

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND
SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING
ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017

Accident No.: DCA17PM012

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Interview of:



U.S. Coast Guard Facilities
New Orleans, Louisiana

Tuesday,
May 9, 2017

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING
ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017

Accident No.: DCA17PM012

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Interview of:



U.S. Coast Guard Facilities
New Orleans, Louisiana

Wednesday,
May 10, 2017

APPEARANCES:

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] of Inspections
Sector New Orleans
United States Coast Guard

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
District 8
United States Coast Guard

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
District 8 Legal
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	
By Mr. Wisniewski	4
By [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	7
By Mr. Wisniewski	19
By [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	20

I N T E R V I E W

(9:00 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good morning. My name is Luke Wisniewski
4 with the National Transportation Safety Board. We're here today,
5 it's May 10th. The time is 0900. We're here interviewing [REDACTED]
6 [REDACTED] a follow-up interview regarding the CG 29113 and Sailing
7 Vessel Vanguard.

INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

8
9
10 Q. Mr. [REDACTED] could we just go through, real quick, we had
11 some follow-up questions based on interviews and testimony from
12 yesterday regarding when things started to go awry or started to
13 go bad when you were getting close to the bridge, and you had the
14 tow and you realized the tow -- that it was not a successful
15 operation, that attempts were now, from the coxon and jointly with
16 the crew's input, to abandon the tow operation.

17 And can you recall what the coxon instructed you or what
18 orders she gave out at that time?

19 A. Well, I heard to break tow, cut line. I didn't see who was
20 saying that. I just know that it was -- I heard it.

21 Q. And I apologize. Is it okay to record? I forgot to ask.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Well, I think I did ask, but --

24 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Let's go around the room and everyone that's
25 here present identify themselves.

1 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Good morning. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

2 [REDACTED] of Inspections, Sector New Orleans.

3 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Good morning, I'm [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm at District 8, Federal Projects.

5 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] D-8 Legal.

6 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

7 Q. Please continue. I apologize for interrupting.

8 A. There was a lot of things going on. I didn't take a look at
9 who was giving the commands. There was a lot of moving parts. I
10 did hear that we were going to break the tow. I did hear
11 something about cutting the line. That's all I can remember.

12 Q. And specifically, like who gave the order to cut the line?
13 Do you remember who said that?

14 A. I don't remember who said that. It felt like I heard from
15 two people. That's, that's all I can remember.

16 Q. And could you identify those two?

17 A. I believe it was BM3 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED]

18 Q. And when you heard cut the line, what actions did you take
19 for --

20 A. Well, I attempted to take my knife out and cut it while BM3
21 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED] were undoing the double becket.

22 (Public address interruption)

23 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

24 Q. Can you just say that again because of the 1MC?

25 A. I attempted to cut the line while BM3 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED]

1 was undoing the double becket.

2 Q. How far did you get in cutting the line?

3 A. I didn't get very far. I held my knife --

4 (Public address interruption)

5 MR. [REDACTED] I held my knife up to the line, and as soon as
6 I was about to start cutting it, they took the double becket off.

7 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

8 Q. Was it a personal knife? Was it a knife on board the vessel?

9 A. It was a personal.

10 Q. Do you know if there was a knife on board?

11 A. There's a knife on each of the pyro vests.

12 Q. How many pyro vests are you aware of that were on board that
13 night?

14 A. Four.

15 Q. And just a couple more questions regarding -- as everything
16 unfolded, I understand emotions were high. But as far as the
17 coxon's orders, we learned that BM3 [REDACTED] actually drove the boat
18 home, piloted the vessel home. Is that correct?

19 A. That's correct.

20 Q. During that time frame, was the coxon able to give commands?
21 You know, I'm just trying to understand the state --

22 A. It was --

23 Q. So if you can describe that for me, I'd appreciate it. From
24 what you -- from your position?

25 A. It was more of a group discussion on what to do next.

1 Suggestions were being offered. And then we all agreed on mooring
2 at Oak Harbor because it was closer and the weather was getting
3 bad.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: That's all I have. I'll pass the floor.
5 Coast Guard?

6 [REDACTED] I don't have any questions at this time.

7 [REDACTED] Yeah, I have a few question.

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Say your name for the transcriber.

9

BY [REDACTED]

10 Q. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And I have
11 several questions for you, [REDACTED]

12 So, first of all, could you tell me the roles of -- the
13 designated roles of everybody on board. So who was the coxon?

14 A. The coxon was BM3 [REDACTED]

15 Q. And was there a break-in coxon?

16 A. BM3 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED]

17 Q. So you had two break-in coxons?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. And then you were officially designated as?

20 A. The crewmember.

21 Q. Okay. At the time of the tow, were you designated as tow
22 watch?

23 A. Once we made the tow, I assumed command of the tow watch, and
24 BM3 [REDACTED] was beside me also looking out for the tow.

25 Q. So do you find it difficult to hear sometimes when you're at

1 the tow bit, you're working the tow bit? Is it common practice to
2 put somebody in between you and the coxon to relay information?

3 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Because sometimes -- is it difficult to hear sometimes, the
5 coxon?

6 A. It is difficult to hear the coxon, especially if bad weather
7 and the engine.

8 Q. And then did you -- so it sounds like you heard a standard
9 command, break tow, which is -- would you say that's the words you
10 heard, break tow?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Could you distinguish the coxon's voice from the two other
13 [REDACTED] mates that were on board? Was it --

14 A. I can tell that there was a male voice involved. I don't
15 want to say -- I mean, it could be -- I mean, I don't want to
16 speculate, but I know it was a male voice that I heard. And then
17 there was a faint voice in the background. And --

18 Q. Was it clear to you that the coxon was in charge?

19 A. I don't believe that the coxon was in charge. I think it was
20 two individuals that were helping each other.

21 Q. Kind of like a joint effort?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So it was like a joint -- okay. Okay.

24 Did you -- at any time during the -- either before you hooked
25 up the tow -- before you hooked up the tow, did you have that

1 safety break where you go, is this a good idea; should we be doing
2 it this way? Was there any discussion on should we be doing this;
3 is there a better way to handle this situation?

