

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :
 :
 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF THE: NTSB Accident No.
 COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
 -----:

INTERVIEW OF: JAMES WINEGEART

Monday,
 October 12, 2015

Jacksonville, Florida

BEFORE:

MIKE KUCHARSKI, NTSB
 MIKE MILLAR, ABS
 KEVIN STITH, TOTE Services
 ■■■■■ ■■■■■ U.S. Coast Guard

This transcript was produced from audio provided by the
 National Transportation Safety Board.

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 5:06 p.m.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Good afternoon everyone.

4 This is Mike Kucharski. It's 1706 on the 12th of
5 October. We're here at the Pilot Station, St. John's
6 Bar Pilot Association in Jacksonville. And we're
7 investigating the El Faro incident. And specifically
8 the members here today are from the operations group.

9 The purpose of the investigation is to
10 increase safety, not to assign fault, blame or
11 liability. The NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of
12 confidentiality or immunity from legal or license
13 actions.

14 But, let me stop there. We can't stop it.
15 We have no enforcement powers though. A transcript, a
16 summary of the interview will go into the public
17 docket. I can tell you there will be a transcript of
18 this recording. Do you mind if we record this,
19 Captain?

20 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I do not.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And the transcript
22 will be sent to you first. You can look at it and tell
23 us if we need to correct anything.

24 You're allowed to have a personal
25 representative if you want one here. The

1 representative cannot testify or really comments are
2 limited for the representative. They don't participate
3 in questioning or raise objections.

4 Any questions so far?

5 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No questions.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. To my left we have?

7 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar with ABS. I'm with
8 the American Bureau of Shipping. And I'm with the
9 Operations Group of the NTSB investigation.

10 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services.
11 I'm a member of the Operations Group.

12 MR. [REDACTED] And I'm [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the
13 Coast Guard. Also, a member of the Operations Group.

14 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Captain James Winegeart
15 with the St. John's Bar Pilot Association.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, Captain, will you
17 spell your name for the record?

18 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: James, J-A-M-E-S
19 Winegeart, W-I-N-E-G-E-A-R-T.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, Captain, would you
21 give us a little bit of your background? Schooling
22 related to the maritime industry?

23 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I went to SUNI Maritime
24 from 1977 to 1981 when I graduated. Went to sea after
25 that. Worked my way up, Third Mate, Second Mate, Chief

1 Mate, Master, Sailing Master a couple of years. And
2 started with the St. John's Bar Pilots in August 1993.

3 Started my training. Became a full Pilot
4 October 1995. And been piloting here ever since.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: So from 1995, so roughly 20
6 years.

7 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Twenty-two

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Twenty-two. Okay, great.
9 Captain, understand that you brought the El Faro into
10 Jacksonville on the -- that would be about the 28th of
11 October, -- September?

12 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: September 28, yes sir.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And have you piloted that
14 vessel before?

15 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you say it's one time?
17 Twenty times, a hundred times? Just approximately.

18 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Somewhere between 20 and
19 100.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Okay. And I don't
21 want to pin you -- you know, pin somebody down. But
22 we'd just like to, you know, sort of bracket it. You
23 know, when you say I've piloted it before, is it a
24 couple of times.

25 Great. So you've handled that particular

1 vessel many times.

2 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: And the El Yunque, have you
4 also handled that vessel?

5 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Would you say that's many
7 times too?

8 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

9 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, great. So, when you
10 are piloting the El Faro, does the ship operate or
11 handle differently from similar ships of class? Of
12 class, of that design and size?

13 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: She handles similarly,
14 yes.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes. Okay. Do you have any
16 recollection of bare steerageway on that vessel?

17 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Not particularly the El
18 Faro. But that class of vessel, yes.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you tell us what that
20 is? What type of turns of speed you have?

21 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Well, it's a steamship.
22 It can go -- it can give you whatever RPMs that you
23 desire, up to a limit. And she would steer down as low
24 as 10 RPMs, as long as you gave it plenty of time.

