



U.S. COAST GUARD WITNESS STATEMENT FORM

Witness Name: [Redacted]  
Street Address: [Redacted]  
City/State/Zip: [Redacted]

Date: 27 SEP 2019  
Phone Number: [Redacted]  
MMC#: [Redacted]

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

- What was your position during the response? i.e. COXSWAIN, LOOKOUT.
- Describe the scene as you approached GOLDEN RAY.
- Did you see any fire or smoke? If so where was it coming from and can you describe its appearance, smell, etc.
- Did you hear any alarms from the GOLDEN RAY?
- Were there any other sounds from the GOLDEN RAY?
- Was there any other vessel traffic in the area?
- What was the observed weather on scene including sea state, wind, etc.?
- As you conducted SAR Ops, what were your interactions with the GOLDEN RAY crew?
- Did you have any discussion with the GOLDEN RAY crew? Please summarize.
- Did you take any photo or video during the response?
- Is there any other amplifying information that can aid in the investigation?

OATH/SIGNATURE: I have read my statement consisting of 3 page(s) and hereby swear or affirm the information provided is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

[Redacted Signature] STATEMENT

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER

Subscribed and sworn to me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this 27 (day) of SEP (month), 2019 (year).

[Redacted Signature] ADMINISTERING OATH

## United States Coast Guard

### Witness Statement

- My Position during the response was Coxswain of the 29139
- Scene: WE arrived around 0300 in the morning. It was very dark outside and there were several boats with spotlights all shining at the Golden Ray crew as they were climbing down lines and firehoses to surrounding boats. The 45741 was bow to the Golden Ray as we came on scene. The Golden Ray was on its port side with about a 60-70% list and still slowly sinking/turning.
- On the 29139 we were in charge of transferring personnel to and from the golden Ray. Our first trip we took 11 people from the 45741 who came off of the Golden Ray. As we came back on scene there was smoke that we could see all the way out from Bird Island in our AOR. As I then maneuvered the 29139 to get alongside the Golden RAY that is when we received reports from the tug boats saying there were possible fires. After I was transferred more of the crew and we were making our second trip back to the triage command, that is when on the starboard side that was pointing to the sky was in flames near the starboard beam of the vessel. As we made our way back we picked up members of the Fire Department to access the fire. When then transferred the firefighters to the St. Simons pier where they picked up an infrared heat gun. With that heat gun we circled the Golden Ray twice and were able to determine the hottest spots of the vessel which we concluded was the goose neck next to the pilot house and the stern of the vessel where the fire was, but had gone out by that time. There was smoke after the fire went out, but instead of it being dark/black smoke, it was now white smoke and would stay that way until it finally dissipated by the second day. When it was just the white smoke, it had a burning rubber smell, the crew concluded it smelled like burning wires, or the rubber casings of wires.
- I did heard alarms for approximately four hours after being on scene, then the alarms stopped, but there was still visible white smoke.
- The Sounds I heard from the Golden Ray, other than the alarms, were what sounded like cars moving around the hitting each other. The water that was flowing through the vessel was making smaller items bang against the bulkheads. We initially thought the smaller stuff moving and making noise in the hull was the remaining four passengers, but we later learned they were near the stern some 24 hours later.

- There was little to no vessel traffic the first night other than local agencies (DNR, SEATOW, etc...). The second day a few rec vessels were wondering around the perimeter to look at the scene, but never got close enough to cause any danger or any disturbance. The second day was also the day when all the booms and clean-up teams started doing their assessments and getting their plans, so their boats were scattered throughout the day.
- Observed weather: 2-3 knot current with incoming and outgoing tides. Initially on scene there were less than 10 knot winds and would decrease as the sun came up. Sea state was 2 feet to 3 feet initially and slowly became 1 foot – 2 feet as the sun came up as well. Initially on scene it was pitch black one of the darker nights I have seen in my three years I have been in Brunswick Georgia.
- During the SAR Ops, my crew and I interacted with several crew members. We first received for transport the 11 people the 45741 rescue. When they were transferred we had to render first aid to several members, and provided as much water and blankets as we could. There was a lot of blood and some of them had oil on them. The ones I talked to while navigating back to the station spoke English and they were just recounting their stories of how they escaped the vessel. Most were in high spirits, but some were in shock and I was not able to have conversations with those passengers. My crew and I talked to all of them as much as we could and tried to get any more details about anyone who was left on the vessel before we transited back the Golden Ray. The second group we took back to the triage command center, we even more talkative, and appeared to be in better health. One said he was the chief engineer so when we were transiting I was just asking him about the ship layout and any ideas how we could access the boat safely. My crew talked with the other gentlemen after we assessed them and made sure they were safe and didn't require medical attention. The last time I had passengers from the Golden Ray on the 29139 was on the last day when we pulled the last 4 members off the vessel. I took the first 2 on the 29139. They were healthy, covered in water and oil, but they were in the best of spirits. They required no immediate medical attention, they were just recounting their stories about how the lights went off after about 6 hours and they never came back on. They said they never inhaled or saw any smoke, and that they were just worried about the two they had left behind on the vessel. During the rest of the ride back to Station Brunswick they were making small talk, smiling and joking with me and my crew.
- All photos and videos taken were sent to the Station Brunswick OOD phone, Sector Charleston PA contact, and to Senior Chief [REDACTED] (OIC).

- No other information t this time other than my attached statement of the events.

