

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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Interview of: CHARLES WEAVER

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

Monday
July 12, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice,
at 9:29 a.m.

BEFORE: LIAM LaRUE
Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

LIAM LARUE, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
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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

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:29 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. LaRUE: All right. Good morning. It is 9:29 on
4 Monday, July 12th. This is Liam LaRue from NTSB. I'm at Sector
5 Delaware Bay doing the investigation into the DUKW accident. On
6 the phone we have Senior Chief Charles Weaver. Senior, if you
7 don't mind, could you please spell your name for the record so we
8 make sure we have it correct?

9 MR. WEAVER: First name, Charles, C-h-a-r-l-e-s. Last
10 name Weaver, W-e-a-v-e-r. Title, SBCS; in English translates to
11 Special Boat Senior Chief.

12 MR. LaRUE: Okay. Thank you. And I'm going to have
13 everybody here go ahead and identify themselves.

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

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

17 LCDR FINE: Lieutenant Commander Matt Fine with the
18 Coast Guard.

INTERVIEW OF CHARLES WEAVER

19
20 BY MR. LaRUE:

21 Q. All right. Senior Chief, I understand you were in
22 Philadelphia on the day of the accident. I guess to start off
23 could you just -- you're stationed down in Virginia, correct?

24 A. We are at the Joint Expeditionary Base Little Creek/Fort
25 Story, which is actually a Virginia Beach address. So, yeah,

1 we're at Little Creek. Special Boat Team 20.

2 Q. And what were you doing in Philadelphia on the day of
3 the accident?

4 A. We had come to Philadelphia to do two things. One was
5 to attend a luncheon with the Union League so that our commodore
6 could receive a distinguished officer award, naval officer award,
7 and the second was to attend a tree planting ceremony at the park
8 at Schuylkill Banks.

9 Q. Okay. And what vessel were you on there?

10 A. What we had in port at the marina behind the museum was
11 two Mark V Special Operations Crafts. By hull number they were
12 976 and 975.

13 Q. Okay. And which one were you on?

14 A. 976.

15 Q. Okay. And if you don't mind, if you could just kind of
16 walk us through the events of that afternoon, please?

17 A. Simply put, as I understand it, without notes in front
18 of me, we had just returned from a luncheon with the Navy League
19 or the Union League, changed out of dress whites into civvies to
20 come down to the boats to change into uniforms, because we love
21 changing clothes. And so this was approximately -- we started
22 filtering down to the boat about 2:30.

23 At right about 1440 I was standing on the concrete
24 behind the floating pier at the museum. My boys, the majority
25 were on 975 and 976. One of the navigators off of 975, and some

1 people will love this, heard a distress call on the MAR (ph.) band
2 radio. Simultaneously to that I heard fire sirens/police sirens,
3 first responder sirens, and commotion coming from the waterfront.

4 So I ran from the landing, the floating pier up to the
5 waterfront, at which point was I viewed was approximately 20 to 30
6 -- we know the number's higher -- but that was my estimate at the
7 time of people in the water. The passenger ferry was in the
8 vicinity. I noticed a police boat and a Coast Guard boat in the
9 vicinity, and turnaround and got my people motivated so that we
10 could get a boat underway.

11 At exactly 1443 -- so, 1440 that chain of events
12 started. At 1443 I boarded vessel 975 -- or 976, had engines
13 running, untied the boat, got the boat underway, transited through
14 the small marina at a safe speed, turned the corner so that we
15 were rolling upstream in the Delaware River. Approximately end
16 position would have been in a straight line to the Maritime
17 Museum, at which point the time was 1446.

18 At 1449, I launched a small Zodiac boat, which for
19 further purposes in this conversation will be described as a CRRC,
20 which stands for Combat Rubber Raiding Craft. In the rubber
21 raiding craft I had four people. As we were launching that I
22 noticed that the Coast Guard was having difficulty getting a very
23 large man in the back of one of their SAFE Boats, so I directed
24 the CRC [sic] to head in that direction. By that time they had
25 moved the gentleman to the bow of a police boat. I embarked one

1 of my sailors onto the police boat to assist with aiding that
2 gentleman out of the water.

3 After that the gentlemen in the CRCs recovered three, I
4 believe to be females, from the water. Simultaneous to that four
5 of the crew members from 975, via land, had come down to the
6 floating dock and were assisting the extraction of people from the
7 water. So, we got a CRC moving in one direction picking up
8 people. We've got four guys from the other craft aiding the first
9 responders, the police and civilians, who were all on the landing.

10 Once they had dropped their three passengers from the
11 CRC off onto the landing, we picked up one crew member from the
12 other boat, so I'm now back to four people on the CRC. I had them
13 start doing a survey along that quay wall from roughly the bridge
14 down to the turn into the marina, just to make sure we hadn't
15 missed anyone. The other thing we did was I took the Mark V from
16 what -- to the location from what I had received in conversations
17 the best guess of where the accident had occurred. Why it struck
18 my mind I'm not really sure. I was looking in the water to see if
19 I could see anything. We got up by the bridge. I told my driver
20 and one of my gentlemen to get on a depth sounder and, basically,
21 so I started doing a bottom survey.

22 What I can tell you factually is that in a straight line
23 from where I was parallel to the quay wall coming off of the
24 concrete arch almost out to the channel, I found an area that the
25 bottom contour went from 50 feet to 41 feet for approximately 12

1 feet and then bounced back down to 50 feet. At that point in that
2 place I hand signaled to the police or divers and to the Coast
3 Guard and made a verbal recommendation that they use that location
4 as a start point for their search for the DUKW. At this point
5 that this conversation was going on I was probably 150 to 200
6 feet, if not closer to 250, downstream from where we found the
7 anomaly on the bottom.

