



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594  
Office of Marine Safety

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**Date:** 05/17/07 at 15:00 PM

**Place:** USCG D17 Offices, Juneau, AK

**Person Interviewed:** Doane Brodie, Captain – Spirit of Columbia

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

### INTRODUCTION

Doane Brodie 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

- They were on their way to Glacier Bay National Park. His second mate woke him at around 0130 in the morning – said Empress had issued a mayday and that the CG was asking any vessels in the area to respond.
- They were in Icy Straights near the “Sisters”.
- He asked the 2<sup>nd</sup> mate to contact Sector Juneau to see if they could be of assistance and they requested that they return.
- They started back towards Hanus Reef – got there around 0245. They could see the Empress was well lit.
- They were monitoring communications between the CG and the Empress. They heard that there were 3 compartments between the double hull that had flooded, but that the Empress was not taking water into the interior of the vessel.
- He also heard that the Empress had launched liferafts, was not planning on

placing passengers in them, but was asking for vessels to assist in disembarking passengers off of the vessel.

- At 0245 he awakened all his passengers and crew and got them ready to assist. He asked passengers to stay in their rooms so there wouldn't be additional people to get in the way.
- At 0314 they were alongside the Empress – went in on the port side because she was listing to starboard about 6 to 8 degrees – both bows pointing same direction.
- Empress had all her life rafts tied up on the port bow forward. They couldn't get their bow over so they asked the Empress to move them.
- Empress was not able to comply with request. He had to move the vessel further forward in order to have them lower their gangway from their upper deck down to the aft part of the vessel on the upper deck so they lined up with a gate that they opened on the next deck up from the main deck on the Empress.
- They came alongside and in the process the Spirit sucked the sea anchor up into the bow thruster because they had to lay right on the Empress's rafts.
- They secured to the Empress and took 52 passengers across – 4 who were in wheelchairs, and 5 who were basically non-ambulatory (walkers and canes) that had to be assisted. They then got everyone down below.
- He conferred with the office and because the COI is for 102 passengers he contacted the CG about this and they waived the COI for this situation. He was thinking in terms of taking additional passengers on when the Liberty arrived.
- The Liberty said if they weren't going to take more then to clear off.
- There were 281 on board the Empress and some had gotten off before the Spirit arrived on a smaller fishing vessel, then the tug Tiger was there with a fuel barge and she tied up on the starboard side of the Empress and people started getting on the barge.
- Then the Liberty tied up to the port side and passengers got onto the Liberty.
- The Spirit departed at 0427 from the Empress and then drifted in the area until the passenger ferry Columbia diverted to the area.
- This all took place about a mile and a half or two miles north of Hanus Reef – between Hanus reef and Rocky Island.
- Then the Liberty went along the port side of the ferry Columbia and offloaded passengers.
- Then the smaller self-righting CG vessel began transferring passengers from the fuel barge over to the Liberty, where they were transferred onto the Columbia.
- The Spirit was the last vessel that the smaller CG vessel came to and offloaded their 52 over to the Liberty and onto the Columbia.
- The Spirit of Endeavor had responded and arrived in the area but after everyone but the crew on the Empress had been disembarked. She stood by and then was dismissed so headed towards Skagway.
- At 0822 the Empress got underway and headed out. The CG asked the Endeavor if they could come back and escort the Empress until a tug could come out of Juneau and assist.
- After this he took his vessel and they continued on to Glacier Bay.
- He provided a statement to his office.
- All passengers were wearing PFD's.

- Spirit has a gate on the aft part of their upper deck where they normally board and disembark passengers. Empress lowered their gangway from the upper part of their ship onto the upper deck of the Spirit. They lined both openings up and used the Empress's gangway.
- Weather was calm, visibility was good, seas were calm – flat.
- Described the area as pretty wide open – Hanus Reef has a buoy on it. There is good water on both sides all the way around that. He wasn't sure if Hanus Reef was where they went aground. He assumed it was though. There was no mention of the actual grounding location between the Captain of the Empress and the CG.
- The CG asked for a complete manifest of names of all the passengers on board. They did one initially and passed it up with 51 passengers accounted for. Then when they offloaded passengers onto the smaller CG vessel they found one more that they had not accounted for. They contacted the CG and told them they had one more, making a total of 52. They read the names off to the CG.
- The Spirit came from Sitka into Chatham Straights heading northbound. Then they were bound for Icy Straights north towards Glacier Bay.
- They just finished a 10-day trip up to Juneau, starting in Seattle. They'll reposition the vessel to Prince William Sound and spend the summer in Whittier running tours to the Glaciers. When they come back in the fall they go to Juneau, and make the same 10-day trip back down to Seattle.
- There is good water between Rocky Island and Point Couverdin and they have cut in between before because there is good water for them to go between.
- He thinks that it was very fortunate that the Empress had double bottoms.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

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Liam LaRue