

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

DUKW 34 AND M/V CARIBBEAN SEA

Docket No.: DCA-10-MM-025

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Interview of: RICHARD STOLTZFUS

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

Friday  
July 9, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,  
at 8:41 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

MATT FINE, Lieutenant Commander  
United States Coast Guard

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

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Richard Stoltzfus:

By Mr. LaRue

4

I N T E R V I E W

(8:41 a.m.)

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3 MR. LARUE: Okay, good morning. It is 8:41 on Friday,  
4 July 9th. This is Liam LaRue from NTSB. We're here at Station  
5 Philadelphia to interview Richard Stoltzfus, BM1. And with me to  
6 conduct interviews?

7 MR. LAWRENCE: Captain John Lawrence from K-Sea  
8 Transportation.

9 LCDR FINE: Lieutenant Commander Matt Fine, U.S. Coast  
10 Guard.

## INTERVIEW OF RICHARD STOLTZFUS

BY MR. LARUE:

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12  
13 Q. Okay, BM1, if you don't mind, just tell us a little bit  
14 about your background.

15 A. Okay. I've been in the Coast Guard for 18 years. I've  
16 done 16 years at small boat stations Atlantic City -- Station  
17 Atlantic City, Station Cape May, Station Siuslaw River in Oregon,  
18 and Station Philadelphia here for the last two years. I've been  
19 certified on numerous types of vessels as a coxswain, a heavy  
20 weather coxswain and surfman on the 47-foot motor lifeboat.

21 Q. And what's your current position?

22 A. Executive petty officer, Coast Guard Station  
23 Philadelphia, tactical boat coxswain.

24 Q. Okay. And just what we'll do now is take us back to the  
25 day of the accident. Just walk us through how you learned about

1 the accident, you know, what you did, what you saw, and we'll go  
2 from there.

3 A. Okay. I was down below doing maintenance on one of the  
4 boats in our boat bay. I heard the sector search and rescue alarm  
5 sound on four separate occasions. Immediately made our way into  
6 the station building to find out what the situation was, received  
7 very vague information that there had been a major collision on  
8 the Delaware River between a barge and a DUKW boat. We  
9 immediately made the decision to get two of our response boat  
10 smalls, the 25-foot RVS underway. It was also decided to get the  
11 41-foot utility boat, UTB, underway.

12 I was the second boat to arrive on scene. I made a wide  
13 sweep on the east side of the shipping channel, in between the tug  
14 and the ferry -- the RiverLink, the Camden RiverLink, Camden at  
15 Penn's Landing RiverLink. Immediately noticed that there was a --  
16 the Philadelphia Marine Police vessel was recovering. I don't  
17 remember what the boat number they used to describe -- I think  
18 it's boat number 3, their dive boat, was recovering a large group  
19 of people that were in the water. Philadelphia Marine Police's  
20 27- or 28-foot SAFE Boat was also with a group. Noticed that the  
21 groups were huddled together, couldn't tell how many people were  
22 in each group. Several of them wearing life jackets.

23 We went outside of that activity and noticed three or  
24 four people -- it was kind of hard to tell -- hanging onto a  
25 dolphin, a piling next to the RiverLink's moorage on the

1 Philadelphia side. Directed my 25-foot, my other 25-foot SAFE  
2 Boat, the RBS, to move in and attempt to recover those people.  
3 Myself and my boat crew moved back out into the middle of the  
4 river to try to survey the situation and to take on-scene  
5 commander until the 41 could get on scene, and to kind of direct  
6 the traffic, all the different response vessels. There were  
7 several. There was Camden Fire, three vessels from the  
8 Philadelphia Marine Police, one vessel from the New Jersey State  
9 Police. The Camden RiverLink was on scene. One of the DUKW boats  
10 was on scene. I'm trying to remember who else was there. It was  
11 -- there was a lot of response.

12 All the people that I could see visibly on the surface  
13 of the water had been recovered. There were still life jackets  
14 and throwable life rings floating on the surface, so we went and  
15 investigated each one of those. In my attempts to establish  
16 communications with all the other vessels that were on scene, I  
17 was not able to do so. I couldn't speak to any of the police  
18 vessels. I couldn't speak to any of the fire and rescue vessels.  
19 So, my communications were between the RBS, the UTB, and sector  
20 and myself; just those four vessels I had good communications  
21 with.

