

## **ATLANTIC STRIKE TEAM SYNOPSIS - PETER A. BRUNK - 1975-78**

I reported to the Atlantic Strike Team in August, 1975. The Strike Team had just returned from major ADAPTS pumping jobs in Chile (Tanker METULA) and Straits of Malacca (Tanker SHOWA MARU). Both were ULCC tankers. Two weeks after reporting, I went on my first major spill which was in Baltimore Harbor near my hometown. When I went aboard the Strike Team, I had no idea what would be involved. I met the AST while serving as CO of USCGC SLEDGE.

We used the AST divers to recover submerged pilings at a lighthouse in Roanoke Sound, NC. Most of our equipment on the AST was Army and Navy excess property - boats, motors, cranes and trucks. Later, as we did more jobs, we were able to get better equipment.

### **1. BALTIMORE HARBOR - AUGUST, 1975**

Tankerman and PIC both went to sleep during transfer. 250,000 gallons of #6 oil in the harbor ended up between Dundalk Marine Terminal and Sollers Point. We were there for thirty days recovering product. There were a lot of problems. It didn't take long to learn the AST ropes.

### **2. EDMUND FITZGERALD - NOVEMBER, 1975 - LAKE SUPERIOR**

We left Elizabeth City NC. It was 74 degrees. Exec and I arrived in Sault Ste. Marie. It was snowing and 17 degrees. The next day a Navy P-3 Orion aircraft arrived from Chicago. I interviewed the Captain on the ANDERSON. They were following the EDMUND FITZGERALD when she disappeared from their radar. He gave me their last estimated position. Commander Corbett from CCGD 9 told me to go in the airplane to look for the wreck. The first pass over the position we received a contact with a Magnetic Anomaly Detector (MAD). After another pass I looked out the porthole and noticed a small sheen; the ship had a diesel bow thruster. I advised the pilot that we had found the wreck. We marked it and went back to Sault Ste. Marie where the families of the crew were waiting. Later, we went aboard the CGC WOODRUSH. Using an experimental side scan sonar we took a picture of the wreck on the bottom.

### **3. McALLISTER BARGE - DECEMBER, 1975 - SAN JUAN, PR**

We worked with Gulf Strike Team on a barge in the surf line west of San Juan. #6 oil was pouring out of the barge causing a lot of problems. I was sent to Roosevelt roads to pick up a Navy barge. I worked with Captain Al Kirchoff from Murphy Pacific. He was the first salvage master to pump oil off of a stranded tanker instead of just pumping it overboard. We used ADAPTS\* to pump off the barge. We were there 37 days.

### **4. VICTORY SHIP BETELGEUSE - JANUARY, 1976 - RODANTHE, NC**

The vessel was en route to a scrapyard in Texas under tow. The hawser parted in a storm and the ship went on the beach. The ship had a belly full of #6 oil in her double-bottomed tanks. The ship was a missile storage unit at Holy Loch, Scotland. We went aboard and set up ADAPTS to pump the product up to her deep tanks. The ship was refloated by Murphy Pacific Salvage Co. While working this job, we received a call about a possible spill on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

#### **5. ALLIED BARGE - EASTERN SHORE OF VIRGINIA - JANUARY, 1976**

I went from Cape Hatteras, NC to the Eastern Shore of Virginia via CG helicopter and found 200,000 gallons of #6 oil on approximately 20 miles of shoreline. 40,000 gallons were on the Western Shore of Virginia at Windmill Point, VA. It was a massive cleanup operation lasting 30 days. There were a lot of problems and a lot of stories. We had 900 open-topped drums with oil, debris, and 30,000 dead ducks. A friend that I served with on the USCGC MADRONA and I discovered a way to burn the oil. I presented a paper about this event at the next oil spill conference. I received a CG Achievement Medal for this operation.

#### **6. BARGE ON JETTY - CLEVELAND, OH - MAY, 1976**

A tug was trying to shift from hawser to pushing and got a line in the screw. The barge was sinking when I got aboard. We used a 50 ton steam derrick to hold the barge until we rigged ADAPTS. We pumped #6 oil from the barge into another barge. One tank was breached releasing 6,000 barrels of product. There was no cleanup as it was very rough and the product dissipated. We worked this job with Dave Usher of Marine Pollution Control. Our ADAPTS, with a stripper pump, outdid his big pump which had a 6-71 prime mover.

#### **7. ARGO MERCHANT - OUTER NANTUCKET SHOALS - DECEMBER, 1976**

The ship was aground. The middle of the ship was in 25 feet of water, the bow was in 55 feet, the stern was in 55 feet. The ship was drawing 35 feet of water. The Coast Guard removed the crew and took over the ship using the Intervention at Sea Act. We worked with Captain Kirchoff again. We used the USCGC BITTERSWEET and SPAR and Army Skycrane helicopters to put ADAPTS and other equipment on board. There were a lot of problems due to the weather and the location of the vessel. The ship broke in half 3 days before Christmas. 7.5 million gallons of #6 oil were spilled and dissipated as it was very rough. My first job as a Warrant Officer was CO of the NANTUCKET LIGHTSHIP. A reporter for a Providence, RI newspaper wrote the book, "HARD AGROUND", about this incident.

