

Race Point Light can be seen at the right, in the picture below.

-February 25, 1960 -

# Grounded Freighter Awaits Tug, Tide After Going Ashore Near Race Light

By Dan Bernstein

All around Provincetown, this sunny Wednesday afternoon, the word is being passed, "The tug got the Monica Smith moving today!" The tug was the Orion, operated by the Boston Tugboat Co. and the Monica Smith was the Swedish Chicago Lines freighter that had gone aground late Saturday night.

I heard the latest news at a gas station from someone who had just come in from New Beach where the 280-foot freighter has been aground about a mile south-east of Race Light. I had some doubts as to the truth of the report that the Orion, all alone, had budged the 6,000 tons of dead weight off the beach, if only a little bit. The Orion together with the tug Mars, had both previously made efforts to free the Monica Smith and had only a broken steel towing cable to show for their efforts. Running this latest report down, disclosed that it had been indeed true. This morning's tide was considerably higher than in past towing attempts and while the tug could not pull the ship off the beach, it had moved it. Plans are for the Orion to maintain her position and to keep tension on the towline until the next high tide. The Monica Smith might just come clear tonight!

### Back Empty

The freighter had left Fall River on Saturday afternoon at 2 p.m., where she had unloaded a cargo of cement. She had been delayed in leaving port for three hours due to the high winds. At 11:10 p.m. that night when she ran aground, she had been on her way to St. Johns, New Brunswick, to pick up a cargo. Then she was to go to Halifax before returning to Europe where she was to call at ports in England, Norway, Sweden, Poland and Denmark. Her next trip to the United States was to take her through the St. Lawrence Seaway to service Great Lakes ports.

The Monica Smith is a Great Lakes freighter that had recently added 36 feet of length to her hull to accommodate more cargo. The modification took place in Europe just prior to her present trip

where she had been calling at East Coast ports while the St. Lawrence Seaway is closed for the Winter.

When she came aground Saturday night the Monica Smith was empty except for the 27 man crew aboard. Captain John Gustrind had retired to his cabin after clearing the Cape Cod Canal, leaving the third mate in charge. Visibility was excellent but a howling fifty-mile-an-hour wind from the northwest was blowing across the bay. The Monica Smith should have passed 3 miles to the northwest of a gas-lighted buoy which is located two miles northwest of Race Light. Race Light is on the very extreme tip of Cape Cod and is the dividing point between the Atlantic Ocean and Massachusetts Bay. For some unknown reason the ship came aground just south-east and less than a mile away from Race Light. Since the winds from the northwest were of gale force it is presumed that the empty freighter had been blown off course onto the beach. Shortly after grounding the Coast Guard cutter Evergreen, on standby duty at the entrance of Provincetown Harbor was notified and she put a towline on the freighter with the assistance of the motor lifeboat from the Race Point Coast Guard Station. The Evergreen pulled the ship off the beach but the towline broke and the Monica Smith ran aground at her present position, the wind forcing her stern around so that she lay almost parallel to the beach.

### Completely Aground

Sunday morning the word had spread through town and people started going out to the beach first by the tens, and in the afternoon by the hundreds. At low tide it was possible to walk completely around the ship. A few of the crew members came down from

the ship by way of a Jacob's ladder and chatted with the onlookers on the beach. A curious sight it was, rivalling the strange appearance of a live whale that had become grounded in December last year at the East End of Provincetown Harbor. Just as the whale had resisted five attempts at towing, so the Monica Smith wanted to stay on the beach. One remembers the Homeric myth of the singing sirens on the faraway shores of an Italian island whose voices lured the unwary to their destruction. Unlike the whale, this ship came aground on a holiday weekend, and many people were visiting the Cape. Still others took advantage of the long weekend to drive down to the Cape Tip to see the spectacle of the huge white ship sitting on shore.

On Sunday afternoon the tugs Orion and Mars arrived from Boston to attempt towing the freighter at high tide which was around 6 p.m. The Coast Guard amphibious duck which had been standing by on the beach all day, was called upon to carry towlines from the two tugs to the Monica Smith. It was on one of these trips that the duck started to fill with water and just made it to the safety of shallow water when the surf swamped her with gallons of water. Her crew attempted pumping her out but she had become stuck, like the freighter, in "live sand". Efforts to winch her out by the power wagon from the Race Point Station were unsuccessful. The Monica Smith let out two steel cables from her powerful winches which were attached to the duck. This too, failed to free the duck. When the tide did go down, both the duck and the freighter were stuck. Two powerful caterpillar tractors finally got the duck ashore.