22 At a later time, Chief Bell from the command center, the  
23 OP center over here at sector arrived on scene. I'm sure he was  
24 with other people, but I don't know who was with him. He was  
25 speaking to me on a handheld radio. And I asked Chief Bell to

1 attempt to get a good count of how many people had been recovered  
2 and transferred to land. My communications with him were not  
3 clear, not readable.

4           We approached the other DUKW boat in the area that was  
5 on the scene and requested to know how many -- if they knew how  
6 many people exactly were on the tour, on the boat that was  
7 submerged. Up until that point, there had been several  
8 speculations, but nobody had given an actual number. They told us  
9 there were exactly 35 passengers and 2 crew. I passed that  
10 information to sector. I also passed that information to the  
11 shore party and requested again that they try to get a good count  
12 of how many people had been recovered. It later came back that 35  
13 people had been recovered, and we were still looking for 2 more.

14           I did a pier sweep, which is pass close aboard to the  
15 length of Penn's Landing Pier at about 8 to 10 knots to try to  
16 throw a wake to see if anybody was up underneath the pier and  
17 lodged in. I did that the entire length, and I then went into a  
18 shoreline search, because it was a strong ebb. I would say maybe  
19 a knot and a half, two knots of an ebb current. I decided to run  
20 the shoreline down along the pilings at Sector Delaware Bay and  
21 south down to the Walt Whitman.

22           The tug Reid McAllister was station-keeping 450 to 500  
23 yards north of the Walt Whitman. I asked him how long he had been  
24 in that position. He said for 25 minutes. I asked him if he had  
25 -- how many crewmen he had on board, if they were keeping a good

1 lookout. He said four and that they were all on the bridge, and  
2 they were all with binoculars and keeping a sharp lookout. I  
3 asked him how long he would be in the area. He said he would  
4 probably be there for another 30 minutes to 45 minutes. I asked  
5 him to please maintain that lookout, and I was going to  
6 concentrate my search efforts further to the north. He assured me  
7 that he would.

8 I would say about 40 minutes later, we saw him depart,  
9 so we again went down south and started a creeping line search  
10 from the Walt Whitman bridge to the heliport, just running north  
11 and south at 100-yard track spacing intervals between each track  
12 leg. We completed six of those legs all the way to the Camden  
13 side and did a pier sweep of the Camden seaport, the commercial  
14 piers over there, all the way up into and behind the Battleship  
15 New Jersey.

16 While I was over there -- oh, TowBoat U.S. was on scene  
17 as well when we first arrived. TowBoat U.S. was also doing a  
18 shoreline search along Camden's waterfront. We completed that,  
19 and then we went into -- we went back north in the vicinity of the  
20 area where Mr. Bordeaux, Chief Warrant Officer Bordeaux from  
21 sector contacted us and asked us for a river chart. At the time  
22 we were the only vessel that was out there. The second Coast  
23 Guard vessel had been asked to return to base at -- I'm going to  
24 let -- I'm going to have to let him tell you when he was told to  
25 RTB. They picked up Chief Lawler, the OIC, from the Penn's

1 Landing waterfront and took him back.

2           We went in and gave a chart of the Delaware River and  
3 the area of operations to Mr. Bordeaux for Captain Gatland's (ph.)  
4 use and returned back into the vicinity of where the DUKW boat had  
5 been submerged, and we were asked to set up a safety zone in  
6 between Walt Whitman and Ben Franklin. I took position underneath  
7 the Ben Franklin and turned away about eight vessels that were  
8 attempting to navigate south of the Ben Franklin.

9           And at that time -- shortly before that, the 25740 came  
10 out, and they took up station south of the Walt Whitman Bridge.  
11 They had -- that was the first time they had responded, and I  
12 don't think that they ever really made it up into the area where  
13 all of the activity was going on. His name was -- the operator of  
14 that boat was BM1 George Plotts.

15           At 1805, I returned to the Penn's Landing waterfront and  
16 recovered the chart from Chief Warrant Officer Bordeaux, and at  
17 1810, I was ordered to return to base to have another crew come  
18 out and relieve us.

19           Q. All right. I just have a few, just a couple of follow-  
20 up questions really. That was a good job going through  
21 everything. What was your boat number?

22           A. 25575.

23           Q. And do you remember what time the call came in, the SAR  
24 alarm?

25           A. Honestly, I don't. I don't carry a watch, and I was

1 just down below. By the time I got out there -- really, the first  
2 time I looked at the clock, it was already 1600, a little after  
3 1600.

