

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ANDREW J. BARBERI
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

* Docket No.: DCA-10-MM-017
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Telephonic Interview of: RUBEN COUVERTIER

State Island Ferry Facility
Staten Island, New York

Monday,
May 10, 2010

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: MICHAEL KARR
Chairman, Preparedness and Response Group

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P R O C E E D I N G S

1
2 MR. KARR: All right, we're now recording.

3 This is Michael Karr of the National Transportation
4 Safety Board. Also present is Max Green of the National
5 Transportation Safety Board and Leonard Kinnear of the U.S. Coast
6 Guard. And on the phone we have Mr. Ruben Couvertier, who was a
7 passenger on the Staten Island Ferry on Saturday, May 8th. That's
8 the Staten Island Ferry Barberi. And I'll just ask everyone in
9 the room that, before we talk to Mr. Couvertier, if we would
10 identify ourselves so the person that will type up the transcript
11 will know who is speaking.

12 INTERVIEW OF RUBEN COUVERTIER

13 BY MR. KARR:

14 Q. So, Mr. Couvertier, if you could, tell us about your
15 voyage on the ferry that day.

16 A. Yes. Well, I was on my way to Staten Island to help a
17 friend of the family do some roofing. He had a leak. So I
18 went -- had to take the ferry to get to the island. And along the
19 ride -- you know, it's not my first time taking the ferry, even
20 though it's been quite some time, but I noticed that we was
21 getting close to pulling up to the pier. So I prepared myself by
22 trying to go in the front of the pier so, you know, I could avoid
23 the traffic when it was time to exit it.

24 As I was by the exit, actually, in the stairwell between
25 the upper and lower area, I was just watching. One of the crew

1 members came out front -- I guess he was preparing for the boat to
2 dock. But after a few seconds of him being outside, he noticed
3 that it was pulling in too fast. So one gentleman happened to
4 come behind him and I noticed he was grabbing that one gentleman
5 and telling him, "Get back in, get back in." And I'm kind of
6 noticing that that seems a little odd, you know. So I'm wondering
7 why is he -- the gentleman saw. So then I looked out through the
8 glass doors and I noticed that it was coming in, you know, a
9 little too fast.

10 So I had -- actually had a friend with me and I told
11 him, "Listen, I think it's going to crash. Grab on to something."
12 So I went back into the stairwell in the part that was actually
13 going into the lower half of the boat and I didn't go down the
14 stairs, but, actually, at the time, what I did was I held on to
15 the railing. And as I was holding on to the railing, I noticed,
16 you know, at the point of impact there were two other gentlemen in
17 front of me that actually at the moment -- and maybe they didn't
18 realize what was about to happen, but actually I yelled loud
19 enough, you know, with the intention that anybody that's within
20 reach of hearing my voice could, you know, brace themselves.

21 But these two gentlemen didn't, so they just happened to
22 fall onto me when we made the point of contact. And I fell like
23 not completely down the stairs, but midway into the stairwell, you
24 know, because of the pressure of them falling onto me wind up
25 making me release from the railing. You know, at the moment, I

1 can't tell you the exact position of which I fell, but I know I
2 was able to, like, have some kind of movement even though I felt
3 pain. So I kind of tried to get myself up after the accident, you
4 know, since I had the pain in my lower back.

5 And like immediately, as I seen myself try to get up,
6 one of the crew members for the ferry told me, everybody just sit
7 down, any injured stay down. At that point after the accident, I
8 don't know, I never got an opportunity to see the crew member that
9 I recalled yelling to tell the other guy to get back in. But I
10 just remember pretty much all the crew members looked like they
11 were running back and forth, trying to find out what the situation
12 was, if there were any injuries.

13 Where I was at at the time, I recall seeing at least
14 four -- well, five, actually five people laid out on that small
15 area. There were the two gentlemen in front of me, which, you
16 know, were still up the stairs, the ones that bumped into me.
17 Another guy on my left that I didn't know, I don't know if he --
18 what happened there. He had complaints of hitting his head.

