



U.S. COAST GUARD WITNESS STATEMENT FORM

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

Date: 02OCT2019  
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]

SIGNATURE OF PERSON MAKING STATEMENT

SIGNATURE OF INTERVIEWER

Subscribed and sworn to me, a person authorized by law to administer oaths, this 2 (day) of OCT (month), 2019 (year).

[redacted signature]

SIGNATURE OF PERSON ADMINISTERING OATH

-My position during the Golden Ray case was boarding officer and crewmember during the initial response on the Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) from USCG Station Brunswick.

-As our vessel initially approached the Golden Ray, the scene was as follows; wind from the Southeast variable less than 15 knots with slight gusts. Sea state 2-4 foot chop. Dark nighttime conditions, no fog. Upon approaching the Golden Ray, I estimated the vessel was listing approximately 70-75 degrees to port. The vessel appeared to be hard aground based on the lack of any relative movement. The vessel was resting with the bow pointing in a Southeastern direction. Initially there was no visible smoke or flames. There was no noise coming from the vessel, no alarms, no mechanical noises. The vessel's propeller was out of the water and was not rotating. The rudder was visible. The angle was such that the rear of the rudder was pointing towards the port side of the Golden Ray. Other than response vessels, there was no additional vessel traffic. Our crew assessed the scene and communicated with our chain of command to formulate a strategy for removing survivors from the Golden Ray. During this time, additional response vessels arrived on scene. This included two tug boats which acted together to attempt to push the vessel in an approximately Southeastern direction. The tug boats were unable to achieve any visible movement of the Golden Ray, further reinforcing the belief that it was hard aground. The two tug boats continued to apply pressure to the Golden Ray. I saw a person aboard the Golden Ray emerge from a door on the rear of a cabin structure approximately 2/3 to 3/4 back on the port side. This person appeared to be a male in good physical condition as far as I could tell from our distance. He was moving around slightly and waving his arm occasionally. Our crew noticed the Golden Ray was now listing further to port compared to when we initially arrived on scene. I estimate it was now listing 80 degrees to port. I noticed the waterline relative the port side of the vessel was now higher on the vessel than initially, confirming the fact that the Golden Ray was now listing further. Our crew noticed smoke emitting from the Golden Ray on the starboard side, from multiple locations. Because of the darkness the smoke was difficult to accurately assess in quantity and color. I could smell odors consistent with burning electrical equipment and possibly burning diesel fuel. As our response boat maneuvered about the vessel I could smell diesel fuel. Our crew then noticed flames emitting from the starboard side of the Golden Ray, and an increase in the quantity of smoke. Our coxswain came to an agreement with Station Brunswick's Officer in Charge that removal of any survivors was critical and should be completed as quickly as can be safely done. Our crew decided that the most suitable location to extract survivors from the Golden Ray was from the port side bridge wing, the corner of which was now in an elevation approximately 8 feet above the bow of the RB-M. Communication with survivors on board the Golden Ray was completed by the crew of another response vessel on-scene. Survivors moved to the bridge of the Golden Ray, and utilized fire hoses as a method of repelling down from an open door on the port side of the bridge to the bridge wing. The coxswain maneuvered the RB-M so that the bow was as close as safely possible to the Golden Ray. This took several attempts due to the weather conditions. Due to the combined effects of the wind and sea state pushing the RB-M, the bow contacted the Golden Ray causing damage to bow railings. A flare from the Golden Ray was knocked free of its mount and it fell towards the water and ignited. This flare had a red flame and grey-white smoke. It was tethered to the Golden Ray. From the tethered position of the flare, the smoke was rising and filling the bridge of the Golden Ray. The survivors indicated that the smoke was negatively affecting their ability to extract themselves. I moved to the RB-M bow with another crew member assisting. The coxswain maneuvered the RB-M so that I could remove the tethered flare with a boat-hook. The coxswain then maneuvered the RB-M so that the bow was as close as safely possible to the Golden Ray port side bridge wing. I saw a female survivor repelling down the port side bridge wing. I then instructed the female survivor to jump down to the RB-M. Due to the difference in elevation between my position on the RB-M bow and the Golden Ray port bridge wing, the survivor had to jump down several feet and I had to catch her to prevent her from falling. This survivor was a young female who had one apparent injury to her hand which she was cradling. Her hand had a significant amount of blood visible. This survivor was moved back along the starboard side of the RB-M with the assistance of another RB-M

