

Jonathan Tennant, Brunswick Bar Pilot No. 6 - Closing remarks of Gratitude.

Captain Welbourne with your permission, sir, it would be both proper and fitting in this circumstance to express my heartfelt gratitude to all those Heroes who answered the call when our lives were in peril in early morning of September 8, 2019. I would like to take this opportunity to recognize them in the official record.

On behalf of all of us who survived, the shipwreck. Thank You. We were well buttressed by this South Georgia community, its local industry, and our government maritime partners.

As first responders, every State Pilot in the Port of Brunswick and our vessel captains responded immediately with every company vessel available and many were on scene within minutes to search for survivors, take soundings around the ship and provide aid. The following off-duty pilots rushed to the Saint Simon's Pier with all possible dispatch: Edwin Fendig III, Bruce Fendig, John Beimler and retired pilot Lawrence Gray. Thank you.

As more of the cavalry arrived, it increased our hope for rescue. The sound of the MH-65's overhead was comforting.

After witnessing the capsizing from the inbound meeting ship, Pilot Jamie Kavanaugh and Apprentice Gordon Strother Jr. calmly maneuvered around my capsized ship and skillfully anchored their inbound ship, with a fair tide, without tug assistance in the Colonel's Island turning basin because all harbor tugs came to my aid. As a close friend and colleague, Jamie watched in horror as I rolled over. However, he was still able to do his job and relayed my radio request to the tugs for assistance. Our small boat captains Danny Jones, David Colquit, Michael Giery also manned

our SeaTow vessels, Recovery and Responder, throughout the morning.

Captain Robert Darby, aboard Pilot Boat Brunswick, was waiting 12 miles offshore for my disembarkation of the outbound Golden Ray. He immediately raced to my aid, marking the depths of the sandbar in front of me per my request, while looking for survivors that may have been thrown from the anchor watch.

Henry Wynn, Operations manager for Sea-Tow Brunswick and the Brunswick Bar Pilots, called the USCG and all interested parties- All hand's on deck! Henry provided water to survivors and boat crews alike.

With only a portion of the ship touching the sandbar and an incoming tide coupled with down-flooding there was a grave concern that we would pivot off or be scoured off the sandbar into deep water.

Therefore, there is immense gratitude for the heroic efforts of the Tug Anne Moran and her crew, Captain Skylar Dionne and Tommy Brooks, who steamed at best possible speed across the sound to assist in holding the ship on the sandbar as I directed. Preventing the ship from slipping back into the depths of the channel and the crew perishing.

In similar fashion, Tug Dorothy Moran, Captain Cliff Gordon and James Stoddard did the same and assisted on the port side. They maneuvered towards survivors and ultimately put rescue teams near the trapped crewmen later that day.

Brunswick Pilot Will Stubbs expertly maneuvered Sea-Tow vessel Responder, near the heat and toxic smoke from ship's burning paint locker. This enabled Pilot Edwin Fendig III to convince the Chief Engineer to abandon ship from his sinking stateroom

window. After pleading several times, “Get off the ship or Die!”. The crewmember boarded the Sea-Tow boat successfully.

Off duty GCFD LT Kyle Brown, water rescue station 2, had jumped aboard the Responder at the pier earlier to assist.

Glynn County Fire Department Capt. Jeff Stokes, Firefighter T.J. Cheek, and Chief Scott Cook boarded a USCG vessel and made attempts to gain entry into the ship.

Two Georgia DNR vessels handled by Sgt Mark Carson, CPL Jay Bright, CPL Colte Shaske and Game Warden Zach Griffis rescued two Golden Ray survivors and transported them to EMS at the nearby DNR HQ.

Countless citizens readied their private watercraft at the marina to come aid if needed. Our local Southeast Georgia Health System stood at the ready and accepted survivors from the USCG on their helo pad, within sight of the shipwreck and treated them.

As dawn broke, news of the burning capsized wreck and the fate of the trapped crewmen spread rapidly through the community and to our many churches. Being Sunday morning, churches had moments of silence for us and their prayers surrounded us like the smoke from the burning ship. While trapped in the wheelhouse for hours, I received countless texts of prayers from the community and friends.

Thank you to the USCG for their professional and expert response to a significant ship casualty. Specifically, the watchstanders at Sector Charleston that took my Mayday Call, both response vessels crews from Station Brunswick and both helicopter crews from Air Station Savannah. You prevented this casualty from becoming a tragedy and I Thank You.

The International Seaman's house in Brunswick clothed the crewmembers who lost all their possessions. Remember, this ship was their home most of the year.

Brunswick and The Golden Isles of Georgia fed, clothed and sheltered the survivors. Special Mass services were held in vigil for the trapped four crewmembers.

U.S. Historian Shebly Foote often spoke of General Ulysses S. Grant as having "four o'clock in the morning courage."

All these first responders, possess and have demonstrated that same four o'clock in the morning courage, putting others above themselves, so that others may live.

I have special gratitude for Admiralty Attorney Ryan Gilsenan, Captain John Cameron, USCG (ret.) and our fellow State Pilot Associations across the nation.

Above all, I would like to recognize that each of these individuals, the weather, the capsizing location, the capsizing direction that slid my survival vest with radio to me (not away); and the successful rescue of every crew member- comes down to our merciful God, our Creator.

I will end with these two brief quotes from 2,000 years ago that still apply to each of you and the survivors today.

and I quote:

"Some went down to the sea in Ships; They were Merchants on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, his wonderful deeds in the deep....They cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their Distress, guiding them to safe haven." (Psalm 107:23/28)

And for those of us who were prepared and prevailed that morning:

“For the Horse is made ready for the day of Battle, but The Victory is the Lords.” (Proverbs 21:31)

Thank you, United States Coast Guard and all first responders.