

MEMORANDUM

June 7, 1944

*Full
ships*

TO: Mr. Fulton
FROM: Mr. Robinson

I have recently had occasion to interview Chief Engineer Miles C. Caughrean of the Army Transport Service, who has been specifically assigned to repair vessel James B. Houston, operating in Alaskan waters. The complainant outlined that the repair ship is now at the Lake Union yards in Seattle, where extensive conversion is being performed.

He outlined a picture wherein the Army in Alaska would be at a loss if they were not able to depend upon the Navy for supplies. He also questioned the advisability of a conflict of policies by the Army operating repair vessels and the Navy establishing repair bases in the same areas, and cited a Marine railway built at extensive cost at Massacre Bay. *(never used)*

This memorandum is for the purpose of recording the names of contacts furnished by Mr. Caughrean as future sources of information in the event it is desired to develop information relating to the Army's operations in Alaska:

Captain Frank Mills
Queen Ann Hill
Seattle, Washington

Lou Hammerbeck
Repair Man
Adak, Alaska

Captain Harry E. Leighton
7037 Alonzo Avenue
Seattle, Washington

Major Peterson
Port Captain
Attu, Alaska

Mr. Caughrean outlined general instances of wanton and careless destruction of marine equipment in the area, and that barges had been completely obliterated by even raking the beaches to burn the wood chips after they had been broken apart, and that considerable "polishing up" of this type had been done prior to the visit by the Senators.

Mr. Caughrean's chief cause of complaint was in behalf of friends in the service who had been lost as a result of the sinking of tugs. The particular tug is the M.T.L. invasion tug which was built by a Texas yard and only has 3 inches of freeboard, with the result that in heavy weather, and particularly Alaskan waters, there have been 6 or 7 of them overturned with a loss of the tug and its crew. This apparently is somewhat similar to the Higgins versus Bureau of Ships controversy, and there is attached hereto a further complaint received with respect to the M.T.L. tugs from another source, which is presently being handled by Mr. Irvin.

Of secondary interest, Mr. Caughrean attributed much of the chaos to the arbitrary attitude on the part of the Army personnel who are entirely unfamiliar with marine operations, particularly in Alaskan waters, but yet superimpose their judgment on experienced sea captains, etc., and he cited as an illustration a Major who, contrary to advice of the captain of the vessel, insisted on a landing party and ordered, at the point of a gun, two crew members into a boat which was later wrecked in the attempted landing with a loss of one of the crew members.

Attachment
HGR:ls