Thomas Randall and Fireman - Watertender Guilherme DeSilva joined the *Manhattan* at Sachs Harbor to assist with heeling system operations during the heavy test period in Melville Sound. Their signing on the ship brings to 58 the number of officers and crew in the tanker.



EASY SAILING. The *Manhattan* sails in smooth, ice free waters after leaving the western end of the Northwest Passage. On reaching Point Barrow, Alaska, the big ship turned east and headed back into the frozen waterway to make further ice tests.

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EXX-MOR-003844

At Avondale Shipyards Inc.

Inspectors Work Hand in Glove With Shipbuilder

The ship was a mess.

A steady stream of water seeped in between the bulkhead and the deck.

Higher up it flowed in around an electrical outlet.

Insulation in another bulkhead was torn.

Two cargo tanks leaked — in four places.

Reach rods running to valves 55 feet below the main deck were loose and ineffective.

There also was a valve at the end of one rod that wouldn't turn.

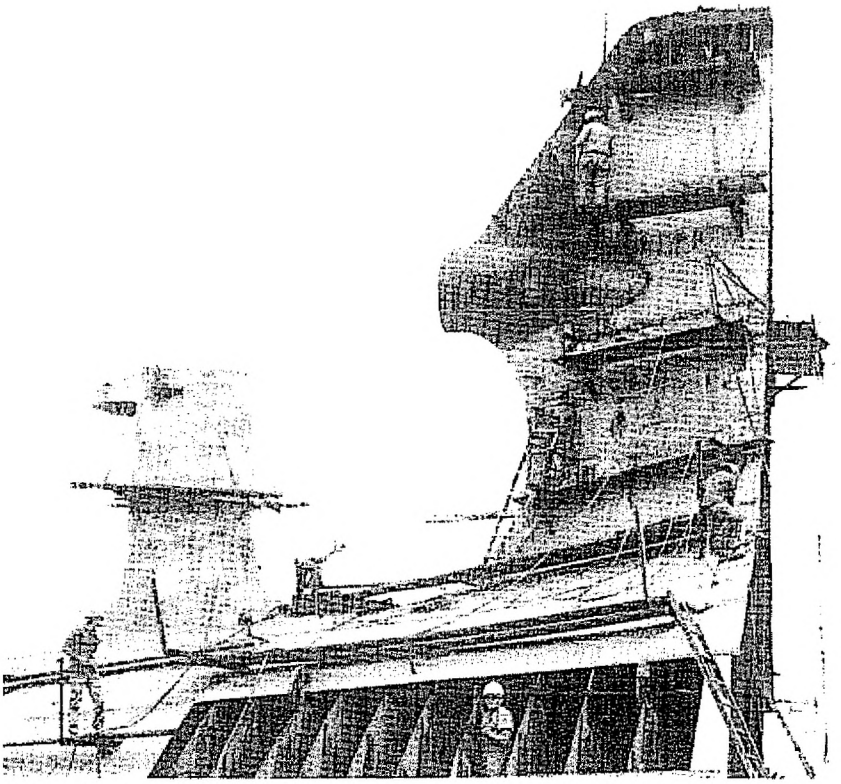
The ship's main deck was a shambles—littered with equipment, electrical lines, pipes, nuts, bolts, cables and tools.

In short, the new $16 million *Esso San Francisco* looked like a wrecked ship that had been attacked by gremlins and stripped by salvage pirates.

"She looks good to me," said Humble's John Ireland matter of factly as he pulled his hulking 215 pound figure out of Number 4 cargo tank and wiped his brow. Beads of sweat rolling down his face glistened like crystals in the bright sunlight. He paused momentarily and breathed deeply the sultry air hanging heavily over the Mississippi River. Even the 100 degree heat of the afternoon was refreshing after crawling around a cargo tank where temperatures reached a scorching 120-plus degrees.

"She's alright . . ."

"Yeah, she's alright," he continued, "except for those reach rods and that sticky valve. Let me know when you get 'em ready." A shorter, sunburned man under an orange helmet stood in the considerable shade provided by John Ireland's towering 6'5" frame and wrote "rejected" on an inspection ticket.



PIECE BY GIANT PIECE of the *Esso Baton Rouge* is built and assembled on the banks of the Mississippi River at Avondale, Louisiana. Every inch of it is inspected by Humble engineers.

John smiled, clapped the man on the back, and said, "Let's get a little coffee." As the two men headed for a coffee break, the tall one's blue eyes moved over the deck of the 810-foot-long vessel. Big John Ireland was looking for trouble. That's his job.

