

Posted – April 16, 2024

## **THIS DATE in HISTORY...**

The year was 1947, and it was mid-April. Though the month was still fairly new, it had already proved to be quite eventful. On the second of April, the Tribunal in Poland sentenced Auschwitz commandant, Rudolf Höss, to death. On the 7<sup>th</sup>, 325,000 telephone workers went on strike in the United States. On that same day, historic industrialist, Henry Ford, passed away. On the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in major league baseball when he crossed the white line onto Ebbets Field in Brooklyn (NY). On that historic day, a French liberty ship known as the SS Grandcamp found itself moored at a pier in the post-war boom town of Texas City, Texas.

On the morning of April 16, 1947, the Grandcamp was already laden with tobacco, cotton, peanuts, drilling equipment, large balls of sisal twine, a few cases of small arms ammunition, and about 2,300 tons of Ammonium.Nitrate.Fertilizer. The day's primary objective was to finish loading the remaining fertilizer into Hold #4 of the ship.

It should be noted that within a stone's throw of the Grandcamp lie another ship (the High Flyer) laden with 1,000 tons of ammonium nitrate fertilizer, an Agrochemical Plant, grain silos, a large crude oil tank farm, and a sugar/molasses plant.

Just before 8:00 am, workers noticed excessive heat, smoke, and eventually fire. Attempts to suppress the fire with available resources proved futile, so the crew evacuated the hold. Concerned that using water to battle the fire might damage the ship's cargo, the captain ordered the crew to seal the hatch and apply steam to the hold. At 9:12 a.m. the cargo within the Grandcamp detonated creating an explosion that registered at the earthquake center in Denver, Colorado. The shock from the explosion knocked two small airplanes out of the sky. Flying molten shrapnel injured personnel on the ground and started multiple fires. The blast also created a tidal wave that impacted the entire area.

# IMPRIMIS

— Forensic Health & Safety —



As you might expect, the High Flyer's cargo also detonated; generating an explosion that was comparable to the initial explosion aboard the Grandcamp. The agrochemical plant was destroyed as was just about everything within a half mile radius of the initial explosion. In order to establish a general sense of this event, consider the the Grandcamp's 2 ton anchor was found 1.62 miles from its point of origin.



When this horrific event ended a couple of days later, it was established as the worst industrial disaster in United States history, and it remains so to this day.

**Imprimis FHS** – Specializing in Expert Witness Services in the field of Environmental Health & Safety. [andy@imprimisfhs.com](mailto:andy@imprimisfhs.com) (843) 209-2951.