

ROMANCE – BOUNTY Etc

From: ddmmoreland@picton-castle.com <ddmmoreland@picton-castle.com>

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To: 'Peter Damon' <PeterTDamon@outlook.com>

Subject: RE: Lessons of the BOUNTY | WoodenBoat Magazine

My dear shipmate Pete,

Here is a short run down responding to the questions you posed. Hope this finds you and Marcie well and kids doing fine.

Yes, I know Andy Chase very well indeed for many years. We go way back to St Thomas in the 1970's. His article associated with the loss of the BOUNTY replica is excellent. A long-standing authority in the field of seafarers training. Andy has sailed with me in PC.

These principles of Bridge Resource Management (BRM), Risk Assessment, Margins of Safety and much more are standard fare in PICTON CASTLE as they are on most ships these days. PC is a dedicated inspected and credentialed sail training ship. With roots in ROMANCE and DANMARK, yet a long way down the road from that wonderful brigantine. For me ROMANCE was year 2 (1973) through 6 (1977) in a career of now of 49 years. Pivotal, crucial, amazing, deep but far from the whole show. Brixham Trawler MAVERICK followed by Brigantine ROMANCE and Skipper certainly got me going. Laid the foundation. And like any foundation, it lays under the edifice in question. ROMANCE seems pretty far away these days.

Regarding the question of the ROMANCE (and YANKEE for that matter) and approaches to safety management. Well, as you know we never did one emergency type drill in ROMANCE under Skipper on that world voyage of 1975-77. I recall doing one orientation with the new liferafts they wisely got for the world voyage. I am told that in YANKEE there was not much in the way of drills either. I have discussed this with YANKEE family and mates. Yet both these amazingly accomplished mariners of Johnson and Kimberly and sterling seamen had serious professional mariner training; Captain Johnson in the war time USN in the Pacific and Captain Kimberly at Kings Point Academy and as a credentialed mate in the war time merchant marine in tanker in convoys - and for a long time after in ships that I am confident carried out drills to the standards of the day. They both had plenty of training in drills in all sorts of situations. This was not alien to them. Yet neither one conducted drills or stepped up with anything like BRM and so on in their famous ships. This seems odd to us today. But back then the skipper was all, for better or for worse and all the more so when sailing with such young and inexperienced crews as they did.

When discussing this apparent anomaly it should be noted too that in their combined over 50 years at sea, in these three blue water sailing ships under their commands, and with a combined 500,000 miles at sea in these ships they had ZERO serious incidents. Nothing major bad happened. No man overboards, no fires, no falling out of the rig, no catastrophic groundings, no abandon ships, when other ships were ongoing horror shows or simply ending up lost or tied to the dock. Google up "Last Voyage of the Brigantine Yankee" for more on that score; post Johnson and post Kimberly. In ROMANCE and YANKEE, no drills, not BRM, no harnesses, no GPS, no radar, no Coast Guard inspection and, notably, no real problems. This does beg certain questions, no?

When it comes to BRM, I can assure you that Skipper never consulted me on passage planning or much else besides. Why would he, given my age and short experience? He did give me all sorts of other latitudes. And we did talk about a lot of stuff regarding how things were going.

But did we not drill constantly in launching the boat at sea and in sail handling, anchoring under sail, and in all manner of actual seamanship and much else besides? Irving and Skipper were great seamen. They made sure that their crew became some kind of seamen. And that we were seamen prevented a lot of incidents, but this lack of drills and safety training is curious, given how well they had been trained and in what manner.

Captain Arthur M. Kimberly was an amazing seafarer and mariner and seaman. And he carried ROMANCE on his shoulders every mile. By himself. Gloria was a good mariner and was the wind beneath his wings but he was the seaman onboard. From coasting schooner in the 1930's, to Swedish 4-masted barks, to Kings Point and service in WWII convoys in tankers and sailing as mate and skipper in some of the last big sailing ships before getting the ROMANCE, he was a seaman with every fibre of his being. And a navigator, sailmaker, rigger and so on. Irving Johnson's story is well known.

