



Shipwreck: MAURICE DESGAGNES

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The small freighter **Maurice Desgagnes** had a diverse career, mixing deep sea, coastal, Arctic and Great Lakes trading.

This vessel was originally known as **Vaasa Provider**, and it had been built in 1963 at Terneuzen, Holland. The 296-ft long by 44-ft wide general cargo carrier was sold to A/B Rauanelmo O/Y of Finland in 1966 and sailed as **Lauri-Ragnar**. The ship was renamed **Finnrunner** when acquired by R. Nordstrom & Co. in 1971.

A year later it became the flagship of Desgagnes Navigation and moved to Canadian registry as **Maurice Desgagnes**, where it replaced the ill-fated **Voyageur D.** that had been lost on the St. Lawrence in January 1972.

Maurice Desgagnes initially operated between Montreal and Sept Iles, PQ. Other trips included a voyage to Brazil in 1973, annual excursions in the summer supply run to the Canadian Arctic and occasional trading into the Great Lakes.

On February 26, 1974, the vessel made the news when it caught fire while in Montreal. The fire damaged the interior and resulted in minor burns to the Captain, his wife and infant daughter. Just over a year after that tragedy, the ship collided with the **Skua** at Sorel on April 14, 1975.

Maurice Desgagnes travelled to the Bahamas, Guatemala, and Egypt in 1978, brought steel from Europe in 1979 and had just visited Venezuela prior to heading north to load a cargo of oak railway ties.

The ship loaded the last cargo at New Orleans, LA for Sept Iles when it was caught by a late winter storm in the Atlantic on March 11, 1980. While sailing about 75 miles ESE of Halifax in 50 - 60 mph winds, a monster wave struck the vessel, causing the cargo to shift drastically

Fortunately, the Canadian destroyer **Huron** was nearby and sent helicopters in response to the distress call. They evacuated all 21 sailors from the listing freighter on March 12, 1980.

Maurice Desgagnes sank in the Atlantic about 30 minutes after the last man left the pitching decks. ⚓



Freighter Maurice Desgagnes