

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of:

ALLISION WITH STATEN ISLAND
 FERRY TERMINAL MAINTENANCE
 PIER AT ST. GEORGE'S,
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK BY THE
 FERRY ANDREW J. BARBERI on
 OCTOBER 15, 2003

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DCA-04-MM-001

Thursday,
 October 16, 2003

Staten Island Ferry Terminal
 St. George, Staten Island, NY

INTERVIEW OF:

DANIEL SYLVESTER

PRESENT: BILL WOODY
 MORGAN TURRELL

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. TURRELL: It is Friday, October 16, excuse me, Thursday. Thursday, October 16. And with you start with spelling your first and last name.

MR. SYLVESTER: D-A-N-I-E-L, Daniel. S-Y-L-V-E-S-T-E-R, Sylvester.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. How old are you?

MR. SYLVESTER: I am 40.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And how long have you worked with the Staten Island Ferries?

MR. SYLVESTER: Thirteen years.

MR. TURRELL: And what is your position with the Staten Island Ferries?

MR. SYLVESTER: My title?

MR. TURRELL: Yes, your title.

MR. SYLVESTER: I am a deck hand.

MR. TURRELL: Can you describe your duties as deck hand onboard the ferry, just briefly?

MR. SYLVESTER: Basically, safety, look out, keep the place clean --

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And on the day in question, yesterday, you reported to work. Can you tell us where you were assigned onboard the vessel yesterday?

MR. SYLVESTER: I was assigned to the main

1 deck, the New York end.

2 MR. TURRELL: At any particular side?

3 MR. SYLVESTER: The Jersey side, I am
4 responsible for the Jersey side, which is the New York
5 end.

6 MR. TURRELL: Main deck, New York end, Jersey
7 side.

8 MR. SYLVESTER: Right.

9 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So, can you tell us when
10 you reported to work yesterday?

11 MR. SYLVESTER: One thirty.

12 MR. TURRELL: One thirty. And just tell us
13 briefly, starting from 1:30 yesterday, what you saw,
14 what occurred in your own words, yesterday afternoon?

15 MR. SYLVESTER: From 1:30.

16 MR. TURRELL: From 1:30, take us through where
17 you were and the first trip and just tell us a little
18 narrative of your day after 1:30.

19 MR. SYLVESTER: I came onboard, went
20 downstairs in the room, put my coat in there -- Came
21 back upstairs, signed in, I went back up to my station,
22 main deck, port into Manhattan, helped the boat, came
23 back through, clean up, make sure everybody was off the
24 boat. -- just the same thing -- 2:30, three o'clock
25 back to Manhattan. And then coming back, three

1 o'clock, somebody let the boat go. I was standing back
2 on the New York end the whole time. We pulled in,
3 stand by the -- And clean up.

4 I stand by -- as we were pulling, walking up
5 front, I heard the bang. And everybody started running
6 in the opposite direction -- to the front. I thought
7 there was an explosion, and then I realized it wasn't.

8 I ran to the rear of the deck, trying to -- I tried
9 to cut through the people, because everybody was
10 grabbing life jackets, putting life jackets --

11 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

12 MR. SYLVESTER: I went upstairs to see where
13 the Captain was, to do anything, what he wanted us to
14 do. He told me, get in touch with the Chief, he was
15 trying to get the power. And I went back down to the
16 engine room, told him the Captain was trying to get the
17 power. And we pulled into the dock -- trying to work
18 around, people were trying to --

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay. When you went to the
20 bridge, you went to the bridge, just after the accident
21 you went to check the Captain.

22 MR. SYLVESTER: To see whether the Captain
23 wanted us to do anything -- We were docking.

24 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And when you went up
25 there, who did you see?

1 MR. SYLVESTER: I saw Captain Mike Gansass.

2 MR. TURRELL: Captain?

3 MR. SYLVESTER: Mike Gansas.

4 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Captain Mike Gansas, okay.
5 Was anyone else up there?

6 MR. SYLVESTER: (inaudible)

7 MR. TURRELL: And this was briefly after the
8 accident, within a matter of minutes?

9 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes, a few minutes had passed.

10 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

11 MR. SYLVESTER: Five minutes.

12 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Did you notice anything on
13 deck, like any blood on deck or any sign on the bridge
14 that anyone was bleeding?

15 MR. SYLVESTER: On the main deck?

16 MR. TURRELL: On the bridge deck?

17 MR. SYLVESTER: No, I didn't see any blood or
18 anything. I just ran upstairs, I went up to the pilot
19 and went, went back down to the engine room.

20 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

21 MR. SYLVESTER: I really didn't look for any
22 blood.

23 MR. TURRELL: So, it was Captain Mike Gansas
24 that told you to contact the Chief?

25 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes.

1 MR. TURRELL: And on the way down to speak to
2 the Chief Engineer, did you see any other crew members?

3 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes, the crew members were
4 there trying to help out.

5 MR. TURRELL: All right. Do you remember what
6 other crew members you may have seen on the way down,
7 just a recollection?

8 MR. SYLVESTER: I saw Joe, Joe -- he was
9 standing on the -- deck, trying to keep people back
10 from --

11 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

12 MR. SYLVESTER: Richie, Richie, I don't know
13 he was on the main deck, trying to get the people and
14 stuff.

15 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

16 MR. SYLVESTER: And I saw, Ira was on the main
17 deck.

18 MR. TURRELL: Ira was on the main deck, okay.

19 MR. SYLVESTER: That is about it. That is all
20 I can remember.

21 MR. TURRELL: Okay. During any of this time,
22 you were in the New York end, and the first you knew
23 there was, you thought it was an explosion, you heard
24 something?