19 As far as the -- I don't know how long it took,
20 actually, before the firefighters, you know, and the EMT and the
21 police officers -- I know there were officers already there on the
22 boat to assist, but -- before more actually came onto the boat.
23 But I know once I seen their presence, you know, I kind of
24 observed that they were instantaneously, you know, trying to
25 assist anybody that was priority. So they came up to me and they

1 said, you know, "Hey, what's going on? How bad are you injured?
2 Can you move?" Whatever, you know.

3 So there was a gentleman beside me that seemed that he
4 was a little bit more injured than me. So I kind of understand
5 the fact that he seems to be more of a priority. But from my
6 understanding, I mean from my observation, I seen them pretty much
7 responding to it, in my opinion, the best that, you know, that
8 they could under the circumstances.

9 As far as anything else that you might possibly would
10 want me to -- you know, I'm only telling you what I know. I don't
11 recall -- I was watching the news last night and I recall them
12 talking about sirens that, you know, that went off before impact.
13 You know, I'm not saying that it did or it didn't. I don't
14 recall, I guess, maybe because of the fact that seeing one of the
15 crew members, the way he responded to that gentleman, gave me an
16 indication that I was just focusing in on what was going on right
17 there in my surroundings. So if I heard -- you know, if there was
18 any alarm that went off, it went past me. I didn't even get a
19 chance to hear it because I was already zoned in on what was going
20 on, you know. And I believe that's my story.

21 Q. Well, keep telling me your story. So tell me about how
22 -- you know, what happened to you on the boat, as far as you were
23 sitting there and they just asked you if you were okay. You know,
24 walk me through any other contacts you had with people, you know,
25 if you went to the hospital, how you got off the boat. You know,

1 just --

2 A. I was actually -- like I said, they was giving the
3 guy -- the patient that was a little bit more priority. So I
4 noticed, after a couple minutes, there was a smell of smoke. I
5 could hear people yelling fire, you know, but I never seen -- I
6 didn't see no fire and, I mean, especially where I was sitting,
7 where I was at; I was in the middle of the stairwell. So, you
8 know, actually I was on the stairs, so I didn't get a chance to
9 really see anything.

10 A lot of people were like looking confused, didn't know
11 where to exit, you know. So -- but where I was located at, there
12 was a lot of people within that stairwell. So, you know, officers
13 were trying to prevent anybody from either coming up or going down
14 that area, you know. So when I fell, you know, I hurt my lower
15 back, but I didn't felt like it was so dead where if anything was
16 broken. There was just like pain.

17 You know, once I smelled the smoke at first, you know,
18 the only thing that ran through my mind was hold on, you know. I
19 mean, even though I'm injured, I've got to get out of here. This
20 place going to burn, I ain't going to be here with it. But it was
21 kind of difficult for me to move at the time. So, you know, when
22 one of the paramedics actually seen me trying to move, that's when
23 they came -- you know, I was trying to go down the stairs. That's
24 when they came and assisted me and, you know, they told me to hold
25 on to the garbage can that was near me while they tried to, you

1 know, put me on a stretcher, put a neck brace, just in case I had
2 any major injuries, to try to prevent it from getting any worse.

3 So they put a neck brace. They strapped me to a -- I
4 don't know if it was a stretcher or what (indiscernible) that they
5 use for -- and then I just recall being carried out. I really
6 couldn't see anything at that point other than, you know, the
7 paramedics and the firemen that were carrying me out. I didn't
8 know the -- I just recall the position being awkward because of
9 the fact that, from where I was, they had to -- they went -- they
10 exit through a lower part. So it was like my body felt like if I
11 was on a flat and kind of like aiming down where, feeling like if
12 I was going to slide off the board.

13 And then once they got me out, you know, I couldn't
14 really look around, but I was able to, like, you know, through the
15 corner vision of my eye, seeing there was a person laid out beside
16 me who also had a neck brace, and there was also someone, you
17 know, on either side of me that gave me the indication that there
18 were quite a few people that they had been injured. And, you
19 know, after being there for quite some time, you know, it began to
20 feel -- it had begun to feel to me that my neck brace was too
21 tight. So I kind of -- you know, I began to choke a little bit
22 and it actually caused phlegm to come out of my chest. But I
23 recall the paramedic coming over to roll me on my side on the
24 board so the phlegm could come out. And even before they rolled
25 me over, I started having phlegm coming out of my mouth and it was

1 beginning to flow down my left side of my cheek, you know, and the
2 left side of my face. And so -- and then, after they realized
3 that, you know, maybe the brace was too tight and they had me on
4 my side, a few minutes later they put me -- laid me back on my
5 back and loosened up the brace for me.

