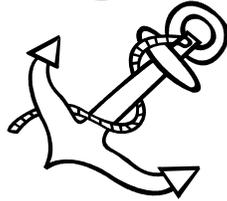


# ANCHOR LINE



**Flotilla 87**

**Englewood, Fla.**

7th Coast Guard District  
[www.CoastGuardEnglewood.com](http://www.CoastGuardEnglewood.com)

## ***SPECIAL EDITION***



The USCG EAGLE in 1956 before her CG stripes

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**Editor's Note:**

**The following article was written by Flotilla 87 member Donald Penrod. The article depicts his accounting of the collision between the Stockholm and the Andrea Doria on July 25, 1956 when he was on active duty with the United States Coast Guard.**

**Don has written about this event in descriptive poetry, a favorite hobby of his.**

## *Collision at Sea*

*(Dedicated to survivors of all shipwrecks)*

by  
D.E. Penrod  
6/1/07

The year was Nineteen Fifty Six---July Twenty Fifth was the date  
A night that many remember---and others have learned to hate.  
Two ships were in and outward bound---New York City their port  
How quickly disaster can happen at sea---even with time to abort



*Collision at Sea*  
(Dedicated to survivors of all shipwrecks)

by  
D.E. Penrod

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Part #1  
Historical Facts



The *Stockholm* was heavily damaged---her bow crushed for 50 feet or more  
But later deemed to be sea worthy---was afloat and could steer as before



All this happened in eleven hours or less---a collision, a rescue, and then the *Doria* sunk  
Her sea-grave was about two hundred fifty feet below---soon marked by huge bubbles, sharks and junk

# *Collision at Sea*

*(Dedicated to survivors of all shipwrecks)*

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## **Part #1 Historical Facts**

The year was Nineteen Fifty Six---July Twenty Fifth was the date  
A night that many remember---and others have learned to hate.  
Two ships were in and outward bound---New York City their port  
How quickly disaster can happen at sea---even with time to abort

The sea was flat calm and black that night ---with heavy banks of fog here and there  
Just several miles off Nantucket --- nothing different for that time of year  
A canopy of stars blinked low overhead---as ships moved into the fog-shrouded night  
A night of grand memories for all those on board---would be replaced with chaos and fright

Both ships were called "ocean liners"---over twenty-four hundred on board  
They were steering parallel courses---but a safe passing would not be told  
A working-type night on the *Doria*---with this her last night at sea  
And the *Stockholm*'s crew was batten-down---to a homeport that never would be

The *Andrea Doria* was westward bound---from Genoa, Italy her homeport  
A Luxury liner with over seventeen hundred on aboard ---a floating art gallery of sort  
Weather was rarely a concern to her crew---this, her hundredth crossing in ten years  
The nine day voyage was routinely done---and completed without any fears

The *Stockholm* was a small ocean liner ---she too the pride of her class  
Her homeport was Gothenburg, Sweden ---these trips she would make very fast  
Made fifty or more crossings to New York---a liner that all could afford  
Designed with a sleek double plated bow---to break through Scandinavian ice fjords

Both Captains were trusted seaworthy men---with 86 years training between them  
The latest technology on both vessels---would handle all weather-type whims  
Each had the best sonar and radar---to assure a safe voyage at sea  
All of the equipment was working that night---but a collision was their destiny

The *Doria* had been fogbound for hours---and slightly reduced her speed  
Her watertight doors were locked and secured---and the foghorn was sounded indeed  
The port empty fuel tanks were not ballasted---with salt water as was recommended  
And lookouts were moved to the forecastle---and the radar was well attended

The *Stockholm* was now eastward bound---a star lit night so far to log  
She was fully loaded with fuel and passengers---later, she would be into the fog  
A lookout was posted in the crow's nest---and the bridge was properly manned  
But she drifted off course when the crew changed---and the weather would soon change her plans

The rules of the sea are old and defined---as to how and when ships should pass  
Port-to-Port is the maritime law--- like "red-right-returning," taught early in class  
The *Doria* and *Stockholm* were on a parallel course---but starboard-to-starboard their position  
The radar was watched, for seventeen miles ---with only one mile passing distance between them

