

50121 3 2 1 BoBo writes from Edisto Island, "Dear Lawyer Cooper, Can you explain about maritime law and courts in short words?"

Well, BoBo, I will do my best. Some admiralty cases involve a lawsuit for breaking a maritime contract, such as a contract for operation of a boat on navigable waters, or for use of ships in commerce, or for employment of seamen on vessels. Other admiralty cases involve negligence or wrongful conduct without a contract which results in injury or damage on the navigable waters.

Admiralty cases can be filed in state court or in federal court. The thing to remember is that federal admiralty law applies in admiralty cases, no matter which court decides the case. This rule is important because admiralty law is often different from state law. There. And without too many Sunday words!

Ellen writes from Mt. Pleasant, "Dear Mr. Cooper: My husband and I are considering whether to document our new boat with the Coast Guard or to register it with the Boating Division of the S.C. Wildlife & Marine Resources Dept. What is involved?"

Very briefly, all vessels in the state qualify to be registered with the Boating Division, and most are required to be registered with the Boating Division. If your vessel qualifies for documentation with the Coast Guard, you may document your vessel instead of registration with the Boating Division, or in addition to registration with the Boating Division.

Registration of a vessel with the Boating Division is cheaper than documentation with the Coast Guard, but documentation with the Coast Guard allows recording of a preferred ship mortgage which

50114 3 2 1 This in, courtesy of the publishers of Professional Mariner. COLUMBUS ISLEN is a 289 ton research vessel owned by the National Science Foundation and chartered to the University of Miami. A knowledgeable captain has commented, "This is a highly equipped vessel, loaded with navigational equipment; she's got every type of antenna known to man..." On a recent voyage in the Florida keys, 21 scientists aboard represented Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution, Max Plank Institute in Germany, and the U. S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration. One purpose of the voyage was the study of one of the most fragile ecosystems in the world -- the coral reefs of 5.32 square mile Looe Key National Marine Sanctuary. Day Beacon #24 stands 20 feet high and marks the east corner of the reef with a flashing 6 second red light with a nominal range of 6 miles.

Although The Florida Keys National Marine Sanctuary Act generally prohibits vessels the size of the COLUMBUS ISLEN from entering the sanctuary, on August 10, 1994 with clear skies and a 20 knot wind, Captain Michael Dick rammed the COLUMBUS ISLEN through four coral spurs and grounded the ship 250 yards west of Day Beacon #24. The COLUMBUS ISLEN pounded on the reef for 2 days, destroying a 500 ft. by 30 ft. section of coral. Damage estimates for the ship run up to \$1 million.

Capt. Dick first told Coast Guard investigators that he had "blacked out" for 6 minutes before the grounding. Later, Capt. Dick stated that he had not blacked out and that he was not going to make any further statements. Capt. Dick voluntarily surrendered his Coast Guard license to avoid a public hearing on charges of