John is Humble's construction superintendent at the sprawling Avondale Shipyards up the Mississippi from New Orleans. The *Esso San Francisco* and two sister tankers are being built there. His job is not unique in the world of shipbuilding. It's all part of putting together a tight ship. Both the ship owner, Humble, and the builder, Avondale Inc., coordinate construction through Mr. Ireland and five other Marine Dept. inspectors.

As John sipped the hot, thick Louisiana coffee, he relaxed and talked easily with a handful of Avondale shipyard workers whom he knows on a first-name basis. He could afford to relax a moment because he knew the leaky bulkhead would be repaired, the valve made to turn, the reach rods fixed, the torn insulation replaced. It's the way things are done when you build a steel ship that's longer than the Humble Building is tall.

Fault Finding

Nobody is surprised that construction inspectors turn up defects. Both Humble and Avondale expect it. "Mister, it's just

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part of the shipbuilding process," John explained. "Product inspection at the assembly point is nothing new, and when you're building a product the size of a ship, there'd be something wrong if you didn't find a few faults."

Take the leaky bulkhead. Use a flashlight and scan it carefully. It looks perfect, a product of skilled craftsmanship. The leaks showed up when Bob Reed, a Humble hull and machinery inspector, asked that water under at least 60 pounds pressure be shot against the bulkhead. The shaft of water from a fire hose pounded like a pneumatic hammer against the steel and entered the deck house through a faulty welding seam.

Or go with Curtis Keech or Donald Delozier when they inspect Rust-Ban coating applied to large sections of the ship. It must be put on according to the manufacturer's (Enjay Chemical) specifications to prevent rust. They measure the thickness of the coating as close as three thousandths of an inch.

Paul Balcius and Ed Worrel inspect thousands of welding seams to make sure the ship is water tight, well constructed and capable of holding her future cargoes of crude oil or petroleum products without springing a leak. Ed is also a machinery inspector.

The reach rods were rejected by John Ireland after he made his way along a narrow scaffold in the cargo tank, reached out with his long arms and shook the rods. They rattled because the guides in the brackets were loose.

Lloyd Comeaux, an Avondale coordinator, knew that an easy but important adjustment would put the rods in ship shape. Their repair, he knew, was critical. The rods reach from the main deck to pipe valves on the bottom of the cargo tank. From the deck a seaman can operate the valves. But if one broke or came loose during a loading or unloading operation, the cargo would have to be pumped out or transferred to another tank so that repairs could be made. "That could be real costly when you consider you'd have to hold up a ship to do it," Mr. Ireland observed.

It is a precise and exacting business.

Checking a Tank

To check out a cargo tank, you seal it up tight. Seams in adjoining tanks are coated with a soapy substance. The sealed tank is then pumped full of air that will create bubbles in the soapy material wherever a leak occurs. To see the bubbles, Humble inspectors crawl around the five-story tanks to examine each seam individually.

"Nothing less than a snake is any good in this business," smiled John Ireland as he wiggled his way along a dim, narrow opening in the bowels of the ship. "You've got to crawl, scoot, climb and slide to get around one of these babies."



CHIEF INSPECTOR John Ireland (left) and Lloyd Comeaux, Avondale coordinator, aboard *Esso San Francisco* talk over inspection of cargo tanks following close examination by Humble inspectors.

As he spoke, a shower of flaming sparks falling from 40 feet above momentarily lighted the area. Welding torches glowed in the darkness overhead. John stepped over a glowing hot piece of steel and kept walking. "These safety helmets are uncomfortable at times," he remarked, "but you don't ever want to be without one around here."

In the deck house, Bob Reed and Avondale coordinator Jim Hawco were making a joint inspection of bulkheads in crew quarters before workers put up paneling that would hide pipes, wires and insulation. Leaving the deck house, Jim said, "There ought to be a couple of steps here, Bob, but the plans don't call for any. We need them and the Coast Guard is going to demand them." (Ships must also meet Coast Guard and American Bureau of Shipping construction requirements.)

"Okay, I'll tell Ireland and he'll have to work it out with Humble and Esso International," Bob Reed agreed. Construction plans, detailed and voluminous as they are, sometimes omit small things like steps. Neither Humble inspectors nor Avondale engineers have authority to change them.

Change in Plans

To have the steps incorporated in the plans, John Ireland requests a change. The request is reviewed in Houston by Robert X. Caldwell, Marine Dept. technical superintendent who draws up shipbuilding specifications. With his approval, Esso International — ship designer for Jersey affiliates — makes the necessary changes.

Then a modification plan is sent to Mr. Ireland at Avondale. He spends up to two hours a day noting changes and filing them in one of 16 big file drawers in his office. It usually gets done during his lunch hour and near the end of the day.