The *Doria's* bridge had a concern that night---when they first detected the problem  
A ship was getting dangerously close---and would pass on the wrong side of them  
Bearings were checked, and adjustments made---but this happened by both bridge crews  
Passing distance decreased as bearings were changed---and the fog shrouded all from view

The last night at sea on a liner---is an event, that no one wants to end  
But there's packing to do and special events---maybe farewell parties with new-found friends  
Then early morn the *Doria* would be in New York Harbor---a glorious site to behold  
The Statue of Liberty would be standing there---greeting all that would be on board

Friends and relatives would be at dockside---for arrivals both young and old  
But two ships were set on a collision course---with almost twenty-four hundred aboard  
The passing of starboard-to-starboard---would not happen to those ships that night  
The last bearings adjustments were erroneously made---and it was too late to make things right

About one nautical mile apart, both ships appeared out of the fog---a monstrous sight that was told  
Reported to loom "like a huge city of lights"---all that saw, knew what would unfold  
Both vessels again adjusted positions---the *Stockholm's* engines were thrown in reverse  
The *Doria* steered hard to port---exposing her starboard side for the worse.

The *Doria's* hit was almost broadside---just about mid-ship on the starboard side  
Cut starboard fuel tanks and watertight decks---and with this hit the *Doria* died  
The two vessels were tangled in a structural mess---for several minutes or more  
Then the *Stockholm* reversed direction ----enlarging the hole that it tore

The *Doria's* wound was most fatal---her watertight integrity was lost with that gash  
She listed 18 degrees to starboard---and the water poured in like a flash  
The *Stockholm* was heavily damaged---her bow crushed for 50 feet or more  
But later deemed to be sea worthy---was afloat and could steer as before

At approximately 23:20, the SOS was sent---and relayed to all ships at sea that night  
The shipping lanes were still crowded---with vessels of all sizes and types  
Liners, freighters and military ships---were all in the fog-shrouded night  
The SOS was immediately answered---help would quickly arrive at the site.

The *Doria* and *Stockholm* soon lowered their lifeboats---the rescue at sea was underway  
Military support was dispatched---a merchant vessel was just 90 minutes away  
The *Ile de France* that was eastward bound---now quickly reversed her course  
Radios reported help on the way---as the shipwreck conditions became worse.

The *Doria* continued listing to starboard---the decks slanted 25 degrees and increasing  
Flooding rapidly filled the ship---her ability to stay afloat was decreasing  
The list made the port side lifeboats useless---when lowered they dragged on the hull  
Passengers crawled and slipped, on oil-slick decks---abandoning the *Doria*, was a chore for all

A rescue sea epic unrivaled that night---unfolded through the panic-stricken night  
Four rescue ships arrived within hours---as the fog slowly lifted from the site  
The *Ile de France* then also arrived---lit up the shipwreck like day  
All lifeboats were lowered and raised that night---with air-support too under way

The rescue efforts went through early morn---as the passengers left the *Doria* behind  
Some families were separated on different ships---to be re-united, later in time  
A remarkable effort by all those involved---“a rescue done right at sea”  
Had the collision been in the winter months---another “*Titanic Story*” it would be

With all *Doria*'s passengers removed--*Ile* circled, dipped colors, and sailed from the site  
Captain Calamari's wish was to save his ship---could she be towed to shallow water all right?  
But the list continued to get steadily worse---he knew what her destiny would be  
Towing would never save his ship---shortly, she would be claimed by the sea

Within hours of the collision, *Doria*'s fate was sealed---about 05:30 Captain Calamari abandoned his ship  
She continued to roll to starboard--- at 10:09 she capsized, and vanished in the oil slick  
All this happened in eleven hours or less---a collision, a rescue, and then the *Doria* sunk  
Her sea-grave was about two hundred fifty feet below---soon marked by huge bubbles, sharks and junk

Six ships returned to New York ports---with survivors from the shipwreck  
All *Doria*'s passengers lost their possessions---but thankful to feel a dry deck  
Finding family members either dead or alive---now the quest of all that survived  
Personal, hotel accommodations and travel needs---still a large task for all those alive