4 Did you ever have any doubts that maybe this was not a good
5 idea?

6 A. There was a little doubt, sir, but I have seen a towing
7 evolution where what we did was done. And that was the only way
8 we could get that sailboat to safer waters because that boat was
9 -- we couldn't find anything to hook the eye over, except for the
10 stern.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. The safest way.

13 Q. Can you briefly describe the situation, what was going on
14 through your head? And to start, just to go back a little bit,
15 what kind of stern was the sailboat? Did it have a flat, square
16 stern or did it have that racing stern at an angle? Do you --

17 A. It wasn't a flat stern. Well, it was a flat stern on the top
18 and then it curved in because there was a small prop on the
19 bottom. So --

20 Q. And so you couldn't find any good cleats or anything to get a
21 line to? Or was it --

22 A. The only -- there was only two bits on the stern visible that
23 we deemed were safe. There was rails, and I did suggest that,
24 hey, maybe we should hook it up to the rails. But just with the
25 weather, those rails would have broken off if we hooked it up

1 there.

2 Q. Okay. Did you -- so you used an approach where you backed in
3 from the stern of the RB-S, I assume? So you were standing on the
4 stern of the RB-S and the coxon was backing into the stern of the
5 sailboat; is that correct? Or what kind of approach did you make
6 to pass the towline? And then also, once you passed the towline,
7 did you use a kicker skiff hook or did you just directly take the
8 eye and put it on the, a cleat?

9 A. I didn't put the eye over the bit. It was BM3 [REDACTED] I was
10 helping him feed the line and take it.

11 Q. So you kind of worked the bit, you worked the towline. He
12 actually put the eye.

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. And there was a -- you guys used a pendant, correct?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. The 30-foot?

17 A. We used a 30-foot. Made it into a bridle.

18 Q. Oh, so you had two eyes so you made a bridle?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Who rigged the bridle?

21 A. BM3 [REDACTED]

22 Q. Can you describe how the bridle was rigged?

23 A. What I remember was the BM3 [REDACTED] put it on one bit, and then
24 he got it over to the other bit and we started tending the line
25 about 30, 50 feet out.

1 Once I gave the command that 30, 50 feet paid out, coxon said
2 to make the bit. I made the bit, assumed tow watch. BM3
3 was right there with me. Just giving them distances, where the
4 line was tending, what the strain was.

5 Q. What was the strain?

6 A. It was moderate.

7 Q. Was the line -- was the catenary of the towline, was it in
8 the water or was it just straight? I mean, was there a lot of --
9 what did that line look like?

10 A. It was straight. The only time it was catenary and in the
11 water was when we had to come down and put it in neutral to
12 prevent the boat from -- prevent the stern from dipping into the
13 water.

14 Q. The stern of the sailboat?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. So describe briefly -- I'm trying to get a good picture.
17 What were the seas doing? One-footers, 2-footers, calm?

18 A. It was calm when we got on scene. As soon as we got the
19 vessel in tow and trying to bring it to safe water, it started
20 moving up to 2 feet, I believe. We were going at least clutch
21 ahead. The waves weren't making it any better.

22 A. Right.

23 A. Because we were going slow, and every time it hit a wave, the
24 stern would dip into the water and bring some water up. So every
25 time we'd catch a wave, we put it on neutral, and then clutch

1 ahead, neutral, clutch ahead, neutral.

2 Q. Right. So initially you were going to hook up to the stern
3 of that sailboat to get it off of the 11 bridge; is that correct?

4 A. Yes. Well, what we wanted to do was at least hook up the
5 tow, bring it to safe water, and re-assess our tow or put it in a
6 better position.

7 Q. And was this briefed before -- did the coxon have a brief
8 with all you guys: All right, everybody gather around, this is
9 what our plan is, this what we're going to do?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And everybody was in agreement that it was -- all right, that
12 this was what we were going to do? You had a good, clear mental
13 picture of you were going to back into the stern of the sailboat,
14 you had a bridle, put two eyes over, and the you were just going
15 to work the bit?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. So you had a good, clear picture?

18 So you've hooked up the tow. Does it feel like it's really
19 -- the progress is very slow? I --

20 A. Yeah, it was very slow. It was -- I was frustrated because
21 every time we get a good position to get the tow in a better
22 position, we'd always get dragged back closer to the bridge. So
23 we'd have to readjust our lines, put in stern tow again and bring
24 it back out to safe water.

25 Q. At any time did anyone stop and say maybe we should tow this

1 at the bow or -- from the bow of the boat or alongside? Did
2 anyone -- did you guys ever think that, hey, let's try that?

3 A. It was always in our -- to my -- what I believe is that it
4 was always in our head, like, because we're noticing that towing
5 off the stern is not getting anywhere.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. We need to put it at least in side tow or off the bow.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So we were constantly looking at the boat, like, trying to
10 see where we can hook it up --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- every time. But, like, every time that we readjusted, we
13 were constantly looking for things we could attach the tow to --

14 Q. Right. Right.

15 A. -- to put it in side tow or to tow from the bow, but we
16 couldn't find anything.

17 Q. How much freeboard -- did you think maybe the sailboat
18 was -- because the sailboats typically have the skeg, you know,
19 that goes below. Did you think maybe the sailboat might have been
20 aground or could the sailboat have had -- could it have been
21 taking on water? Was there diminishing freeboard or was there
22 water shipping over the side of the sailboat? Did you at any time
23 thing that, wow, this thing could sink on us?

24 A. I did think about this boat could sink on us, just because --
25 BM3 [REDACTED] pointed out that there might be holes in the boat

1 because he tried to get on board, but the coxon said that he --
2 the coxon did not allow that just because --

3 Q. Right. That's probably --

4 A. It wasn't deemed safe to board it. But from what he was
5 saying was that there might be some holes, anything like that.

6 Q. Was there any -- was there further discussion with the coxon
7 amongst the two BM3s that were breaking in and the coxon and
8 yourself, like, wow, we need to completely break tow and try to
9 reconnect tow at a different angle?

10 A. We -- yes, sir, there was -- we were constantly discussing
11 like putting it in side tow and towing it off the bow. So we'd
12 constantly break the tow and readjust, tend the line so it doesn't
13 get caught in the props.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Trying to look for more approaches or avenues of approach
16 to --

17 Q. Right, right.

18 A. -- put it in side tow or from the bow.

19 Q. Was the sailboat -- could you tell whether -- was the
20 sailboat -- because when you first came on scene, the sailboat was
21 up against the Highway 11 Bridge, correct?

