

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN SEA

* Docket No.: DCA-10-MM-025

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Telephonic Interview of: PAUL KRATZ

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

Monday
July 12, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,
at 8:32 p.m.

BEFORE: LIAM LARUE
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

LIAM LARUE, Accident Investigator
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Health, Safety, Quality and Environment
K-Sea Transportation

JOHN FITZGIBBONS
Ride the Ducks

MATT FINE, Lieutenant Commander
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:32 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. LARUE: It is 8:32 on Monday, July 12th. We're here
4 at Coast Guard Sector Delaware Bay. We're talking by phone to --
5 can we just get you to say and spell your name please?

6 MR. KRATZ: Sure. First name is Paul, P-A-U-L. Middle
7 initial is A. Last name is Kratz, K-R-A-T-Z.

8 MR. LARUE: Okay. Great. And Mr. Kratz, you were a
9 passenger onboard the DUKW the day of the accident?

10 MR. KRATZ: Yes, that's correct.

11 MR. LARUE: Great. All right. I'm going to have
12 everybody else here in the room identify themselves for the
13 record.

14 MR. KRATZ: Okay.

15 MR. LAWRENCE: I'm Captain John Lawrence from K-Sea
16 Transportation.

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

18 MR. FINE: Lieutenant Commander Matt Fine with the Coast
19 Guard.

INTERVIEW OF PAUL KRATZ

20
21 BY MR. LARUE:

22 Q. Paul, can I get your age first please?

23 A. Sure, 53.

24 Q. Great. Where were you seated on the DUKW the day of the
25 accident?

1 A. I was in the last seat in the back on the starboard
2 side.

3 Q. And were you on the window seat or the aisle seat?

4 A. Aisle seat.

5 Q. Great. All right. If we could, I'd you to just walk us
6 through the events of that day as best you can remember and, you
7 know, try to be as detailed as possible and then we'll follow up
8 with any questions after that.

9 A. Okay. You want me to start when we got in the water or
10 I don't know where you want me to start?

11 Q. Actually, if you don't mind, tell us a little bit about
12 the -- what you remember from the safety brief that was given by
13 the captain.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. And then --

16 A. Okay. We got on the vessel on dry land, and the captain
17 was up front, and he said that he had, you know, some things to
18 talk to us about about the safety. He showed us where the life
19 preservers were, how to get them down, how to hook them, you know,
20 put them on and hook them around you. You know, I was in the back
21 of the boat. It was kind of hard to hear. I don't know if he
22 said anything else after that about the safety issue. He did say,
23 you know, because it's close quarters on the streets and
24 everything and sometimes on the water, do not put your arms or
25 head or legs out of the boat. You know, keep everything inside.

1 He said especially be careful like if you're pointing to
2 something, you have a tendency to put your hand outside the
3 boat -- or the vessel I guess he called it -- don't do that, you
4 know, things like that.

5 Q. Okay. And then if there's anything else you think is
6 important, you know, between there and the water, go ahead and
7 fill that in, but otherwise just tell us about the, you know, the
8 trip leading up to the accident.

9 A. Okay. We went in the water. We were cruising around.
10 He was pointing out different things. We were heading back up
11 river and he was not driving the boat. The mate was, but he was
12 sitting right next to him, facing us, explaining things, what this
13 is, what that is. All of a sudden it started to smoke and he got
14 the mate out of the seat. He got in the driver's seat, so to
15 speak, and you could smell the antifreeze. It smelled like
16 antifreeze. It wasn't like a fire smoke. It was antifreeze, from
17 what I could tell. He shut it down and the mate got up and got on
18 the hood of the vessel, so to speak, and I couldn't see what they
19 were doing but it looked like they opened it up to make sure there
20 was no fire, and I heard them say that there was no fire.

21 And then it was like the -- I'm going to call it smoke
22 but it was like the fumes from the overheated engine were coming
23 back to us, so he took out a roll of duct tape and apparently
24 taped over some kind of vents or something and then they threw the
25 anchor.

1 And then he, he was either on a cell phone or he was on
2 the radio. I couldn't tell which because I couldn't see but I
3 could see he was talking to someone, and I don't know what he was
4 saying. I couldn't hear it. And then finally he got off and then
5 kind of said to us, we're waiting for a tow. You know, we'll just
6 hang in there or -- what should be, you know, a couple of minutes
7 or whatever for someone to come to tow us.

