

got into the trough. The name could be made out, the BRUCE HUDSON, well known in lake traffic... Capt. Leonard resolved to board her. What his motives were, the court did not inquire, but it was not to his discredit if he had a healthy interest in the possibilities of earning salvage, as well as a humanitarian desire to save a company's property and the lives of any of her crew who might have been left below decks, and to remove this floating menace from the path of navigation.

"The seas running made the approach of the two vessels difficult and dangerous. The one was 248 feet long, the other 164, their combined burden of three or four thousand tons made impact possibly fatal to both. There was, to Capt. Leonard's mind, the added hazard of explosion. He believed the tanker to be loaded with gasoline. As a matter of fact, she was filled with 6,700 barrels of crude oil, but he had no reason to know that she would not burst with a roar of flame on the first bump, through the sparks of steel crashing on steel.

"First he held the BRULIN up to windward of the wallowing barge, thus making a lee, into which he lowered the sturdy punt the newsprint freighter carried on deck as a workboat. The punt was held by a line from the steamer. First Mate Charlie Levens and Rod McLennan, wheelsman, the twin heroes of this sage, lashed themselves with lifelines to the punt and essayed the voyage.

"The punt was filled with water, but the two plucky chaps hung on, veering out line and letting the punt drift down on the barge until it was almost there. Then they could see that the seas were breaking over the HUDSON with such force that the punt might be tossed right across the barge or capsized or smashed by touching it, and they themselves drowned. So they reluctantly signalled to be hauled back aboard the BRULIN...

"Next they tried the landing boom. All big steamers ride so high above the wharf levels that to get a man ashore to run the 'wires' when a mooring is being made, with all the lower (cargo) ports closed, the line-tender has to be dropped from the upper deck, as by parachute. To do this, a boom is rigged with whip rove through a block at the end of it. The outer end of the whip has a crossbar on it. On this, the lineman sits or straddles, the boom is swung out over the side, and his shipmates, tailing on to the fall of the whip, lower him down, like a spider on the end of his thread, till he touches the wharf. It is a tricky descent at the best of times, sometimes forty feet through the air, even if the ship is still and the wharf solid and free from ice.

"For one thing, you are apt to hang on to the rope a second too long, and find yourself sitting down very hard as they keep playing out the slack. But if you are dangling at the end of a thread from a 2,000 ton ship rolling her insides out in the trough, and are trying to light on another heaving platform rolling just as hard, and washed neck-deep by breakers - well, you are apt to get more than wet in the process.

"This was just Charlie Levens' problem. Capt. Leonard worked the BRULIN past the barge, on the lee side of her this time so as not to crush her by rolling down on her. The BRULIN passed within twenty-five feet, which was a very narrow margin for rolling safety, and the landing boom swung out, with First Mate Levens on the end of it. The boom end missed the barge rail by three feet. When the BRULIN rolled to starboard, he was plunged into the icy waters of Lake Ontario almost head-under. When the BRULIN rolled to port, he was swung fifty feet high in the air in a dizzying arc.

"The BRULIN rolled past, came around, and tried again. This time, Mate Levens was almost crushed as his 'boatswain's chair', the crossbar, struck the hoisting gear on the barge's forward deck. He could not drop off and catch the barge, so the second try failed.