

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the Matter of:	*	
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ALLISION WITH STATEN ISLAND	*	
FERRY TERMINAL MAINTENANCE	*	DCA-04-MM-001
PIER AT ST. GEORGE'S,	*	
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK BY THE	*	
FERRY ANDREW J. BARBERI on	*	
OCTOBER 15, 2003	*	

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Thursday,  
October 16, 2003

Staten Island, NY

INTERVIEW OF:

ANTHONY ELMORE

PRESENT:

ROB JONES, NTSB  
RICHARD GONZALEZ, USCG

## P R O C E E D I N G S

1  
2 MR. JONES: This is an interview with  
3 Anthony --

4 MR. ELMORE: Elmore.

5 MR. JONES: Elmore. And this is regarding the  
6 incident on the Staten Island Ferry last night, October  
7 15.

8 This is Rob Jones from the National  
9 Transportation Safety Board.

10 And Anthony, if you could just describe the  
11 area you were located in before the accident happened  
12 and when you were first alerted, what you saw first,  
13 anything like that.

14 MR. ELMORE: Yeah. I was coming from work,  
15 and you know, I usually take the top part of the boat  
16 because I have to, you know, try to make it first, you  
17 know, on the bus. I usually pick a seat out on the  
18 bus. But, at any rate, I was on the boat, and you  
19 know, I sit in the inside, in the beginning, you know,  
20 and later on, at a certain point, one of the buoys, you  
21 know, you will come outside because you know it is  
22 getting ready to dock. At that time that I was  
23 thinking it was getting ready to dock, I got up and I  
24 went as I normally do every day, to the front. And I  
25 noticed that, you know, the boat is moving kind of

1 fast, a little too fast, you know, you know, my  
2 estimate 30 miles an hour. And for a boat that is a  
3 little bit too fast.

4 But, also I noticed that it was very windy  
5 outside. I seen water caps in there, you know,  
6 everything out there. And as I am standing in the  
7 front, you know, waiting for the docking, its pulling  
8 in, I see that, one, he is off course. He is way off  
9 course because he was suppose to go into the wooden  
10 docks, and that is like, what, maybe Dock number two.  
11 I don't know what slip they would call it, maybe number  
12 five. But, he was way off and I noticed that he was  
13 going so fast and he was moving towards the  
14 construction dock, which is a concrete dock. And all,  
15 for that five seconds, because it was this much  
16 distance to my thinking, you know, it was like quick  
17 thinking, and what I did was I was, as a matter of  
18 fact, one person was in front of me and then I had  
19 someone else in back of me, so when I seen that he was  
20 looking like he was getting ready to hit, my quick  
21 thinking, the only thing I could think of, is either go  
22 overboard or run. And I ran towards the back, which is  
23 the actual middle section of the boat, not the end.  
24 Okay. I ran through the doors which somebody was  
25 getting ready to come out, and as I ran in, you know,

1 they have the first set of seats there, I tried my best  
2 to get that seat, because you want to grab onto  
3 something when something like this is getting ready to  
4 happen. But, I didn't actually make it to grab onto  
5 it, actually the, the crash sent me to it, and that is  
6 where, you know, I sprung my hand because I tried to  
7 grab the bench like this and this part of my hand hits  
8 the bench, and my back kind of went in like this, you  
9 know, my whole bottom part of my body. That is why I  
10 have like, you know, my back is a little hurting now.

11 And, you know, what I can remember as far as  
12 everybody else, is a lot of panic, a lot of screaming  
13 from the bottom level. Now, I wasn't on the bottom  
14 level as I just said, I was on the top. And I can hear  
15 the bottom level people screaming, you could hear  
16 people screaming and there was a lot of pain, you know,  
17 from what I am sensing. And of course, from what I am  
18 hearing, when the boat docked, when the boat did dock,  
19 because they had to, they had to send a tugboat there,  
20 because it hit so hard that, I think the motor shut  
21 off, because that is the whole point. He never shut  
22 off the motor within the whole trip. We were traveling  
23 at the speed of when we started, you know, when the  
24 boat finished docking, when the boat leaves the dock  
25 and it starts picking up the speed in the middle, that

1 same speed is the speed that hit, that we went into  
2 crashing. That same speed. The motor never shut off.

