

I thought that I would put out a note since a lot of you have been calling and writing to find out how things are and if I'm OK and what happened. If you hadn't heard, my boat hit a uncharted submerged sea mount at the highest speed we can go at about 500 ft. below the surface. There were about 30 of us that were seriously hurt and, unfortunately, one of my shipmates didn't make it.

First off, I am OK. I am pretty beat up with my entire left side and butt as one big bruise. My shoulder is separated and may require surgery. They will evaluate later this week. I am very fortunate that I hit the wall and didn't go down a ladderwell that was right next to where I hit. If I had gone down that, I would have got really messed up.

I took a tremendous shot to my left thigh from something. If it had been slightly lower in the knee area it would have been really ugly. But all in all I am in good shape. We hit it at about noon right after field day (where all of us clean the boat for several hours). Thank God we didn't hit while we were doing this or it would have been much worse. We would have had flying deck plates through the air and such. Not good.

As it was, it happened while chow was going on and most people were either sitting and eating or on watch. I don't remember much of the collision. People describe it as like in the movie, "The Matrix," where everything slowed down and levitated and then went flying forward faster than the brain can process. My mind has blanked it out exactly what happened. Adrenaline kicked in and I have no real memory of how I got down to middle level or what I did immediately following.

I helped carry several shipmates to the crew mess deck (adrenaline is a wonderful thing - my shoulder was wrecked and I had no idea until about 4 hours later). I sat with several of my junior guys that had bad head wounds and talked with them to keep them conscious until doc could see them. It seemed like an eternity but I'm sure [it] wasn't that long.

For those Navy folks that ever wondered why Chiefs stomp around and preach, "Stow for Sea," this was a perfect example. It definitely saved lives.

I am extremely proud of the crew to do damage control, help the wounded and get the boat safely to the surface (for the boat guys we blew the tanks dry on the emergency blow but unbeknownst to us we were missing some ballast tanks - some didn't have integrity).

The ship's control party did every thing exactly right even though they were hurt as well. The Diving Officer of the Watch had just unbuckled his belt to update a status board and hit the Ship's Control Panel hard enough to break some of the gauges. To add insult to injury, his chair came up right behind him. Several people were injured in the Engine Room Lower Level area. Lots of metal and sharp edges in the area as well as that's where the boat's smoking area is. Several crew members are reevaluating that habit now.

Once again, we got lucky in the fact that we had an extra corpsman onboard. One of our officers was a prior enlisted corpsman who was a Fleet Marine Force medic so he was a Godsend for us. Our Corpsman did an outstanding job getting everyone stabilized and did the best he could for our fallen shipmate.

I am surprised that he got him to hold on as long as he did. Our corpsman is definitely a hero in my book. He didn't sleep for 2 or 3 days. We finally put him down when the SEAL docs helicoptered in to help. Like I said, I am extremely proud of my crew and how they handled themselves.

My Chief of the Boat was an inspiration of what a leader should be and my Captain was as well. My XO took out an EAB manifold with his back but still managed to help coordinate things. No matter what happens later, these men did a superior job under difficult circumstances. I am humbled by the entire crew's performance from the CO down to the seaman that I was checking in two days before.

For those of you wondering, I am sure there will be an investigation into what happened and, no, I was not part of the navigation preps for this voyage. I work on the inertial/electronic navigation and interior communications part of my rate and didn't have anything to do with the conventional navigation part of it. I will be lending support to my comrades who were to help them prepare for the pending investigation.

I thank you all for your concern and appreciate your prayers not only for myself, but for my shipmates. We are doing well, we band of brothers and will pull through just fine.

Thanks,

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