8 And then he was explaining some things and then all -- I
9 was -- like I said, I was in the back of the boat, and then all of
10 a sudden I could see the look of panic on his face and he kind of
11 jumped up and he grabbed the radio. And I don't know what he was
12 saying because I couldn't hear, and that's when I stood up and I
13 turned around and there was the barge. So I started grabbing life
14 preservers and pulling them off and kind of just throwing them
15 around, like just over my head, just pulling them off the rack.
16 And then I look and then I saw the barge was -- I don't know how
17 close. Real close. And I turned around. There was a little girl
18 beside me. I turned around and put a life preserver on her, and
19 then that's when we got hit, and I ended up in the water, and
20 pretty much, you know, just trying to get free.

21 And then when I popped up to the surface, the little
22 girl was next to me and I completed hooking her life vest and kind
23 of pushed her out of the way. And then I was looking for my
24 girlfriend, Barbara, and finally found her and swam over to her
25 and then we -- about, I don't know, three minutes I guess went by

1 we were in the water, and then all of a sudden we heard all the
2 sirens and all the police boats and I guess it was a Coast Guard
3 boat that showed up though I don't know, and they pulled us out of
4 the water.

5 Q. Okay. Great. How did you get out of the water?

6 A. It was on a police boat.

7 Q. Okay. Were there other people with you on the police
8 boat?

9 A. Yeah. I don't know any -- the only name I know is
10 Barbara. She was on the boat with us and --

11 Q. That's Barbara Anderson?

12 A. Myself, Barbara, and a Mr. Keen. I don't know his first
13 name, was on there.

14 Q. Was he the larger gentleman?

15 A. Yes. Because I helped them, I helped the police people
16 get him on the, on the boat. He was the last one. And there were
17 a couple other people but I don't remember who they were, even if
18 I knew them.

19 Q. Great.

20 A. I'm going to say maybe two more people, I guess. Could
21 have been three. I don't really know.

22 Q. So you said it started to smoke, what you described as,
23 you know, engine overheating?

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. Where were you seeing the smoke coming from?

1 A. From the engine compartment, you know, up front.

2 Q. On any particular side or --

3 A. Both sides. And you could smell it. It smelled, you
4 know, like they popped a hose or, you know, you could smell the
5 antifreeze.

6 Q. What color was it?

7 A. The smoke was like a whitish color.

8 Q. You said you were grabbing life jackets. Did you happen
9 to get a life jacket on yourself?

10 A. After I popped up, like I said, but when I came up out
11 of the water, the little girl popped up next to me and she had --
12 I put the life jacket on her but I couldn't get the strap around
13 her in time, so when she, she kind of bobbed up next to me and
14 she's holding onto the, to the life preserver, and it was an adult
15 one. It wasn't a -- you know, a juvenile one, and it was really
16 big for her. But I got the strap around her and hooked it. And
17 like I said, I was looking for other people and they -- most of
18 them had life preservers.

19 And then I was trying to find Barbara and I found her
20 and I swam over to her, and she was holding onto, I think a little
21 boy, and he was okay and she was okay. She had her life preserver
22 on. And then I'm kind of bobbing around like, oh, I guess I
23 better grab one and one kind of floated by and I just reached out
24 with my arm and grabbed it and just kind of pulled it to my chest.
25 I did not put it on. I wasn't going to take the chance. I knew I

1 had to hold onto it till I got to a boat or something.

2 Q. Okay. How long were you under water, and then do you
3 remember how you actually got out of the boat?

4 A. Let's see. I don't really know how long I was under
5 water but I know I was -- and that's why I'm all kind of congested
6 now. Ever since I've been in the water I've been congested, so I
7 know I sucked in some water and -- but I don't really know how
8 long I was under water. I don't know. It seemed like three days
9 but --

10 Q. I can imagine.

11 A. I don't know. I guess if I had to guess, well obviously
12 under a minute, but I don't, I don't really know.

13 Q. And do you remember how you got, you know, back to the
14 surface out of the boat?

15 A. Well, I kept feeling things like around my legs, and I
16 don't know if it was the canopy or the -- I don't know what it was
17 but I kept feeling things like not really holding me but hitting
18 me on the legs, and it could have been the little girl too because
19 she was next to me, because when we went in the water, I kind of
20 went in first and then something fell on top of me and I assume it
21 was that -- the little girl that was next to me. And I could kind
22 of feel like, like a body part of some sort, like an arm and a leg
23 or something as I was trying to kick to get away from the boat.

