

U.S. COAST GUARD
SECTOR NORTH CAROLINA, WILMINGTON

Investigator Statement Form

Investigator/Witness Name: Charles A. Mellor, LT

IIA Number: 4474566

Date of Incident: Oct 29, 2012

Incident Name: BOUNTY sinking

I, the undersigned, make the following statement voluntarily, without threat, duress or promise of reward:

On October 29, 2012, I received a call from LCDR Evelyn Samms around 0900 regarding the sinking of the vessel BOUNTY & the need for me to depart to Air STA Elizabeth City to investigate. I was told that the vessel was approximately 90 miles SE of Cape Hatteras, NC when the vessel sank around 0300 that morning & that of the 16 crew onboard, 14 had been recovered. I was also advised that MST2 Devin Horoszewski (USCG Investigator from Nags Head, NC) & CDR Kevin Carroll (D5 DPI) had also been notified & were also in-route to investigate. I immediately called MST2 Horoszewski and notified him to ask the company about drug testing of the crew & to let him know that I & CDR Carroll would be arriving soon to help him with the investigation.

Once arriving at Air STA Elizabeth City, CDR Carroll & I attended the interview of Jessica Hewitt which was being led by MST2 Horoszewski. Jessica was a deckhand onboard the vessel & had been onboard since August of 2012. She stated that she had approximately four years experience, mostly as a 2nd & 3rd mate, operating on fishing vessels. She mentioned that there was lots of concern amongst the crew & family members of the upcoming hurricane "Sandy", so the CAPT (Robin R. Walbridge) had a discussion with the crew prior to leaving New London, CT advising them that if anyone would like to leave, they could with no repercussions. Only crewmembers Marco & Morgan departed the vessel once arriving New London, but it was assumed that they never intended to sail on this voyage due to prior engagements. Jennifer Hewitt stated that based on her previous experiences, she thought that there was very little instruction & safety training on the BOUNTY. She stated that when the vessel started taking on water it seemed obvious to her that no one knew how to operate the bilge system. She further stated that the crew was exhausted & fatigued having recently worked on the vessel while in the yard (dry dock), working all day Thursday (25 Oct 2012) giving tours in New London, CT, & that same day attending a tour of a Navy submarine. She thought the crew wasn't rested enough for leaving. Also, in her opinion, the vessel was not safe to sail because there were numerous objects that hadn't been properly secured on the vessel & the engine room still needed more work, but the CAPT seemed urgent to get to St. Petersburg, FL for upcoming tours & a liberty day in Key West. Jessica stated that while working on BOUNTY she had never participated in an abandon ship drill nor a fire drill & that during the only man overboard drill she was part of, the CAPT told the crew that it was unsatisfactory. She thought the safety drills on the BOUNTY were more chaotic than those she had participated in on other vessels. She stated that while the vessel was taking on water, no one seem to be in charge, that there was a major lack of communication/organization amongst the crew on what to do ("rumor reporting"), that no one seemed to knowledgeable about the life rafts, & that many of the crew seemed

confused on how to don their immersion suits. She wasn't sure on where the water was coming into the vessel, but said that while in the yard (Boothbay, ME) some holes were identified in the hull for repair. She stated that on Sunday (around 1500-1700) the ships port & starboard generator stopped working & the fuel tank sight glass for the port generator was broken & potentially caused the generator to stop working due to the lack of fuel. All of the crew members were working on the bilge trying to pump out the water, but because generators were down, the electric bilge pumps had no power. Ms. Hewitt stated that before leaving port the vessel had the incorrect fuel filters onboard & that could also have been a contributing factor for the generator problems. During this time Ms. Hewitt recalled there were a dispute between Dan Cleveland (Mate) & the CAPT because the CAPT didn't want the crew to don their immersion suits or life vest because it would be too difficult to work with gear on & it may scare them. She said that once water was up to the tween deck, the crew left the bottom of the ship & gathered on deck. All crew members were wearing an immersion suit & had also grabbed a "ditch kit" used for emergencies. While on deck, the crew attempted to muster, but everyone was scattered on deck in small groups, & none of the groups were near the life rafts. Earlier in the day a jackline on the starboard side of the vessel had been established for people to clip into. Claudene Christian wasn't familiar in the weather so she was by herself & clipped in. Ms. Hewitt stated no signal was given by anyone to jump overboard or to get to the life rafts & the vessel just went over & everyone went overboard. Some of the crew tried to get the life rafts to release, but weren't immediately successful & others were tangled in the rigging. After sometime, one life raft opened on its own & the other was finally opened by the crew. Lastly, she mentioned that it took a very long time for everyone to get into the life rafts because no training had ever been done on how to do so.