8 At 1537, I looked at the situation, realized that all
9 the people appeared to be out of the water, that the Philadelphia
10 Maritime Police, the fire department and the Coast Guard, along
11 with other assets, really did have the situation well at hand, and
12 recovered our CRC and attempted to get back to the business, which
13 was at that point to head towards the tree planting ceremony at
14 Schuylkill Banks.

15 The last thing I can tell you, and it's not in the
16 papers and I'm pretty pleased that it's not, the estimate that
17 I've got is that we ended up assisting somewhere between 10 and,
18 hopefully by the end of the day I'll get an accurate number,
19 probably 12 or 13 people from the water.

20 Q. So that --

21 A. So that's my version of the story.

22 Q. Okay. Great. Thank you, Senior. That 12 or 13 people,
23 so that includes the three on your CRCC -- CRRC, excuse me.

24 A. CRRC.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. The one that we assisted onto the police boat is the
2 fourth, and then my four gentlemen on the pier were working with
3 the police, first responders, and I can verify another four, but
4 in conversations -- and I haven't sat all the boys down to have
5 the final conversation -- it appears that number is a little
6 higher. So at the end of the day what I can account for is
7 approximately 10 people. It may be higher; it may not. It really
8 doesn't matter from my end of the world.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. I'm glad we could help the Philadelphia police.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. And Coast Guard and fire and rescue.

13 Q. And I'm sure all those people were glad you guys were
14 there, too. Actually, we've heard that quite a bit in our
15 interviews, so --

16 Next question is about the radio call that you -- or
17 that one of your guys heard. Could you tell us a little bit more
18 about that, please?

19 A. At the end of the day we -- this is where it gets
20 interesting. I have the ability to channel hop on our MAR band
21 radio. We traditionally run our radio on a dual setting of 12 and
22 16. I know the Delaware River runs on channel 13. As to exactly
23 what channel we heard a distress call at approximately 1440, I
24 cannot in good conscience give you an accurate number to define
25 that. What I can tell you is that one of my senior personnel

1 emphatically states that he heard a distress call pretty much the
2 same time I was running around sighting things.

3 Q. Did he tell you the nature of the distress call?

4 A. We have not had that discussion, sir, and I would be
5 misplaced if I attempted to create verbiage for him.

6 Q. Okay. And what channel did he say --

7 A. I can't answer that, sir.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. My guess is it was either on 12, 13 or 16, but at that
10 point I'm guessing. I know how my radio works. I know what it
11 should have done. I cannot validate as to the exact channel that
12 that distress call came in on.

13 Q. Fair enough. Maybe we'll get that gentleman's name once
14 we go off the record. That's -- I think I'm good with questions.
15 I mean, I'll let the other gentlemen here have an opportunity to
16 ask any questions.

17 MR. LARUE: No? None from Coast Guard. None from the
18 tug company.

19 BY MR. FITZGIBBONS:

20 Q. You said you channel surf 12 and 16 --

21 MR. LARUE: This is --

22 BY MR. FITZGIBBONS:

23 Q. Sorry, I'm John Fitzgibbons of Ride the Ducks.

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. You said you were bouncing between 12 and 16 usually,

1 but 13 you were monitoring also that day?

2 A. I can't say that, sir.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. What I can say is that that radio is normally set for
5 dual frequency.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. That it does have the capability of scanning, okay?

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So at the end of the day what I can validate, and I
10 cannot validate the source, is that someone within my group,
11 factually, on the MAR band radio did hear a distress call. From
12 what craft, sir, I would be remiss to try to even guess that at
13 this moment.

14 Q. Okay. Thank you.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 BY MR. LARUE:

17 Q. Okay. This is Liam from the NTSB again. We appreciate
18 you talking to us, Senior, taking the time out of your busy
19 schedule. Just before we go off the record, is there anything
20 else you can think of that we didn't ask you about that might be
21 useful?

22 A. No, sir. I mean, part of me says I'm sorry for sticking
23 us in because there were a lot of assets there. The really cool
24 part, which I've stated time and time again and I'll do it one
25 last time, whether we were there or we weren't there, at the end

1 of the day the results, theoretically, would have remained the
2 same.

3 What I observed that day, being from a military
4 perspective, is a phenomenal situation where people for once in my
5 career, which has so far lasted 23 years, put their personal
6 agendas aside and shared responsibility and, without trying to
7 create a pecking order, worked together for a common good. And I
8 think, at the end of the day, the reason the numbers are as strong
9 as they are is because of that factor, and from that I am very
10 pleased that I had an opportunity to witness it. Because between
11 the police, first responders, the Coast Guard, Sea Tow and the
12 other assets that for whatever reason stopped their worlds, that
13 basically -- a little less than an hour, was a phenomenal thing to
14 witness and be part of. So from my end thank you, and that thank
15 you pretty much goes to the City of Philadelphia, the Coast Guard
16 and -- because it was a pleasure to watch and be part of.

17 Q. All right. Senior Chief, thank you very much for taking
18 the time. I'm going to shut off the recording now. I just want
19 to make sure and confirm that you're okay with us recording this.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 MR. LARUE: All right.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

23

24

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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
 Interview of Charles Weaver

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