

"Flares from the trapped crew attracted the attention of the Coast Guards, and Captain John A. Basch took a boat into the furious lake in an effort to reach the ship. The boat was swamped, smashed against the breakwater. The cutter ESCANABA, Lake Michigan rescue ship, then attempted to reach the CORT by steaming shoreward from a position out in the lake, but was able to approach only within half a mile. There her captain hove to, fearful of being driven upon the breakwater himself.

"All night, Coast Guardsmen were forced to stand by, vainly attempting to signal the ship with flares that went out like candles under the force of the gale. The scant few thousand yards of wind and sea proved impassable. The fate of Dippert taught the Coast Guardsmen that no boat could live in the gale. Thunderous breakers sweeping the breakwater from end to end forestalled any attempts to reach the ship by walking the stone pier.

"Cheers of a thousand shivering spectators rose above the roar of the gale as the Coast Guard surfboat fought its way out to the wallowing whaleback. Members of the CORT's crew had huddled in the cabin as the gale pounded their ship during the night and frustrated all rescue attempts. As the surfboat was launched, they came out on deck to watch the guardsmen fight their way out. For thirty minutes, the guardsmen fought to keep their tiny craft from capsizing in the 15-foot waves. When they reached the lee of the breakwater, they secured themselves with lines from the CORT.

"The temperature was below freezing and snow was beginning to fall. Five Coast Guardsmen fought their way out on the breakwater, lashed together, and shot the line aboard the ship. As the men were brought to the breakwater from the CORT, they were tied to the guardsmen. It was their third attempt to reach the wreck. The decks of the CORT were awash and only the superstructure was visible. The freighter had been broken in two by the pounding of the surf. The stern was submerged (sic) and the bow upraised.

"J. E. Hobart, a fisherman who lives near the harbor beach, said he heard the steamer strike, but was unable to see it. Wails of the vessel's whistle apprised him of the wreck. The same noise summoned the Coast Guardsmen. From the breakwater, they caught only occasional glimpses of the tossing ship as it lurched to the peak of 10-foot waves and smashed down against the rocks. Not until the ESCANABA bucked into the harbor from Grand Haven with its powerful searchlights did they get a full comprehension of the CORT's perilous position.

"It was believed the accident resulted from the inability of the CORT's officers to see in the darkness and storm. Size of the hole in the ship's bow and the noise of the impact indicated that she was steaming at considerable speed when she struck. Hundreds of Muskegon residents built bonfires along the shore and remained through the night as the drama developed.

"Soaked through, despite his heavy sea clothing, but still laboring in the biting cold to prepare a breeches buoy for use at daylight, Captain John A. Basch, commander of the Muskegon Coast Guard station, told with tears coursing down his face, of the loss of Dippert. 'We had all kinds of trouble getting our craft launched,' Basch said. 'Surf piled the boat back on shore several times before we got off. We finally got away and were almost out to the CORT when a cable parted. Our boat jumped like a cork. Dippert shot out into the lake like a bullet. I never even saw him after that. A man couldn't live a minute in that sea.'

"The CORT left Holland for Chicago at 9 a.m. Friday. The storm, described by marine men as the worst of the 1934 season, apparently broke its full force against the ore (sic) carrier. Charles V. Cox, of Minden City, Michigan, is captain of the CORT, a type of vessel fast disappearing from the lakes... A brother of the captain, James Cox, 48, is a fireman on the boat.

"So severe was the lake storm that the ANN ARBOR NO. 6 cancelled its schedule from Manitowoc, Wisconsin, and another ferry bound from Frankfort, Michigan, for Kewaunee, Wisconsin, was forced back to Frankfort harbor."