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Observations made by Humble inspectors at the construction site can be vital to the life of a ship. For instance, insulation was about to be laid on the galley deck in the *San Francisco* when Bob Reed noted that the deck should be painted with a special solution first. The salt base of the insulation, according to the manufacturer, would rust naked steel. Plans, however, did not call for the protective paint. So Mr. Ireland once again went through the process of having plans altered.

At the end of the workday, Humble inspectors gathered in a modestly furnished office and discussed inspections they had completed. With crayons, John colored a small set of drawings that looked like the kind you find in model shipbuilding kits at hobby shops. Different colors indicated ship sections that had been accepted, rejected or various stages of construction. "I gave up color books when I was a kid, but this isn't for kicks," smiled the chief inspector.

Just then an Avondale office boy popped through the door and dropped several sheets of paper on John's desk. It was a summary of tests and inspections scheduled for the following day. Four inspections were slated at 9 a.m. in four different sections on three ships: the *Esso San Francisco*, the *Esso Baton Rouge* and the *Esso Philadelphia*. Another was set for 9:30 a.m.

With one inspector on vacation, it meant that Mr. Ireland and the other Humble trouble shooters would have to move fast next morning. The schedules are important.

450 Workers

With 450 men working on the *San Francisco* and hundreds of others on the *Baton Rouge* and *Philadelphia*, the step by step process of construction hinges on coordination and timing. "They can't put up paneling in the steering gear room until after we've made our inspection tomorrow," John said. "And if we're late it means that men will be idle and standing in line to do their work. The whole work schedule goes to pot right down the line."

Then he turned to schedule the next day's workload for the inspectors, who are charged with making certain the ships are built according to specifications. When the *San Francisco* is completed and passes her sea trials, she will be turned over to a Humble master and crew in a seaworthy condition.

"Even then the crew is going to find a few bugs in the new ship," Mr. Ireland said. "It's like the fancy new cars that people take back to the dealers for mechanical adjustments."

But John Ireland knows that the *Esso San Francisco* will be a well built tanker capable of doing the job for which she has been designed.



ESSO BATON ROUGE. Coating inspector Ed Worrel (top) and Bob Reed cross paths in sprawling Avondale shipyard where *Esso Baton Rouge* in background is beginning to take the shape of a ship under the watchful eyes of marine inspectors.

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Esso Tug Pulls Coast Guard Crew from Water

"Fire" — one of the most dreaded words in a sailor's vocabulary — was the warning cry that shattered Capt. Oscar Vansant's sound sleep at 2:30 a.m. The master of the *Esso Delaware Valley* shot out of bed, darted across his cabin and out the door.

Inevitably the thought flashed in his mind that the 104-foot tug was afire. Out on deck he quickly learned it was not. Half a mile away bright orange flames burned a jagged hole in the darkness.

Taking command in the pilot house, Capt. Vansant headed the Esso tug directly for the flames dancing wildly on the Delaware River north-northwest of Billingsport, New Jersey. Seven minutes later the *Esso Delaware Valley* was within 200 feet of a 40-foot-long vessel engulfed by fire. It was Coast Guard patrol boat 30560.

As he approached the burning boat, the captain wondered about her crew — were they in his path? Then he spotted a cluster of three small white lights bobbing in the water. A fourth was about 75 feet away from the others. The lights were attached to life preservers.

10-Minute Rescue

Capt. Vansant sent Mate Ed O'Neal, who had seen the fire first, to direct rescue operations on the deck. The other three crew members of the *Delaware Valley* had already assembled there. Three minutes later all four members of the Coast Guard crew had been fished out of the river. None was injured. The rescue operation took exactly ten minutes.

Other tugs in the area of the fire had been unable to assist in the emergency because they were pushing barges.

The Esso crew then turned full attention on the boat and fought the fire until 3 a.m. Finally, the vessel turned over and the flames were snuffed out in the water. Meantime, Capt. Vansant had given the Coast Guard crew several of his shirts. "It was chilly and they were cold," he explained.

The *Esso Delaware Valley* took the charred, totally destroyed patrol boat in tow before heading for Paulsboro, New Jersey, where the Marine Dept. maintains a sub-office of the Baltimore Branch. Saving the worthless vessel turned out to be a good move.

Coast Guard investigators later determined the fire broke out when a fuel line burst, spilling oil which was ignited by heat from an engine. Modifications have since been ordered on other patrol boats to prevent the recurrence of a similar tragedy.

Routine Work

The Coast Guard crew was served a hot breakfast enroute to Paulsboro, where they arrived at 3:45 a.m. A few hours later the *Esso Delaware Valley* went about her routine work of pushing barges in the Delaware River-Delaware Bay area and occasionally in Chesapeake Bay.