6 And I recall one of the EMT workers standing over me,
7 speaking to someone else, stating that, "See, this is what happens
8 when you don't adjust the neck brace." And then from that point
9 on, I recall -- I heard another EMT worker stating that, "Listen,
10 we need to get him out of here," you know. And so they carried me
11 out and placed me in the ambulance and took me to Staten Island
12 University Hospital.

13 And on the way to Staten Island University Hospital,
14 other than the EMT worker, I guess there was another assistant
15 there, a young-looking kid. He had a white shirt on. I remember
16 him asking me, you know, personal information about myself, as far
17 as my name, my address, any contact number, you know, where I
18 could be -- you know, what was my injuries.

19 And during the time when we were in the ambulance on our
20 way to the hospital, the same situation as far as, you know, the
21 brace, the neck brace choking me that caused phlegm to come out of
22 my mouth, wound up occurring again. So this was the second time
23 it happened, but this time in the ambulance. So they also placed
24 me on my side again.

25 And I felt kind of bad because I also seen a lady

1 that -- another -- an Asian lady that I guess she was on the boat
2 at the exit as well, too. And I don't know the severeness of her
3 injuries, but from the way that I see her bandaged, moaning and
4 screaming in pain, it made me feel bad that they had to place me
5 on my side, which was actually facing her, and then I have all of
6 this fluid coming out of me and I'm coughing and, you know, I
7 guess I'm regurgitating. And it kind of, you know, made me feel
8 bad. You know, you've got to keep the germs to yourself, you
9 know.

10 And then from there, you know, I mean, a few minutes
11 afterwards we wound up reaching the hospital. You know, they had
12 put me back on -- they laid me back on my back once again, took
13 the stretcher out and rolled me into emergency, where once I got
14 into emergency I found myself surrounded by, you know, doctors,
15 nurses, and so forth, which was, you know -- and at that point
16 they just wanted to see the condition of my injuries and they just
17 told me to turn my neck left to right. But they never really took
18 any X-rays or anything to see how severe it was. I know the fact
19 that I was capable of moving and walking, but I was just in
20 extreme pain.

21 So, you know, after meeting with the doctor, they took a
22 urine sample to check to see if I had (indiscernible), because
23 actually it's in my lower back where it's affecting me. So I
24 guess they took a urine sample and it must've came back negative
25 and they released me from the hospital (indiscernible) and gave me

1 a prescription for the pain.

2 Q. Could you say that again, sir?

3 A. That, you know, after, I guess, the testing my urine
4 sample that I gave them to check to see if had any bleeding,
5 bleeding in my kidneys, if I had any kidney damage, I guess it
6 came out negative. So after that, they just gave me a
7 prescription of pain medicine and had released me from the
8 hospital.

9 Q. What other advice did they give you?

10 A. They gave me a doctor's note saying that if I still --
11 if I continue to feel any pain, you know, after my prescription
12 runs out, to go back and see a doctor, you know. They stated that
13 I had a slight bruise on my right side of my lower back. And you
14 know, to me, I was like, wow, because, you know, I noticed that
15 they didn't really check my left side, which was -- that's the
16 side that was really bothering me more, you know, so --

17 But he told me I had a little bruising on the right
18 sight of my lower back and, you know, he told me to take your
19 time. They give me a note. They said if you need to stay home
20 for a couple days, catch some rest, and if the pain continues once
21 your prescription runs out to -- I should go back to the hospital
22 and try to see a doctor, see a specialist for the pain that I'm
23 enduring.

24 Q. Okay. I'm going to back over my notes and ask you a few
25 more questions.

1 A. Yes, go ahead.

2 Q. I'm going to try and figure out exactly where you were.
3 I have a drawing of the Staten Island Ferry decks in front of me.
4 For the most part of the trip, which deck were you on? And if you
5 can tell me some landmarks: you know, were you on a deck with the
6 toilets, with the snack bar?

