

## Seasick Sailor

### The Story

*"The deck was deserted, and he crawled to the extreme end of it...There he doubled up in limp agony...the surge and the screw combined to sieve out his soul. His head swelled...his body seemed to lose weight...he was fainting from seasickness. The roll of the ship tilted him over the rail...a low, gray mother wave swung out of the fog...pulled him down and...away. The great green sea closed over him, and he went quietly to sleep."* From CAPTAIN'S COURAGEOUS  
By Rudyard Kipling

For anyone who has been seasick, Kipling captures the essence of the experience. But the story below is not fiction. It is the brief story of a hapless passenger overcome by seasickness; however, unlike the young man in Kipling's novel, no other vessel was nearby to save him.

The weather had turned foul, but the seas did not seem too bad. The captain thought the water would be calm enough at the dive site by the next morning, so he decided to sail with the small party of sport divers. In the wallowing seas no one felt very good, and it wasn't long before most found their way to the bunks below. Perhaps each were struggling too much with their own misery to notice Mr. Smith, but Mr. Smith was ill as it turned out, deathly ill.

While the captain fought the sloppy seas, Mr. Smith gripped the gunwale in his own "limp agony." On several occasions the deckhands and the passengers offered warnings to be careful, but he didn't respond—he was alone in his misery. No one thought to get a Personal Flotation Device (PFD) for him or to rig a harness. Perhaps they hovered in the purgatory of loneliness between seasickness and normalcy and shared his need for solitude. Whatever the reason, it seemed little transpired between those aboard. One of the passengers recalls seeing Mr. Smith around midnight. At about 0230 a passenger noticed he was not in his bunk; nor was he at the rail or in the head. It was quickly evident that he was missing. The captain swung the vessel around and began to search along the track line. The Coast Guard was notified, but the day's search was fruitless.

The Coast Guard investigator pieced together the final day of Mr. Smith's life from statements of the passengers and crew. No one saw him fall overboard. He simply disappeared...unseen, like Kipling's young hero...fainting from seasickness...slipped over the side...and went silently to his final sleep.

# Lesson Learned

*Know the dangers of seasickness. Take care of your passengers even when they are sick. Don 't leave the seasick unattended without taking basic safety precautions.*

**Prevention Through People**



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**Created 6/3/96**

**Updated 7/7/98**