22 A. When we were on scene, it wasn't at the bridge yet. It was
23 still. I mean, the weather was calm; the sea was calm. It was
24 still. We did a 360 around the boat. I looked to see if there
25 was an anchor, because it was just -- it wasn't moving.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. So we did a 360. Nothing in the water was obstructing us
3 from taking further action. As soon as we started getting the
4 boat ready for the tow, it started moving to the Highway 11 Bridge
5 and stayed there. And that's when BM3 [REDACTED] was able to put the
6 bridle on the bits and we were able to pull it out.

7 Q. So help me understand why you decided to -- why would you
8 have not hooked up to the bow of the boat versus the stern?
9 I'm -- can you help me understand? Paint me a picture.

10 A. I'm not really sure of how a sailboat works. Because I know
11 it has a mast and then there was like a -- going that way, like an
12 extra pole going this way.

13 Q. So you had a main mast, and then -- did it have one mast or
14 did it have several masts?

15 A. It was one mast.

16 Q. One mast. And then you would have had a -- so you had a
17 large mast in the center, and then you had another beam maybe --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. -- running aft.

20 A. It was running forward.

21 Q. Oh, that -- okay.

22 A. And the bow was obstructed by the sail and we couldn't pull
23 the sail off.

24 Q. Okay, okay. Got it. And you didn't see an anchor at any
25 time?

1 A. We didn't see an anchor.

2 Q. So did you feel that -- we briefly talked about
3 communication. Did you feel that at any time if you had thought
4 that this was dangerous and said that we should stop, do you think
5 that everyone would have stopped and regrouped and talked about
6 it?

7 A. I brought it up when I noticed that we weren't going
8 anywhere. I said, oh, we should just leave this here and let the
9 OOD know that we can't save it.

10 Q. That was after various tries, attempts to try to tow it
11 correctly, and you made that -- and how was that recommendation
12 received?

13 A. Well, we just -- we kept going, trying to tow it.

14 Q. Who did you make that recommendation to? The coxon, or to
15 [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

16 A. I addressed it to -- we were all in the -- well, I was on the
17 aft deck, and --

18 Q. Right.

19 A. -- those three were in there, and I brought it up. I don't
20 know who decided to receive it, but I did voice that, you know,
21 this might not be -- we might not be able to save it.

22 Q. So you guys did a GAR at the beginning. When did you do your
23 GAR?

24 A. It was in the truck.

25 Q. And your GAR score was what?

1 A. It was 21.

2 Q. Twenty-one? And that was before you ever got on scene, you
3 had a GAR score of 21?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Highest category being what?

6 A. I believe it was weather.

7 Q. Environment. Right. Which makes sense. That was a --

8 At any time did the coxon say, okay, we're on scene, let's
9 reassess GAR? Did you ever think about reassessing GAR?

10 A. I don't know if -- I'm not sure if that happened there.

11 Q. Right. Well, because if you reassess GAR, everybody's
12 involved, right? I mean --

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Just, for the record, you've had team coordination training?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Probably one time, maybe more, while -- since you've been in
17 the Coast Guard?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Do you think that you followed the -- do you think that you
20 or the crew or everyone worked together as a team? Or could
21 they -- do you think that -- do you feel -- did you feel
22 comfortable with being able to interject and say, hey, we need to
23 reevaluate our GAR score, or -- it sounds like you already voiced
24 your opinion that you didn't feel comfortable with this, maybe we
25 should drop tow. Did you only say that we should just drop tow --

1 did you say it one time or did you keep saying it until somebody
2 heeded your recommendation?

3 A. I don't know, sir. All I know is that I brought it up.

4 Q. Do you feel like the coxon would have been receptive if you
5 would have voiced your opinion a little more strenuously, you
6 know, or do you think that they wouldn't have paid -- I'm just a
7 [REDACTED] they're BM3s, they wouldn't have paid any attention to me
8 anyway? What's your -- do you feel comfortable answering that
9 question?

10 A. It's both, sir.

11 Q. Can you elaborate that a little bit, when you say it's both?
12 I mean, I can see -- I'm a non-rate; I'm a seamen, and here are
13 these BM3s are and -- you know, we talk about TCT and how we say
14 it's important that everybody have a voice, but sounds like maybe
15 you didn't feel like they paid a whole lot of attention to you.

16 Although, let me -- how long have you been qualified as a
17 boat crewman?

18 A. I want to say a year, or a little bit over a year, sir.

19 Q. Right, right. So you may arguably have had more experience
20 in New Orleans area than anyone on that boat, correct?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Have you -- I'm getting off track here. I apologize. Have
23 you ever towed anything astern like that before?

24 A. I have not, sir.

25 Q. So you thought it was kind of odd to be towing something, you

1 know, backwards?

2 A. Yes, sir. I know it was going to be difficult. But also I
3 know that the coxon -- I know that the abilities of the coxon,
4 that she'll be able to navigate safely through safe waters. And I
5 know that she didn't want to tow the boat from the stern the whole
6 way. That's why we --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. -- we were trying to adjust every time.

9 Q. Right, right, right. So really the reason you couldn't tow
10 it from the bow was because the sail was in the way, and --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And you didn't have any experience with sailboats, per se,
13 how to remove sails or lower sails or anything like that, so --

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. That's not something that you would have had knowledge to do.
16 Would it have been helpful if you had a lot of experience
17 with sailboats?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 [REDACTED] I don't know that I have any further questions.

20 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

21 [REDACTED] I can take a break for a bit.

22 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Sure. I'll take it back. NTSB, Luke
23 Wisniewski.

24 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

25 Q. Just a quick follow-up, really. With the rudder tiller on

1 the sailboat, could you see the tiller handle or anything? Could
2 you see it going back and forth when you were towing it from the
3 stern?

4 A. I didn't see it move. The only time I saw it was when we
5 would hit a wave and it would come up and then back down. All I
6 saw was the tiller and a small prop. I didn't see it move
7 anywhere. It was just --

8 Q. And let me just clarify. When I say move, like back and
9 forth, like going hard to port, to starboard; was it swinging back
10 and forth?