3 Because I know all my time riding the ferry and I have  
4 been riding the ferry for quite awhile.

5 MR. JONES: Do you have an estimate of how  
6 many years?

7 MR. ELMORE: Oh, an estimate of maybe, you  
8 know, like two years, because I did just move out to  
9 Staten Island within this one, but, I have been, you  
10 know, going back and forth to Staten Island because I  
11 had friends out here. And all my time of and then  
12 again, also, later on in the years, when I used to ride  
13 it, you know, at an earlier age. And I noticed that  
14 when the boat gets halfway, they stop the motor, so he  
15 can glide in. So, that way you will get a control, you  
16 know, and this didn't happen that day. Yesterday this  
17 didn't happen. The boat went so fast into it, you  
18 actually seen it coming and all you could see is just  
19 panic, you know, and that was my thing. I kind of  
20 froze up because, (1) I don't know how to swim. And  
21 once they start, you know, telling everybody get the  
22 life preserver jackets, the first thing that was on my  
23 mind is, oh, my gosh, I am going to die. Because, you  
24 know, I don't know how to swim. I don't know how, as a  
25 matter of fact, I don't even how I am going to get into

1 the water, because the boat is, you know, I am on the  
2 top level and the bottom level is messed up. What are  
3 they going to have us jump in, you know, I don't know.

4 So, these are the things that is going through my  
5 mind.

6 But, I heard a lot of panic, a lot of  
7 screaming. I really couldn't see what was on the  
8 bottom, if anybody got hurt or bruised up, because, you  
9 know, the top part has that, you know, you can't look  
10 down, you know.

11 MR. JONES: Anthony, just to interrupt, were  
12 you on the middle, the middle level?

13 MR. ELMORE: Yeah, the level that, there was  
14 only two levels on this boat.

15 MR. JONES: Right.

16 MR. ELMORE: It was that bottom level for the  
17 cars, street, street level.

18 MR. JONES: Right.

19 MR. ELMORE: And then there was the top deck  
20 and I was in that top deck.

21 MR. JONES: Okay.

22 MR. ELMORE: But, when I ran through the  
23 doors, you know, you have that side door here, you have  
24 the in door here, you have the middle door and then you  
25 had the in door, I ran through the middle door for the

1 simple fact that, that is the closest place to reach  
2 the benches, because if you run through the side door,  
3 you are not going to get a grab on the benches because  
4 the benches are lined up this way. So, you want to run  
5 through the middle one, because the benches are  
6 grabable. And that was my case, is to run, you know,  
7 to grab onto something because I seen it coming. And I  
8 knew that at the speed we were going, the impact was  
9 going to be strong.

10 MR. JONES: Did you hear anything before  
11 impact, any announcement by the vessel?

12 MR. ELMORE: Well, to tell you the truth, no,  
13 because I was, I really didn't, because, you know, I  
14 had never, you know, pay attention to that announcement  
15 that comes on, that we are getting ready to dock into  
16 slip number five. I didn't recall hearing anything.  
17 All I recall is just getting up and saying, okay, it is  
18 time to hit that, the front of that boat. And, you  
19 know, as I went up there, that is when everything just  
20 happened. And, you know, that is when it just  
21 happened.

22 MR. JONES: And how long do you estimate that  
23 you were onboard the boat before you gotten take off by  
24 the --

25 MR. ELMORE: Well, the estimate time onboard

1 the boat, okay, when he hit, okay, the boat was suppose  
2 to pull in, we are talking about three o'clock boat, we  
3 are talking about three thirty docking. So, within the  
4 boat hitting, I don't actually know the time because I  
5 am just giving you the estimate time that the boat is  
6 suppose to dock. And I am going to give you the  
7 estimate time of what I think was the time limit that  
8 they spent with us, getting us off the boat, but I  
9 believe that the boat was docking at 3:30 and I could  
10 say at least 15 minutes of standing around, because you  
11 had to wait, one, for the tugboat, because when the  
12 boat crashed, they immediately send us to the back of  
13 the boat because they told everybody get out of, get  
14 out of the area, and get to the back of the boat. And  
15 I guess that is a caution that is suppose to happen.

