

Alaska Sentinel, Sitka, Alaska, Monday, October 6, 1980



HAVEN FOR VICTIMS — The tanker Prinsendam, which took the majority of the crew and passengers from the ill-fated Dutch cruise ship Prinsendam, is in choppy water off the Gulf of Alaska. The boat in the foreground is a white speck off the back of the tanker. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

Tanker Carries Passengers into Valdez

VALDEZ (AP) — A fully loaded tanker carrying an excess complement of 383 cruise ship passengers and crew members pulled into Valdez Sunday night, ending a dramatic North Pacific rescue.

When the 1,000-foot Prinsendam nudged into a berth at the Trans-Alaska oil pipeline terminal, the former passenger and crew of the ill-fated Dutch cruise ship Prinsendam started filling off.

It was the end of a grueling ordeal for all, especially for the passengers, most of them elderly and the sickly.

The liner, on a 30-day luxury cruise to the Orient, caught fire 120 miles off the Alaska coast early Saturday. Most of the some 600 persons aboard were ordered on short notice to prepare to abandon ship. Most of their possessions were left behind.

Cmdr. James Woodie of the Coast Guard station here, said there were apparently no medical problems among the rescued who reached dry land via the Prinsendam. The tanker was headed south with 1.5 million barrels of Alaska crude when it suddenly became a rescue vessel.

Another 150 persons who were aboard the Prinsendam were taken to Sitka.

Many of those brought here had spent as long as 10 hours in lifeboats on the icy Gulf of Alaska, only to spend another another day in cramped quarters aboard the Prinsendam.

"They were just stacked in there; they were wall-to-wall," Woodie said.

"They were to start moving out of Valdez to their homes today."

The Prinsendam's passengers were hungry and tired, but obviously relieved that they were back on land. They had lavish praise for rescue personnel, the crew of the tanker, and each other.

"We had a wonderful experience, but not I would want to repeat it," said 79-year-old A.D. McJurey of Fallbrook, Calif. "We were very fortunate that we had good weather. One day either way would have made a big difference."

Clemmie Hill of Ganado, Tex., checked in at a Valdez hotel wearing heavy red pajamas, jogging shoes and a suede coat. "They had me to dress warmly," she said with a laugh. "Oh, hell! I'm 78 and I ought to be dead."

She said the only time she was frightened was when the lifeboats were first lowered and swells threatened to dash the boats against the side of the cruise ship.

She said she came through in fine shape, "other than I was sick up and I needed a drink when I got here."

Dr. Charles Bergman, 66, of Westbury, N.Y., and his wife, 64-year-old Helen, said they had been on 17 or 18 cruises, but they said they would have to think about it before going on another.

"You hear about these things, but I never thought I'd be in a similar situation," Bergman said.

Bergman echoed the praise many of the rescued had for the Coast Guard and the tanker crew, but he added, "The passengers themselves deserve a tremendous amount of praise. There was absolutely no panic on the ship."

Most of those passengers who talked with reporters said they were confident all along that they would be rescued safely.

But Leonard Baker of Baltimore said he was "scared to death, and it had good reason to be."

Although conditions were crowded on the super-tanker, with its limited crew space, many of the passengers said it was even worse in the lifeboats.

The elderly and some passengers with health problems were given five bunk beds available on the tanker.

"Any bed they (tanker crew) had they gave us, but there were too many of us," said Margaret Baker of Baltimore.

McJurey looked eagerly at a menu in a Valdez restaurant Sunday night.

"We're going to enjoy a good meal for the first time since Friday," he said. "I'm so sick of sandwiches..."

Boeren said the Prinsendam tried using foam and water from a pump system crippled by the fire, he said.

Boeren said on the Alaska voyage there had been a demonstration of lowering the lifeboats, but no fire drills.

He said that the smoke detection system had worked, and that passengers had been notified of the fire by a series of bells.

He said there was a minor fire aboard the Prinsendam a year ago, but it was contained in the cook's quarters.