7 A. Well, actually, yeah, I was right there where the snack
8 bar was. I believe that was the upper part.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Okay. I was actually, you know, sitting on the side. I
11 recall watching the Statue of Liberty as, you know, as we passed
12 by it. But I think we must've -- I stayed in my seat until
13 probably like a couple minutes after we passed the Statue of
14 Liberty and then that's when I started getting myself together to,
15 you know, prepare myself for exiting. But actually, yes, I was on
16 the right side of the boat and -- yes.

17 And then I was -- and the snack bar was maybe, I'd say,
18 about -- in front of me. It's not in the same section that was in
19 because it was on another side of a wall or a different section,
20 but it was on the same elevation. I could say possibly anywhere
21 from around maybe 10, like 10 feet or so. I believe it was 10 or
22 8 feet in front of where I was sitting, but to the left side, the
23 left side of me, on the other side of the wall. But I was able to
24 see it, I guess, through the glass they had. But it was about,
25 roughly, about 8 to 10 feet in front of me, towards my left.

1 Q. Okay. Now, walk me -- how did you get down from that
2 area to get ready to leave?

3 A. Well, I started to walk straight forward
4 (indiscernible). And then when I reached the first opening, that
5 was the to the left; right, you know, where they had a stairs
6 going down and another stairs that was going up.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So instead of going to that first stairwell, you know,
9 that was in the section that went up, I just -- I hanged a left
10 and cut all the way to the other side. And the stairwell up, all
11 the way on the left side of the boat, that was the one that I went
12 up to. And once I went up the stairwell, (indiscernible)
13 stairwell and then I went out the door to actually get some of
14 that fresh air, you know. I don't know what you call that area
15 where you exit through, but once you pass through the exit doors
16 of the boat, where the boat actually attaches to the pier.

17 Q. Yes. Now, were you outside the doors?

18 A. No, not at the point of contact. Actually, I was back
19 in because, right before, you know, before it fully pulled in, I
20 felt a couple of drizzles beginning to come down, you know, over
21 the (indiscernible). So I thought like, well, let me get back
22 inside, you know, let me not get wet. So I went back inside and
23 then it was like -- it must have been moments, moments afterwards.

24 Well, I'm just sitting there. I'm watching as we pull a
25 little bit closer, but I'm not realizing at that moment that, you

1 know, we were going too fast until I actually noticed one of the
2 crew members and the way he responded to that gentleman that
3 was -- actually, I noticed the guy had earphones on his head, you
4 know, a radio on and, you know, I guess a Walkman or an iPod or
5 whatever. So I, you know, maybe because of that, that caused --
6 that actually caused one of the crew members to, you know, yell
7 out loud. But he wasn't -- I guess, since he was out on the
8 outside of the boat and it was, you know, because (indiscernible)
9 because the gentleman came in right behind him, you know, I heard
10 him yelling, "Hey, get back in, get back in." But the guy, I
11 guess he couldn't hear him because he had the radio on. You know,
12 so he started -- he said it a little louder and then I noticed him
13 grabbing, you know, the guy and like trying to push him back
14 through the door.

15 So then I was like, well, let me -- I looked through the
16 -- I looked and then all of a sudden I looked outside and I tried
17 to look at the pier and I noticed and I'm like, wow, we pulling in
18 fast. And then that's when I yelled, "Everybody grab on to
19 something," and that's -- grab on to the railing, you know. And
20 then that's when it made the impact. That's when it made, you
21 know, impact and then, you know --

22 Q. About how long after you heard the crewman tell everyone
23 to get back inside did the allision occur?

24 A. It had to have been about seconds.

25 Q. Seconds. Because it was enough time for you --

1 A. I can't really say it was a minute or so; I can't
2 necessarily say it was five seconds. But it was like almost
3 instantaneously, you know. I mean, it was like just, you know,
4 everything played out so quick, you know, that once I seen him
5 yelling that -- and he must've yelled it to the guy like three,
6 four -- like three or four times. At the same time I'm seeing
7 him pushing one guy in, pushing, trying to push that guy back in
8 the door -- and it was the far -- the exit door on the far right.
9 At the same time I recall him doing that, I also recall on the far
10 left side, there was an elderly couple that was together and I
11 seen them just going out the door as, you know, the crew member
12 was trying to push the other guy in. And I was yelling towards
13 them, too, "get back in, get back in," you know. But, you know, I
14 mean, it had to -- it could have been 10, 15, 20 seconds. I mean,
15 it wasn't that long of a span, you know.