So, combine the high standard of operational seamanship of YANKEE and the ROMANCE, with today's attention towards emergency training preparation and there you have what we strive for in PICTON CASTLE and a few other ships today. You need both types of training and skills to be reasonably well prepared at sea. Seamanship prevents jams, emergency training gets you out of jams. I tell the gang; good to know how to set a broken leg, better not to break the leg. So, learn not to break a leg but also learn how to set a leg.

Onward.....

In the following discussion and since it is linked to ROMANCE, YANKEE's 1 and 2, I may as well note that like BOUNTY neither YANKEE 1, YANKEE 2 nor ROMANCE were USCG inspected or certified nor were set up to meet any such SSV or small passenger vessel regulations.

Some notes regarding the loss of the BOUNTY

The loss of the replica of the HMAV BOUNTY in 2012 was a sad and readily avoidable disaster.

When the USCG was setting up to do an inquiry and hearings on the loss of the BOUNTY, among other things, they wanted a comparable vessel that made different choices and survived, or sorted it all out in some alternative way with some intention. They needed a model of what logically and reasonably should have been done instead of what BOUNTY did. All ships tied up for the storm, but they wanted a parallel vessel. They were at first looking for American flag ship for comparisons, but could not find one, they kept getting sent to the PICTON CASTLE here in Nova Scotia.

These ships were of similar size, outwardly had some esthetic similarities to the untrained eye: both square-rigged, both were headed south about the same time, both with a large gang aboard. But very different decision-making processes with different outcomes. PICTON CASTLE was fine, BOUNTY was lost.

Of course, the ships are not actually that similar at all. So, I was vetted by the USCG over some months and was subpoenaed for the USCG hearings on the loss of the BOUNTY. My testimony was taken while

PICTON CASTLE was in Tahiti in 2013. It is all part of the public record and I think gCaptain has it too with some sublime analysis by Mario Vitone.

Here are some comparisons:

BOUNTY

- Wooden built for a movie a long time ago.
- Well and properly built in 1960 but that's a long time ago for a wooden ship.
- Indifferently to poorly maintained over the years.
- Frequently de-commissioned for long periods
- In poor shape from the water line up. Topside seams wide open. Means one thing in calm protected Long Island Sound, another offshore in a hurricane.
- In improved but uncertain shape from the WL down.
- She was an uninspected US flag 'yacht'. This basically means unregulated in any way.
- Not required to meet any safety or condition standards
- No water-tight bulkheads
- No single compartment subdivision
- Minimal life saving gear requirements
- No firefighting requirements
- No specific dewatering pumping requirements
- No water-tight hatches
- No stability requirements
- No flag state inspection requirements
- No safe manning certificate or requirements
- Not conforming to any code of inspection regulations or standards such as USCG
- No IMO-STCW Basic Safety Training required of staff crew
- No real agenda/mission apart from financial survival
- BOUNTY was good at Tall Ship events. Port fees for Tall Ship events were only major source of earned revenue apart from the occasional movie gig.
- A long track record of coming in from ocean passages all beat up.
- Frequently stopped at European Port State Inspections when over there
- Leaked to literally an amazing extent.
- Had recently undergone a partial rebuild. She was leaking less than before but evidently still a lot
- Original deck bilge pumps by each mast now gone.
- No hand deck pumps
- Limited engine room pumps
- No back up pumps
- The one trash pump insisted upon after a UK Port State Inspection was "not to be used or tested so as not to wear it out"

BOUNTY MARINE STAFF

- The skipper, of many years, a capable guy, came out of the offshore oil supply industry. A good guy, good ship handler, been aboard a long time, had somehow kept things going. His back ground was in offshore supply boats and had neither a wooden vessel back ground nor any major square-rig background apart from BOUNTY.
- Mates: limited experience. Not sure on credentialing.
- Engineer: no marine experience at all, new to the ship just immediately before sailing

- Deckhands: only limited BOUNTY experience, drawn from the volunteers. Little to now experience in other ships.
- Lots of volunteers: these were essentially trainees but as BOUNTY is uncertificated she cannot charge tuition. As they are not paying cash money to be there this is not illegal. This detail allowed BOUNTY to do almost anything apart from charge for sailing in the vessel.