Boeren said the Prinsendam

Ship Without Sprinkler System

NEW YORK (AP) — The cruise ship that burned off the Alaska coast Saturday, forcing the evacuation of more than 600 persons, had no fire sprinkler system, and its fire doors failed to hold back the flames, a cruise line executive says.

Crewmen filled the burning engine room with carbon dioxide. Jan Boeren, vice president for reservations of Holland-America, said operator of the Prinsendam, told a news conference Sunday.

When the carbon dioxide didn't stem the flames the crew

Song, Prayer Helped Passengers

By BETSY LONGENBAUGH
Seattle Staff Writer

"We prayed. We even sang a little at first. Some complained a little bit and then we prayed some more — mostly to ourselves," said Prinsendam passenger Thomas Tusmaridi Sunday.

Tusmaridi, of Silver Spring, Md., was one of 61 persons in lifeboats on the burning cruise liner Saturday after rescue from their open lifeboats in the Gulf of Alaska.

The 61-year-old retired scientist was interviewed at MacDonald's men's store Sunday morning as he and others rescued — some still clothed in the pajamas and slippers they had worn since abandoning ship the previous day — picked out clothes. Other stores, including Harry Race Pharmacy, the Footwear Gallery and V's Apparel were also opened. All bills were to be footed by the Holland-America Line.

"My lifeboat was so full there were people under my feet," Tusmaridi said. "I sat next to an 85-year-old woman," he said. "We were packed so tight she couldn't

move and I couldn't either," he said. "It was terribly cold. The time until rescue praying, he said."

Tusmaridi said he had held up well during the ordeal, but said this morning I broke down.

Even as he picked out a change of clothes Tusmaridi was distressed in the suit and cap he had worn in the lifeboat.

Another passenger, Stanislas Czetywinski, 77, on the other hand, had a more pressing need: he had left the ship without his trousers. He was at first in a blanket as he tried on pants in the store.

Czetywinski, a Polish-born resident of North Carolina, said he had prayed in the lifeboat, too.

"I said, Dear God, this is such a silly way to die," he said with a laugh. His boat, he said, was "completely crowded."

A retired plastic surgeon from San Antonio, Texas, refused to comment on the conduct of crew members, but said the passengers were "wonderful."

Dr. Arson House, 60, said of the hours he spent in the pitching boat: "You just sat there — trying to keep your seat and keep from getting seasick."

Each lifeboat had been assigned a Prinsendam crew member commander. House said the passengers in his lifeboat, however, "elected a replacement. House said, was in his mid-50s and a veteran of "a couple years" with the Coast Guard.

The passengers, House said, tried to figure out ways to make the boat more safe. He put out a water anchor (see article) to keep it from drifting.

The Texas doctor said the Coast Guard did "a tremendous job" of hoisting the passengers, most of them elderly, one by one into helicopters and then to the waiting tanker or, on the change or refusing runs, to the Hoger Ray, a 66-year-old comedian employed by the cruise line as a ship entertainer, was wearing a sweatshirt emblazoned "Yakutat," sweat

A Night...

Indonesian crewman hurling himself atop an elderly woman already in a cotter pickup basket, and several others scrambling "over the top of little old ladies to be first off the boat."

Passengers had words of praise for the conduct of most of the ship's officers and crew.

"The officer in charge on our boat could not have done more to assist us," Gyorkas said. "His wife, who was also aboard, was the last woman to leave, and then left reluctantly. She wanted to stay and help the others."

Hoisted one at a time into the coppers until a load of 10 or so were aboard, the passengers were flown to the massive deck of the tanker Prinsendam, where the coppers landed to discharge them.

Some passengers were flown directly to the search operations staging area at Yakutat, if they were in the last of a helicopter's pickup prior to a refueling or crew change.

It was those 10 or so who were flown to Sitka Saturday night. Most had been separated from the rest of their families.

Assured of comfortable lodging in Sitka's best hotels and medicine, food and long-distance phone privileges they desired — all at the Holland-America Line's expense — most of the passengers quickly resumed a holiday spirit.

