

Chapter 03110K **12/21/1938**

SS SCHODACK

SEA RESCUED #2
Captain Clifton Smith

Albin Wesley Pierce
Former 1923 crew member



10/7/2024

Another Schodack sea rescue. This time, 20 Norwegians on 12/26/1938.

RESCUE IN GALE.

NORWEGIAN FREIGHTER SINKS.

Women Cheer Crew With Songs.

NEW YORK, Dec. 26.—One of the most thrilling rescues in the annals of the sea was recounted to-day when the American freighter Schodack landed eighteen men, two women and two dogs from the Norwegian freighter Smaragh, 1181 tons, which sank 300 miles from Bermuda Island, in the Atlantic.

continued

The vessel sank an hour after the rescue was effected. The Smaragh had no radio equipment, but it attracted the Schodack's attention by flares, and then by the Morse signal SOS with an electric flashlight.

A full gale was blowing and the Smaragh had to wait all night, after which the Schodack discharged 350 barrels of oil fuel on the water to make it sufficiently smooth to enable a small boat from each vessel to be launched to make the rescue. The ship's cat

leapt back to the Smaragh from the lifeboat.

The rescued women were the wife of the captain and their daughter aged 18 years. The daughter said she would never go to sea again, but her mother said she was ready to accompany her husband anywhere.

One seaman lost two fingers in launching the boat. The women had sung old Norse songs and carols throughout the height of the storm to cheer the crew. They were virtually without food.

Eight Men Battle Wild Seas, Save 18 on Doomed Tanker

550 Miles Out, in a Smother of Hell,
A Job Was Done as You Came to Work

By Asa Bordages,
World-Telegram Staff Writer.

1938

THE safe little people went scuttling about the city on safe little errands as the gray, chill morning came today and a few words clicked out of the air to tell that a man named Smith and some other men, ordinary men, were fighting a demon and death with their bare hands 550 miles at sea.

The safe little people were worrying whether they'd be in time for work, worrying whether they'd catch cold, and at latitude 38.06, longitude 61.50, a rare spot of hell, Captain Clifton Smith swung the pounding, weary freighter Schodack to make a lee and said it was time to take the chance.

Eight men in a peanut shell of a boat, eight ordinary fellows you'd never notice ashore, staked their lives then that their arms were strong enough, their luck miraculous enough, to pull them to the doomed Norwegian tanker Smaragd, to pull them through a sea amok and back again to the Schodack with the helpless tanker's people, two women and sixteen men.

The wireless brought that word at 6:45 A.M., and no word from the Schodack since except the blunt announcement at 11 A.M. that the two women and sixteen men were safe aboard the rescue ship. No word at all of how the fight was won against a raging sea and a nor'west gale. Only this from Mac-Kay Radio:—

"S. S. Schodack rescued crew of eighteen including captain's wife and daughter from sinking S. S. Smaragd in storm which was very thrilling. Captain of Smaragd expects ship to sink in a few hours."

The first news of this match of men against the sea, a match with no championship belt at stake and no cheering crowds and no movie contracts for the winner, was picked up last night by Radio-marine. That was 10:49 P.M. Captain Smith said:—

"Standing by Norwegian steamship Smaragd, which is in sinking condition. Will attempt rescue crew at daylight. Weather conditions at present, northwest gale rough."

The records showed that the Smaragd was of less than 1,200 tons. She was on her way from Norfolk, Va. to European ports, laden with oil, when the sea smashed her.

The 8,000-ton Schodack, chartered by the America-France Line from the United States Maritime Commission, was slogging away toward New York with a cargo from French ports when she picked up the tanker's S O S.

Wireless too Weak

The tanker's wireless was too weak to be heard ashore by that time—by the time her master had to admit that the sea had whipped her; by the time he called for help.

Reprinted from the New York World Telegram, Friday, December 23, 1938.

Her engines were still; broken, as useless as junk. She was down by the head and taking water fast.

Captain Smith wirelessly the position. All he could do then was wait. All he could do was to stand on his pitching bridge and watch the faint, tossing glimmer of the lights of the tanker off there in the blackness.

There wasn't any use to send messages to the shore. Nobody ashore could do anything about it. Nobody of the crowds getting thrills in the movies, getting drinks in the bars, getting excitement in the night clubs, none of these could do anything. It was up to Captain Smith and his men.

Heard Him Talking

The wireless stations ashore heard Captain Smith speak now and then through the night to the sinking ship. He was getting reports on her condition. If she couldn't last he'd have to take the risk of sending a boat in the dark. But if she could hang on until morning there was no use sending men to die in the dark. It looks good in the movies, of course, but this wasn't for the movies. This was a job.

The morning came slowly. The stations ashore heard Captain Smith telling the tanker he was preparing to launch a boat.*

There was silence for a time. The city was waking up. People were bolting their breakfasts. People were buying newspapers to read about Coster and Hitler and famous people. Captain Smith was making a lee. That was the only chance.

The lifeboat must be launched in the lee or it would be smashed against the Schodack's side. Then the eight men must pull across that stretch of tumbling sea, pull around to the far side of the tanker for the



Captain Clifton Smith, Rescuer and
Captain Bernhard Larsen, Rescued.

desperate gamble of trying to take off her people.

Schodack Must Move

The Schodack must move, too, for human strength couldn't pull against that sea and wind. She must slog her way to the loo'ard of the tanker so that the boat — if it wasn't crushed, if it did the devil's job of getting off the women and the sixteen men—would have a chance to be brought down to the Schodack, to pull around to the far side of her for protection against the wild sea and the gale as the men and women were put aboard.

It Just Sounds Easy

It sounds easy, when it's put down in little words, as easy as tumbling off a log. But it's not easy when the wind's a gale, nor west, and seas stampede. It's like throwing the gates of hell over your shoulder then.

That's what Captain Smith and his men were doing out there as the commuters ran for their ferries. A man named Smith and some other men, ordinary men, were too busy doing what they had to do to wireless the newspapers about it.

* The entire ship's crew volunteered, and Captain Smith selected eight men for the rescue job.

Rescued



12/26/1938 The Norwegians who were rescued by SS Schodack.