11 A. No.

12 Q. It was stationary?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. It was in a fixed position?

15 A. It was in a fixed position, sir.

16 MR. WISNIEWSKI: That's all I have. I'll just go around one
17 more time here.

18 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

19 Q. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Coast Guard.

20 When you -- I want to ask a couple more questions about the
21 sailboat. You said when you guys came on scene the weather was
22 calm. Was the sailboat anchored when you guys arrived or was it
23 drifting?

24 A. Yeah. It wasn't anchored. If it was drifting, it wasn't
25 enough to make a visual difference.

1 Q. Okay. It wasn't anchored, so there was no -- it's on Lake
2 Pontchartrain, so there's no significant tide; is that correct?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. And so I just wanted to -- so you said the sail, the forward
5 sale, generally a jib, was in the way. Was the sail on the mast,
6 the main mast, was it stowed or was it unfurled?

7 A. Just to clarify that question, sir, when you mean unfurled,
8 was it --

9 Q. Was it loose or was it put away?

10 A. Oh, it was loose.

11 Q. It was loose. Okay. And then could you tell anything about
12 the just overall condition of the vessel? Was it -- did it look
13 brand new; did it look older? Was there anything that you could
14 tell about the condition of the vessel from your vantage point?

15 A. It was older. It wasn't new. Needed a new paint job. To me
16 it looked like a wooden sailboat. I didn't see no sail on the
17 mast but I did see a sail on, I guess, the jib. The hull, from my
18 point of view, it looked fine. No anchor. That's all I know.

19 [REDACTED] All right. Thank you. I have no further
20 questions.

21 [REDACTED] I have no further questions at this time.

22 MR. WISNIEWSKI: NTSB, Luke Wisniewski.

23 I just wanted to give you the opportunity, you know, if
24 anything you said yesterday, would you like to change, or anything
25 you'd like to add from our discussion here?

1 MR. [REDACTED] No.

2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Well, I appreciate it.

3 This will conclude the follow-up interview. The time is 10

4 -- or 9:33.

5 (Whereupon, at 9:33 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND
SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING
ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17PM012

PLACE: New Orleans, Louisiana

DATE: May 10, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber

APPEARANCES:

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

█ █ █ Sector New Orleans, Investigations
United States Coast Guard

█ █ █ District 8 Legal
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	
By Mr. Wisniewski	5
By [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	17
By Mr. Wisniewski	24
By [REDACTED] [REDACTED]	28

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Good morning. My name is Luke Wisniewski.
3 Today is May 8, 2017.

4 I am here with -- at Sector -- I mean Station New Orleans,
5 here to conduct an interview with -- can you say your name?

6 MR. [REDACTED]

7 MR. WISNIEWSKI: And spell it please.

8 MR. [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Thank you for that.

10 And correction, today is May 9th. We're going through here
11 today, the incident that occurred with the Sailing Vessel *Vanguard*
12 and Coast Guard 29113, small boat.

13 At this time, we'll go around the table and introduce
14 everyone that's here at the table. To my left --

15 [REDACTED] Dan [REDACTED] Sector New Orleans,
16 Investigations.

17 [REDACTED] District 8, Legal.

18 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Before I begin, we're going to record
19 this and transcribe this. Is it okay to record this interview?

20 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Thank you. I just want to go through real
22 quick, NTSB is an independent federal agency, and we're charged
23 with determining the probable cause of transportation accidents to
24 promote transportation safety. We're not part of the Department
25 of Transportation or the Coast Guard, and NTSB has no regulatory

1 or enforcement powers. The purpose of our investigation today is
2 to increase safety and not to assign fault, blame or liability.
3 However, NTSB cannot offer or guarantee any confidentiality or
4 immunity from legal or license actions.

5 A transcript of this interview will go on the public docket.
6 You will have the opportunity to review this transcript and make
7 any corrections prior to it being released on our docket.

8 We discussed earlier the interviewee is entitled to have one
9 representative of the interviewee's choice. The interview
10 representative may not testify. You are aware that you're allowed
11 a representative and have chose not to have one present?

12 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Thank you.

14 And we're really -- like I said, we're just after here
15 safety, so we're going to ask that if there's any questions that
16 you're unfamiliar with or -- have us repeat it again. If we
17 misstate something or if you need to modify something at a later
18 date or a later time in this interview, that's fine. You can just
19 go back to and say -- and expand on it.

20 If there's no questions at this time, we'll go right into the
21 start of this.

22 INTERVIEW OF [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

23 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

24 Q. Can you give us your title and position held on board the
25 morning of May 2nd?

1 A. My title is a [REDACTED] I was a boarding team member and
2 crewmember the day of the mishap.

3 Q. Okay. Can you give us a little brief background on your
4 maritime experience? How long have you been in the Coast Guard?

5 A. I've been in the Coast Guard for over a year. I'm qualified
6 as a boat crewman, a tactical boat crewman, a boarding team
7 member, a trailer, and 45 response boat-medium engineer.

8 Q. And how many years? When did you start in the Coast Guard?

9 A. October 25, 2015.

10 Q. Prior to joining the Coast Guard, did you have any maritime
11 experience, on the water experience beforehand?

12 A. Just fishing here and there.

13 Q. Okay. So you're familiar with the waterfront and water
14 activities?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. Do you have any education other than high school level
17 or college?

18 A. I have a -- I'm obtaining my degree in fire science
19 management, also attending my -- recertifying my EMT
20 certification.

21 Q. Great. Okay. So let's start on the day, now, of May 2nd.
22 Start with that morning when you got up. Can you take us through
23 basically a timeline of when you reported to the vessel? However
24 you want to start.

25 A. It as our on-coming day. So I woke up around 5:40, wake up

1 my son and get him ready for school. Then I got myself ready and
2 drove to work. I did the daily routine: Once I got to the
3 station, did our boat checks, did some station maintenance. After
4 the day was done, I was working on school and I heard the SAR
5 alarm go off. I was on the primary boat crew, myself, BM3 [REDACTED]
6 BM2 [REDACTED] BM3 [REDACTED] The case was a vessel adrift in the
7 vicinity of Highway 11 and the Rigolets. We were just standing by
8 to get more word from sector to see if we were going to launch or
9 not. It took about a good 10, 15 minutes before we got to go to
10 respond to, respond to it. So the trailered the Coast Guard
11 29113, took it to the Rigolets Marina, launched from there.