16 But, all I know is I looked out the window  
17 and I see like on the other, on that same loading dock  
18 that it hit, the guys are running toward the boat, I  
19 guess, I don't know why, but all I know is that 15  
20 minutes was the time limit that it took to get us off  
21 that boat, because they had to bring that tow boat in  
22 and the two boat had to, you know, kind of pull the  
23 boat in, because when it hit, I guess the boat backed  
24 up, because they only had to swerve it in this way, you  
25 know, so, it was, it was a one, two, three job. The



1 tow guys was there like this. They was on the job,  
2 they were right on top of things. And they got us in  
3 safely, you know, and from there they lowered the ramp.

4 They asked anybody, are they all right, and if people  
5 screamed that they wasn't all right. They took them.  
6 And that was it.

7 MR. JONES: Do you remember who told you guys  
8 to move back to the other end of the boat? Was it over  
9 an announcement or was it the crew members walking  
10 through?

11 MR. ELMORE: It was the crew members walking  
12 through. It was one of the crew members.

13 MR. JONES: Okay.

14 MR. ELMORE: I can't actually tell you who,  
15 which crew member it was, but I do remember a crew  
16 member telling us.

17 MR. JONES: As long as you can identify --

18 MR. ELMORE: Yeah, it was a, it was somebody  
19 saying to go to the back of the boat, you know, and  
20 everybody was walking to the back of the boat. So, I  
21 recall that.

22 MR. JONES: Now, were you allowed off as soon  
23 as the ramps went down or did --

24 MR. ELMORE: As soon as the ramps went down,  
25 they let the top people off. I don't know about the

1 people on the bottom.

2 MR. JONES: Yes.

3 MR. ELMORE: Because I didn't see nobody hit  
4 off from the bottom. All I know is on the top part of  
5 the ramp, they had the police standing there, had lots  
6 of fire people standing there. The ramp came down, and  
7 you know, a lot of people say, we want to just go home,  
8 dah, dah, dah, and you know, they just let us out right  
9 then and there.

10 MR. JONES: So fire and rescue and the police  
11 were already there.

12 MR. ELMORE: They were already there on the  
13 scene.

14 MR. JONES: Before this boat docked.

15 MR. ELMORE: As a matter of fact, they were  
16 right on the tip of the deck, waiting.

17 MR. JONES: Okay. Great. Anything else you  
18 can think of that might help us? Did you get a life  
19 jacket if you wanted one? Were they available?

20 MR. ELMORE: Well, let me, well, they were  
21 available but one thing I did experience that there is  
22 a lot of kids ones. It is not, you know, I didn't see  
23 that many adults. I had to go through like two of  
24 those compartments, but, because you can see of them  
25 was taken, but, there was a lot of kids ones that I was

1 coming across. You know, I had to grab two kids life  
2 preservers, jackets, you know, and I was just going to  
3 put them on my arm if anything.

4 MR. JONES: Did a lot of people put on life  
5 jackets after the crash?

6 MR. ELMORE: Not a lot of people. You have  
7 people who didn't, and you had people who did, you  
8 know, you had, the majority of the people put them on,  
9 put them on their neck. The majority people, some  
10 people had them held in their hand, some people didn't  
11 have none at all.

12 MR. JONES: Okay. Any, other than the deck  
13 hands, which you seem to think they were, telling  
14 everybody to move back to one area, any other  
15 announcements from either the, over the PA or the deck  
16 hands that said anything that --

17 MR. ELMORE: No.

18 MR. JONES: -- you know, we have had an  
19 accident, please remain calm.

20 MR. ELMORE: No. No. I didn't hear none of  
21 that. I didn't hear nothing about remaining calm. And  
22 maybe from the people who was taking us off the boat,  
23 you know, maybe from them, but as far as the boat  
24 hitting, I didn't recall an announcement.