16 Q. Well, let me ask you this to try and gauge the time.
17 You heard the crewman tell someone to get inside.

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. And now you've told me you had enough time to tell
20 people to hold on.

21 A. When I heard him, when I heard him say that, you know,
22 then I repeated, because I was right there by the stair -- you
23 know, in that area where the stairwell was.

24 Q. So you repeated it right after he did?

25 A. I wouldn't say at the first time. I would say maybe the

1 second or third time. You know, the first time it really didn't
2 dawn on me, you know, but when I seen him, like severeness and
3 then how aggressive he started getting with that one passenger,
4 you know, and then I came to the conclusion that something was
5 serious. So then I looked, actually. So once I seen him, you
6 know, the way he was responding to him, actually, I looked through
7 the door first and then once I realized for myself -- because, you
8 know, at the moment I didn't know what he was talking about. I
9 mean, it's been quite some time since the last time I caught the
10 ferry, you know. Everybody usually stand on the outside area, you
11 know, close to, you know, the boat pulling into, you know, the
12 pier. So you know, I'm thinking maybe they changed the -- you
13 know, maybe people not can't stand out there no more. So I'm just
14 -- you know, so it didn't dawn at me at first, until, you know, I
15 looked outside myself, you know.

16 So while he was more focused on getting that, you know,
17 that one passenger back inside, and the more he said it to him,
18 the more it started to dawn on me, and then I looked through the
19 doors myself and once I seen it approaching quick, then that's
20 when I turned around and I just yelled out, "Listen, everybody,"
21 you know, "everybody hold on to something." And then, you know, I
22 grabbed -- and then I grabbed the railing, you know. I mean, at
23 that point, you know, the most I could do was just warn people and
24 from that moment on, you know, everybody got to just grab on to
25 something.

1 Q. Did you say anything to that older couple?

2 A. The way I said it, it was loud enough for every --
3 because there was a lot -- quite a few people in -- you know,
4 around me, you know. So, I mean, I directed it loud, pretty much
5 for everybody else can hear it.

6 Q. All right.

7 A. I don't think -- there was not enough time for me to,
8 you know, to deal with everybody individually.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. You know what I mean? I recall another -- one of the
11 guys that got -- that I recall that received a worse injury, I
12 mean, he was on his phone, you know, and I -- and, you know, he --
13 and it was like he was still in a daze because actually it looked
14 like he was looking through the door but did not see what was
15 going on. I guess, you know, the conversation hadn't -- he was
16 going forward with the conversation when it -- you know, and I
17 tried to tell him too, but, you know -- I mean, there was quite a
18 few people around me, like four or five people, you know, I mean,
19 in that one position or one area where I was. You know, between
20 the elderly couple, there were two Spanish guys that bumped into
21 me, and then that -- and then the guy that was on his phone.

22 Q. The rail for the steps that you held on to, were those
23 steps going up?

24 A. Yes. No, but it was going up and out, not up and into
25 the boat, but up and out. Like if -- you know, because from the

1 level that I was at, I was going -- the stairs took me up and then
2 out to where the door is to exit the boat.

3 MR. KARR: All right, I'm going to ask Mr. Kinnear if he
4 recalls this diagram. I can't tell from this diagram whether -- I
5 can't remember where those steps go. Does the ramp go down or up?

6 MR. COUVERTIER: It was one stairs in the middle that
7 was going down and then there was one at either end that was up.
8 And once you reach the top of those risers, then, in between the
9 middle of those two stairs there was another stairwell that I
10 believe that went up again. And then -- so like the level that I
11 was on, if I was to go in front of the stairs, on each side, on
12 the left and the right, there's a stairwell that went up and there
13 was one that goes down. But, you know, I chose the one to go up
14 and in between each one of those risers that went up, then once
15 you get to the next (indiscernible) --

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's a ramp. It's a ramp.