12 The seas were calm. Winds were coming out of the east. It
13 wasn't really blowing hard. It was overcast. It was -- the wind
14 was pretty bad earlier but we were there, it was calmed some.

15 So we got on scene. Well, we left the station around I want
16 to say 1500, got on scene to the vessel around maybe like 1400,
17 1430. We did a quick scene size-up, notified the OD that we were
18 on scene. We were circling the vessel, making sure that it wasn't
19 anchored or anything in the way to cause us from making a safe
20 approach to it. It was pretty close to the Highway 11 Bridge. I
21 want to say about 100 yards to 200 yards from the bridge, right by
22 -- and it was right by this piling with a pole. There were like
23 cables running through it because there were other poles in the
24 area, so they were all attached. So we were trying to get into a
25 safer area so we can reassess and prevent it from hitting the

1 bridge.

2 So BM3 [REDACTED] suggested that, you know, he'd go on board the
3 vessel to check if there's any hazards or anything like that, but
4 the coxon deemed that it wasn't safe to go on it just because it
5 looked really old and it was sketchy.

6 So the coxon decided to put it in tow to get it out of the
7 way. We continued to circle, trying to find anything that we
8 could put a towline over because there was a -- the sail was
9 covering the bow and we couldn't get to it safely, and BM3 [REDACTED]
10 found two bits on the stern. So he suggested that we put it in a
11 bridle tow off the steering because that was the safest way to get
12 it out of there.

13 As soon as we started setting up the deck, the sailboat was
14 already on the bridge. It was like right there. Like, all right,
15 we got to get out of here so it doesn't cause any more damage. So
16 we BM3 [REDACTED] quickly put the line over and put it on the bits. I
17 was feeding him the line and made the bit. I got -- I assumed tow
18 watch and BM3 [REDACTED] assumed tow watch also.

19 Well, we got it -- we were able to pull it out a good, a good
20 ways from the bridge. We had to go slow just because the weather
21 started to pick up. Every time we tried going a clutch ahead, the
22 stern would drop down and take water. So we put it in neutral and
23 waited for it to balance itself out again, put a clutch ahead,
24 pulling at a slow speed. When we saw it again, when we saw the
25 stern dip into the water again, we put it in neutral and kept

1 doing that until we could get it to a safer area.

2 As soon as that, we noticed that we weren't making any way.
3 We were -- when we stopped and tried to figure out to reassess and
4 readjust our towlines to put it in a better position, the sailboat
5 kept going back to the bridge. So we had to keep going forward,
6 and every time we reassessed, the sailboat kept going back.

7 So after a while, I think it was a good 30, 40 minutes,
8 trying to get this vessel to a safe haven, we decided to break tow
9 because we noticed that the boat wasn't going anywhere, the stern
10 was starting to go -- was starting to dip more and we decided to
11 say, hey, we need to break tow. This vessel's not going anywhere.
12 We need to notify the OD that we can't really take this vessel
13 anywhere.

14 So we started to break the tow, tried to get the lines off
15 because we noticed that the stern was already in the water; the
16 vessel was already about to sink. So as soon as we got that off,
17 like we were trying to cut it -- it was me, BM3 [REDACTED] and
18 BM3 [REDACTED] trying to get the towlines off. So BM3 [REDACTED] and
19 BM3 [REDACTED] were trying to get the double becket off while I was
20 trying to cut it. As soon as they got it off, threw it in the
21 water, and we were about I want to say 10, 15 feet away from the
22 vessel. As soon as we saw it, all we saw was the mast, and once
23 the lines was off, we told the coxon to go because we were about
24 to get hit. But I guess there was a wave that pushed us back into
25 the mast and caused the mast to fall on the taffrail. And the

1 mast had some wires, so it was caught up in the taffrail. And as
2 soon as that happened, the engines stopped.

3 So myself and BM3 [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were trying to get the
4 lines from the mast off, told the coxon to trim the engines up to
5 see if anything was damaged, and the towline was caught on the
6 engine. So we were all trying to untangle all the lines to get us
7 out of there. As soon as we got the lines off and the wires from
8 the mast, we were already at the Highway 11 Bridge, going under
9 it.

10 We got pinned under the bridge, in front of the railroad
11 bridge, and it still didn't work. The lines -- the towline was
12 still caught up on the engine. We were getting hit by at least 4
13 to 6 foot waves. We tried to secure the boat to one of the
14 pilings but it wasn't safe. I was trying to secure it but every
15 time I tried to wrap it around, the wave would hit and then pull
16 us out again, and hit and pull us out again. So I felt like I was
17 unsafe.

18 So I told either the coxon or the BM3 [REDACTED] to trim the
19 engines up so I could see if -- what's wrong with the engine
20 because we were at a standstill and didn't feel like we were in
21 immediate danger right now, so I could figure out what the problem
22 was with the engine. And there was a line there, so I was trying
23 to get that line out.

24 BM3 [REDACTED] assumed the helm. He said that the kill switch
25 was off. So he turned it on and started the port engine, and it

1 worked. So he trimmed the port engine down and maneuvered his way
2 out of the bridge and into the safe water.

3 As soon as we were in safe water, I asked BM3 [REDACTED] if he
4 could trim up the starboard engine to see if it would work -- if I
5 could fix it to make it work. He started it up. It didn't work.
6 Trimmed it back down. It was clogged, so we managed to unclog it
7 and the starboard engine started working again. We were going to
8 make our way to the Rigolets Marina to trailer it but the weather
9 wasn't permitting it to be safe to go there. We weren't going to
10 try to chance on -- in [REDACTED] the engines failed again.

11 So we decided to pull into Oak Harbor Marine which is closer.
12 We moored there and waited for assistance from the station and to
13 bring the trailer over there so we can trailer the 29113 back to
14 the station.

15 Q. Okay. Luke Wisniewski, NTSB. Thank you for that
16 description. I want to now just go through a little bit of
17 questions we have, and we'll go around the room after I finish
18 with my questions, just on the area that you discussed now, and
19 then we'll go into a couple other areas after that.

