

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

Tuesday,
January 5, 2016

Portland, Maine

BEFORE:

BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB

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

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard:

██████████ ██████████
U.S. Coast Guard

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

(Time not given)

1
2
3 MR. GRUNWALD: Yes, hi. This is Tim
4 Grunwald.

5 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Hi, Tim. This is Brian
6 Young.

7 MR. GRUNWALD: Hi, Brian. How are you?

8 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Good. Thank you very
9 much for your time. I'm in a, we're in a sheriff's
10 office in Portland, Maine and I'm with [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
11 [REDACTED] is a Coast Guard investigator. It's just the two
12 of us here.

13 MR. GRUNWALD: Okay.

14 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: And we just got off the
15 phone with Mr. Pusatere and I'm sorry if we held you up
16 at all.

17 MR. GRUNWALD: Okay.

18 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: So if you just have a
19 few minutes we just wanted to, Emily had told us that
20 maybe you might have had some information based on
21 discussions that you and Richard had about some
22 technical, you know, discussions that he maybe he
23 wouldn't have shared with his wife about engines and
24 ships and boilers.

25 MR. GRUNWALD: Right, right.

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1 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: You know. And said you
2 guys were close and as friends and all just wondering
3 if you might share some of those with us and just
4 before we start what we do is we record all of our
5 interviews and this way we can pay attention to you.
6 So we just want to make sure that you're all set with
7 that.

8 MR. GRUNWALD: Okay. Yes, I'm fine with
9 that.

10 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. Yes, so if you
11 have time we're ready to roll and we are, the NTSB is
12 doing a safety investigation. We're not trying to
13 blame anybody for anything. We just want to find out
14 what happened and we want to come up with a probable
15 cause so we can prevent this from happening again.

16 MR. GRUNWALD: Got you.

17 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: So pretty much maybe
18 right up front maybe just tell us about how much, how
19 long you've known Richard.

20 MR. GRUNWALD: Well Rich was my neighbor.
21 He lived just behind me in the neighborhood I grew up
22 in. My back gate would be right in his back yard. So
23 I've known him, you know, just as a neighborly
24 acquaintance basis for a couple years.

25 And then he, in June they had asked me to

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1 remodel their house for them. They needed a contractor
2 because their daughter was getting to a point where she
3 could walk around and the stairs and the balconies and
4 some of the parts of the house weren't safe and they
5 needed to get it done quickly.

6 So I agreed to come over and kind of do a
7 whole house makeover in about four or five weeks for
8 them. And that was, we started in early July and
9 finished the end of July. And that's where I really, I
10 really became close with Rich because he had taken
11 three or four weeks, you know, took his leave at that
12 time so he could be there to help supervise and his
13 wife Emily and their daughter went out of town while
14 the work was being done because obviously they couldn't
15 stay there while it was being done.

16 So over the four or five weeks we became
17 pretty close and talked a lot because he was kind of my
18 second set of eyes and ears on the job. And he was
19 very handy. He could do most of the work himself. He
20 didn't have the time to do it.

21 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Right. So and I guess
22 during that time I guess you must have talked a lot
23 about the ships?

24 MR. GRUNWALD: Not really. It was just one
25 brief conversation at the end of the, I mean he talked

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1 to me about what he did on the ship and, you know, how
2 hard he worked on it and, you know, how he did
3 electrical work and worked in a lot of hot and confined
4 spaces.

5 But we didn't really talk too much about,
6 you know, any of the safety issues about it until I was
7 almost finished with the job. And a couple days, this
8 was maybe two or three days before he ended up, you
9 know, going down to Jacksonville to go back on the
10 ship. It was just a brief conversation that we had
11 about the, about what he mentioned about the, you know,
12 the work that was being done on the ship.

13 But I felt like it was, I felt like I needed
14 to share it with Emily because, you know, in my mind it
15 had something to do, it could have had something to do
16 with, you know, if there was engine failure it could
17 have had something to do with it. That's why I
18 mentioned it to her.

19 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. And she didn't
20 really share the discussion with us. She wasn't sure
21 of it and that's why she asked us to contact you.

22 MR. GRUNWALD: Right, right. And it was a
23 very brief discussion with him. It was, it started out
24 the job was pretty much finished and we were just
25 finishing up the final touches and Rich had mentioned

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1 to me how he appreciated the trade that I had on the
2 job.

3 My flooring guy and my carpenters and the
4 electrician and the painters, he was appreciative of
5 the quality of the work. And I mentioned to him, I
6 said, you know, they're not the least expensive guys
7 and they're not the most expensive but you don't have
8 to babysit them. They know what they're doing.

9 And after I said that that's when he shared
10 with me just briefly what I felt like I needed to tell
11 Emily is he said, well, he said it's funny you say
12 that. He said the company that owns my ship just hired
13 a company to refit the boilers.