24 And then I started to look up and I couldn't see
25 anything, and then all of a sudden I saw daylight and that's when

1 I started to go up and I popped up.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But you could kind of feel like nothing really holding
4 me but I was hitting things with my legs, and I don't know what it
5 was. Maybe it was like the side structure of the canopy or
6 something. I don't really know, but you could feel things that
7 you were hitting.

8 Q. Let's see. Can you swim?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. Did you end up going to the hospital? Do you
11 have any injuries?

12 A. I did not go to the hospital. I just have some bruises
13 on my, my right bicep in the back. I don't know what I hit. And
14 my back is like a little sore, but that's about it. But I didn't
15 go to the hospital or the doctor.

16 Q. Okay. Did you hear any instructions from the captain or
17 from anybody, you know, prior to the barge hitting?

18 A. No. No, I didn't, because once I turned around and saw
19 the barge I just started ripping off the life preservers and I
20 really wasn't paying attention. My main focus was to get as many
21 of those either in the water or on the boat as possible off
22 that -- I'm going to call it a rack, whatever they were --
23 whatever was holding them.

24 Q. Did you have any issues getting the life jackets down?

25 A. No. Huh-uh. No. And I must have -- because I remember

1 the captain saying to get them down you pull the yellow tab and I
2 just started ripping yellow tabs down and just kind of scattering
3 them, you know.

4 Q. Did you hear any sound signals or anything like that
5 from the -- either from the DUKW or from the tug and barge?

6 A. No.

7 Q. You said you couldn't hear any of the radio calls from
8 where you were?

9 A. No. I couldn't -- I knew he was talking but I couldn't
10 tell you what he was saying, but I know he was, he was talking
11 something, and then like I said, when I saw the look on his face
12 when he saw that barge and I turned around and saw the barge, and
13 then I looked down at the water to see if there was a wake in
14 front of the barge to see if it was still moving, and it was.

15 Q. How far away was the barge when you first turned around
16 and noticed it?

17 A. Boy, that's kind of hard to say but I'm going to guess,
18 and it's a total guess, it's like, I don't know, 50 feet, maybe a
19 little farther away than that.

20 Q. And you know, I know in a situation like that, you know,
21 time starts to warp and everything, but how long from the time you
22 first looked back and saw it until you -- until it collided with
23 you?

24 A. I was asked that question by a friend of mine and I'm
25 going to say probably around 15, 20 seconds.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Because I'm, I'm trying to think. I quick jumped up and
3 I started pulling the tabs, and I must have pulled about five of
4 those yellow tabs which would mean, what, about 10 life preservers
5 I got down. And then, and then it hit. I went down on my knees.
6 And then it just kind of -- well, obviously it kept coming, and
7 then the boat turned and then I just went face first into the
8 water.

9 Q. So from the time you looked back or, you know, you saw
10 the look on the captain's face and looked back and saw the barge,
11 you had time to pull five tabs and then it hit?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay. All right. I think that's all the questions I've
14 got. I'll pass it onto Matt Fine now.

15 A. Okay.

16 BY LCDR FINE:

17 Q. It's Matt Fine with the Coast Guard.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. Can you tell me a little bit more about -- you said the
20 captain -- he had started talking to you guys about what to do.
21 Can you expand on that at all?

22 A. You mean the safety thing?

23 Q. No, no. Once you're in the water, it's anchored. You
24 said he's talking to you about, you know, we're in -- you know,
25 are we on fire? Is someone coming?

1 A. Oh, okay. Yeah. He says that they were having engine
2 trouble and that he was waiting for a tow.

3 Q. Did he do this over the loudspeaker?

4 A. Boy, I really don't remember but I don't think so.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I think he was just talking to us.

7 Q. You were able to hear him all the way in the back
8 without the loudspeaker?

9 A. I heard that, yeah.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Yeah. I heard him say we're waiting for a tow. And at
12 that point in time he didn't seem to be panicked, you know. I
13 mean, there was no --

14 Q. Sure.

15 A. It was almost like, it was almost like he's done this
16 before, and I'm not saying he did, but he was real calm about it.
17 It wasn't like he was, you know, like oh, my god, we're dead in
18 the water and we need a tow, you know. It was just like all
19 right, you know, we're here. I shut the engine off. We have
20 engine trouble and we're waiting for a tow.

21 Q. We keep getting a common theme of people just kind of
22 got popped out of the boat. Do you remember actively swimming
23 toward daylight or was it one of those things where you were in
24 the boat one minute and out the next?

25 A. Yeah. It was -- I was in the boat and I heard the barge

1 hit, and like I said, as soon as it hit I went down on my knees.
2 It knocked me on my knees. And then within like, you know, a
3 second, I was -- the boat kind of titled to the right and then I
4 went face first in the water. And you can't really see under
5 there. I'm sure you guys know that.