20 You indicated that you conducted the checks, you performed
21 the checks on board the vessel. Was that at the station here for
22 this vessel, for CG 29113?

23 A. I conducted the boat outfit checks. The way it works here is
24 that the engineers do the engine side of the check and the deck
25 department does all the outfits making sure that we have

1 everything we need to go out there, making sure that's in proper
2 working order.

3 Q. Okay. And what did you physically check? What was part of
4 your checks?

5 A. I would check to make sure that there was enough mooring
6 lines, fenders, purple bilge pumps buckets, charts, navigation
7 equipment, heaving lines, throw bags, distress markers, pyro,
8 flares, pencils, search pan wheels (ph.), compass, dividers,
9 stopwatches.

10 Q. I'm sorry to interrupt. Is this a check sheet that you sign
11 off and initial?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. And what's the name of that form?

14 A. It's our own form. It's not a --

15 Q. Okay. Well, we'll ask for a copy of that.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Okay. Thanks for sharing that information. I don't want to
18 continue on and try to memorize everything was on there, but thank
19 you. That's good. You indicated when you arrived on scene, that
20 the sailboat was riding -- as far as sitting in the water, do you
21 know how it was -- was there water inside the sailboat?

22 A. We couldn't tell just because that's what BM3 [REDACTED] wanted to
23 check if, if it was salvageable but we couldn't get on board. But
24 as far -- well, when we went on scene, it was calm. The boat was
25 just sitting there, just chilling. But we noticed that there was

1 no anchor and in my head I'm like, this boat is not going anywhere
2 and it has no anchor. I don't know what else is wrong with it.

3 Q. Can you describe the condition of the vessel? Can you
4 elaborate a little bit more on -- was it maintained? I mean,
5 could you --

6 A. It wasn't -- I felt like someone was just -- someone just
7 left it there to leave it there. I mean, the boat looked -- it
8 was pretty old. I mean, the paint job wasn't kept. I felt like
9 the mast was intact and -- I don't know much about sailboats but
10 my overall picture was that this boat was just old and like, I
11 don't know why it was even out here.

12 Q. Can I have you go through a little bit more on the -- when
13 you said the tow watch -- when you said the tow watch, can you
14 describe exactly your functions?

15 A. Tow watch is just where we look at the towline and the vessel
16 being towed and we relay that information to the coxon, where the
17 boat is in relation to us, what kind of strain the towline is
18 taking. That way we could either pick up speed or just speed to
19 prevent the boat from hitting us or having the towline snap. We
20 also report how the boat is moving, if it isn't going anywhere or
21 anything like that, and just make suggestions on and relay it to
22 the coxon.

23 Q. As far as when the tow -- how it's made up to the sailboat,
24 were you involved with that decision or is that --

25 A. I wasn't involved with that decision. I just assisted with

1 setting up the tow.

2 Q. Okay. You indicated when the engines were clutched ahead
3 forward, both the port and starboard engine, that you had to
4 engage and disengage pretty quickly because the sailboat would --
5 and I'm making sure I'm just clarifying this correctly, that the
6 sailboat's stern would submerge in the water farther? It was the
7 stern going under the water, dipping under? Is that why you were
8 afraid of water going over the, over the rail of the stern?

9 A. Yes, sir. Like every time we started to go a clutch ahead, I
10 want to say like 1 to 3 knots, like it would take a wave and then
11 it would go down -- like it would bob and then come up like a
12 whale coming out of the water.

13 Q. Okay. And can you just go through a little bit more and
14 describe when the vessel, the sailing vessel's mast struck the
15 taffrail? Can you go through as far as -- I just want to clarify
16 a little bit as far as what, you know, what you witnessed. Did
17 the water on the -- did it roll over? You said it tipped over,
18 was it the port or starboard from a description standpoint? Was
19 it --

20 A. I mean, it was through my peripherals because I was trying to
21 get some lines untangled and I saw it through my left eye. It was
22 on the starboard side where the mast fell, but I saw it come down
23 and I had to back away to prevent from getting hit. That -- I
24 don't know if you looked under the house on the boat, but that
25 piece where it got ripped off, that's where the mast hit. I

1 didn't really -- really see how tall it was. I want to say maybe
2 like 10 feet, but all I can remember was I was trying to unhook
3 the wires and lines and I just see the mast through the corner of
4 my eye just coming down.

5 Q. Okay. You indicated that the engines failed. Was that --
6 did they fail when -- because of the towline being wrapped around
7 the props? I mean, can you remember which engine stopped first?
8 Port, starboard?

9 A. I want to say the port just because that's where I saw the
10 line, and that's when I heard, hey, the engines are not working.
11 And I saw the line, I'm like all right, turn it off and let me --
12 let's see if we can untangle this, and then start it up again and
13 see if it works.

14 Q. Okay. But fairly close together, the port and starboard
15 engines were lost?

16 A. Yes. It happened like -- it happened pretty quick because I
17 felt like the starboard engine was working fine. The port engine
18 just shut off. So -- and I saw the line, so I'm like, okay, this
19 could probably be the issue. So, hey, turn the port engine off so
20 I -- so we can take this line out.

21 Q. In your estimation of the time, how long was that port engine
22 -- how long did you work on that to free the line?

23 A. I want to say like close to a minute. It's just -- it's kind
24 of hard to tell because there was a lot of things going on at
25 once.

1 Q. Sure. Understood.

2 A. I want to say close to a minute trying to get that line out
3 and then dealing with another problem with the wires getting
4 caught up, dealing with that, trying to get out of there, so we
5 don't get tangled up again.

6 Q. Okay. As far as the starboard engine, the same thing: How
7 long do you think that was down for? It seemed like it was a
8 lesser period of time frame that you were without the starboard
9 engine.

10 A. It was. Like the port engine died and right after the
11 starboard engine died, I'm like, all right, it's probably a line.
12 So let's disengage it and let's try and get it out of there.

13 Q. I only have one more question and then we'll -- I'll pass the
14 floor over. The engines, you indicated that if you were to take
15 the vessel back to the launch to put it back on the trailer, the
16 launch ramp to put it on the trailer, but you said you were
17 concerned about the engines failing again during -- I guess to put
18 it back on the trailer?

