

# Best Revenge 5 Incident Report

## Fire on Vessel --- July 07, 2017

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**Nicholas James Baxter – Captain/Master of Best Revenge 5**

**Approx.: 00h00**

I went to bed for the night in the crew cabin along with Lucy Fletcher (the vessel's First Mate and Chef). The crew cabin is located amidships on the main level, forward of the main salon – and is entered through a small door at the center-forward part of the salon. The vessel was docked on A-Dock at MacDougalls' Marine, at the end face slip, port-side-to, with the bow facing south, towards the mouth of Falmouth Inner Harbor.

**Approx: 01h00-2h00**

I awoke to the smell of smoke and, to investigate, I climbed out of the overhead hatch located in the crew head (which is *en suite* with the crew cabin, on the port side of the cabin). As I looked aft towards the main salon, I could see through the forward-looking windows of the salon that it was full of smoke, and I could see a red glow towards the lower part of the port side of the salon or the lower port companionway.

I immediately climbed back down into the crew head and yelled to Lucy to get out of the boat ASAP – and to alert our neighbor on the dock, Chris Sullivan (an employee of MacDougalls' who lives aboard his boat, two vessels down from us on A Dock) and ask him to call the fire department. However, instead of following me out of the hatch in the crew head, she ran aft out through the crew doorway into and then through the salon, into the cockpit and down onto the dock via the sea-stairs at the port-aft quarter of the boat. I was later able to infer that – after she exited – she had left open the sliding door from the salon to the cockpit.

I learned several minutes later from Lucy that, the moment she got to the dock, she did run to Chris' boat and slapped hard on his hull, yelling for him to come out because our vessel was on fire. She reported that she awoke him and he came right out to help and called the fire department. It appears that he was asleep when the fire started.

After alerting Lucy, I climbed back out through the crew head hatch and – realizing I could not reach the sea stairs aft – I ran to the front port pulpit, jumped into the water, and swam around to the dock.

I found Lucy with a water hose standing near the part of the vessel's topsides where the aft port head is located on the lower interior level of the vessel – immediately adjacent to the dock power pedestal on the dock where I had plugged the vessel's 110V/50A power cord. The exterior of the topsides was burning severely at that spot and a hole had burned through the topsides, just below the portlight for the head in the aft-port guest cabin. The power pedestal itself was burned and badly charred and melted. **[see Lucy's report below]**. I should note that – at that location inside the vessel – there are no electrical power sources, breakers/panels, or any storage area for explosive/flammable gases.

While Lucy was trying to extinguish the flames on the exterior of the topsides and on the shore-power pedestal, I assisted Chris in moving his boat off the dock to the marina's fuel dock. I then ran back to the boat where Lucy was still spraying the boat with the dock hose.

A short time later, a backdraft occurred, causing a significant increase in the fire. Flames shot forcefully out of the salon aft-wards into the cockpit, out of the hole in the side of the boat where Lucy was pouring water, and also up and out of the sides of the mast.

It was my assessment that the risk to life and limb was too great to permit any further efforts, and I pulled Lucy back down the dock, away from the burning vessel. It was then that I realized Lucy had been burned while running through the salon and cockpit. Lucy had not felt any pain yet.

It was about at this time that the fire department and EMT arrived. My best sense that this was about 30 minutes after I awoke and starting evacuating the boat. We took Lucy off the dock to the EMT, who started treating her burns. We both then climbed into an ambulance and were taken to Falmouth hospital. Lucy was later flown by helicopter to the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston, where she is being treated for second and third degree burns on her arms and hands, and second degree burns on her feet.

**Lucy Fletcher – Chef / First Mate of Best Revenge 5**  
**[transcribed by Joshua Goldberg from an interview in hospital on July 15, 2017]**

Around 1:00 AM, I awoke to Nick's yelling to me to get out of the boat as quickly as possible. I didn't know where he was, and I was awakening from a dead sleep. It was hard to breathe, I could smell acrid smoke.

My first instinct was to head aft through the door of our cabin into the boat's main salon. As I entered the salon, the smoke was far thicker and I began choking. My eyes were wide open, but it was total blackness. I could smell melting fiberglass, but saw no flames anywhere in the salon.

With my hands out, I stumbled forward until I felt the glass of the sliding door... and I slid the door open and stepped into the cockpit. Suddenly I could breathe. There was no smoke or fire in the cockpit.

I ran down the boat stairs to the dock and ran to the boat owned by Chris Sullivan (works for MacDougalls' - lives aboard his boat 10 meters or so from BR5). I slapped / banged several times on his hull, yelling that BR5 was aflame and asking that he call the fire department. He awoke and I headed back to BR5.

As I approached BR5, I could see the exterior of the boat burning in one spot: forward of the boat stairs, right where the shore-power pedestal was. The pedestal itself was smoldering, burning and charred, and seemed to be melted / melting down to the dock. I grabbed a dock hose from the side of the dock and began dousing the fire on the exterior of the topsides, tried to extinguish the flames. I thought that if I could stop the burning at this spot, the fire wouldn't spread elsewhere on the boat. But every time I seemed to get the flames almost out, they would flicker back to life and begin to spread into the vessel. I could see the interior of the aft port guest cabin first catch fire... and the fire seemed to spread from there. At around this time, the portlight above the exterior flames fell away from the topsides and the hole began to widen.

By this time, Nick had returned to my side – after he had helped Chris move his boat to the MacDougalls' fuel dock. I was still hoping we could put the fire out at that spot... and was worried because it seemed a long time for the arrival of the fire fighters. At some time over the next 15 minutes, there was a dramatic “whoosh” (which Nick later told me was the backdraft, as air moved through the boat possibly between this hole and the open sliding door). Large flames shot out of the salon into the cockpit and out of the hole in front of us on the topsides.

Nick pulled me back down the dock towards land. At about this time, police, fire and EMTs started to arrive. I urged them to rush – perhaps the boat could be saved. They did not move that quickly.

A fire fighter or police officer took me to an EMT... I was burned but I had not realized it before. They asked me some questions about my identity, examined me, and then they took me and Nick to Falmouth Hospital.