14 And he said that they had hired and this is
15 as much as I can remember pretty much quoting, you
16 know, he said they hired the least expensive bidder.
17 And he mentioned I think they were lower by several
18 hundreds of thousands of dollars and the guys keep
19 coming to me with the parts and asking me, you know,
20 where they go and how to install them.

21 And he said finally I had to go to my, he
22 said they had no clue what they were doing. He said
23 finally I had to go to my supervisor and tell them look
24 I can rebuild the boilers but I've got my own job to
25 do. They're going to have to do it themselves.

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1 And that was the only, that was the gist of
2 the conversation I had with him. So I felt like it was
3 something I needed to share with her.

4 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: And do you know for 100
5 percent fact that it was boilers that he was talking
6 about?

7 MR. GRUNWALD: That's what he said. I'm
8 pretty sure. I mean that's the word that he used was
9 boilers. I'm pretty sure he said boilers but it might
10 not have been.

11 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. And did he
12 mention any fact that they were Polish? Did he say
13 anything about that?

14 MR. GRUNWALD: No. He did not mention their
15 nationality. He did not. But I'm pretty sure he, I'll
16 say I'm 95 percent certain he said boilers because
17 that's, I mean I wouldn't just, you know, that wouldn't
18 just come into my mind.

19 If you would have said engines I think I
20 would have said engines but I think he said boilers.

21 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Yes.

22 MR. GRUNWALD: But he didn't mention the
23 nationality but he did mention that, you know, they
24 seemed to have no clue what they were doing. They keep
25 coming to me with the part and asking me how to install

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1 and asking me where they go.

2 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. Could that
3 possibly be a heater instead of a boiler? I mean I'm
4 just trying to --

5 MR. GRUNWALD: No, no, it was not a heater.
6 No, it was definitely boiler. I could probably say I'm
7 99 percent sure he said boilers and that's the exact
8 term he used is boiler.

9 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: And would he be
10 referring to a previous trip like before he was on or
11 was this when he was onboard a ship when you were
12 having this discussion?

13 MR. GRUNWALD: This was on, when he just got
14 off. So, you know, he had just gotten off the ship
15 three weeks before this. No, this was ongoing. He was
16 clear that they were in the process. He said they were
17 in the process.

18 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay, so it's --

19 MR. GRUNWALD: And he said that, you know,
20 he was disappointed because, you know, and, you know,
21 this is all what he told me. He said they were the low
22 bidders, the lowest bidder by several thousand,
23 hundreds of thousands of dollars.

24 And that's exactly what he said as well.
25 They were the low bidder by several hundreds of

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1 thousands of dollars and that now he could see why
2 because of (inaudible) kept showing up with parts and
3 pieces and not knowing where they went.

4 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. So it --

5 MR. GRUNWALD: It was just a brief
6 conversation, you know, it was just, that was it.

7 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: And just to make sure
8 I'm clear this was probably in July so he was talking
9 about a trip that happened previously to before --

10 MR. GRUNWALD: Correct. This was in July
11 and this was work that was ongoing on the ship that he
12 had just gotten off to go on his, whatever three or
13 four weeks or five weeks leave he took to remodel the
14 house. And then I would say within four or five days
15 later he was back, he flew down to Jacksonville to go
16 back on the ship.

17 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay.

18 MR. GRUNWALD: This was late July, early
19 August. That's the best I can recall.

20 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. And did you
21 communicate with him at all once he got back to the
22 ship in August and into September?

23 MR. GRUNWALD: No, that was one of the last
24 times I spoke with him actually.

25 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. And generally

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1 did he seem like he, did he ever say that he didn't
2 feel safe on the ship or anything or have any
3 complaints about the --

4 MR. GRUNWALD: No, never said that. He
5 never said that. In fact we never talked about, that
6 was really the only, besides him kind of telling me,
7 yes, I'm used to using in a hot environment and working
8 in, you know, a confined space because he was working
9 really hard on the job.

10 And I said, man, you never stop do you. And
11 he said no, I'm used to it. Besides just generalities
12 we didn't even speak about the ship. That was really
13 the only conversation we had and like I said it was a
14 three or four sentence conversation just based upon,
15 you know, his what he said about my tradesmen and what
16 a good job they did.

17 And then when I told him about hey, they're
18 not the cheapest but they don't have to be babysat.
19 And then he made that like two or three sentence
20 comment about, you know, the guys walking on the
21 boilers and that was it. It was very brief.

22 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Okay. Well that's
23 good. I'm going to pass it over to [REDACTED] But thank
24 you very much for passing that statement on.

25 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem.

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1 MR. [REDACTED] Hey, Tim, this is [REDACTED]
2 [REDACTED] from the United States Coast Guard. Thank you
3 very much for your time.

4 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem.

5 MR. [REDACTED] I'm just trying to, you know,
6 I'm in the human performance group and we're trying to
7 understand what people do and the decisions they make.
8 So Rich is in his house with you and, you know, your
9 tradesmen are out there working around and trying to
10 understand what kind of guy he is did he ever like try
11 to micromanage in a positive way your workers?