19 A. Because Oak Harbor Marina is right here and then Rigolets is
20 here. So we were -- we was thinking like let's just put this on
21 the trailer and go back to the station, but -- I mean the engines
22 seemed fine, but we just didn't want to chance it malfunctioning
23 for whatever reason. So we decided to take the marina that was
24 closest to us and call for assistance.

25 Q. Okay. And during that evolution, that transit back to the

1 pier, was there any issues with the engines?

2 A. The only issue that we had was being that the taffrail was
3 preventing the starboard engine from fully turning.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. We only had a little room to turn on the starboard. So --

6 Q. And how much would you say you were limited to turning to
7 starboard? Twenty degrees, 10 degrees?

8 A. I want to say 20 to 30 degrees.

9 Q. Okay. So hard over to starboard, you didn't have that
10 functionability?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] Dan [REDACTED] Coast Guard, Sector
14 New Orleans, Investigations.

15 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

16 Q. I just -- I want to -- I have very few follow-up questions.
17 So you reported in October 2015?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. And how long have you been qualified as a crewmember? When
20 did you get qualified approximately?

21 A. Six months.

22 Q. Six months ago?

23 A. Six months from --

24 Q. So after -- six months from reporting?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. So you've been qualified for about a year and a half?
2 Is that about right?

3 A. About a year, year and a half, sir.

4 Q. Okay. So I just became familiar with the [REDACTED] this morning.
5 So I'm going to ask you a stupid question, but there was no people
6 on board the sailboat?

7 A. No people on board the sailboat, sir.

8 Q. Okay. Why, why were we responding to that?

9 A. We got a call from sector saying that there's a vessel
10 adrift, we need you to check it out. But we were standing by
11 because we don't know --

12 Q. We weren't sure if there were persons on board? Did we know
13 for sure?

14 A. We didn't, we didn't -- as far as us, we didn't know if there
15 was people on board. We just knew that there was a vessel adrift,
16 stand by for further word.

17 Q. Okay. Do you know who that RP was?

18 A. No, I don't.

19 Q. Reporting party? So did -- so sector, sector called coms
20 here and then they hit the siren and then you guys went, but
21 you're not sure like who the original RP was?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. Okay. But when you got on scene, before you even decided to
24 do any towing stuff, you could -- was it pretty clear there was
25 nobody on board?

1 A. It was clear. We got --

2 Q. How long was the sailboat? I'm sorry to interrupt.

3 A. The sailboat was about, I want to say, 18 feet --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- 18, 20 feet.

6 Q. So there was not a lot of room for -- okay.

7 A. We got really close to where you can touch it.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. And we were just circling around just making sure that --
10 just like looking at it, making sure that nothing was --

11 Q. Did you guys report back to the station that nobody was on
12 board?

13 A. I, I'm not sure of that, sir. I was out on the deck. It
14 could be reported because that's what usually happens. We get the
15 scene sized up as soon as --

16 MR. WISNIEWSKI: If you don't know, don't speculate.

17 MR. [REDACTED] All right.

18 MR. WISNIEWSKI: It's fine to say you don't know.

19 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] If you don't remember, you can just say you don't
20 remember. So --

21 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Yeah.

22 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

23 Q. Okay. So have you ever trained on -- so let's just make it
24 very clear for the record, right. You guys did a stern to stern
25 tow, right?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Have you ever trained on that?

3 A. Rarely, sir.

4 Q. So you have once?

5 A. I've seen it done once, sir.

6 Q. Okay. You've seen -- okay. And how do you normally take a
7 vessel on tow?

8 A. Through the bow.

9 Q. So stern to bow, right?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Was there -- so there was no appliances at the bow?
12 There was nothing?

13 A. Nothing.

14 Q. Okay. What size towline did you use?

15 A. A 50 foot --

16 Q. No, the diameter.

17 A. I'm not sure, sir.

18 Q. Is a 29 like a 25, where it has only one? It doesn't have
19 two sets, right, of towlines? I can't remember.

20 A. It's one set of towlines, sir.

21 Q. Okay. So whatever was on board obviously, right?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. When you -- so there was a bit at the stern and how
24 did you -- so you got right up on it so you could just -- how did
25 you actually physically attach the towline to the sailing boat?

1 Did anybody go over?

2 A. No one went over, sir. We got close enough to where we could
3 attach both eyes to the bits.

4 Q. Okay. So the towline had -- oh, you just doubled?

5 A. It was a, it was a -- we put it in a bridle tow --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- off the stern.

8 Q. Okay. Just like that?

9 A. Just like that, yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. And then -- so how much towline did you pay out
11 initially approximately?

12 A. Thirty to 50 feet, sir.

13 Q. Okay. And then when you guys went to try to clutch ahead,
14 how much did the line slack?

15 A. It was moderate strain.

16 Q. So you kept tension even, at neutral?

17 A. Yes, sir. We actually -- we paid out more line just to
18 ensure the safety, that in [REDACTED] a wave comes, it doesn't --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. -- push us. So we pretty much paid out almost the whole
21 line.

22 Q. Were you guys into the --

23 A. We were into the, into the sea, so the waves were here and we
24 were coming this way.

25 Q. Okay. So between when -- so if you were keeping tension, you

1 were riding into the sea, and then at some point -- I'm trying to
2 understand. So at some point, you -- the coxon was -- you guys --
3 it was getting too -- the sailboat was getting too close or just
4 not making way and you wanted to break the tow?

5 A. We weren't making way. We just kept readjusting line trying
6 to put the sailing vessel in a better position where we can tow
7 it.

8 Q. Okay. So in order to -- how, how did you guys want to break
9 the tow?

10 A. Like break the tow from the bit or break the tow before --

11 Q. Well, I mean you can explain it to me so I can understand.
12 So you're running and you say you're keeping some tension, but
13 you're not making way, right? So the towline's not slack yet,
14 right?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. And then -- so we're not making way, then what?

17 A. Let's readjust, find a better position or a better approach
18 to tow the vessel more effectively. Still not working. Break
19 tow, we can't save the boat.

20 Q. Okay. And how did you want to break tow? Or how did the
21 crew decided to break tow?

22 A. Well, we broke tow. We took it off the bit.

23 Q. So you actually brought the boat in?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. You started taking in the line?