My second interview was with Adam Prokosch, who was an Able Seaman (AB) on the vessel for approximately eight months, but had five years experience on traditional boats. Adam was visibly in pain from injuries received during the sinking. Adam verified that there was a lot of concern from crew members & their families prior to the BOUNTY leaving port regarding the storm. He mentioned noticing on the AIS system that no other vessels were at sea during the storm & that posed concern with him & some of the crew. Adam stated that BOUNTY was taking on water, but wasn't sure where. He stated that crew had called the Coast Guard via satellite phone. The day the BOUNTY sank, Adam remembered the crew conducting a muster under deck & donning their emersion suits. After some time, the spaces below deck had taken on significant amount of water & the vessel started listing so the CAPT made the decision for the crew to retreat to the main deck. Once on deck, they started to conduct another muster count for crew, but the vessel listed & capsized before the muster could be completed & no life rafts were deployed prior to the vessel sinking. He stated that he got tangled in the shrouds & forced under water several times by the sinking vessel & once untangled, he swam away from vessel. He stated that one life raft was deployed & the other was still in its container until crew was able to get it to deploy.


Third interview was with Drew Salapatek a deck hand on the BOUNTY. This was Drew's second season on the BOUNTY (9 months per season). Drew states that on Thursday before leaving the port of New London, the crew mustered & had a discussion concerning everyone's worries about the upcoming storm. He said the CAPT told the crew at the muster that anyone who wanted to leave & not take the trip could do so. On Friday & Saturday, there were major concerns with the bilge & worries of flooding. The crew was using every means available to pump out water & they weren't making progress; bilge filling with water was the main focal point of the crew. Drew stated that the engine room was filing up with water &

power started shorting out due to the poor conditions. Drew said that although they had called the Coast Guard before sinking, they probably should have notified the Coast Guard much sooner once they realized they couldn't empty the bilge fast enough & were facing additional inclement weather. He states that the wind was hitting the port beam & then the vessel turned over. Everyone was in immersion suits but no had planned on going overboard when the vessel listed & everyone fell into the sea.

Fourth interview was with Chief Mate John Svendsen. He's been on BOUNTY for three years, but has over 15 year's sea time. John stated that the BOUNTY had recently left the yard & underwent a dry-dock. During this yard period, the tank room had been moved aft & berthing moved forward so fuel & vent lines wouldn't pass through berthing. He stated that there was a lot of concern among the crew & their families about leaving during a hurricane. John had a discussion with the CAPT about the crews concerns, & as a result the CAPT addressed everyone before setting sail to let everyone know that due to his experience he was confident about making the voyage, but anyone who wanted to leave could do so. Saturday evening, sometime between 1600-1700, John recalls that the port generator & port main engine shut down. He says that the vessel was taking on water faster than the pumps could dewater the vessel, but no one could determine where the water was coming in. At this point, everyone donned their immersion suits & roll call was taken. When water levels got too high below deck, everyone retreated to the main deck of the vessel & began to stage themselves for another muster. John states that before a decision was made to abandon ship, the vessel turned over & everyone entered the water. He was pulled under water for approximately 20 feet by the sinking vessel, but managed to come back up to the surface after several seconds. After reaching the surface, he was hit by a yard arm in the face & arm & sank under water again for several more seconds. Each time John was taken under water by the vessel, he wasn't sure that he was ever going to come back up. When he finally reached the surface again & was able to break away from the entanglements of the vessel, he swam to a strobe/epirb floating in a "ditch kit". John states that the Coast Guard had been notified prior to the vessel sinking so they weren't in the water very long before being rescued.

Fifth interview was with Mark Warner a deck hand on BOUNTY. Mark had been on BOUNTY for 5 months, but has about 18 months experience on ships. Mark stated that the vessel started taking on water a day or so before the sinking, but when they started losing their engines, generators, pumps, & power is when conditions worsened considerably. Mark states he knew that the Coast Guard had been called & the crew had been told to put on their life jackets. Mark said that all the crew had their immersion suits on before the vessel sank. He states that they were all on the deck when the vessel rolled over & everyone was tossed into the water. He says that no one knew how to get into the inflated life rafts, especially with their immersion suits on which made it even more difficult. He says that it took what seemed like an hour to get just one person into the raft. They stayed in the life rafts until Coast Guard arrived to rescue them.

I have read my statement as documented above (and, if applicable, on continuation pages), and to the best of my knowledge and belief, it is true and correct.

 LT
Signature

13 Dec 12
Date