

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN

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

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Interview of: GABOR MIHALCSIK

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

Friday
July 9, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,
at 2:10 p.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.
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(202) 314-6000

MATT FINE, Lieutenant Commander
United States Coast Guard

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

GREG BLUMENTHAL, General Manager
Ride the Ducks Philadelphia

SHANE LAWS, Chief Warrant Officer
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:10 p.m.)

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3 MR. LARUE: Okay, good afternoon. It is 2:10 in the
4 afternoon on Friday, July 9th. This is Liam LaRue from NTSB. And
5 we're going to be talking with Gabor.

INTERVIEW OF GABOR MIHALCSIK

BY MR. LARUE:

6
7
8 Q. And how do you pronounce your last name?

9 A. Mihalcsik.

10 Q. Mihalcsik, is that close?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. All right, okay. And how old are you?

13 A. I'm sixteen.

14 Q. Sixteen, okay. And if you could just, you know, just
15 walk us through what happened, please.

16 A. Okay, so, I started -- I started the engine stopped.
17 Okay, so the engine stopped, and there was a gray smoke. The
18 captain tried to stop it. I don't know how, but it was -- it
19 worked. The smoke stopped. Then he tried to make a call on his
20 walkie-talkie or radio, I don't know. I can't remember that was
21 there answer or not. I don't know. But we were sitting there,
22 and at about five minutes later, the captain said that whoa. I
23 turned back, and I saw that there were a huge barge was coming to
24 us. Yeah, yeah, the captain tried to make a call, I think, to the
25 barge's captain, but it didn't work. I think there were no

1 answer. I think the captain didn't say that we should get the
2 life jackets and jump, just at about 15 or 10 seconds before the
3 crash.

4 Q. Did you say he did or he did not say?

5 A. He said just 10 seconds before the crash to jump and get
6 the life jackets. No, he just said jump, yeah, just jump. Yeah,
7 it was too late.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And I realized that the barge is coming, and it would
10 crash us. And then I stood up, and I tried to get a life jacket,
11 but when I was trying -- he tried to grab a life preserver, but by
12 the time he was grabbing it, there was the crash. Yeah, so it was
13 too late. But after that, the ship was turned a bit, like yeah.
14 So, here we are, our ship, and this one is the big barge. It was
15 coming, and our ship turned like this way, because it was -- it
16 pulled it.

17 Q. So, it turned to the left?

18 A. Yeah, we were here, and the barge was here at that time.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So, our ship was not full, but half with water. You
21 know, and then there was a tugboat -- there was five or ten
22 seconds. I get -- I grab a life jacket at that time, and yeah, I
23 was breathing deep. So, I had a big breath. Then --

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You had a what?

25 BY MR. LARUE:

1 Q. Took a deep breath, big breath?

2 A. Yeah. Then our ship was under the water, and I think it
3 was ten seconds, but I don't know. It was so long. I almost
4 can't stand it under the water. I can swim, but that was too
5 much, almost too much. And I saw light. I feel the light under
6 the water. Then I feel that -- I felt that there was air over me.
7 I came up and came out the ship, because I was until that time, I
8 was in the ship. So, I came out, and there was my life jacket. I
9 couldn't put it on. And then I saw another one, another life
10 jacket. I gave it to a little boy who was screaming. After that,
11 I saw that David was -- David started to swim to the dock. I was
12 going with him. I took a look back to the ship, our ship. It was
13 going down to the water, under the water. And I saw that the
14 barge was turning back in this way. I don't know. I was
15 swimming, and in my left hand, there were my hat, my sunglasses,
16 and my camera. I know that it was a stupid thing, but I -- yeah.
17 So, I was swimming, and I reached the dock. Someone gave me a
18 hose, a fire hose.