4 Q. And so, you don't know what time it was when you left or  
5 anything? Did you -- do you use the ALMIS system to --

6 A. I used the ALMIS system when we got back. One of the  
7 coxswains attempted to sign out his boat and the ALMIS completely  
8 shut off on him. So, instead of taking the time, we had the --  
9 our original report was there were up to 30 people that were in  
10 the water. So, instead of grabbing out the paper copies and  
11 attempting to go through that, I just -- I ran down and got on the  
12 boat and got underway.

13 Q. You went through kind of quickly all of the people that  
14 you saw when you first got out there. Could you go through it  
15 again? I lost you at three Philly Marine Police.

16 A. There were -- I think there were only two Philadelphia  
17 Marine Police vessels when we first responded, but they were right  
18 behind us, the third one was right behind us. So, I got on scene  
19 before the third Philly Marine Police vessel did. Camden Fire and  
20 Rescue; I believe there was one New Jersey State Police boat; one  
21 TowBoat U.S. boat; the Camden RiverLink, the RiverLink ferry. I  
22 don't know what exactly they call themselves. I know it's the  
23 RiverLink. I don't know if it's Camden RiverLink or the  
24 Philadelphia River -- I don't -- it's just RiverLink.

25 Q. Is that Freedom?

1           A.    Yeah, is that what it's called? We just call it the  
2 RiverLink. Who else was out there? As I started going through  
3 the whole response, I could see where each of them was and what  
4 they were doing, and now that I'm trying to go back and remember,  
5 I'm not seeing the picture.

6           Q.    That's okay. That's plenty. I just want to make sure  
7 we got a good idea of who all was out there.

8                    So, you talked to the DUKWs, and then that was -- or the  
9 other DUKW that was on scene, and that was the first time you had  
10 the actual count?

11          A.    Yes.

12          Q.    So, do you know where they got that? Did they call back  
13 to the office?

14          A.    He actually had one or two -- I don't know. The radios  
15 were going crazy, so I'm monitoring four channels at all times. I  
16 heard the DUKW talk to sector. When I went alongside, there were  
17 four people on board the DUKW, and from what I could understand on  
18 the radio was that the DUKW that was still on the surface had the  
19 two crewmen from the DUKW that was submerged, and he's -- that's  
20 how we got the accurate count of 37. And he -- I had my stern to  
21 him, and my crewman was talking to him from the stern -- I'm  
22 sorry, my bow to him, and the crewman was talking to him on the  
23 bow and trying to relay information around the pilothouse to me.  
24 But from what I understood was the two crewmen from the DUKW boat  
25 were on board that DUKW boat, so we were still looking for two

1 survivors. The other 33 passengers had been recovered.

2 Q. So, the two from the sunk DUKW were on the other DUKW  
3 that was out on the water?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. That's how you got the count. And who did you pass that  
6 to on shore?

7 A. Sector.

8 Q. Oh, you passed it to the sector?

9 A. Yes, via the radio.

10 Q. I think that's all the questions I have. That was very  
11 detailed. I appreciate it.

12 MR. LARUE: Commander Fine?

13 LCDR FINE: I'm fine. That was great.

14 BY MR. LARUE:

15 Q. All right, is there anything else you can think of off  
16 the top of your head that might be useful for us to know?

17 A. I don't believe so. Oh, I forgot the two Coast Guard  
18 helicopters and the one New Jersey State Police helicopter that  
19 was -- that were conducting search patterns. They were also doing  
20 parallel searches to the shore up and down the river. If I had to  
21 give an estimate on time, I really couldn't. Things were just  
22 evolving. New Jersey State stayed for a long time, at least two  
23 hours. The Coast Guard helos I believe were there for the better  
24 part of an hour and a half before they had to head back.

25 Q. The Dolphins or --

1           A.    Dolphins.  Yeah, two H865s.  And there were several news  
2  helicopters, but that's really not important.  They were just in  
3  the area.

4           Q.    Great.  Well, thank you very much.  I appreciate your  
5  time.  It's 8:56, and if you don't mind, could you just  
6  acknowledge that this is being recorded?

7           A.    Yes.

8           Q.    All right.  Thank you very much.

9                   (Whereupon, at 8:56 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:                   DUKW 34 & M/V CARIBBEAN SEA  
Interview of Richard Stoltzfus

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.

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Debbie Mizell  
Transcriber