17 MR. COUVERTIER: -- there was another one in the middle
18 that went up again.

19 MR. KINNEAR: This is the bridge deck.

20 MR. KARR: Which is where the -- the snack bar is here,
21 right?

22 MR. KINNEAR: Yeah. Here's the main deck. So this is
23 where he -- he walked on either here or here.

24 MR. KARR: But he said he was by the snack bar.

25 MR. KINNEAR: Well, he must have --

1 MR. COUVERTIER: That's where I was sitting at.

2 MR. KARR: Okay.

3 MR. COUVERTIER: That's not where I was at the moment
4 that the accident occurred.

5 BY MR. KARR:

6 Q. Oh, okay. So you had walked down some decks?

7 A. Prior to the accident, a few minutes just after passing
8 the Statue of Liberty, you know, I mean, the boat was still like,
9 I'd say, a few minutes from actually pulling into the pier before
10 I left my seat. You know, because if you wait until the last
11 minute you deal with a lot of traffic area. So I tried to be one
12 of the first individuals there, so once it -- when it hits the
13 pier and open up, you know, I'm gone. I don't like to get caught
14 in the traffic.

15 So actually I was preparing myself way before. So
16 originally that's where I was sitting at, but I got up from that
17 seat way before we pulled into the pier.

18 MR. KINNEAR: So he got up and came down to here. This
19 is where the ramps coming, right here. This is the bridge deck.
20 This is the pilot here.

21 MR. KARR: Yeah, that's where the pier comes down,
22 because there are the doors, there are the doors.

23 MR. KINNEAR: This is where the ramp would go, but it's
24 the main deck.

25 MR. KARR: Yeah, but doesn't the dock that they hit,

1 wouldn't the doors open up so he could just walk out on that?

2 MR. KINNEAR: Yeah, this would be the -- when they come
3 in, they come into this area.

4 MR. KARR: Yeah. So would he have been --

5 MR. KINNEAR: It sounds like he was up here.

6 MR. KARR: Okay.

7 MR. KINNEAR: This is the -- that's the (indiscernible).

8 MR. COUVERTIER: All right. The level that the
9 concession stand was, right?

10 BY MR. KARR:

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. Okay, just say, if you were facing the direction of the
13 exit that you would exit at, you know, and the concession stand is
14 behind you.

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Walk forward and the stairwell far left, and the
17 stairwell far left going up, I was at that point and it was in
18 that area right there at the top of the riser, at the top of the
19 platform at the top of that stairwell.

20 Q. Okay, thank you. Now we know exactly where you were.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. And you were at the top of the stairwell. And which way
23 did those people fall on you?

24 A. Well, I was -- to be honest with you, I was resting like
25 my right arm -- you know, like my right arm, I was trying to rest,

1 you know, hold up (indiscernible), you know. So then I was -- you
2 know, the railing was on my right side and -- but I guess I was --
3 I guess I didn't go down farther enough, so I was still maybe at
4 the ledge. And I held on and then they was right in front of me.
5 So they had, you know, fell into me. You know, I guess one guy
6 fell into the other guy and the other guy fell into me, you know.
7 And then -- so then I fell like in between the stairs but not
8 completely all the way down.

9 Q. I'm still here. I'm just taking some notes.

10 A. Yeah, that's pretty much it, I guess, I mean, at this
11 point. If you've got any questions, you know, just ask away.

12 Q. I will.

13 A. I really don't know if I could say anything else. I
14 think I gave you everything I know, you know.

15 Q. Were you happy with the service -- or were you happy
16 with the reaction of the deckhands of the Staten Island Ferry just
17 before the accident and afterwards?

