

into the Atlantic Ocean. The beaches to the east of the harbor entrance were stained with a black film of petroleum up to a distance of five miles. Approximately one million gallons of crude were in the water and four and a half million gallons remained in the bow and stern sections of the tanker; moreover, the bow was still leaking petroleum at an alarming rate.

1. ACTIVITY OF THE FEDERAL AGENCIES

As soon as the *Ocean Eagle* accident occurred, those federal agencies which are authorized by law were immediately mobilized. The agencies concerned with the disaster were the U. S. Coast Guard, the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers, the U. S. Navy, and the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration. Their activities during the emergency can be summarized as follows:

A. Activities of the U.S. Coast Guard

By authority of Executive Order of the President of the United States No. 10173 as amended and the federal regulations which deal with port Authorities (Title 33, Code of Federal Regulation Part 6.04, Captain of the Port), the U. S. Coast Guard began the search and rescue operations of the *Ocean Eagle* at 7:20 A. M. on March 3rd, 1968. The vessel was first reported in danger about 500 yards north of Punta El Morro, the rocky head land to the east of the entrance channel. At 7:45 A. M., the Coast Guard cleared the port entrance and established a schedule to enter and leave the harbor.

The Coast Guard spread emulsifiers around the wreck acting under the Coast Pollution Law of 1961 which prohibits the dumping or spilling of oil in coastal waters. The emulsifiers were spread by tugboats and helicopters along the coast of San Juan to about 5 miles to the east of the entrance to the harbor. This activity was interrupted when the tugs were needed to pull the bow seaward. They were discontinued after a meeting where it was decided to eliminate the use of detergents.

When the oil began to spread at an alarming rate, the Coast Guard enlisted the other state and federal agencies concerned with the accident to share the duties of the operation. As a result, numerous agencies were involved in the activities to correct the problem; therefore, the Coast Guard cooperated with the other agencies in all aspects of the work.

The Coast Guard set-up a refuge for oil-soaked pelicans at their San Juan base. These birds were washed with a mild detergent and were treated with a mixture of mineral and castor oil. Fourteen out of the thirty five pelicans treated have survived.

The Coast Guard also built a 505 foot boom of wooden board with empty drums at both sides of the boat to float the boom. The purpose of the boom was to encircle the stern during the pumping operations, but it was never used. The boom was turned over to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers who in turn, handed over the boom to the Department of Public Works.

The total cost of these activities has not yet been determined.

B. Activities of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and U.S. Navy

The Corps of Engineers assumed responsibility for the removal of the *Ocean Eagle* wreck under section 19/20 of the River and Harbor Act of March 3rd, 1899. This act gives the Corps the responsibility for the removal of all wrecks which are a menace to navigation. In addition the Corps assisted in minimizing the pollution problem at the request of the Federal Water Pollution Control Administration.

After the owners of the vessel had formally abandoned the ship on March 6th, the Jacksonville District, whose jurisdiction includes Puerto Rico, assumed the job of removing the bow and the stern. On March 8th, negotiations were initiated with the Murphy-Pacific Salvage Company for removal of the stern section. The contractors salvage vessel arrived the same day to begin salvage operations.

The U.S. Navy agreed to handle the removal of the bow section. The Navy salvage team tried to pull the bow section off the coral reefs, but after many unsuccessful attempts, this operation was abandoned in favor of removing the crude and refloating this section for deep water disposal.

Between March 14th and March 27th, nearly 2 million gallons of petroleum were removed from both sections of the tanker. The offloaded petroleum was transported by barge to the Caribbean Gulf Refinery docks.