The gaiety intensified with the arrival Sunday of the sleek Coast Guard cutter Bowtell,

with another contingent of passengers. Hotel lobbies were packed with cheerfully dressed but cheerful passengers and crewmen. Coast Guardmen were greeted by applause and offers of drinks.

Eleven of the rescued were seen by doctors at the coast hospitals but only two were hospitalized, both with minor injuries.

Although about half the 18 were elderly, all of them were "in good shape," said Peter Kaplan, 25, of New York City. He and another entertainer off the ship, Rick Spivey, 27, were among the last 18. "It was hard to sustain optimism there in toward the end," Kaplan said. Others around them, including the other 71 in their boat, had all been picked up but darkness settled they were all alone.

But then the Bowtell was spotted, the paramedics set off the flares they had with them, and the 18 were lifted one by one into the neighborhood of the ship, Rick Spivey, 27, was in the neighborhood of the other 71 in their boat, had all been picked up but darkness settled they were all alone.

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Honors Two

JUNEAU (AP) — The Alaska State Chamber of Commerce has named both Lew Williams Jr., publisher of the Ketchikan Daily News, and Fred East as recipients of the 1980 Distinguished Alaska-Anchorage law firm, at its annual award ceremony Sunday.

The joint award is the chamber's 16-year history that two persons have received the annual award.

"As soon as we have I'm going to gather everyone together, and we won't have slides or pictures to show them, but will we ever have a story to tell."

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abandon ship, the Coast Guard said it believed everyone had been rescued.

But a count showed 18 of those known to be aboard the 600-foot ship were unaccounted for, along with two Air Force paramedics who had been been rescued into the sea with scuba gear to aid rescue efforts.

The search quickly resumed, and four hours later the lifeboat was spotted. Its occupants were taken aboard the Coast Guard cutter Bowtell, at about 2 a.m. Sunday.

"After the Coast Guard left, we were left all alone in the fog and it was very, very scary," said Regina O'Malley of New York City.

One of the Air Force men, Sgt. Jose Rios, said those in the lifeboat became excited and panicky when they realized there was a chance that in a sea they had been missed.

"Everybody was terrified," Rios said, describing a pitch-black environment with what he called "wildly thrashing seas."

Re-elect DAN KECK

Sitka Assembly

6 years experience representing the best interests of Sitka.

Paid for by Dan Keck Committee, Betty Keck, Treasurer

Fire Started in Fuel Line?

By Sentinel Staff

One of the last crew members taken off the burning Prinsendam told a Sentinel reporter Sunday that he thought the fire had begun in the fuel pipe of the main engine.

The Dutch officer said that when he finally left the ship late Saturday night, "it looked terrible." However, he said, the ship was only "listering a little" — it was amazing the ship stayed so stable.

He added that the crew had "wanted to leave earlier, but the captain told us to stay — that's a normal order."

The officer, who looked exhausted, said he'd got his first sleep in 36 hours Saturday night after being evacuated to Sitka.

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Van Noort said the Prinsendam is the "smallest and the newest" of the line's ships and valued at more than \$10 million.

He said that plans have been made to tow the ship to a near ship yard — but the yard hasn't been decided on yet. The closest ship yard is Vancouver, Washington.

NOTICE! Project Child Find

BY LAW, ALL SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN IN ALASKA HAVE THE RIGHT TO A FREE PUBLIC EDUCATION.

Some children, however, are not in school. They may be handicapped or just left out. If you know of a child, age 0 - 21, not in school call the Sitka School District office at 747-8624 and fill this coupon to Terry Coen, Project Child Find, P.O. Box 179, Sitka, Alaska 99836.

Name of child _____ address _____ age _____

Parent's name _____ address _____

Reason for not being in school: _____

Divas of the Golden WEST

Saturday, October 11
Dinner 8:00 - 9:15 p.m.
\$6 - \$8 - \$4