

1989 part 3

7. 1989 NBSAC Propeller Guard Subcommittee: Full Timeline

by Gary Polson, PropellerSafety.com
 Polson Enterprises
 Copyright © 2022 October 11, 2022 version

Mercury Knowingly Misled the Subcommittee

Dick Snyder was Mercury Marine's long time in house expert witness in propeller guard cases. A series of four letters and one deposition prove Snyder was well aware that Event 1 propeller strike data did not include all U.S. Coast Guard Boating Accident Report Database (BARD) reported boat propeller accidents.

The letters and deposition are labeled as **SP1, SP2, SP3, SP4,** and **SP5** on the timeline below. Dick Snyder positively knew Event 1 data did not represent all USCG BARD reported propeller accidents on or before October 9, 1987.

Almost a year later Dick Snyder prepared to present Event 1 propeller fatality data to the NBSAC subcommittee as representing the total number of "struck by boat or propeller" fatalities. Before supplying Event 1 fatality data, he further reduced it by:

1. one third claiming 1/3 of the fatalities were due to being struck by a boat. However, two U.S. Coast Guard studies did not identify a single struck by boat fatality.
2. several victims who were fatally struck by boat propellers and drowned.
3. a few water jet accidents which may represent early PWC's operators jumping boat wakes and getting struck by boat propellers.

Snyder presented his reduced annual Event 1 propeller strike fatality data to the subcommittee on September 22-23, 1988 as if it represented the total number of fatal propeller strikes.

Mercury Knowingly Misled the Subcommittee continued

Montgomery, Lincoln, and Kerlin were all present, but said nothing. Shortly later, Snyder wrote a letter (**B** on chart below) to Jim Getz, subcommittee chair, summarizing his presentation using reduced Event 1 data.

About five months after Snyder's presentation to the subcommittee, Dick Snyder wrote Jim Getz telling Getz that he (Snyder) recently became aware the U.S. Coast Guard reported accidents as a series of three events (point **C** on chart below). Thus his earlier presentation of Event 1 data did not include all USCG BARD reported propeller fatalities. Snyder then supplied average actual BARD reported fatality data AFTER he once again reduced it by the same methods he previously used.

This is a classic example of the boating industry controlling accident data to reduce the number of accidents being discussed to make the problem appear less important and less urgent. Snyder even subtracted those who bled out and drowned after being struck by a boat propeller.

By the time Dick Snyder submitted his revised propeller fatality data to Getz, the subcommittee was preparing to wind down and Getz was writing the report. No evidence was found that other members of the subcommittee ever saw Snyder's revised data.

No efforts were made to estimate the number of unreported fatalities or the number of boat propeller injuries.

NBSAC Propeller Guard Subcommittee Timeline

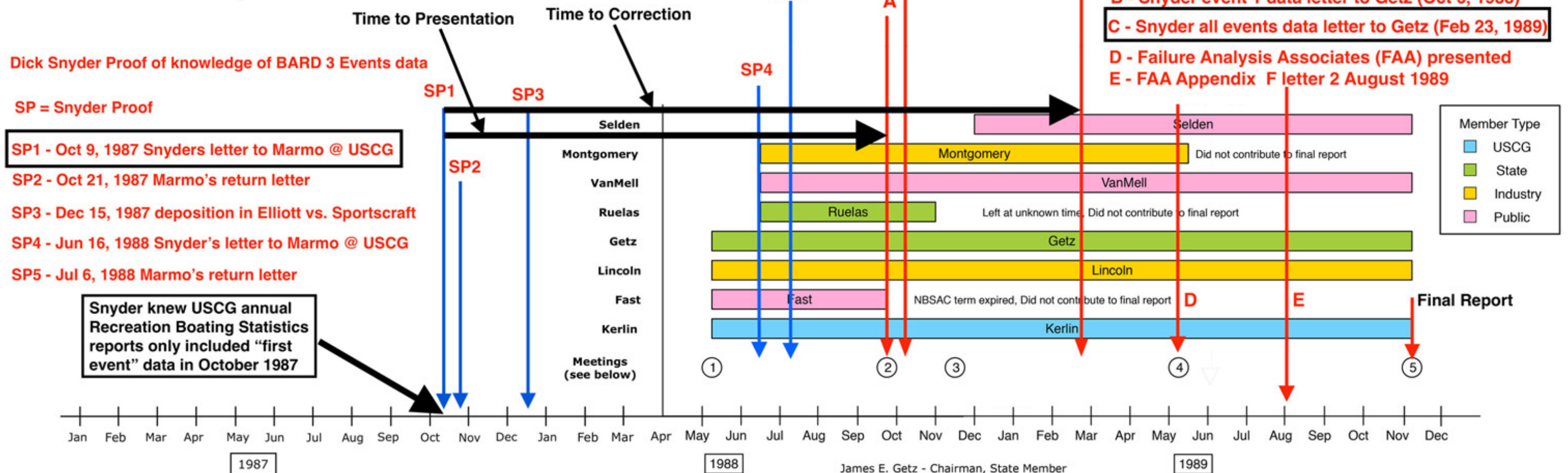


Figure 15: Timeline Chart 4

by Gary Polson © Polson Enterprises 2011. All rights reserved.
 Propeller Guard Information Center
 PropellerSafety.com