25 MR. JONES: Okay.

1           MR. ELMORE: I didn't recall the announcement.  
2           Maybe I was in too much of shock that it happened,  
3           that I wasn't paying attention, but, you know, really I  
4           do listen to things and I don't recall hearing  
5           anything. All I recall hearing is just really the crew  
6           guys telling us to go to the back, you know, everybody  
7           to the back of the boat, you know, maybe he could have  
8           said it through word of mouth, within, not on the PA  
9           system. I didn't hear no PA system going through, that  
10          I can remember.

11          MR. JONES: So, and on your deck after the  
12          incident, what would you say how many crew members you  
13          saw on that deck assisting --

14          MR. ELMORE: Well, on that crew, on that deck,  
15          I seen one, maybe two on that top deck, just two of  
16          them.

17          MR. JONES: Okay.

18          MR. ELMORE: Now on the, you know, on the  
19          Staten Island side, you know they have got a whole  
20          bunch of them.

21          MR. JONES: Yeah.

22          MR. ELMORE: But, on that, on that boat,  
23          itself, I didn't really, I didn't recall even seeing  
24          the captain at all.

25          MR. JONES: Yes.

1                   MR. ELMORE: None of them. None of them. I  
2 only seen the two crew members, who usually open the  
3 gate. And to be honest with you, the crew member  
4 wasn't the one who opened the gate to let us out. One  
5 of the guys who was in front of the thing, he took the  
6 chain off and opened and then let us out.

7                   MR. JONES: In regular transiting, this  
8 incident never happened, say, when you are pulling into  
9 the dock, how close are you allowed to get to that  
10 gate?

11                   MR. ELMORE: Well, you are on touching, hand  
12 touching gate level.

13                   MR. JONES: Okay. So, you can stand --

14                   MR. ELMORE: You can stand right --

15                   MR. JONES: Through the doors.

16                   MR. ELMORE: Through the door, I mean, you  
17 would be --

18                   MR. JONES: Out on the platform.

19                   MR. ELMORE: -- You would be packed like  
20 this, standing on the gate, bump, back to back. That  
21 is how close you can stand on that gate.

22                   MR. JONES: Now, we did see the signs there  
23 that say do not stand on the stairs while the vessel is  
24 moving, but, when it is docking.

25                   MR. ELMORE: Yes.

1 MR. JONES: But people stand there?

2 MR. ELMORE: Yeah, that happens. That happens  
3 on a given non accident day.

4 MR. JONES: Right.

5 MR. ELMORE: That always happens.

6 MR. JONES: So, sign is there, but, people  
7 still stand there.

8 MR. ELMORE: People still stand, and they make  
9 the announcement, you know, clear the ramp, you know,  
10 and all that stuff when the boat is docking. I guess,  
11 at this particular time, no announcements were made  
12 because it was just, it happened too quick.

13 MR. JONES: Something was going wrong.

14 MR. ELMORE: Yeah, it happened too quick, you  
15 know. My idea is, you know, the thing that just arises  
16 in my head is, you know, I know, I don't know much  
17 about boats, but I do know that in that kind of  
18 situation of riding, you know, I guess picking this up  
19 from the fire department, you have to have that guy in  
20 the back of the truck, you know, the truck that swerves  
21 around like this, you have got to have him in the back  
22 and one in the front, and I believe that on that kind  
23 of boat you have to have a safety, one captain in the  
24 back, one captain in the front, in case something like  
25 that happened, he can reverse the motor and stop, you

1 know, the boat from, you know, going so fast. All I  
2 know is it should have been two captains on that ship,  
3 and I heard that two was on the ship, but one is only,  
4 to be found.