18 A. Well, I mean, I seen them moving around. I seen them
19 trying to find, you know, what was going on, the situation, you
20 know, or smelled the smoke, you know. So even as they was
21 (indiscernible) a couple of, you know, the ferry -- the employees
22 and, you know, some of the crew members, you know, they -- even
23 the -- there was a couple police officers, you know, firefighters,
24 EMT workers passed me a couple of times and, you know, each
25 individual that passed me, they asked me are you okay; how severe

1 are your injuries? Do you think you can hold on for a minute?
2 You know, I mean, can you move or whatever the case may be. I
3 said, no, just deal with other people first. Because, you know,
4 like I said, from where I was, you know, from the two guys that
5 were in front of me and the other guy that was to my left, you
6 know, that was on the phone, they looked like they were seriously
7 injured, I mean, compared to me. I was hurting, but, you know --
8 I mean, I'm used to get bumps and bruises. I do construction for
9 a living, so, you know --

10 Q. Yeah. How many people asked you if you were okay? If
11 you can just estimate. Two, three, four?

12 A. Oh, lots of them. Five, six.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I don't know, somewhere around that number. I
15 mean --

16 Q. All right.

17 A. -- there were so many workers back and forth, you know.
18 I mean, it seemed repetitive. You know, like one person asked the
19 person standing next to them and asked me again. You know, I
20 mean, it became repetitive. It seemed like, you know, everybody
21 walked past you was asking, you know.

22 Q. Understood. Can you make any -- do you have any
23 thoughts about how ferry transportation can be made safer?

24 A. Yes. Don't let nobody pass out those exit doors until
25 the boat actually, you know, docks, you know. Like they should --

1 I think they should provide, you know, more -- like even with the
2 seats, you know, how can you possibly -- even if everyone is
3 sitting down, how can you prevent somebody from really getting
4 injured? You know, I mean, they don't have no real rail system,
5 almost like the train. I mean, I guess it wouldn't be, you know,
6 completely needed in the ferry. But under these circumstances
7 there's not too much -- there wasn't -- you know, I mean, I felt
8 that I was blessed because I was in the stairs. I had a railing
9 to grab on to.

10 But what about the individuals because -- you know, I
11 mean, how can you hold on to a box seat? You know, no handles, no
12 nothing, you know. I think they should provide some kind of
13 railing system so, if that was to occur again, the individuals
14 would have, you know, a better chance of not, you know, throwing
15 any major injuries because they were able to hold on and, you
16 know, have something to grab on to, you know.

17 And then at the same token, you know, I don't know about
18 -- like I said, I've heard that alarm went off, but I don't recall
19 hearing none of that, you know. So maybe it was because of the
20 fact that, you know, what I observed was before the alarm went off
21 -- I mean before the siren went off or whatever the case may be.
22 But I know what I observed as far as -- you know, that brought me
23 to the attention that something was about to happen or we were
24 about to crash, was the action of that one crew member. And by
25 the time, like I said, by the time it came -- by the time it

1 dawned on me, we was already getting ready to make contact. I
2 mean, it wasn't that far away. So, I mean, from my position,
3 that's all I was able to see, you know, what was going on by that
4 exit, you know.

5 Q. And where was that person, that crew member that told
6 the person to get inside? Where was he standing?

7 A. He was on the -- like I said, he was just -- he was on
8 the outside of the door. He was on the outside of the door, but
9 all the way on the right. So he was by the far-right exit. So I
10 guess he's one of the members that, you know, unhook the rope, tie
11 it up, whatever the case may be. But he was on the far right on
12 the outside of the door.

13 Q. Good. I needed that information.

14 A. And from my observation, because of, you know, the guy
15 had the earphones on his head, I mean, now that I think about it,
16 I think that in all reality he probably spent too much time
17 focusing on that one individual, that by this guy having his
18 earphones and I guess the guy -- you know, this is the first
19 person he sees, so, you know, he's trying to address it, you know.
20 But I think that if that one guy wouldn't have been, you know,
21 with the music, that that crew member probably would've had a
22 better chance of actually making it in and, you know, at least
23 yelling out to the rest of, you know, the passengers to inform
24 them of what's going on, you know.

25 So because -- I mean, like I said, you know, I don't

1 know what happened after that, you know, after it made impact. I
2 never seen the guy again. I don't know what happened to him, you
3 know. I mean, I was going through my own dilemma, you know what
4 I'm saying? But it scares me, you know, because of only the fact
5 that I never seen him make it back in, you know, through those
6 doors.

7 Q. Okay, all right. Well, I'm going to wrap up this
8 interview unless if we have -- Mr. Kinnear's got some questions
9 for you.