19 Q. A fire hose?

20 A. Yeah. I climbed up, and after that, I pick -- he took
21 off his shirt, my shirt, because it was water, it was wet. Not
22 the same but different shirt. And I took off my shoes too, and
23 first, I thought I'd like to jump back to help to David, but I
24 realized that I couldn't. So, I started to move to the lower dock
25 steps, so lower pier maybe. And then I helped David to come up

1 out of the water. Yeah, and that's all, I think.

2 Q. Okay, did you hear sound signals or a horn or anything
3 like that?

4 A. No.

5 Q. From your boat or the other?

6 A. Absolutely not.

7 Q. Nothing. You said you tried to get a life jacket when
8 you first grabbed, but it was -- you didn't have enough time?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. And then you managed to grab one. Where did you grab
11 the life jacket from? Was it above? Was it fallen down?

12 A. It was about -- because no, this way. So, here is the
13 barge, you know, and here is our ship. This way, I was here, I
14 think, and there were the -- no, on the right above me.

15 Q. Okay, and then you went under the water?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. So, you managed to hold onto it when you went under
18 water?

19 A. Yeah, because there were air. So, I saw everything
20 around me. I turned back, and I saw that there is a barge, a huge
21 barge, and I could -- no, it was above me on the right, yeah.
22 Yeah, in the water there was my life jacket with me.

23 Q. Okay, so you held onto it, okay. Did you -- were you
24 hurt at all? Do you have any injuries?

25 A. No, nothing.

1 Q. So, no hospital?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Can you swim?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Did you see any people on the tug or the barge?

6 A. No.

7 Q. I think that's most of the questions. How did you get
8 out of your boat? You said that you managed to get out?

9 A. Yeah, my life jacket was with me, and it was going up.
10 And on the window, the DUKW boat window, I came up, I think.

11 Q. And you said you heard the captain say wow, or something
12 like that?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Do you remember if he said anything else?

15 A. No, I can't remember. I don't know.

16 Q. Okay, I think that's the majority of them.

17 BY MR. LAWRENCE:

18 Q. John Lawrence. You were just saying where you had
19 your -- when you were swimming, you had your hat and sunglasses
20 and camera, but you didn't have a life jacket. Then you gave your
21 life jacket to the little boy?

22 A. Yeah, because I found another one.

23 Q. Okay, so you did have a -- you were able to have one so
24 you could swim?

25 A. Yeah, yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Just a comment. You should feel good for
2 probably saving another life by passing off your first life jacket
3 to him. Be proud.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. That's all I have.

6 BY CWO LAWS:

7 Q. I don't remember which seat she was in. I'm Shane Laws
8 with the Coast Guard. Where was she sitting?

9 A. Next to me.

10 BY MR. LARUE:

11 Q. Gabor, you're aisle seat 8, correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Portside.

14 A. In the aisle, yeah.

15 BY CWO LAWS:

16 Q. So, if I understand you right, you went under with the
17 boat for a little while?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So, did you come out the window right next to where you
20 were sitting, or did you come out the other side of the boat?

21 A. No, the other side.

22 Q. The other side, okay.

23 A. Because I stood up, and I ran to the aisle, the middle
24 aisle. I was staying there when the barge crashed us.

25 CWO LAWS: Okay, I think that was all I had.

1 BY LCDR FINE:

2 Q. Before -- Matt Fine with the Coast Guard. Before you
3 got off at the very last moment, did you see anyone else still on?

4 A. When?

5 Q. When you were under water, right before you left the
6 boat out the window, did you see anybody else still on the boat,
7 or was it just you?

8 A. Still on the boat? No one.

9 Q. Just you?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay.

12 BY MR. LARUE:

13 Q. Okay, anything else that you can think of that we didn't
14 ask you that you might think it would be good to know?

15 A. No, I don't know nothing.

16 Q. Well, we appreciate you talking to us today. And it was
17 okay that we recorded this?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Thank you very much.

20 (Whereupon, at 2:26 p.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: DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN
 Interview of Gabor Mihalcsik

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-10-MM-025

PLACE: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DATE: July 9, 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.

Debbie Mizell
Transcriber