

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of:

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN SEA

Docket No.: DCA-10-MM-025

\* \* \* \* \*

Telephonic Interview of: RACHEL KELLER

Conference Room  
Sector Delaware Bay  
United States Coast Guard  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Monday  
July 12, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,  
at 9:06 a.m.

BEFORE: LIAM LaRUE  
Accident Investigator

## APPEARANCES:

LIAM LARUE, Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board  
Office of Marine Safety  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East, S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20594  
(202) 314-6000

JOHN LAWRENCE, Vice President  
Health, Safety, Quality and Environment  
K-Sea Transportation

JOHN FITZGIBBONS  
Ride the Ducks

MATT FINE, Lieutenant Commander  
United States Coast Guard

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Rachel Keller:		
By Mr. LaRue		4
By LCDR Fine		11
By Mr. Lawrence		11
By Mr. Fitzgibbons		12
By Mr. LaRue		12

I N T E R V I E W

(9:06 a.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. LaRUE: Okay. Good morning. It is 9:06. It is  
4 Monday, July 12th. This is Liam LaRue from NTSB and we are here  
5 at Sector Delaware Bay and we're here today talking over the phone  
6 to Ms. Rachel Keller. Rachel, would you mind spelling your first  
7 and last name just so we make sure we have it right for the  
8 record?

9 MS. KELLER: R-a-c-h-e-l and my last name would be K-e-  
10 l-l-e-r.

11 MR. LaRUE: Okay. Great. And how old are you, Rachel?

12 MS. KELLER: I'm 15.

13 MR. LaRUE: Okay. All right. I'm going to have the  
14 other gentlemen here in the room identify themselves now.

15 CAPTAIN LAWRENCE: Captain John Lawrence from K-Sea  
16 Transportation.

17 MR. FITZGIBBONS: John Fitzgibbons with Ride the Ducks.

18 LCDR FINE: Lieutenant Commander Matt Fine from the  
19 Coast Guard.

## INTERVIEW OF RACHEL KELLER

20  
21 BY MR. LaRUE:

22 Q. Okay, Rachel. Just to start off, do you remember where  
23 you were sitting on the boat?

24 A. Yes. I was in, I would say, the middle of the back or  
25 the back of what you would consider the middle of the boat.

1 Q. Okay. What side of the boat were you on?

2 A. I was on the right side.

3 Q. Okay. Do you remember who was sitting behind you?

4 A. No, I do not.

5 Q. How about in front of you?

6 A. I do not, sorry.

7 Q. Across from you?

8 A. I only remember -- I think the one sitting across from  
9 me as in directly from me across the aisle --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- would be the two Hungarian teachers.

12 Q. Great. Okay. What I'd like you to do now, please, is  
13 to just walk us through, you know, the events of the day of the  
14 DUKW ride and try to give us as much detail as possible and we'll  
15 follow up with any questions that we might have after that. Okay?

16 A. All right.

17 Q. Great.

18 A. Basically, we boarded the DUKW after a bit of a wait  
19 because one of our group leaders had forgotten her purse. We  
20 boarded the DUKW at the Philadelphia Visitor's Center, I believe,  
21 drove through the streets for a while, you know, seeing sights and  
22 we got in the water. We stopped right before getting into the  
23 water and we got a second driver or second crew member on the  
24 boat, who I believe his name was Kyle. That's about all I  
25 remember.

1           We went into the water. I remember the captain asking  
2 whether we wanted to make a larger splash -- or whether we wanted  
3 him to make a large splash in the water when we went into it or a  
4 small one and, of course, we answered larger because it was a hot  
5 day and we really wanted to get a little bit wet.

6           We went around the water for a while. I think we got  
7 about to Penn's Landing when we turned around and we were going at  
8 top speed. Kyle was driving, I believe. The original captain  
9 noticed -- we all noticed the smoke before the original captain  
10 did. I think it personally smelled a little bit like pretzels,  
11 burning pretzels. The captain turned around seeing a lot of black  
12 smoke and started yelling at the assistant to stop the boat, slow  
13 down, stop the boat and we idled for a bit.