25 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. How about speed

1 through the water? You know, irrespective of having
2 turns on the rudder where she will be difficult to
3 steer.

4 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Well, You're speaking of
5 how many knots through the water --

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

7 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Do you lose steerage?

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes, for that type of.

9 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: At what point?

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yes.

11 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: It would be down to a
12 couple of knots.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: But it wasn't anything
14 unusual compared too other --

15 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Type of ships of class?

17 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And how about
19 responsiveness to the rudder? Did it respond well to
20 the rudder?

21 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: It did. I would say she
22 was a good handling ship.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And over the course
24 of the last number of years, have you noticed any
25 differences in the ship, the way it responded?

1 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Gents, any questions?
3 Mike?

4 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. In -- have
5 you taken outbound trips as well as inbound trips on
6 both vessels?

7 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

8 MR. MILLAR: Did they behave differently
9 going outbound versus inbound?

10 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Typically inbound, they
11 didn't have as much progress, so there was not as much
12 draft. And typically, not always, it would have more
13 trim. So it did handle a little differently.

14 Outbound, typically it was loaded down more
15 and heavier. And it did respond a little bit
16 differently, yes.

17 MR. MILLAR: I understand from the previous
18 Pilot that there are quite a few turns in the process
19 of leaving the Port of Jacksonville on an outbound trip
20 when she -- when they're loaded.

21 How did the vessel behave? Did you
22 encounter any situations where you had wind-loading and
23 she behaved differently? Was she a tender type of
24 vessel?

25 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, she doesn't stick

1 out in my mind as being tender. Different loaded
2 conditions, there might -- she would be more tender if
3 you will, then other times.

4 MR. MILLAR: Would she be considered a
5 vessel that was sensitive to wind, wind loading?

6 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Well, because of the
7 containers and high sides, yes, you would have to pay
8 attention to the wind.

9 MR. MILLAR: Okay.

10 MR. STITH: Kevin Stith with TOTE Services.
11 Prior to arrival or after departure, around the sea
12 buoy in that area, what type of currents can you expect
13 to see or set?

14 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: At the sea buoy?

15 MR. STITH: Yes.

16 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Well, it can vary.
17 They're largely wind-driven.

18 MR. STITH: Okay. So, would those types of
19 vessels tend to handle well taking in account the
20 current and the wind?

21 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes. They'd handle as
22 well as any other ship.

23 MR. STITH: So, I guess what I'm trying to
24 ask also is, would you have to -- compared too other
25 let's say container ships, or other vessels of that

1 similar design, would you have to -- would you notice
2 any more or less rudder that you would have to apply
3 under similar circumstances?

4 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

5 MR. STITH: Okay.

6 MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski. How about
7 RPMs when there was wind out there? Did you have to
8 boost those RPMs to get her through the wind or into a
9 turn?

10 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes. Typically you
11 would use full ahead to come through the J's if there
12 was any significant wind.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And at full ahead
14 maneuvering speed?

15 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Full ahead maneuvering.
16 And occasionally you would give it an additional 10
17 RPMs.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And what do you
19 recollect is the most wind you've piloted that ship in?

20 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I can't off the top of
21 my head recall. I've had it in some windy conditions.
22 Windy being 20 knots, 25 knots.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Is there a restriction on
24 the port as far as coming off the berth? Were you not
25 supposed to undock a ship or maneuver a ship in the

1 Port of -- in the St. John's?

2 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No. There is no written
3 limitations on that.

4 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. So you -- somewhere
5 in the vicinity of 20 to 25 knots was about the most
6 wind that you've encountered with that ship?

7 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I'm just guessing.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Sure. Sure.

9 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I don't recall.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: It wasn't a gale type
11 situation in other words?

12 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Not that I can recall.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Right. Right, right. Any
14 discussion of weather with the Captain inbound?

15 (No response)

16 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Only the weather, the
17 local weather here in Jacksonville and what we were
18 expecting to encounter on the inbound voyage.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: The inbound voyage, okay.

