



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Date: 05/16/07 at 09:30 AM

Place: CGC Liberty Office, Juneau, AK

Person Interviewed: LTJG Kalen Kenny, USCG

Interview Conducted By: Liam LaRue, NTSB
Paul Webb, USCG

INTRODUCTION

LTJG Kalen Kenny was interviewed in conjunction with the Marine Accident Investigation concerning the *M/V Empress of the North*. 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

- Were in Bravo 2 status – able to get underway in 2 hours
- At 0145 he received call from Fireman Brizendine, crewman of the watch on board saying they had been tasked with a SAR case. Initial report was a ferry carrying 281 passengers had run aground and was taking on water.
- Estimated to be underway at 0230. Actually got underway at 0244.
- Went straight to Icy straight at 30 knots.
- It took about an hour and a half – exact times are in the logs.
- Monitored channel 16, 13, and 21 VHF, and listened to all the radio traffic.
- There were a bunch of people helping out in vicinity of Empress – tugs, fishing vessels and small cruise ships
- CG Jayhawk assumed on scene command because they were only ones on scene at around 0300 he guesses.

- They arrived a little bit after 0400 and as soon as they arrived they assumed on scene command through the command center, and took a bearing on Empress.
- Empress was about a mile west of where it was supposed to have grounded.
- They assumed it grounded on Hanus Reef, as it had been reported to them. Boat was floating free away from there with Rocky Island about half way between where the boat was now and Hanus Reef.
- Empress looked fine, it was riding low in the water, no problems, just a lot of vessels around it and two helicopters overhead.
- It was light by this time.
- They launched their small boat to go around to each boat and find out how many people were on board. They were given a crew manifest. The tug and one of the fishing vessels had taken some passengers off the Empress already.
- They decided they would moor to the port side of the Empress and take on the rest of the crew. They did this without any incident.
- Up forward on the port side were 8 to 10 life rafts the Empress had deployed. No one was in them – they deployed them just in case they needed them.
- They took all the remaining passengers on board and any non-essential crewmembers. They estimated to be about 130, but after final count it was 127. They had them up forward and aft above decks.
- Then they got away from the Empress without problem.
- At some point in the mean time it had been decided that the ferry Columbia would take all the passengers on board because the Columbia is a huge vessel and could accommodate all those people.
- On the tug, according to the log, about 70 people he thinks that were actually on there.
- The Spirit of Columbia had a good number of passengers on board too.
- Discussed different options for transferring passengers, and it was finally decided to open the port side hatch that opened to the car deck. The opening was about 8 to 10 feet above the waterline, very close to even with the Liberty's deck level.
- Before they had left the Empress the CO of the Liberty went on board and went up to talk to the Captain to find out what his state was. Talked to him and said he seemed very aware of surroundings, fine, completely sober, and seemed stressed but handling it well.
- Offloaded all 127 passengers to the Columbia. They did not use a brow or anything – just had two people stationed on their vessel and people on the Columbia to assist passengers on board. Passengers all had blankets and bags with medicine.
- After offloading they decided to stay moored up and act as a dock – there was a CG 47' (CG47261) that they wanted to ferry the passengers from other vessels.
- The 47' then went to the Tug Tiger and got 2 shipments of personnel. Offloaded all over the deck of Liberty and onto the Columbia.
- Went to Spirit of Columbia and got their passengers. All the offloads went fine. There were 4 passengers in wheelchairs, which was a challenge. They had to make a ramp tying boards together.
- There were also a few passengers on crutches, but they didn't have any trouble getting over.
- After Spirit of Columbia offloaded all personnel, they asked for a final total from

the Ferry Columbia to make sure they had everyone on board. They had 281 passengers reported. 29 crew stayed on board the Empress so their should have been 252 total.

- They stayed tied on for another 15 minutes while they checked passengers numbers.
- They went through one by one and checked names of passengers.
- They got underway and stayed in the area for another 10 minutes, finally they made the decision and were told by Sector that they could start to head back.
- In the meantime, EON was heading into Aucke Bay because they were taking on water – the voids had flooded and flooded their crew berthing (part or all, not sure)
- The pumps they had were managing to keep up with the flooding pretty much.
- After done with the 25 footer on scene, they sent it to catch up with the Empress to escort them into Aucke Bay Ferry Terminal.
- They stayed on scene for about 10 more minutes after they un-moored from Columbia. They got to Aucke bay about 5 minutes after the Empress moored at the ferry terminal.
- Instituted a 100-yard safety zone around the Empress.
- They did not notice any listing on the Empress. It did not look like anything was wrong except all the people on the decks.
- They looked in the water for any kind of sheen, to see if they were leaking oil – they saw nothing.
- He has not been involved in this type of rescue before.
- They do not have specific regulations or procedures on how to evacuate a vessel like this.
- Weather was good, overcast, pretty much full cloud cover, seas were negligible. It started to rain for about 10 minutes, sprinkled, but then stopped. Winds were light – about 5-10 knots the whole morning.
- Liberty can carry 100 people, which is saturation. Super saturation, which is the max limit, is 150. The crew is normally 16, but during this event they were 11. They took on 127 so they were pretty close to the super-saturation point.
- The people were fine, some were taking pictures, some asked for CG ball caps. They provided water and tried to keep them as comfortable as they could.
- Unmooring from the Empress was kind of tough with all the extra people on board. They had to have everyone stand to one side.
- They had one EMT crewmember but that person was not able to sail with them. They informed the Sector on the way to the accident site to let them know they had no way to medically treat anyone – they said ok and that the helo's would be standing by to take anyone off.
- All passengers they had on board seemed fine. Some had to use the rest rooms periodically. One passenger had asthma.
- Other assets on scene: Tug Tiger, Barge SEA176, F/V Willow, F/V Evening Star, F/V Sea View, Spirit of Columbia, Spirit of Endeavor, forest service small boat (no number), State Trooper boat, CG 47261, CG25446, 3 CG Jayhawk helicopters, State Ferry Columbia.
- Evening Star had passengers on board, but then they put them on the tug Tiger because the tug was a little bit bigger.

- He doesn't think the other fishing vessels had passengers embarked to them.
- The F/V Sea View helped corral life rafts so they weren't floating all over the place.
- Not sure if Willow took passengers. If so, they did it before Liberty arrived.
- Tug Tiger & Barge had all the personnel from fishing vessels by the time Liberty arrived.
- State Trooper and Forest Service boats were RHI's. Just helped where needed.
- He felt they had adequate control of the assets that were there. They used 21 and channel 13 when necessary to communicate.
- He thinks it ran about as well as it could go for this type of situation.
- Forest Service came in after Liberty, as well as the CG 47 and CG 25. One helo 6026 came in later on. The State Ferry Columbia came in later too. All other assets mentioned where there when the Liberty arrived.
- He thinks it was a really good response from the command center. Good communications. He appreciates all the other vessels that assisted.
- He went to the CG Academy, graduated in 2004. Was on a 210' medium endurance cutter from 2004 to 2006 out of Maine. Came to the Liberty this past summer in July 2006.
- It took him one two-month patrol to qualify as OOD on the 210. He went through a break –in/familiarization that lasted a week and a half to two weeks.

END OF INTERVIEW

Liam LaRue