10 A. Okay.

11 BY MR. KINNEAR:

12 Q. Hello, sir. When you came walking up to get off the
13 ferry, give me a rough -- could you give us a rough estimate of
14 how many people you think were on the stairway?

15 A. As I said, nobody was actually on the stairway. They
16 were on the top of the -- you know, not on the actual stairway.
17 They were on the top of the stairway. Like I said, there were two
18 Spanish guys beside me. There was, you know, a Caucasian guy to
19 my left. You know, he was on the phone. And then there were some
20 -- a few people across the other side, the far-right stairwell.
21 But, you know, I just glanced at it, so I didn't -- you know, but
22 I know there were some people on the other side of the stairwell.
23 So I really didn't see what was going on over there, but there
24 were some people gathering up (indiscernible), you know, for the
25 exiting.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. So -- but from I where I was (indiscernible), it was
3 roughly around five, I think, five, you know, six people.
4 Somewhere around that number. You know, like I said,
5 (indiscernible), elderly couple. That's five right there. There
6 was this other guy and he came from -- the other guy with the
7 radio came from the far-right side, the far-right stairwell, you
8 know. So I'd say about six people, six people that were -- you
9 know, including I had a friend of mine that was with me, but you
10 know, he stood -- actually, he was behind me, as well, when -- in
11 the impact, but I don't know if I fell into him or if he jumped,
12 but he was gone. I mean, that guy was gone. I don't even know
13 what happened to him. He disappeared, you know, so --

14 Q. I got one more for you, then.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. I know there was a lot of confusion. You don't recall
17 hearing any alarms, you said, or any loud horns going off or
18 anything like that right before she hit?

19 A. No, like I said, not to my knowledge. I mean, you know,
20 if it did, I missed it. But I know, from what I seen, my focus
21 was on what was going on in front of me and what was going on in
22 front of me was an indication that something was about to happen,
23 you know.

24 Q. Okay.

25 BY MR. KARR:

1 Q. All right. Sir, it's Mike Karr again.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. Getting back to the fact that you were -- you wanted to
4 rush off the ferry, what made you want to rush off the ferry? I
5 just want to get an understanding of you and all the other
6 passengers on the ferry.

7 A. Well, you know, I mean, you know, over the years, you
8 know, I've been to Staten Island most of the time, you know. And
9 then what happens is sometimes, you know, it's just a matter of,
10 you know, I had somebody waiting for me on the other side, you
11 know, in the clubhouse, you know, on the other side. I came out
12 there to do some -- to help somebody. And, you know, my whole
13 objective was to get to Staten Island, do what I've got to do and
14 get back Manhattan as fast as possible.

15 Q. Did you catch a train or a bus?

16 A. What, to the ferry?

17 Q. No, when you got to Staten Island, were you looking for
18 a bus or a train?

19 A. No, actually somebody was going to meet me at the boat.

20 Q. Okay, all right.

21 MR. KARR: Anything else?

22 MR. KINNEAR: No.

23 BY MR. KARR:

24 Q. All right. Sir, I appreciate your time. And let me
25 give you my office phone number in case you want to call me with

1 any other information.

2 A. Hold on, Mike. I'm running low on ink.

3 Okay.

4 Q. All right. My name is Mike Karr, K-a-r-r. (202) 314 --

5 A. 314.

6 Q. -- 6455.

7 A. Okay. All right, I got it.

8 Q. Okay, I appreciate your time. Thanks for calling us.

9 Thanks for working with us.

10 A. Okay, bye-bye.

11 Q. All right, sir, have a good day. Just a second.

12 MR. KARR: Max?

13 BY MR. GREEN:

14 Q. Mr. Couvertier, thank you. Thanks again for your time.

15 And you have all of my contact information. So if anything else

16 pops up or if you have any questions, don't hesitate to call me,

17 okay?

18 A. Okay. No problem.

19 Q. All right. Take care and I'm wishing you a speedy

20 recovery.

21 A. Okay, thank you. Have a good day.

22 Q. All right. Bye-bye.

23 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ANDREW J. BARBERI
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
 Interview of Ruben Couvertier

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-10-MM-017

PLACE: Staten Island, New York

DATE: May 10, 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.

David Martini
Transcriber