14           We turned off the boat and the assistant got on top of  
15 the hood in order to find out what was wrong. At this point we  
16 were near Penn's Landing, completely stopped in the water,  
17 anchored, and it was about that time when one -- I believe it was  
18 the captain noticed that there was a barge behind us a while away  
19 back, and he radioed in after calling in a tow boat for our boat.  
20 He radioed in to the barge saying that we were in the water and  
21 they should either slow down or move, and we all thought it would  
22 be fine. We -- all of us stopped to pay attention to it until we  
23 looked behind us again and it was directly behind us.

24           By this point the captain had taken off his headset and  
25 we didn't hear him. I don't remember hearing much. I never

1 remember hearing anything to get my life jacket on. I just  
2 noticed a bunch of people were getting them, so I threw it around  
3 my neck and then we got hit.

4 I don't really remember -- I never jumped off. I was thrown  
5 off the boat. I went into the water. I remember losing my  
6 glasses at that point. I went into the water holding my bag with  
7 the life jacket crudely just hung around my neck. I resurfaced  
8 and when I was getting up from the water I think I hit my head on  
9 a piece of driftwood, but I resurfaced and floated a bit in the  
10 water clinging to the youth leader from our church because I can't  
11 swim very well. So we just waited until a rescue boat came for us  
12 and that was about the entire story of the collision itself.

13 We went on the rescue boat, got some other people and  
14 then we went to shore.

15 Q. Okay. Great. I'm just going to walk you back through  
16 there. Let's see, could you tell me a little bit about the safety  
17 brief? Did you go through that?

18 A. The safety briefing we had at the beginning?

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. Because, you know, we were -- I think the captain was  
21 certain we weren't going to be through anything like what we were.  
22 He just briefly told us that, you know, the life jackets were  
23 there because the Coast Guard wanted to make sure we were all safe  
24 in case of an accident. He very briefly went through how to put  
25 them on, but I didn't really pay attention because I thought, oh,

1 it's just a little bit in the -- it's only 15 minutes in the  
2 water, nothing's ever going to happen to us.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. You mentioned that you heard the captain  
4 call out to the barge.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Could you hear specifically what he said?

7 A. I believe it was when he was radioing, I think, "Whoa,  
8 whoa, whoa, slow down there." That's about all I remember.

9 Q. Okay. And did you hear -- was that the only call he  
10 made?

11 A. He also made a call about five minutes before that  
12 calling in a towboat to get our boat out of the water.

13 Q. Okay. So you just heard one call to the tug, though?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Did you hear any sort of sound signal from either  
16 your boat or from the tug and barge, any kind of like horn or  
17 anything?

18 A. We -- I believe we horned a couple times. We didn't  
19 hear anything from the barge but I do remember a bunch -- a few of  
20 us took the quackers that we got at the beginning of the ride and  
21 started making an SOS signal.

22 Q. And so you said you got your life jacket down okay and  
23 you got it around your neck and when you were thrown into the  
24 water, could you describe, you know, how you got to the surface?  
25 Did you consciously swim out of the boat or did you just pop up on



1 the surface?

2 A. I remember being under water and then I had my bag in  
3 hand for some reason and I basically tried to push myself up  
4 through the water.

5 Q. How long do you think you were under for?

6 A. It only felt like about five seconds but I remember as  
7 soon as I resurfaced the barge had passed us already and I was on  
8 the complete opposite side of the boat from which I was on.

9 Q. The opposite side of what boat?

10 A. I was on the right side of the DUKW boat and when I got  
11 up I was very far on to the left.

12 Q. Did your life jacket manage to stay around your neck?

13 A. It did.

14 Q. You said, backing up a little bit, you said you saw  
15 smoke, black smoke that smelled like pretzels, burnt pretzels.  
16 Where exactly was that coming from and how much smoke was there?

17 A. It was coming from the hood. It was really just a few  
18 plumes of smoke just an ongoing plume like you would see, for  
19 example, when a truck is going down and -- when a large, like, 18-  
20 wheel truck is going down you see the black smoke sometimes come  
21 out from its pipe. It was like that. It was that amount but it  
22 was ongoing.

23 Q. And was it coming from one side or the other?

24 A. It was coming from the right side.

25 Q. Okay. And you -- what was the color, again, you said it

1 was?

