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Sept., 9, Boat Lift

Border Patrol
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The undersigned departed Port Isabel, Texas on September 9, 1954 on the SS Emancipation bound for Vera Cruz, Ver., with 800 aliens aboard. We sailed at 7 p.m. At about 7:20 p.m., just as we were leaving the ship channel, two aliens jumped overboard and swam to the rock jetties. Since this was not reported to me immediately I did not see the aliens in the water. I asked the American Pilot if he would notify the Brownsville office and also the Coast Guard when he returned to Port Isabel and he said that he would. Newspapers in Vera Cruz stated that they had information that one of the aliens drowned. As you know, I sent you all the current newspapers pictures and reports from Vera Cruz. So far, the Vera Cruz newspapers have been very unbiased in their reporting on the present Boat Lift.

As we pulled away from the dock in Port Isabel, Texas, there was a great amount of laughing and shouting and hurling insults at the Immigration Officers. This fiesta air remained until we left the ship channel and entered the Gulf. At the first big rolling wave the fiesta air aboard suddenly stopped. Sea sickness took charge of the majority of the aliens almost immediately. A large number of the aliens were sea sick the entire voyage. On Saturday we encountered the hurricane known as "Florence." The aliens that had overcome sea sickness again became ill because of the extremely heavy seas and high winds. We skirted the hurricane for about eight hours and arrived in Vera Cruz about 11 p.m. September 11.

Upon arrival in Vera Cruz there was considerable confusion as to whether to keep the aliens on the boat or let them off. Immigration claimed that they did not have sufficient notice to prepare food for the people. Finally it was agreed by the ship to give the people breakfast aboard ship. The people were then allowed to get off ship and go into a large warehouse nearby. Early next morning some of the aliens were allowed to depart Vera Cruz by bus. These persons had money. The others were placed aboard a train destined for Mexico. The women in chair cars and men aboard freight cars. As far as I could ascertain this train was not supervised. I understand aliens got off wherever they pleased.

The Boat Lift is discouraging to many of the Mexicans, however, there is still a large number that state that they intend to return to the United States illegally immediately. There were a large number that boasted to me that they would beat me back to the United States. Aliens are fed three times a day aboard ship and none claim that the food is insufficient. We did not sail from Vera Cruz until September 17, at 8 a.m. I was told by ship officials that they delay was due to boiler and pump repairs. We docked at Port Isabel, Texas Sept. 19, at 10:30 a.m.

Ernest G. Garrison

