

MCNS

21AUG00

MARINE CASUALTY NARRATIVE SUPPLEMENT

CASE/ MC99009469 PORT/ LISMS SUBJECT/ SEEKER/PERCAS/MCGURR, CHARL
DATE/ 28JUL99

--- COMMENTS ---

Fifty-two years old Charles McGurr was a crewmember on the dive vessel SEEKER.

He was diving on the wreck of the ANDREA DORIA and successfully completed 1 dive on July 27th.

Mr. McGurr was an experienced diver with the following certifications:

Open Water - 05 June 1993

Advanced Open Water - 03 September 1994

Rescue Course - 24 September 1995

Enriched Air (NITROX) Diver - 12 April 1996 (maximum 130 fsw)

Advanced Deep Diver Course - 24 April 1996

Technical EANx Diving - 05 October 1997

Advanced Level TRIMIX Diver - 02 July 1999 (maximum 300 fsw)

According to the SEEKER owner, Mr. McGurr had worked as a part-time crewmember onboard for about three years making probably a half dozen trips to the ANDREA DORIA.

On July 28, 1999, Mr. McGurr was scheduled to dive with Darryl Johnson and Pete Wohlleben. All three entered the water at about 9:00 am. Pete Wohlleben went

down the anchor line first followed by Darryl Johnson and Mr. McGurr. Two divers saw Mr. McGurr descend the line. They stated that he let go of the line to pass an ascending diver and struggled, having to kick very hard, to get back to the line. Pete Wohlleben reached the wreck first. Darryl Johnson arrived next, approximately 11 minutes into the dive. Pete Wohlleben saw Mr. McGurr approach the wreck, motion that he was calling (aborting) the dive and going to go back up the anchor line. This was the last time Mr. McGurr was seen alive.

Darryl Johnson finished his dive including the decompression stops first. When he arrived at the surface, he asked where Mr. McGurr was but no one had seen him. A surface search was started to see if he had come up somewhere else. A few minutes later, Pete Wohlleben came up and was asked if he had seen Mr. McGurr. Pete Wohlleben explained that he had seen Mr. McGurr approach the wreck and then signal that he was aborting the dive and heading back up.

The rescue boat was sent down current about 2 miles to see if Mr. McGurr may have come up and drifted away. The search was negative. While the surface search was going on, the Coast Guard was notified that there was an overdue diver.

A Coast Guard helicopter was dispatched, arriving on scene and dropping a data marker buoy. The helicopter searched until released from the case.

Captain Dan Crowell and J.T. Barker, a volunteer, planned the first underwater search. They entered the water and found Mr. McGurr about 16 minutes into the dive. His body was resting in the promenade of the wreck, about 75 feet north of the mooring line. His mouthpiece was not in his mouth, his wings were inflated, his light was on and his stage bottles were undeployed. Mr. McGurr's weight belt and stage bottles were removed and he floated to the surface and a lift bag sent up his equipment.

When Mr. McGurr's body reached the surface, the vessel crew brought him aboard using a lifting davit. Since it was approximately 2 1/2 hours after his air supply would have run out and there were no vital signs found, it was decided not to attempt CPR.

Mr. McGurr's equipment was found as follows:

Main tanks: 2907 psi

Main valves both on

Stage bottle labeled 83% had 200 psi on gauge with valve off. When valve was opened, it contained 3000 psi.

Stage bottle labeled 39% had 0 psi on gauge with the valve off. When the valve was opened, it contained 2750 psi.

Dacor-omni computer 45 red mode - max 179 feet, 10 minutes.

Nemesis computer 45 max depth 202 feet.

All gases were checked onboard and found to contain the percentages labeled on the bottles.

On July 29, 1999, an autopsy was conducted on Charles McGurr by the Suffolk County Medical Examiner. The report of autopsy findings stated the cause of death to be drowning, a contributory factor was arteriosclerotic heart disease, and the manner of death was accidental.

Conclusions:

The probable cause of Charles McGurr's death was heart failure while underwater. This resulted in him dropping his mouthpiece, ingesting water and drowning. The heart failure was most likely brought on by his arteriosclerotic heart disease.

It is also noted that Charles McGurr failed to have a dive partner near him. Although three divers were supposed to be diving together, they did not remain within sight of one another. If there had been another diver close by, they may have observed Mr. McGurr having a problem and been able to assist him in some way.

The investigation also identified that the crew, with the assistance of the passengers on the vessel, could not easily retrieve the unconscious victim from the water. The crew ended up using the vessel's davit to lift the victim out of the water. However, this davit is not set up to prevent further injury while removing someone from the water.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the operator of the dive boat consider providing some type of lifting harness/system if the davit arm will be one of the primary means of getting injured persons out of the water. One example of this type of system is called a Jason's cradle, which would probably hook right into the existing davit and allow a victim to be brought right up the side of the vessel.

TIMOTHY E. DICKERSON

Lieutenant, USCG

Investigating Officer

Encl.: (Forwarded under separate cover.)

- 1) CG-2692 dated 8-25-99
- 2) Statement of Darryl Johnson
- 3) Statement of Pete Wohlleben
- 4) Statement of Dan Crowell
- 5) Statement of Steve Nagiewicz
- 6) Vessel Incident Notes
- 7) Vessel Dive Logs for July 27th and 28th.
- 8) Autopsy Report for Charles McGurr
- 9) Sitrep One and Final from COMCOGARD GRU WOODS HOLE MA dtg P 28
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- 10) Vessel Crew and Passenger List
- 11) Charles McGurr Diver Data Sheet
- 12) Charles McGurr Liability Release
- 13) Charles McGurr Insurance Cards
- 14) Charles McGurr - Certificate of Death
- 15) Statement of Roy Jasper
- 16) Statement of Jackie Smith
- 17) Statement of Alston Trent
- 18) Statement of Mike Carpenter
- 19) Statement of Michael Kane
- 20) Statement of Gary Gentile
- 21) Statement of James T. Barker
- 22) Statement of Joseph King