

# Sitka Plays Host to Pajama-clad Passengers: 500 Rescued Off Burning Cruise Ship

JUNEAU (AP) — A Coast Guard fire-fighting crew boarded the fire-ravaged cruise ship Prinsendam today as it drifted in the Gulf of Alaska, its 533 passengers and crew all reported accounted for.

Coast Guard spokesman Bob Sheaves said the Coast Guard team flew by helicopter from Sitka to the cutter Mellon, patrolling near the Prinsendam, and then went on to the stricken ship.

The fire-fighting team hopes to determine whether the 400-foot ship can be saved. "They feel the fire may be burning itself out, but it could be all day and all night before they know whether they can handle it," said Coast Guard spokesman Philip Franklin.

Since it was disabled and abandoned last early last Saturday some 120 miles off Yakutat when fire broke out in its engine room, the Prinsendam has drifted approximately 75 miles to the north-northwest, the Coast Guard said.

The service said at last report there was still fire below decks, but that it appeared safe for the Coast Guard fire crews to go aboard.

The engine-room fire spread to upper decks, and when the crew was unable to control the blaze, Wabeke ordered the big blue and white ship abandoned, except for a 40-member fire-fighting crew evacuated only hours later.

Sheaves said the vessel's owner, Holland America Cruises, had chartered a tug-boat that was on its way to the Pacific Northwest.

Sheaves said the plan was to tow the 400-foot ship to Portland, Ore., if it were found seaworthy.

The Coast Guard had posted efforts to determine if the Prinsendam could be saved while the passengers and crew of the vessel were picked up from life rafts and lifeboats.

Member of the Associated Press

## THE DAILY SENTINEL

Monday, October 6, 1980

Sitka Alaska 25¢

### A Night to Remember With a Happy Ending



GIVING UP THE SHIP — Firefighters and some of the crew are airlifted from the Prinsendam. The ship is scarred with evidence of the fire.

By Sentinel Staff  
The dramatic stories of those who were rescued from the sea rescues in history were alike in many ways. They told of: —the smell of smoke in the stairwells around midnight Friday; —a calm announcement via the stateroom speakers that a minor fire had broken out in the engine room but that it was under control; —an order directing all passengers to the main lounge until the smoke could be cleared.

After being escorted onto the outer decks and then turned around and brought back in a few times, the passengers were finally ordered into the boats. Almost everyone related an orderly departure with crew members at every life boat station checking carefully on the whereabouts of every passenger. The sea, which since Prinsendam's departure from Glacier Bay had been so stormy, was finally lowered around 5:30 a.m. Saturday.

### Coast Guard Rescue Wins Passengers' 'Well Done!'

By Sentinel Staff  
"These boys — they did a wonderful job," said Prinsendam passenger Dora Connell-Brewer of the Coast Guardsmen who rescued her.

The Chatham, Ontario, Canada, resident's comment was typical of the virtually unanimous praise of the passengers for the Coast Guardsmen — many of them from Sitka Coast Guard Air Station.

Lt. Bruce Melnick said the air station received a call at 2:30 a.m. Saturday, reporting the ship in trouble. One helicopter, of the three based at the station, left "around 3 o'clock," Melnick said.

Shortly after their arrival, they heard the tanker they heard the Williamsburgh was about 50 miles away and had about 100 firefighters on board.

The helicopter they were piloting held about 12 to 14 people with the rescue equipment aboard it, so only about 10 people could be carried from the plane from Elmendorf Air Force base in Anchorage and fixed boats to the tanker at a time.

Canadian Armed Forces also aided in the hoisting. Melnick said the passengers Thuma and his crew hoisted — an incredible 109 in two hours — were "in good shape — just cold and wet."

By Sunday the Coast Guard rescue mission was in its wrap-up phase. Helicopter crews located the abandoned lifeboats as they drifted in the gulf and bombed them with jars of paint to identify them as part of a completed rescue.

#### HYDRO REPORT

October 6, 1980

KWH used	125,200
KWH used last year	124,500
KW peak	7200
KW peak last year	7000
Lake level	9.8'
Rule level	4.4'

#### FORECAST

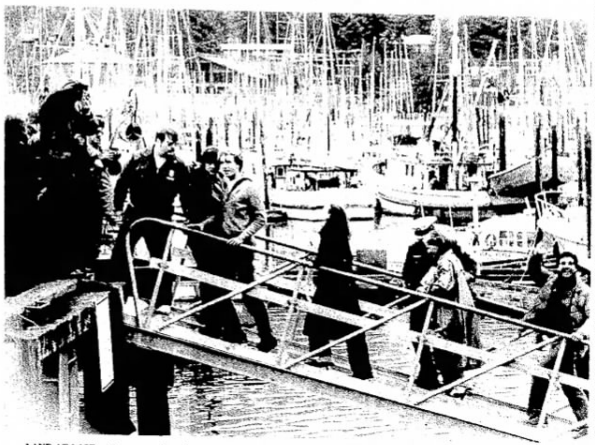
High wind warning! Windy and rainy through Tuesday, with rain heavy at times but diminishing Tuesday afternoon. Southeasterly winds at 20-30 mph gusting to 50 mph tonight. Highs today upper 50s, low tonight near 50. Outlook for Wednesday: showers.

#### TIDE TABLES

Tides for Tuesday, Oct. 7

High tide at 1:25 a.m.	0.8'
Low tide at 7:27 a.m.	9.3'
High tide at 1:49 p.m.	9.8'
Low tide at 8:01 p.m.	1.1'

Courtesy of BAILEY'S MARINE & HARDWARE  
Kathleen St. across from Pioneer Bar



LAND AT LAST — Passengers from the last life boat found walk jauntily up the walk way at Crescent dock here. Many Sitkans turned out to watch them debark from the U.S. Coast

Guard cutter Bristow. The Bristow, out of Seattle, was in Juneau for its Centennial celebration when the crisis began. (Sentinel photo)

David Goodwill, 59 of Palos Verdes, Calif., said he had been assigned to one of the few powered lifeboats. "The engine ran beautifully while the boat was in the davit," he said. "They let it run the whole time we were filling the boat, but when they put it in the water and shifted over, that was it. The crew got it started and it wouldn't take. There was nothing we could do about it."

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