#### **8. BARGE AGROUND IN ICE - TANGIER SOUND, MD - JANUARY, 1977**

A helicopter put me on a tug to assist the captain. The tug was in the notch trying to back off of Shark Fin Shoals. I told the mate to get out of the notch, put the hawser on the bow, and pull, We refloated the barge and anchored it in Hooper Straits. I called the helicopter which was at Patuxent River Naval Air Station to come and pick me up. When the helicopter picked me up, we could not go to Elizabeth City, NC as the helicopter was icing up. It was snowing and blowing a gale. When we got back to Patuxent, the helicopter crashed and fell 15 feet onto the runway. It was a rough landing. The CG has the best pilots\_ We stayed there while the helicopter was repaired.

#### **9. TANKER OVERSEAS ALICE AGROUND - CHESAPEAKE BAY - JANUARY, 1977**

A CG helicopter put me on the tanker in heavy ice conditions. The tide was flooding, pushing the ship against a dredge spoil area outside of the channel. We had tugs there pulling but making no progress. I suggested that one tug proceed close to the ship to relieve the pressure from the ice. As soon as the tug pushed through the ice, the ship rocked and moved about 20 feet. After a few more passes by the tug, the ship refloated with no damage. The ship was loaded with gasoline. I worked this job with LT. Card from MSO Baltimore. He later became Assistant Commandant of the Coast Guard.

#### **10. INDIAN GRAIN SHIP AGROUND - COVE POINT, MD**

The pilot went to sleep and the ship missed the turn to the north at Cove Point. The ship went hard aground before stopping. A CG helicopter put me on board to assist tugs and salvage team. The ship had ballast and fresh water to pump out and was then refloated with no damage.

#### **11. BARGE ETHEL H SINKING - HUDSON RIVER, NY - FEBRUARY, 1977**

We took a C130 to Stewart Air Force Base at West Point, NY. It was a bad landing in snow and 0 degree weather. We went to the barge via CGC SWEETGUM and used ADAPTS to stop the barge from sinking. We worked with Billy Kratz, a salvage master from Don-Jon Marine. We had a lot of problems as ice was up to 3 feet thick on the Hudson. We used the barge engine/pump to remove #6 oil and refloat vessel while working with a drunken tankerman. This was the first of 4 jobs working with Billy Kratz.

#### **12. NAVY TANKER POTOMAC - THULE, GREENLAND - JULY, 1977**

The tanker was under escort by CGC WESTWIND with #6 oil. The tanker hit an underwater iceberg and spilled approximately 100,000 gallons of product in Baffin Bay. The spill was over 300 miles north of the Arctic Circle. We moved equipment from a Navy facility at Cheatam Annex in Virginia using a C5, 2 C130's, and a C141 airplane. We worked skimming from the WESTWIND and USNS MIRFAK. We didn't recover much product, but we proved that we could move equipment in a timely manner.

#### **13. BOUCHARD BARGE AGROUND - EATONS NECK, NY - JANUARY, 1978**

The after rake on the barge flooded. Tug put the barge aground at Eatons Neck. A lot of #2 oil was released from the barge but dissipated as it was very rough. Lt. Kuchin, BM2 Klinefelter, and I went aboard the barge via the Huntington Bay Harbor- master's boat. He was a very good boat operator as it was rough, and we tightened up some of the hatches. We also worked with Billy Kratz on this job. We used the barge engine to pump off the remaining product into another barge. There were a lot of problems on this job as the barge was covered with ice. I met Mr. Jim Miller, Miller Environmental, on this job. He later started the National Response Corporation.

#### **14. COASTAL TANKER AGROUND - PORTLAND, ME - FEBRUARY, 1978**

We proceeded to Portland, ME via C130. The tanker was not leaking. It was refloated with no problems and put to the dock at Portland. As soon as the tanker was secured, it started snowing. This was the start of the Blizzard of '78. During the night, we received a call that a tanker was dragging anchor and in trouble in Salem, MA.

#### **15. TANKER GLOBAL HOPE AGROUND - SALEM, MA - FEBRUARY, 1978**

The tanker dragged anchor and went aground putting holes in the engine room and at least one tank of #6 oil. We could not get to Salem as all roads were closed due to the blizzard. I spoke with the CO of the CGC SPAR, and he said he could take us and our equipment to the tanker. Upon arrival at GLOBAL HOPE, we put our equipment aboard and started setting up ADAPTS pumping system. The initial salvage man was relieved by Billy Kratz of Don-Jon. Billy swam under the engine and put a patch on the hull. Don-Jon ended up owning the ship. The pilot boat, CAN-DO, sank on its way to help the tanker with the 5 good men on board lost. The tanker was not really in trouble after it went aground. 100 people were killed in New England during this blizzard.

#### **\* Air Deliverable Anti-Pollution Transfer System**

The ADAPTS System was designed and developed by the Coast Guard. It consisted of pumping systems, Dracones, and high-seas barrier. All of these systems were to be delivered by air drop using parachutes. The system was supposed to work in 40 knots of wind and 10-12 foot seas. Test drops were conducted with the CGC MADRONA and CGC CONIFER. BM1 Fred Ellinwood was at these tests and can provide more information. His phone number is 252-330-2782. I used the 5,000 gallon Dracone to pump 9,000 gallons of #2 oil from a trawler aground in Fishermen's Inlet near Cape Charles, VA. I was working for Industrial Marine Service at the time. CWO Steve Day arranged for the used of the Dracone in this incident. This was the first operational use of the Dracone barge in this country for emergency pumping. The barge has since been used on a trawler at Cuttyhunk, Island, MA. The job went smoothly using the lessons learned at Cape Charles, VA.