



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Marine Safety

Date: January 06, 2003

Place: via telephone

Person Interviewed: George Forsberg, Passenger

Interview Conducted By: Jim Walsh
Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

INTRODUCTION

George Forsberg was interviewed in conjunction with the investigation into the sinking of the *Panther*. The text that follows is not a verbatim record of the conversation. It has been developed from my handwritten notes of the conversation and is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

INTERVIEW

George was traveling with his wife, Yumi – together they purchased passage for one of the larger boats, *Manatee II*. As luck would have it George and Yumi were too late to secure seats topside on the *Manatee II*. They decided instead to switch to the smaller but open *Panther*. The concession staff agreed to the switch and wrote *Panther* on their receipt.

The Forsbergs were sure that the tour would be safe because – it was in a National Park and a Ranger was driving the boat. Moreover, the Ranger informed the passengers that he was a Master Mariner and had never had an accident. George was familiar with and understood what a master mariner certificate entailed from his participation in the USCG Power Squadron.

The *Panther* left the dock area and George recalled seeing at least three seats vacant. The Ranger gave a brief safety talk explaining where the life jackets were stowed. The Ranger also told the passengers what wildlife they could expect to see and that he would try to attract local dolphins to play astern of the boat.

Some dolphins were spotted and the ranger said if we had more people in the stern we would create a larger stern wave. George remembers looking back and noting that there was little to no free board. The Ranger did have the sump pump on and did look back towards the stern.

The *Panther* had attracted the dolphins to play in the boat's wake and with the second turn the stern was even lower. George recalls at this point thinking they were pretty far from where they had started. The Ranger stopped the boat and asked people to check if the pump was discharging water and directed the people standing the stern to return to their seats.

George observed that the Ranger had turned off the PA and was talking on the radio; lots of clicks and static could be heard coming from the speakers. George thought the Ranger must have been talking to an incoming crab boat because at approximately that time the crab boat started to come towards them.

The Panther was stopped from five to ten minutes before the crab boat came alongside. As the crab boat came alongside there was perhaps five seconds warning before the Panther sank. George grabbed his wife and jumped for the crab boat's side. George and Yumi made it to the crab boat. In landing on the Red Rock's deck George fell gashing his leg.

George immediately got up and helped pull other passengers into the crab boat. Once they were sure all of the people had been pulled from the water the crab boat started back. George did not see or hear anyone take a headcount; he did recall someone asking is everybody here.

The crab boat had made it half way back to the Park when two other Park Service boats showed up. The passengers were transferred to the Park Service boats again without a head count. There were no first responders, medical personnel nor blankets aboard the boats.

George estimated that it took anywhere from thirty to forty minutes to return to the pier. There was no ambulance at the pier when they arrived. George sought medical attention for the gash in his leg from the Park Service Rangers. George recalls that the Ranger station was poorly stocked with first aid supplies and ended up bandaging his own leg.

END OF INTERVIEW

Jim Walsh