[REDACTED]

BM2 [REDACTED]

Summary of Witness Statement: [REDACTED] BM2  
Subject: Golden Ray  
Date of Statement Given: 08 SEP 2019  
Witness Name: [REDACTED] BM2  
Unit: Station Brunswick, GA  
Date/Time/Place of Incident: 08 SEP 2019 – 12 SEP 2019 / 0215 local (0615Z) / St. Simons Sound

Around 0230 Sunday Morning I received a call from the OOD (MK2 [REDACTED]) that the vessel (Golden Ray) was sinking in the St. Simons sound and I was on immediate recall along with my crew of MK3 [REDACTED] SN [REDACTED] and FN [REDACTED]. Once we arrived at the station we immediately were underway with 04 POB and GAR of Medium Risk and High Gain in route to the 45741 who was the on-scene commander at the time.

Once on scene the 45741 instructed us to take their 11 passengers who they and retrieved from the sinking vessel and transport them to EMS. The OOD had arranged a triage station at the DNR parking lot where we would inevitably take all of the crew we rescued that night.

As I maneuvered the 29139 alongside the 45741 we conducted a modified side tow and began to transfer personnel. We started with the ones who needed the most medical attention first. There were passengers with broken bones and open wounds. During this time as people were walked and carried onto the 29139 SN [REDACTED] and FN [REDACTED] conducted first aid as best as possible, grabbing blankets and literally anything around us to apply pressure to wounds. We did our best to give the most injured survivors seats and help stabilize their wounded limbs.

With everyone on board we now have 15 POB and were in transit back to the station with no visibility due to background light and it being night time. As a crew, we safely navigated the waters and arrived safely at station Brunswick where we successfully transferred the crew we had to EMS. Next we cast off lines and went right back to the Golden Ray to see how else we could be of assistance.

People were still trapped inside the hull of the vessel and the list of the vessel had increased from 45 degrees to approximately 60-70 degrees making any escape for the passengers a near vertical drop onto on vessels. The 45741 saw an opportunity as another passenger was scaling down a firehose and went bow in to act as a surface/platform and successfully rescued him. As they backed away to administer first aid the crew spotted another man trying to scale down a 60ft mooring line the 45741 had set up to help people climb down the near vertical vessel. Myself and Seatow positioned ourselves on either side of the structure extended around the pilot house and we were both bow to the vessel watching the scene unfold. The man was making his way down the line, when he misplaced his footing and ended up falling onto a ledge about 10ft down and we suspected he may had injured his feet or legs. He was closer to the Seatow vessel so I smartly maneuvered the 29139 alongside his vessel and he was able to jump on their bow and our crew members grabbed him and immediately conducted first aid to check for bleeding and any injuries.

Once the 45741 got the information from the most recent rescue which had in turn, been the pilot, we transferred him to the 29 and took them back to the triage center at station Brunswick. During this time is when the fire started and we saw open flames on the on starboard side of the vessel which with the list being almost 80 degrees means the starboard side of the vessel was pointing almost directly to the sky. Those would be the last two people we pulled off the vessel that day and then we started searching for the other four persons who we would later discover trapped in the engine room of the vessel.

As we were made out way back to the Golden Ray the sun was finally starting to give us light on the surrounding waters and give us details into the totality of the situation. It was during these early morning hours when we first noticed sheen on top of the water. We could not make out the exact cause of the sheen, but we could trace it back to the Golden Ray. Approximately an hour after the first sighting of the sheen, we began to see darker fluid which we assumed was oil and began reporting that to sector Charleston.

The day continued until we were bagged after eight hours, which during that time my crew and I acted as a transport vessel going back and forth transferring fire teams, strike teams, and just any kind of equipment that could've possibly helped our odds with locating the remaining survivors. My crew and I would go home and sleep and I would be back after 14 hours to continue search and rescue operations.

Fully rested and with my new crew of MK1 [REDACTED], FN [REDACTED], and BM3 [REDACTED] we continued our operations of being the transport vessel to all crews needing to scale the vessel. When I arrived at work we had been notified the other four survivors had been located and they would be drilling into the hull to commence rescue operations. The 45741 had been out for nearly five hours and needed a twenty minute relief. During this time the 29139 was standing by and miraculously the repel team descended into the ship and retrieved two survivors. We had already called and alerted EMS and once the passengers were on my vessel we transported them back to the triage center located at Station Brunswick. They were provided food, water, blankets, and anything else we could provide including first aid. They were covered in oily water, and had an amazing recounting of their experience. They told us that they lost power after about six hour and it had been pitch black inside the boat until rescue teams had cut a hole to see inside. They had incredibly high spirits and were beyond thankful for the all the assistance rendered.

As the 29139 was back on scene the 3<sup>rd</sup> survivor was rescued from the hull and was transported via stoke litter to the 45741. At this time we were recalled to pick up more rescue personal once the 45741 was back on scene. As we arrived with the last of the Sector command, the 4<sup>th</sup> survivor had finally been located and rescued. They lowered him with lines in a stokes litter to the 45741 and they immediately transported him to the station as well. The 29139 remained on scene for another hour or so when they finally concluded the operational success with all members of the vessel successfully rescued. We then began transporting rescue members back to the station as efficiently as possible, all recounting our roles with different agencies and the huge success we had all created with team work by the likes some of us had never witnessed. Throughout the two day evolution my crews and I made approximately twenty six transits from the Golden Ray delivering food, water, ice, air compressors, rescue personnel, Sector Command, DNR, Fire fighters, and just about anything you can think of during those trips offering relief to other vessels when possible. We transferred 14 of the Golden Ray crew

members to EMS and attended to their first aid and general needs. My crew did this all with no damage to the vessel and no incidents to report.

This led to my crew getting another eight hours of underway time on the 29139 and the completion for the search and rescue mission with all 22 lives saved. Mission complete for station Brunswick and all of other agencies that were involved with the rescue of the individuals.

This statement is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Name]

BM2

U.S. Coast Guard