5 MR. JONES: Yeah, well, everybody is looking  
6 into that, so.

7 MR. ELMORE: You know.

8 MR. JONES: Anthony, I would like to, I am  
9 going to turn it over to Mr. Gonzalez, right now, and  
10 let him ask you any questions.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: I have just one question,  
12 Anthony. The crew members, the one or two crew members  
13 that you saw, can you describe --

14 MR. ELMORE: Well, it would be hard to  
15 describe them because this is the, that is not my  
16 actual normal time of taking that boat. I do take the  
17 three o'clock boat, but sometime I miss it, and I take,  
18 you know, either the four, you know.

19 MR. GONZALEZ: Did you see them?

20 MR. ELMORE: Actually see them, yes, I did see  
21 just the shirt part, just the blue shirt. I can't, I  
22 am not going to say, I am not going to sit here and  
23 tell you, oh, I remember their faces, no, I didn't  
24 remember their face because --

25 MR. GONZALEZ: Can you tell me if they

1 appeared to be Anglo, African American, Hispanic?

2 MR. ELMORE: Well, I believe they were, well,  
3 not Hispanic, I don't think it wasn't Hispanic. It is  
4 more of the white, excuse the impression.

5 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. Thank you. That is all  
6 I need.

7 MR. JONES: One more thing, Anthony.

8 MR. ELMORE: Yes.

9 MR. JONES: Just on the, at the point that you  
10 noticed that you were going too fast, the vessel was  
11 going too fast, at that time did you see people, were  
12 people lining up for the regular disembarkation?

13 MR. ELMORE: Yes, because, see, what happened  
14 was no one knew because there was, the guy can slow  
15 down the motor, you know, it was just a point that no  
16 one knew, you know, no one knew that it was, it was  
17 going to hit until it got a little too close.

18 MR. JONES: So, on your deck from what you  
19 could see, everybody was mustering up to the front of  
20 the vessel.

21 MR. ELMORE: Everybody was going, everybody  
22 was as normal.

23 MR. JONES: As normal.

24 MR. ELMORE: Going, you know, like we are  
25 going to get off. We are going to get off.



1 MR. JONES: Okay.

2 MR. ELMORE: The thing is going to dock. But,  
3 when they see it going so fast and seen it, you know,  
4 because some people, you know, me, I am not going to  
5 speak for nobody else, me, I am going to speak for  
6 myself, that you know, I am thinking that, hey, maybe  
7 he could swerve it around or maybe he was going to shut  
8 the motor, you know, but, you know, when I see them off  
9 course, that is what got me started, is when I seen  
10 them off course, and the speed that he was going. Then  
11 I knew right then and there, ain't no, it wasn't no  
12 pulling into the, we wasn't pulling into the slip. We  
13 was miles off from the slip, you know, to be ours. And  
14 miles off from the slip.

15 MR. JONES: Yes.

16 MR. ELMORE: You knew it was going to hit.  
17 You knew you are going somewhere else. And you knew it  
18 was going to hit, you know, otherwise, I would have  
19 just stood there. But, I knew it was going to hit, so  
20 I had to, you know, think, quick thinking is run, run.  
21 And, you know, a lot of people did the same thing, you  
22 know, some didn't make it because the people was in  
23 their way.

24 MR. JONES: Yes.

25 MR. ELMORE: You know, there is a lot of panic

1 up there, you know, and when you see something like  
2 getting ready to crash, you know, some people just  
3 freeze up, others are trying to run, you know, and that  
4 is what happened.

5 MR. JONES: Well, Anthony, I would like to  
6 have your phone number if we ever wanted to call you  
7 back again, to follow up with an interview.

8 MR. ELMORE: Yeah, it is xxxxxxxxxxxx

9 MR. JONES: And what is your age?

10 MR. ELMORE: I am 38.

11 MR. JONES: Okay. All right, well, that is all  
12 I have. Thank you very much. Thanks a lot, Anthony.  
13 Get better fast.

14 MR. ELMORE: Yes.

15 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)