All day Sunday the Monica Smith had been without any electric power as her diesel generators use sea water in the cooling system. As she had been high and dry all day, it wasn't until late afternoon that she was able to start her generators when the tide came in. Later a hose was attached between the cooling system intake and the low tide water point to provide power during the day. Sunday night I drove two of the freighter crew members into town and back to the ship in a vain attempt to find some Sunday newspapers. The lack of electric-

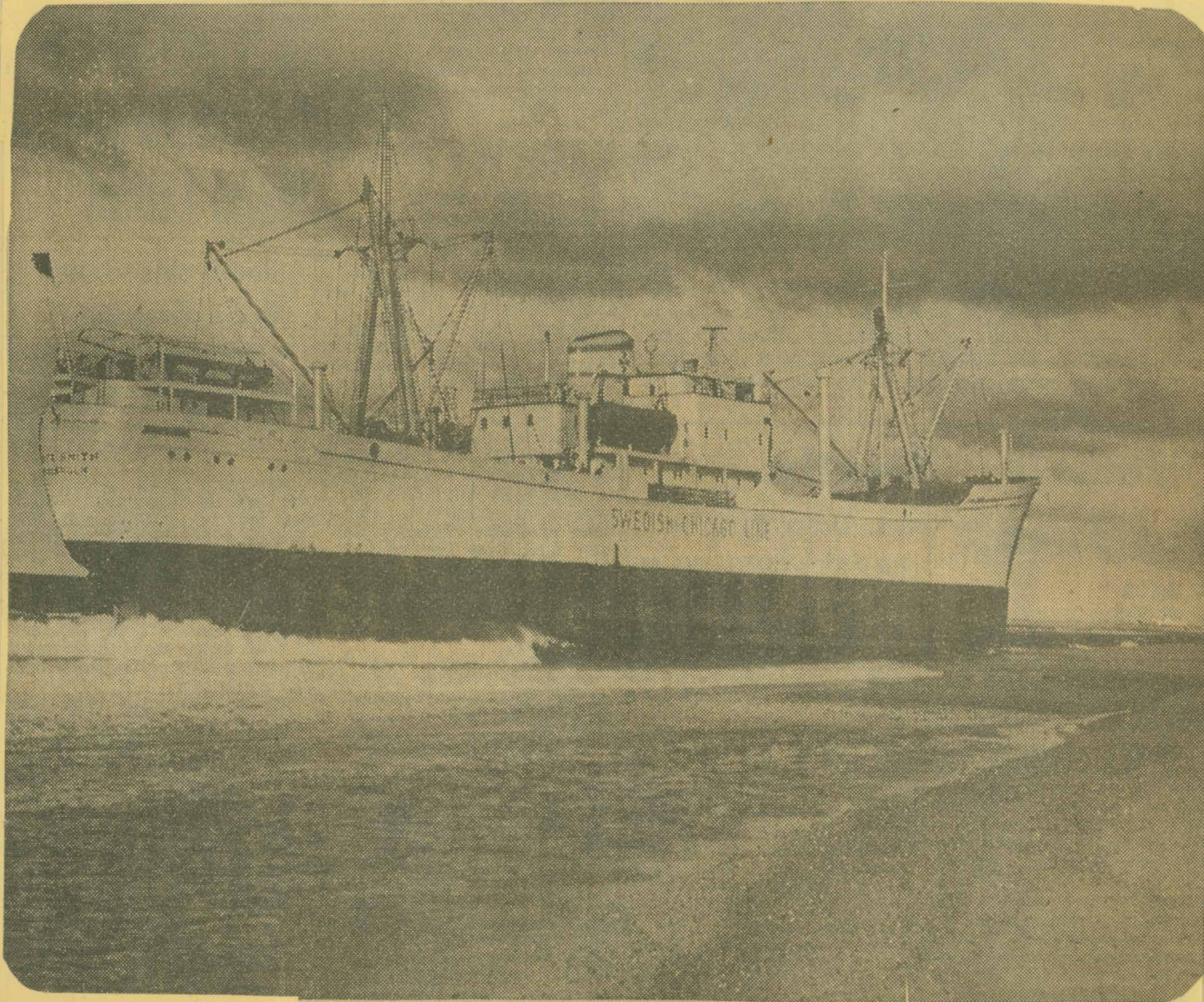
ity during the day prevented the crew from listening to their radio or watching television for news of the Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley.

Monday found Provincetown basking in the warm sun. The day was clear and the sea was placid. Literally thousands of people streamed along the Mid-Cape highway headed for Provincetown. News of the grounded ship appeared in newspapers

across the world, on the radio, and on television. Along with the hordes of curious people came photographers and newsmen. The sky droned constantly with planes from Provincetown, Boston, and New York carrying news photographers. The Monica Smith was snapped from above and below by thousands of photographs. Not only did supplies of film run out in Provincetown, but gasoline as well. Added to this the restau-

rants and luncheonettes who had standing-room-only business that ran down their stocks. Clam chowder was a favorite and the first to go off menus.

While the crowds were out at New Beach viewing the freighter, the tugs Orion and Mars were tied up at MacMillan Wharf to take on water and to have the propeller of the Mars freed of a tangled line by local skindivers, Austin L. Rose, Jr., Russell Watts and Ron-



Hard aground at Provincetown is the Swedish freighter Monica Smith, which went off course Saturday night and ended up ashore about a mile and a half north of the New Beach bathhouse. An attempt last night by two ocean-going tugs from Boston to refloat the vessel proved unsuccessful and further efforts were slated at high tide this morning. The vessel was bound from Fall River to Canada when she became an unwilling visitor to Cape Cod.