20 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Part of the Master Pilot
21 exchange.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: What is the maximum speed
23 you've had on the vessel coming out?

24 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Well, with current,
25 leaving the jetties, you might get it up to 15 knots.

1 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Gents?

2 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast
3 Guard. Captain, during that inbound transit, was there
4 any discussion about any propulsion problems with the
5 vessel?

6 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

7 MR. [REDACTED] No? What about previous
8 voyages with that vessel to the best of your
9 recollection, any issues that you can think of?

10 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: I don't recall any
11 issues with that vessel.

12 MR. [REDACTED] All right. Thank you.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: And when you said you bump
14 the RPMs maybe ten over maneuvering speed?

15 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Have you noticed any change
17 in the way the ship's handled over the last number of
18 years? The last few years from previous time?

19 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: No, sir.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Any questions? Any
21 other questions, gents?

22 (No response)

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Got it. Is there any
24 that you can recollect, any Coast Guard policy as far
25 as not being in port for high winds? Or a hurricane or

1 anything like that?

2 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: There is a Coast Guard
3 policy with an approaching hurricane. Depending on
4 the number of days out the projected path is. And it
5 is the Coast Guard that actually will either send ships
6 out to sea or stop traffic.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: Um-hum. Do you also pilot
8 Navy ships?

9 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Very rarely.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: So, back to the Coast Guard
11 policy. The Coast Guard policy, I'm sure we can get a
12 copy of that. But essentially, there is some kind of a
13 policy overall to try to get the ships out as a
14 hurricane approaches. Not have them remain in port?

15 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

17 MR. MILLAR: Mike Millar, ABS. Would you
18 consider that that's a prudent approach?

19 CAPTAIN WINEGEART: Yes, sir, for the
20 typical vessels, yes.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. I don't have any
22 further questions. It's now 1720. And I will stop the
23 interview.

24 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
25 off the record at 5:20 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of James Winegeart
Jacksonville, Florida

DATE: 10-12-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 16 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.



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Kucharski Michael

From: Bell Caroline
Sent: Wednesday, December 02, 2015 10:53 PM
To: Kucharski Michael
Subject: FW: El Faro Interview transcripts for your review

I added the below changes to the errata sheet-Bryson and Winegeart errata sheets are in Sharepoint- but here is his response to both interviews...

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

From: winegeart@jaxpilots.com
Sent: Thursday, November 05, 2015 9:32:11 AM
To: Bell Caroline
Subject: RE: El Faro Interview transcripts for your review

Good Morning Carrie,

I have a couple of corrections to both interviews. Mainly clarifications and typos.

October 9th Interview:

Page 12, Line 13,14, and 19 - writing should be riding
Page 15, Line 22 - review should be either (a)VHF radio or (b)radio

October 12th Interview:

Page 3, Line 23 - SUNI should be SUNY
Page 7, Line 11 - progress should be cargo
Page 9, Line 11 - J's should be jetties

Let me know if I can be of further assistance. Hope all is well.

Jay Winegeart

----- Original Message -----

Subject: El Faro Interview transcripts for your review

From: Bell Caroline <caroline.bell@ntsb.gov>

Date: Wed, November 04, 2015 5:37 pm

To: "winegeart@jaxpilots.com" <winegeart@jaxpilots.com>

Good evening, Mr. Winegeart,

Attached are the transcripts from your two interviews with NTSB last month in regard to the El Faro accident. Please review these transcripts for accuracy and provide any comments/corrections on the attached OMS Transcript Errata sheet. These revisions should include any grammatical errors/spellings that you wish to change or any words/phrases that are inaccurately transcribed. Content cannot be revised.

Thank you for participating in our interviews. We appreciate you taking time to assist in this investigation. If you have any questions, please let me know.

Regards,
Carrie

Carrie Bell, M.S.

Marine Accident Investigator|Human Performance & Survival Factors

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