Investigations, litigations and lawsuits---would follow this famous collision  
As Maritime Law sorted out the facts---the results would take years for decisions  
Fifty-one lives were claimed by this wreck---and each year, divers add more to the roll  
But the memory of this well known collision---lives-on, with those who answered the call

The *Stockholm* was later refitted---and sailed with that name as before  
She has been sold many times over---with improvements and name changes once more  
Her name is now the *Athena*---with voyages to many ports of the world  
A luxury liner with amenities galore---and memoirs that are sure to be told

So let's drink a toast on July 25<sup>th</sup>---to the rescuers that saved lives that night  
And let's toast the survivors of both vessels---they too provided help at the site  
A classic sea rescue unfolded that night --- when the *Doria* and *Stockholm* collided  
An event that many of us still remember ---and those memories have never subsided.

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*Collision at Sea*  
Part #2  
by  
D.E. Penrod  
Personal Involvement  
(USCGC Campbell W-32)



The *Campbell*, *Eagle* and *Yakutat* (three Coast Guard ships)  
---homeward bound after months at sea  
Completing the Cadet Cruise of Fifty Six  
---on-hands training for future officers to be  
These ship's positions were not close to the wreck  
---when the SOS was sent out that night  
But the *Campbell* and *Yakutat* soon changed their course  
---and made-way to the collision site

The *Campbell* lowered her lifeboats  
---searched the site for possible survivors  
But all passengers had previously been rescued  
---left for New York the previous hours  
Boatloads of suitcases, chairs and personal items  
---were retrieved from the flotsam that day  
The *Stockholm* was escorted part-way back to port  
---where investigations and repairs would be underway



## *Collision at Sea*

### Part #2

#### Personal Involvement

(W-32 Campbell)

The *Campbell, Eagle and Yakutat* (three Coast Guard ships) ---homeward bound after months at sea  
Completing the Cadet Cruise of Fifty Six---on-hands training for future officers to be  
These ship's positions were not close to the wreck---when the SOS was sent out that night  
But the *Campbell and Yakutat* soon changed their course---and made-way to the collision site

Initially, we did not know the extent of damage---to the ships that collided that night  
Our estimated arrival time was early morning---but we too had the fog-bank to fight  
The *Campbell* crew worked on through the night---her lifeboats were made ready for launching  
Then the radio reports became more ominous---the *Doria's* list was increasing

My rate was Damage Control 2<sup>nd</sup>---trained in diving and collision repair  
My Chief was an old Coast Guard Salt---worked many World War II wrecks before  
Our salvage pumps were checked and started---hoses and timbers were loaded near lifeboats  
The Chief said: "Bo-we'll get everything ready to go---but I don't think we'll see her afloat"

Our travel was slow as the fog was intense---the fog horn sounded all through the night  
By early morning everything was ready to go---but we were still several hours from the site  
Our arrival was about 10:30 that morning---and Chief Ethridge's prediction was right  
The *Doria* had sunk to her grave---debris and sharks, now marked the site

The *Stockholm* was still near the collision site---watertight doors kept her out of trouble  
"ckholm" was all that remained of the name---the sleek bow was reduced to rubble  
The sea was covered with flotsam---deck chairs, oil drums and luggage afloat  
And more was coming to the surface---from the tomb that was somewhat remote

The *Campbell* lowered her lifeboats---searched the site for possible survivors  
But all passengers had already been rescued---left for New York the previous hours  
Boatloads of suitcases, chairs and personal items---were retrieved from the flotsam that day  
The *Stockholm* was escorted part-way back to port---where investigations and repairs would be underway

Since then, she has had numerous re-fittings---and renamed ever time she's been sold  
Today she is called the "*Athena*"---sails from Falmouth to many ports of the world  
A luxury liner with amenities galore---has a life's history that's second to none  
I'll soon book a trip on this vessel---and my part of this tale will be done.