BOUNTY SAILING SITUATION

- BOUNTY sailed late that day after a daysail with Naval personnel at 1730 that Thursday evening southbound out of New London, CT. BOUNTY headed offshore in the late afternoon after working all day. I can't figure why you might set out with a crew already tired. On the first night.
- SANDY was well on her way. This was known to all. The claxon was wailing. Other ships were finding safe places to tie up.
- Big crew meeting where skipper is confronted with the storm – he says “stay if you want but I am going - and ‘a ship is safer at sea.’
- No record or hint of having studied the storm or weather. The skipper knew about SANDY but it did not seem to concern him that much.
- Bound for Florida.
- No particular binding schedule dates demanding the ships presence in Florida.
- Set sail south bound - with SANDY, very well developed, well forecast and heading straight for them
- Every other ship was getting hidden and lashed and he went to sea.

This was all quite amazing to alot of us.

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The Barque PICTON CASTLE

- Steel ship, heavy thick steel, leaked zero.
- Hull was excellent when acquired in 1993.
- Been through a multi million dollar refit/conversion
- Rebuilt, converted and set up specifically as a sailtraining vessel
- Devoted and dedicated to sail training and making ocean voyages.
- Occaisionally attended tall ship events. As well as operated coastwise in the USA and Canada under the MENS
- Ongoing annual upgrades and improvements
- Never suffered any damage at sea
- Certified, surveyed, inspected annually as an SSV in compliance with specific flag state regulations comparable to USCG regs. (few nations have such regs)
- All standard required credentials: Load Line, Safe Manning, stability, safety gear, etc
- Single compartment subdivision with four watertight bulkheads
- All hatches and doors dogged water tight variety

PICTON CASTLE MARINE STAFF

- Master with unlimited masters steam, motor and sail certs and 30 years in mostly sailing ships as of 2012 since 1972, including ROMANCE, DANMARK, SORLANDET, PHOENIX, ELISSA, GAZAELA, PRIDE OF BALTIMORE etc

- Mates with ample square-rig sea-time including 40,000 miles in PC and in addition to being professionally trained merchant academy grads and large tonnage certificates to fit ship
- Lead seamen all experienced and credentialed from many countries and other ships
- All hands had been aboard for a long time prepping the ship. Many had been on for years.
- Trainees on hand for weeks learning, training, drilling and prepping the ship
- All staff crew in all departments are required to have IMO-STCW Basic Safety Training. Two weeks of firefighting and life saving device use and emergency situation training.

PICTON CASTLE SAILING SITUATION

- Ship recently hauled and surveyed, re-inspected by flag state inspector and surveyor.
- Bound for Panama and the Pacific. Planned departure date and general route similar to BOUNTY
- As per BRM Mates tasked to study weather for an hour a day independently starting two weeks out from planned sailing date
- At planned sailing date, ship stowed, crew drilled.

SANDY DEVELOPS and DECISION TO SAIL

- I watched SANDY develop from its point of origin south of Jamaica for a week/ten days before deciding not to sail. While I got plenty kudos for this decision it was in fact one of the easiest major operation decisions I have ever had to make – literally a “no-brainer”. Much longer story but with all the mates and I studying the development of SANDY it became clear well before BOUNTY sailed that this was an extremely broad storm that could not be dodged at all.
- 4 or 5 days before BOUNTY sailed out into the storm, I knew we were tied up for a couple weeks to wait it out. Not just to let the storm pass but to give the North Atlantic some time to settle down before we set off.
- That Monday before the Thursday when BOUNTY sailed I told the gang to get used to Lunenburg for awhile as we were not budging and then set them to double lashing everything for possible high winds at the dock in a few days time. Three days later on the following Thursday the BOUNTY was that much closer to SANDY and had that much more recent weather info. The storm was that much more well defined. It was big. No possibility of some how “sailing around” it. BOUNTY sailed right out into SANDY. I could not believe it when I found out that Saturday.

I have little idea what the yacht racers do, or what protocols they follow.

Busy? Yes we are busy, just surviving the economics of Covid. I will fill you in later on this. We have a fully subscribed word voyage for the fall. Hope we can sail with some place to go that will let us in. And doing a BOSUN SCHOOL this summer.

All the best, dan