"We were between jobs when the emergency arose, and when it was over we went back to work," Capt. Vansant remarked. All in a day's work he seemed to say.

He lives in Baltimore and has been with Humble for more than 33 years. Other crew members who assisted in the rescue were Seaman Roland Mooney, Utilityman John Maddox, Cook Raymond Fernald and Mate Ed O'Neal. All were officially commended by the Coast Guard for their quick, effective action.



WELL DONE. Commander R. P. Hartgen, U.S. Coast Guard executive officer, Port of Philadelphia, presents a certificate of appreciation to Capt. Oscar Vansant, master of the *Esso Delaware* Valley, for the rescue of the crew of a burning Coast Guard Patrol boat. Other men who helped in the rescue operation are Mate Ed O'Neal, Seaman Roland Mooney, Utilityman John Maddox and Cook Raymond Fernald.

"It isn't often that the Coast Guard must call for help; however, it is most reassuring to know that personnel such as those of your company and the tug *Esso Delaware Valley* are available and willing to offer unselfish assistance when it is needed." wrote Commander H. A. French, commanding officer of the U.S. Coast Guard Base at Gloucester City, New Jersey. The fire occurred June 8.

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RECENT RETIREMENTS

First Assistant Engineer Gilmore Henderson considers the officers and seamen of the Esso Fleet "the very best in the marine industry or elsewhere." That's how he remembered his 29 years' service when he retired this month. Gil began his seagoing career with Esso in 1939 as a messman in the *Elisha Walker*, and also served aboard the vessel as second cook and wiper. Mr. Henderson moved up to fireman in 1940 in the *C.A. Canfield* and sailed the following year as oiler in the *Esso Scranton*. His first assignment on his license was in the *Esso Scranton* as third assistant engineer in 1944.

Gil was second assistant later in the *Esso Utica*, and in 1947 was first assistant in the *Esso Greensboro*. His last ship was the *Esso New York*. His retirement plans include "hunting, fishing and repairing my own equipment, two boats and a camper." He lives in Baytown, Texas, with his wife, Terry Lee.



BEST WISHES, an electric, direct reading clock, and desk set barometer-hygrometer-thermometer were given to First Assistant Engineer Gilmore Henderson aboard the *Esso New York* preceding his retirement. Gil (center) shows his gifts to Second Assistant Richard L. Weigel (left) and Chief Engineeer Clifford E. Lindsey

Able Seaman Arthur B. Colcord retired with 16½ years' service last month as a result of physical disability. He signed on with the fleet in June, 1952, as able seaman in the *Birch Coulie*. Art and his wife, Margaret, live in Stockton Springs, Maine, where he was born.

Last lost time injury in the Esso Fleet reportable to the National Safety Council occurred

SEPTEMBER 2

TAFFRAIL TALK

To Daddy Donald Dale Dutsch

The following happy message was transmitted by Humble to the *S.S. Manhattan*: "We are pleased to advise that the wife of Donald Dutsch gave birth to a seven pound, 2½ ounce boy at 0014 September 26. Mother and baby are doing fine at Women's Hospital, Baton Rouge. Please extend our congratulations to Daddy Donald Dale Dutsch." Mr. Dutsch is a utilityman aboard the icebreaking tanker.

A NEW MASTER

Capt. Thomas Milligan sailed on his maiden voyage as master September 29 when he took the *Esso Lima* from Charleston, South Carolina, on a voyage to Baytown, Texas. Congratulations and Good Sailing, Capt. Milligan.

DEATHS



Andres Ortega died of a heart attack September 16 aboard ship one day out of San Francisco. The 63-year-old retired messman was returning from the Philippines where he had visited a sister. Mr. Ortega retired this past January with almost 25 years' service in Humble tankers.

He joined the fleet as messman in the *Dean Emery* on March 7, 1942, and continued in five more vessels as second and chief cook during the next two years. After his return to the Esso Fleet in June, 1946, Mr. Ortega served continuously until his retirement. Born in the Philippines, he made his home in Hampton, Virginia.

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Chief Engineer Ernest J. Palmer, 66, died September 16 in a Savannah, Georgia, hospital. He retired in July, 1963, after 34½ years in Esso tankers. Mr. Palmer served three years in the Army and worked briefly for a railroad prior to joining the fleet as fireman in the *Charles Pratt* in 1926.

He sailed as third, second and first assistant in the 1930s and was promoted to chief in the *Glenpool* in 1942. From August, 1953, until his retirement ten years later, Mr. Palmer was in the *Esso New Orleans* and the *Esso Gloucester*. Much of his leave time was spent growing camellias, azales and unusual flowers, at which he became an expert. It was one of the pleasures Mr. Palmer looked forward to when he retired. He leaves his wife, Maude.

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