12 Did he ever say hey those guys should be
13 wearing safety glasses or ear plugs or anything like
14 that?

15 We're trying to understand who he was because we don't
16 know him.

17 MR. GRUNWALD: No, I mean if he saw somebody
18 doing something unsafe he was the kind of guy that
19 would say something because he would be worried about
20 their well being. But I didn't notice that.

21 I mean he was always, he would be more, if
22 he saw something he would be willing to lend a hand or,
23 you know, because he took the time off to, part of my
24 agreement with him was, you know, was that he, that
25 someone be there at his house because it was an

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1 occupied, you know, it was an occupied home and they
2 didn't move their personal belongings out and somebody
3 needed to be there to let the guys in and out.

4 And, you know, I run several, two or three
5 jobs at a time so I couldn't be there all the time.
6 But generally my subcontractors, they were really
7 impressed with him. He was always willing to lend a
8 hand or, I mean he was really detail oriented.

9 If he saw something that didn't, you know,
10 didn't look like it was, you know, didn't look like it
11 was, you know, up to the quality he pointed it out.
12 But, no, he didn't, I don't feel that he micromanaged.
13 But he was involved and if he saw something he would,
14 he wasn't shy to bring it up.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Right. And I don't mean
16 micromanagement as a bad thing. I just meant --

17 MR. GRUNWALD: Right, right. I understand.

18 MR. [REDACTED] -- safety, attention to
19 detail, that's all.

20 MR. GRUNWALD: Very, very, he, yes, he was
21 very, he showed a lot of attention to detail and when
22 he did something, he, if he was doing something he had
23 ear plugs in. If he was, you know, he was doing some
24 work there too he either had ear plugs in or safety
25 glasses on or whatever. He definitely followed all the

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1 proper safety procedures when he did, when he worked.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you knew him for a
3 couple of years and you would see him on an occasional
4 basis as a neighbor?

5 MR. GRUNWALD: Correct, correct.

6 MR. [REDACTED] And, you know, the hurricane
7 season, the Atlantic hurricane season runs from about
8 the first of June until the first of November. Did you
9 ever have like and think back if it takes a minute, did
10 you ever have any conversations with him about the fact
11 that it was hurricane season or there's a hurricane out
12 there? Did he ever have a conversation where he
13 expressed his feelings about operating in heavy weather
14 like hurricanes or other weather?

15 MR. GRUNWALD: No, he never talked about
16 that.

17 MR. [REDACTED] And did he have any
18 conversations at all about just safety in general on
19 the ship?

20 MR. GRUNWALD: No, we did not.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. That's all I have.
22 Thank you very much, Tim. I'll turn you back over to -
23 -

24 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem.

25 MR. [REDACTED] -- Brian.

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1 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem. Thank you.

2 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Yes, Tim, thank you
3 very much for taking the time out of, I know you're
4 busy with all your jobs going on.

5 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem. I mean it was
6 just a very brief, you know, I said the one sentence,
7 you know, he, it was a very brief conversation.
8 Probably lasted less than a minute, you know.

9 I thought it was pretty, when I saw that
10 possibly the ship might have had, you know, issues
11 with, you know, propulsion I figured, I felt like I
12 just couldn't keep it in. I had to say something to
13 Emily about it, you know.

14 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Yes, and these are the
15 things, the leads that we will look into and dig into.
16 So we appreciate you bringing it to our attention. So
17 maybe what I'll do is once I get back to the office
18 I'll send you an e-mail just with [REDACTED] contact and
19 my contact information if you do have anything else or
20 can remember just shoot us an e-mail.

21 MR. GRUNWALD: Okay.

22 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: But again --

23 MR. GRUNWALD: Absolutely, absolutely. I
24 just can't, I just really can't, we didn't really talk
25 about besides him mentioning, you know, that, you know,

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1 because I was impressed with what a hard worker he was
2 and him saying that he's used to that kind of work. We
3 really didn't get into any other detailed conversations
4 about the ship.

5 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Right.

6 MR. GRUNWALD: It was mostly about what was
7 going on, on his project to get it done because we were
8 under a real, you know, we were under a real tight time
9 constraint to get the project done before his wife came
10 back and before he had to go back out.

11 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Right, right. Got you.
12 Thank you so much for your time.

13 MR. GRUNWALD: No problem.

14 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: And we'll definitely
15 follow up with an e-mail.

16 MR. GRUNWALD: Okay.

17 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Have a good rest of the
18 day.

19 MR. GRUNWALD: Thank you. Have a good
20 afternoon.

21 INVESTIGATOR YOUNG: Yes. Thanks again.
22 Bye.

23 (Whereupon, the above-entitled matter went
24 off the record.)

25

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: El Faro Incident
Accident No. DCA16MM001
Interview of: Tim Grunwald
Portland, Maine

DATE: 01-05-16

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