1 A. Yes, sir, to prevent the lines from getting caught up in the
2 props.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. And the boat was starting to sink, like, hey, we need to, we
5 need to take this off now. Just throw the line overboard.

6 Q. So cut it?

7 A. Cut it and take the -- take the double becket off and throw
8 that bridle in the water.

9 Q. Okay. When -- so if I understand you correctly, you were
10 like taking in line and you're coming up on each other, and then
11 at some point you decided to cut the line. Is that correct?

12 A. Yes, sir. We were, we were a good -- we were at a safe
13 distance to start taking that line off, and then all of a sudden,
14 as soon as we got the line off, we were already close to it.

15 Q. Okay. So then when did the props get fouled up? Was it
16 during that, when you guys were shortening the tow?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because was soon as we threw the line in the water, it just
20 -- the sailboat was right there, and the lines were caught and the
21 mast fell and wires came down.

22 Q. So you fouled the prop before the mast hit the boat?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. And then forgive me, because I just joined this
25 morning, but nobody was injured?

1 A. I want to say --

2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Do you know?

3 MR. [REDACTED] I know that there were a few minor lacerations
4 from the glass being shattered. BM3 [REDACTED] might have had a mild
5 sprain to one of his hands. I assessed him to check if he still
6 had post-motor and sensory function. BM3 [REDACTED] had some minor
7 lacerations. BM3 [REDACTED] had some minor lacerations. I had
8 some minor lacerations.

9 [REDACTED] Thank you. I have no more questions, sir.

10 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. Luke Wisniewski, NTSB.

11 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

12 Q. Just a couple more questions I have for you. So you
13 indicated you were the EMT or the medical individual on board to
14 assess everyone?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. Was anyone treated outside of the station or came to
17 you afterwards?

18 A. They -- I know BM3 [REDACTED] and BM3 [REDACTED] were talking about
19 going to medical to get themselves checked out further because my
20 scope is very minimal.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. So I don't know if BM3 [REDACTED] -- I'm not sure if -- I don't
23 know if they did go, but --

24 [REDACTED] Do you know if they went? This is [REDACTED]
25 [REDACTED] D8 Legal. I'm just -- I don't want you to speculate.

1 MR. [REDACTED] I don't know if they went.

2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. We'll follow up with them.

3 [REDACTED] Sure.

4 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

5 Q. Did you record anything in any type of logs or entries --

6 A. I never --

7 Q. -- for the care you provided?

8 A. I didn't record it.

9 Q. Okay. I have another one that goes back to when you first
10 arrived on scene and were getting an assessment of the vessel.
11 Were you part of the decision making or -- and bear with me now
12 because I'm just trying to remember what the acronym or --
13 correctly for the Coast Guard, but it's essentially a risk
14 assessment that every individual takes part in on board the
15 vessel.

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Oh, the GAR. Yes, I'm familiar with the RAC. I was going to
18 say RAC. Yeah, GAR, the GAR score. Thank you. So were you
19 involved with that --

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. -- decision for -- and what did you score the vessel as far
22 as the tow, for environmental, you know, weather, how all the
23 factors played into it?

24 A. I remember the GAR score being 21 at the time. I'm not sure
25 if there was an updated one, but at the time it was 21.

1 Q. Okay. What were your biggest concerns regarding that risk
2 assessment?

3 A. Just the weather. I felt confident in my abilities. I felt
4 confident in the abilities of the crew. It was just the weather
5 that I was kind of iffy about --

6 Q. And with this vessel, was there any limited capability, any
7 things that were reported, CASREP'd for the vessel prior to this
8 evolution that you're aware of?

9 A. Are you talking about like the description before we went on
10 scene?

11 Q. Well, the condition of your vessel, CG 29113, as far as
12 anything that was not functioning to par?

13 A. The 29113 was functioning. It functioned well. Before all
14 this happened, it was running well.

15 Q. So you didn't have any type of limited capabilities or
16 functionalities of the vessel?

17 A. No, sir.

18 Q. That you were aware of. Okay.

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. I'd just like to go back a little bit now more as far as your
21 rest the previous days and everything. And it's not so much
22 detail, but did you feel well rested for this day, this evolution?
23 Because it seemed like it happened toward the end of your watch or
24 the end of your day?

25 A. What I can remember, it was a pretty relaxed day. There was

1 moderate work. So, I mean, nothing too tasking. I felt, I felt
2 like I always feel every day, you know, I feel pretty good. Yeah.

3 Q. You talked about doing boat checks on all the vessels here at
4 the station. Was there any other assignments that you had that
5 day that were taxing or heavy workload?

6 A. Not heavy workload, sir. Just station maintenance. Just
7 little things that needed to be fixed here and there.

8 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. That's all I have. I'll go around
9 again.

10 [REDACTED] No further questions, sir.

11 MR. WISNIEWSKI: No?

12 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

13 Q. Okay. I just have then just two more -- or is there anything
14 during this statement that you'd like to change or anything that
15 you want to clarify more for us at this time?

16 A. Not that I know of, sir, but if there is something that I can
17 remember, would it be possible to add or clarify?

18 Q. Oh, absolutely. I've given you my contact and card. Feel
19 free to reach out to me if anything comes up that you think is
20 relevant to this investigation, I'd love to hear from you. And
21 with that, like, are there any suggestions or anything that you
22 see from this, you know, maybe that we didn't ask question-wise,
23 but you think we should look into as part of this investigation?

24 A. Not that I can think of right now, sir.

25 Q. Okay.

1 [REDACTED] I have one more quick follow-up, sir. Sorry.

2 MR. WISNIEWSKI: No, absolutely.

3 [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

4 BY [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

5 Q. Have you guys ever -- how do I say this -- had a similar [REDACTED]
6 like this since you've been here, unmanned sailing vessel or
7 unmanned adrift?

8 A. No. I know there -- yeah. No, I don't -- I haven't.

9 Q. To the best of your knowledge?

10 A. To the best of my knowledge, no. It's usually people on
11 board.

12 Q. Okay.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay. The time is 10:55. This concludes
14 the interview.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:55 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COAST GUARD VESSEL CG 29113 AND
SAILING VESSEL VANGUARD TOWING
ACCIDENT MAY 3, 2017
Interview of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA17PM012

PLACE: New Orleans, Louisiana

DATE: May 9, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber