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# *Collision at Sea*

## Part #3

by

D.E. Penrod

### Background and Personal Remarks

I have followed up on the many reports and programs regarding this most famous collision---that has been classified as "second" to that of the *Titanic*. The differences in the *Stockholm / Doria* collision (compared to the *Titanic*) were: the location; the time of year; the water temperature; more available lifeboats, and most important ---the rescue work that was done by all of the ships and air support that almost immediately answered the SOS call. In the annals of sea rescue stories, it was reported that: "...the work done that night was an example of everything done right, and a timely response to an SOS call". However, there were some "mixed opinions" reported about that statement by some passengers that abandoned the *Doria*, while others had unlimited praise for the rescue teams.

All of those things said, it was still a night of terror and hell for all of those that sailed on both ships and especially for those that had to abandon the *Doria*. Could it be said that: perhaps the *Doria's* passengers must have had some consolation to know that the *Stockholm* was still navigable and proceeded to assist within a short period of time; that additional lifeboats were made available as the various ships arrived; and the saving grace was when the *Ile De France* arrived? The *Ile* lit up the area, was fully provisioned; supported the rescue teams and ships (that were already at the site) with additional life boats; provided personal and medical needs to the survivors. Of course, all ships (and air support) that had already taken on survivors provided the same service to the best of their ability.

Could it have been some comfort to those that had to abandon the *Doria* to know that with all of the help near by, that in time they would be saved by all of the lifeboats waiting for them in the water---and that the water was at a non-life threaten temperature? You had to be there to answer all of these questions, but probably not as they clung to anything that was secure as they made their way

across slanted oil-slick decks to get to lifeboats, ropes, ladders and nets (or eventually jumped) as they abandoned the *Doria*! But in reality all of these facts had to help reduce the number of fatalities (51 of approximately 2452 from both ships).

Again, there were many hours of fear for those involved---but it could have been worse had it happened in the winter season. A short comparison to the same scenario of those waiting on the deck of the *Titanic* in the North Atlantic in January 1919: the *Titanic* (by design) did not have enough lifeboats to handle a full compliment of passengers that were booked; even with enough time to abandon ship---there was no place to go for many of the passengers; the survival time (if they jumped) was approximately 7 to 10 minutes in the water of the North Atlantic in January. More important, there was no immediate response to the SOS or any rescue vessels in sight as the *Titanic* went down. All that the passengers (without lifeboats) had waiting for them were: the North Atlantic's icy water; darkness; the iceberg and inevitable death!

My Coast Guard Active Duty was from 1952 to 1956. It included duty: aboard a buoy tender; land and lifeboat stations and several years aboard the *Campbell* on International Weather Patrol (this was an International air-sea rescue service that was established following the sinking of the *Titanic*). I had several "North Atlantic Weather-Patrol trips" on the *Campbell*. I have peered into the darkness as "growlers" came near and rubbed the side of the ship, and it is a very unnatural sound and feeling---knowing what can happen. A majority of the *Titanic* passengers were doomed from the minute the ship hit the Iceberg---but not so the *Doria*, thanks to all of the previously mentioned facts.

When the SOS was sent regarding the *Doria* and *Stockholm* collision, the *Campbell*, *Yakutat*, and

the Coast Guard Training Barque *Eagle* (sea-going square-rigged training vessel) were off the coast of Maine, heading for Newport RI, and then into the Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut. All three ships had a compliment of Cadets, and we were returning from the 1956 USCG Training Cruise to: San Juan, Puerto Rico; Havana, Cuba; the Panama Canal Zone and then back to the States. At the time of the SOS, we were not close enough to give immediate assistance; the *Campbell* and *Yakutat* changed course and made-way for the collision site, and the *Eagle* continued on to her next port. The *Campbell's* initial arrival time was estimated to be early-morning of the 26<sup>th</sup>. The radio messages continued throughout the night and early morning, and many of our crew speculated that we would not see the *Doria* afloat. We still made preparations to have everything ready upon arrival, but the fog was very intense and there was a suspicion that a bearing on one of the *Campbell's* propeller shafts was marginal—and both items (mostly fog) delayed our arrival. We first saw the *Stockholm* at approximately 10:30 AM, and the *Doria* had gone down about 20 minutes before our arrival. All known passengers had been transferred; the rescue ships were providing medical assistance to the survivors as they returned to various ports in New York. The *Stockholm* was still near the collision site, did not require additional assistance, and she was returning to New York at a very slow speed with a large number of *Doria* passengers.