6 Q. Sure.

7 A. And you know, like I was -- I was just trying to kick to
8 get up and I kept hitting things with my legs, and then finally I
9 looked up and I saw daylight, and I, I guess I was about, I don't
10 know, four or five feet underwater.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And I just swam, and as soon as I got up, I'm like,
13 whew, okay. Now I'm okay, because I know how to swim.

14 Q. Thank you, Paul.

15 A. Okay. You're welcome.

16 BY MR. LAWRENCE:

17 Q. This is John Lawrence. Paul, I was just wondering, have
18 you -- at any time remember seeing anybody on the barge, whether
19 it was before the -- before you got struck or after you came up?

20 A. No, not before we got hit, but when I looked at the
21 barge, I actually had to look almost straight up to see the bow,
22 the part -- you know, the very, very front of it --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- to where anybody could be standing and I was like
25 almost underneath it at that point so I didn't see anyone, but

1 then when I came up out of the water, there was someone on the
2 back of the barge looking down.

3 Q. When you came out of the water?

4 A. Yeah, when I came up. We were still in the water and
5 the barge kind of went past and then there was, there was a couple
6 of people standing on like, looked like the back of the barge,
7 looking down.

8 Q. Would that, would that be on the tugboat or the barge?

9 A. That was the barge.

10 Q. On the barge?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. So then that was just as it was passing by? So it was
13 almost immediately after you came up?

14 A. Right. Right.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Because I started looking around, because I didn't know
17 where it was and I didn't want to get run over again.

18 Q. Yeah. No, I understand. Okay. Do you remember how
19 many people there were?

20 A. On the boat?

21 Q. On the -- no, on the barge. You said when you came up,
22 you said you saw --

23 A. No. I said I saw one.

24 Q. Just one?

25 A. One person.

1 Q. One person? Then, again, I imagine it must be difficult
2 to -- you know, you remember that but do you remember what he was
3 doing or what he was looking at?

4 A. Just kind of looking over.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. The edge.

7 Q. Okay. And that was on the side -- so you didn't see the
8 tugboat at all?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay. So that was on the opposite side from where the
11 tugboat was, I guess, where you came up?

12 A. Yeah, right. I was on the starboard side of the, of the
13 barge.

14 Q. Okay. Thank you, Paul. That's all I have.

15 A. All right. You're welcome.

16 BY MR. FITZGIBBONS:

17 Q. This is John with Ride the Ducks. The timeframe from
18 when the boat first lost -- the smoke and all that until the
19 impact of the boat, you got any timeframe on that?

20 A. I really didn't, didn't look, but if I had to guess,
21 would be about maybe 10, 15 minutes.

22 Q. Okay. That's all I have.

23 BY MR. LARUE:

24 Q. Hey, Paul, it's Liam LaRue from NTSB again.

25 A. Uh-huh.

1 Q. Just two more quick questions.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. I thought, I thought I heard you say earlier that you
4 had a hard time hearing something? I don't know if it was the
5 safety brief or something he said after that.

6 A. No. I heard the safety brief because that was done on
7 dry land. That was fine. But when he, he was up front talking,
8 and I think he was pointing things out, and there were people like
9 sitting in front of me and they were talking, so it was hard to
10 hear him.

11 Q. Was he talking over the PA system at that point?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. No.

15 Q. And then just the last question, if you guys are good,
16 is there anything else you can think of that -- you know, that we
17 haven't asked you about that might be, that might be useful?

18 A. No, not that I can think of. I mean, we were facing up,
19 up river, so we didn't see the barge. It was coming behind us,
20 but he was facing us, talking to us, so he would, he would have
21 been the one to see, to see it first, him or the mate. The mate
22 was up on top of the engine compartment, so that's about it. You
23 know, we didn't see it coming. We had no idea until he started to
24 like panic. You could tell it -- you could tell by his reaction
25 and what he was doing, you could tell that something was going on

1 and that's when I stood up and turned around.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. Then, you know, everything happened.

4 Q. Right. All right, Paul. We appreciate you taking the
5 time to talk to us this morning.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. I just want to confirm that you're okay with us
8 recording this?

9 A. Yes, I am.

10 Q. All right. I'm going to shut it off right now.

11 A. Okay.

12 (Whereupon, 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: DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN SEA
 Telephonic Interview
 of Paul Kratz

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.

Susan Ueberroth
Transcriber