

Ocean Joss

Ships in Focus

By Geoff Walker



(AMSA)

“Oceanic Grandeur”

The stricken Oil Tanker **“Oceanic Grandeur”**, 30,715 GRT, which struck an uncharted rock on 3rd March 1970 in the Torres Straits, whilst on passage from the Indonesian port of Dumai, to Brisbane, Australia. Built by Sasebo H.I. Ltd., in Sasebo, Japan, in 1965, the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** had a marine Pilot on board at the time of the incident and was carrying about 55,000 tons of Sumatran Crude Oil. Eight of the 15 oil cargo tanks were ruptured, causing an oil spill upon impact. The ship reduced speed and anchored five nautical miles to the east, half an hour later. The **Oceanic Grandeur** then remained at anchor.

The strong tidal currents in the vicinity of the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** made it impractical to deploy floating booms to contain the oil. Small vessels were used to apply dispersant because neither helicopters nor crop-spraying aircraft were readily available in the area. The small vessels also attempted to break up oil slicks with their crisscrossing wakes and propeller action. Coincidentally, a smaller tanker, the **Leslie J. Thompson**, was under ballast bound for Dumai, when she encountered the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** around 9.15 am on 3 March. Noticing the **“Oceanic Grandeur’s”** list, the master of the **Leslie J. Thompson** contacted the pilot on board the **“Oceanic Grandeur”**; however, the master of the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** declined the offer of assistance until he received the **“Oceanic Grandeur’s”** owners’ consent for any proposed salvage agreement.

Finally, the **Leslie J. Thompson** hipped alongside the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** on the 4th of March and commenced transferring of the oil cargo. The **Leslie J. Thompson** and another vessel, the **Oceanic Liberty**, removed all the crude oil in three shipments over the ensuing 18-day period. There are varying reports regarding the total amount of oil leaked into the sea, but it has been estimated to be around 1100 tons. This includes crude oil from the cargo tanks, as well as lighter diesel fuel oil. Upon completing the transfer of oil to the shuttle tankers the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** was able to make temporary repairs sufficient to enable her to sail for Singapore. The rock that holed the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** was located and blasted to allow a water depth above the rock of 12 meters. It is now marked on charts as **'O.G. Rock'**. The Marine Pilot of the **“Oceanic Grandeur”** was absolved of all responsibility regarding the incident.

References: Summary extracted from AMSA Incident Report, AMSA image.