It was a strange feeling for me to stand at the rail of the *Campbell* and look at a sea littered with debris (flotsam) and sharks. Even more eerie, was to see huge bubbles and all types of wreckage continuously pop-out of the water surface as the *Doria* settled into her grave approximately 250 feet below. The *Campbell's* crew patrolled the area checking for additional survivors that might be clinging to the flotsam; looking for bodies; and collecting personal effects that would later be

given to the proper authorities. The *Campbell* then later escorted the *Stockholm* for awhile back to New York and then returned to Newport and later to New London. The *Stockholm* (at sea) was a strange site to behold, as she returned to New York unassisted. The pictures that I took at the site are included to substantiate the story of what I saw the morning of 7/26/56.

Again, a Sea Rescue Epic almost unequaled in maritime history in support of an SOS Call. Since then, I have talked to sailors from the Merchant Marine, the U.S Navy, Coast Guard and Air Force veterans that have all spent time in the water from ships that were blown up and planes that were shot down mostly during WWII. These survivors too, related to the importance of "...water temperatures and help being at the right place at the right time", or they would not be alive today

This event will be 51 years old this year, and to me the *Doria and Stockholm* collision does not seem that long ago. Again, I was involved in our pre-arrival Damage Control preparation, and upon arrival at the site only witnessed the after-effects of the shipwreck—and took pictures of the damaged *Stockholm* etc. I'm sure that for the survivors from both ships, and the mariners and aviators that were actually involved in the rescue, that it would only seem like yesterday's event. The Internet is loaded with facts regarding what happened, and one can really investigate the events (after the fact) that went right and wrong that night (and morning) by both ships, their crews and passengers. The results of the investigations; the decisions made by the Maritime Court System, Insurance Companies and Law Firms can also be reviewed. The *Stockholm* has subsequently been sold and rebuilt many times and has changed her name with each new owner. Today, she is classified as a small luxury liner, and sails under the name of the *Athena*. I'll put closure on my part of the story by booking a voyage in the near future.

Notes: 1) I can only relate to the *Campbell's* involvement, as that was my ship assignment. The *Yakutat* was also at the site (probably did similar work that morning), but I was not part of that crew. The Coast Guard Barque *Eagle* continued to her next port when the SOS was received. 2) I've done lots of research trying to determine the exact number of personnel aboard each vessel, and the exact time of key events. The earlier (and almost immediate) accounts that specified the numbers of personnel involved, specific times of key events etc. were just estimates (in some cases) by the newspapers, magazines, radio and TV, whereas the later reports and TV programs had more accurate numbers and information. Nevertheless, I'm close using the numbers etc that are included, and a few minutes either way should not distract from the story line. The rescue efforts were done quite well by all of those that were involved!



D.E. Penrod, USCG DC 2  
July 1956

**Recognition and sources of information:**

Personal collection of my letters written at that time to family and friends

All of the photographs are from my personal collection that I took at the site.

Discussions with Campbell shipmate (Paul Hooker, RO1) who had bridge duty that night, and subsequently checked his file of old letters to verify the above facts.

Life Magazine articles dated August 6, 1956

Portsmouth R.I Newspaper article---and many other newspapers following that incident

Merchant Marine historical facts

Many websites associated with the collection of information, identification of times, events etc

April 8, 2007

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At the time of the SOS, we were not close enough to give immediate assistance; the *Campbell* and *Yakutat* changed course and made-way for the collision site, and the *Eagle* (a sea-going square-rigged training vessel) continued on to her next port.

Note: The *Eagle* was formerly the *Horst Wessel*, built in Germany and commissioned in 1936. She became a war prize following the conclusion of WW11; was re-furbished, and became a training vessel for the United States Coast Guard. The *Eagle* is United States only square-rigger that is still sailing.

D. E. Penrod 4/8/07