crewmember. The coxswain maneuvered the RB-M safely away from the Golden Ray until a second survivor repelled down the fire hose to the port bridge wing. The coxswain again maneuvered the RB-M into the same position to allow for the survivor to be extracted. This process was repeated until a total of 13 survivors were safely extracted. All were in a physical condition which allowed for them to walk with varying degrees of assistance. All survivors were taken along the starboard side of the RB-M and assisted below deck to the survivor's compartment. During this process, I noticed a significant increase in smoke emitting from the Golden Ray. The smoke appeared to be dark grey nearly black. From our position relative to the Golden Ray, it was difficult to see the point where the smoke was emitting from. I saw flames emitting from the starboard side at various points briefly during maneuvering. Our crew was informed that one additional survivor was onboard the Golden Ray, at a position one deck level below the bridge. This survivor was apparently unable to move himself to the port bridge wing. The survivor used multiple electric extension cords tied together as an improvised line. He passed this improvised line out of an open door on the port side of the cabin below the bridge. The coxswain maneuvered the RB-M such that I was able to retrieve the improvised line. Another RB-M crewmember attached a mooring line to the improvised line. The survivor then pulled this back up to his position. He then fixed the mooring line to the Golden Ray such that he could repel down. Due to the position of the survivor and the large size of the RB-M we were unable to maneuver into position to extract this survivor. The survivor was safely extracted by a smaller response boat from another assisting agency. At the request of a USCG helicopter crew, the coxswain maneuvered the RB-M to allow one USCG Aviation Survival Technician (AST1) to be lowered onto the RB-M. The survivors were transferred to Station Brunswick's 29' RB-S for safe transport to land where emergency medical services were waiting. I communicated with one survivor of the Golden Ray who stayed on scene onboard the RB-M. He identified himself as the Golden Ray's Chief Engineer. He spoke limited English so there was a communication barrier present. He was able to explain that more survivors were onboard the Golden Ray, somewhere near the engine compartment. With the assistance of another RB-M crewmember he drew a sketch of how to move through the Golden Ray to the engine compartment. This information was passed to other responders which included members of the local fire department and the AST1. Sunrise was now beginning to illuminate the scene. The coxswain maneuvered the RB-M around the Golden Ray to allow the fire fighters to use thermal imaging cameras to assess the condition of the vessel. I could see that the smoke had significantly reduced but was still emitting from the Golden Ray starboard side. The smoke was brown in color. There were no longer any visible flames. The vessel had multiple burn marks on the hull, and areas where the hull metal was visibly bent and warped. The fire fighters and the AST1 agreed to attempt to reach the engine room using the Chief Engineer's sketch. The RB-M coxswain maneuvered to allow one fire fighter and the AST1 to climb aboard the Golden Ray, at a point on the port side approximately  $\frac{3}{4}$  back from the bow, near the port side exhaust stack. The two were onboard the Golden Ray for several minutes and determined that there was no safe way to enter the Golden Ray interior from their current location. The coxswain then maneuvered the RB-M to safely extract both the fire fighter and the AST1. The two stated that they tapped on the hull multiple times but received no response. The two stated that one door was accessible but it was locked with a padlock. The two stated that attempts to pry open the door or lock were made but were unsuccessful. We then continued to maneuver about the Golden Ray. I smelled a heavy smell of oil and other fumes, and realized I had throat irritation and a headache. I saw deposits of brown oil at multiple locations in the water. The oil was moving in a Northeasterly direction away from the Golden Ray. The Golden Ray now appeared to be listing 90 degrees to port. The hull appeared to be resting motionless aground completely on its port side. An orange life boat detached from the port side of the Golden Ray near the stern and was now floating. Another local response boat maneuvered to the life boat and safely removed it from the area. The two tugboats were still on scene applying pressure to the Golden Ray, pushing on the rear towards the Southeast. The Golden Ray seemed to stay in the same geographic position throughout the response, the only change being the increase in list angle. Once our crew approached our standard fatigue hour limit, we returned to Station Brunswick to swap with another crew.