2 A. It was black, the smoke was.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Not really completely -- more of a very dark gray.

5 Q. Dark gray. All right. You said you were pulled out by  
6 a boat. Do you remember what kind of boat that was?

7 A. I believe it was the police boat.

8 Q. And you said you were hanging on to the youth leader.  
9 Who was that?

10 A. Jackie Kennedy.

11 Q. Okay. And who else do you remember being pulled out on  
12 that boat?

13 A. I remember, I believe it was Mr. Keen.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. The other youth leader -- one of the other youth leaders  
16 with us, Barbara; and her boyfriend, Paul; and Timmy, the  
17 Hungarian teacher.

18 Q. Was that everybody that was on your boat?

19 A. That was everyone that was on the police boat, yes.

20 Q. Let's see, were you hurt at all? Did you end up going  
21 to the hospital?

22 A. I did not.

23 Q. Okay. I'm glad to hear that. I think that's all the  
24 questions I've got. I'm going to pass it off to the next person  
25 in line here.

1 BY LCDR FINE:

2 Q. Hi, Rachel. This is Matt from the Coast Guard. A quick  
3 question for you. You said you had your life jacket on. What  
4 prompted you to get the life jacket on and how did you get one?

5 A. I noticed everybody else getting their life jackets on  
6 and I figured, well, it's probably a good idea if everybody else  
7 is doing it. I wouldn't -- I was sitting in the boat on -- I was  
8 in the window seat. So, I jumped up -- I was kind of crammed in  
9 the aisle with a bunch of people -- reached up and tugged -- tried  
10 -- tugged one out of the thing in the ceiling. It was already  
11 loose because somebody had ripped the cords out.

12 LCDR FINE: Okay. Thank you, Rachel.

13 BY MR. LAWRENCE:

14 Q. Rachel, this is John Lawrence. Do you remember when you  
15 came up did you see anybody? Which -- do you remember which side  
16 of the barge that you were on? Did you -- could you see the  
17 tugboat at all?

18 A. I did not see the tugboat at all. I came out on the  
19 left side of the barge.

20 Q. Okay. Left side if you were looking from the front as  
21 it was coming towards you?

22 A. The side near the shore.

23 Q. Okay. That's good. And did you happen to look up and  
24 see if there was any -- did you see anybody at all on the barge?

25 A. No, I did not see anyone on the barge.

1 Q. Okay. Okay. That's all I had.

2 BY MR. FITZGIBBONS:

3 Q. From the time the smoke showed up and that, until about  
4 the time the barge hit, how much time do you think passed during  
5 that time period?

6 A. I believe it was about 10 or 15 minutes. All I really  
7 remember is joking around about if we get abandoned in the water  
8 we can either jump or wait around and it's okay, we won't have to  
9 eat each other because my bag was full of food at that point.

10 MR. FITZGIBBONS: Okay.

11 MR. LaRUE: Did you have any other questions?

12 MR. FITZGIBBONS: I don't have anything else. I'm  
13 sorry.

14 MR. LaRUE: No, no problem.

15 BY MR. LaRUE:

16 Q. Rachel, this is Liam again from NTSB. Just the last  
17 question is, is there anything else you can think of that might be  
18 important for us to know that we didn't ask you already?

19 A. I believe at the -- once I had gotten out of the water  
20 we saw the barge turning around, but that was it. And I remember  
21 that when I was on the boat and when the collision happened, I  
22 remember feeling the boat start to tear underneath my feet or  
23 underneath someone's feet, and I remember one of the little girls  
24 in the back was screaming as the water rushed in. But that's all  
25 that I think that I left out.

1 Q. Okay. Well, thank you very much and we're all very glad  
2 that you're okay and you're here to talk to us today. That's all  
3 the questions we've got, and before I shut of the recording I just  
4 want to make sure that you're okay with us recording this.

5 A. Yes. I'm fine with it.

6 MR. LaRUE: Okay.

7 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:                   DUKW 34 and M/V CARIBBEAN SEA  
  Interview of Rachel Keller

DOCKET NUMBER:                   DCA-10-MM-025

PLACE:                               Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE:                                July 12, 2010

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to  
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

---

Beverly A. Lano  
Transcriber