25 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes.

1 MR. TURRELL: Was that the first indication to
2 you that anything was out of the ordinary?

3 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes.

4 MR. TURRELL: And did you feel anything at
5 that time? What did you feel, any vibration or --

6 MR. SYLVESTER: Just heard the bang, and --

7 MR. TURRELL: Did you hear any alarms or
8 general alarm announcements or loud speaker
9 announcements telling you what had happened?

10 MR. SYLVESTER: No.

11 (Pause.)

12 MR. TURRELL: I will go ahead and turn it over
13 to Bill Woody here now and he will ask some questions.
14 Thanks.

15 MR. WOODY: When the people started getting
16 their life jackets, do you recall any kind of
17 announcement associated with that, that could initiated
18 people to get in their life jackets?

19 MR. SYLVESTER: No.

20 MR. WOODY: Okay.

21 MR. SYLVESTER: I didn't hear any
22 announcement.

23 MR. WOODY: Did you hear any announcements of
24 any kind?

25 MR. SYLVESTER: I can't --

1 MR. WOODY: I think that is all the questions,
2 I think that is all the questions that I have.

3 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I am sorry, you said
5 when you went up to the pilot house, you saw Captain
6 Gansas, and you said he was, what did he tell you?

7 MR. SYLVESTER: He was trying to get, in the
8 engine room, he was trying to get them give him the
9 power, to he could turn the boat around and bring it
10 in. I guess he lost the power from the pilot house,
11 and he was trying to get the engine room to give it
12 back to him.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Is that all he
14 said?

15 MR. SYLVESTER: That is all he said, yes.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. When you were
17 making your way upstairs to the bridge, did you see the
18 other captain, Captain Smith?

19 MR. SYLVESTER: No, I did not.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Coming down, did you
21 see him at any point?

22 MR. SYLVESTER: No, I didn't see him. I
23 didn't see him out there yesterday. -- signed in, I
24 guess he was already on the New York end, pilot house.
25 I didn't see him any time of the day.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, you went -- is that
2 correct, you were on the New York end and he was on the
3 New York end.

4 MR. SYLVESTER: No, Captain Gansas was on the
5 New York end.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, the pilot house
8 that you ran up to, when you saw Captain Gansas, what
9 pilot house was that?

10 MR. SYLVESTER: That was the Staten Island
11 pilot house.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Had you taken your turn
14 as look out yet?

15 MR. SYLVESTER: No, I didn't.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what, what --

17 MR. SYLVESTER: I was number four --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. After you heard
19 what you thought was an explosion, and then you
20 realized it was a collision, you said you came around
21 to the Jersey side.

22 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes, because I was standing
23 like to the back of the boat and I heard the explosion
24 from the Jersey side, so I went over to Brooklyn side,
25 to the back. And then I realized it wasn't an

1 explosion, it wasn't a bomb, I went up front, people
2 were --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you came around the,
4 you would have been here, so you came around to look
5 down this side.

6 MR. SYLVESTER: I was in the back, which is
7 the stairs, in the door, like.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

9 MR. SYLVESTER: Or to the, on the Brooklyn
10 side.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Now, when you came
12 around, was the mate over there?

13 MR. SYLVESTER: I can't remember seeing the
14 mate at that time, no.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Usually when you
16 are back there, do you guys, does the mate hang out
17 back there, too? Do you guys ever talk back and forth?

18 I am trying to visualize you are back there, you are
19 not really just standing on post, you are kind of
20 roaming around, taking care of your business. So you
21 are the same deck and the deck is pretty open.

22 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And so do you guys
24 sometimes, you know, you know, talk to the mate,
25 sometimes, you know -- Was any of that going on with

1 you and the mate on that end?

2 MR. SYLVESTER: Yes, I spoke to him --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. But, nothing
4 coming back that you can recall?

5 MR. SYLVESTER: I think -- with mate.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who was --

7 MR. SYLVESTER: Rush, I don't remember seeing
8 Rush. I didn't see him on the boat. I think it was
9 Mate Hyde.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who spoke to you.

11 MR. SYLVESTER: Mate Hyde, I believe.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All the way forward
13 on --

14 MR. SYLVESTER: He is the -- He stands over
15 there.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. The Jersey side
17 of the Staten Island.

18 MR. SYLVESTER: Staten Island, yes.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. But, you don't,
20 you talked to Hyde a little bit, but did you talk to
21 either Ennis or Rush?

22 MR. SYLVESTER: No.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. That is all I
24 have.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I have one. When you

1 went up to the pilot house, just Mike was up there?

2 MR. SYLVESTER: Just Mike.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you see Richie
4 anywhere?

5 MR. SYLVESTER: I didn't see Richie. After
6 Richie -- directing traffic or something and was trying
7 to control the crowd.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

9 MR. WOODY: Go ahead.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You participate in any
11 emergency drills with the Ferry?

12 MR. SYLVESTER: Fire drills.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And what other kind of
14 drills did you participate in?

15 MR. SYLVESTER: Steering drills -- drills,
16 fire drills, boat drills.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How often do you
18 participate in these drills?

19 MR. SYLVESTER: On the Barberi, every week.
20 On the -- boat, which we have sometimes, we do it, once
21 a month. But, the boat we do it every week.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What -- your
23 participation in those drills, performed yesterday, did
24 it make a difference, help yesterday?

25 MR. SYLVESTER: Well, you try to control the

1 crowd after the accident, the accident, there was no
2 fire, so we didn't have to do any fire.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can you tell me the
4 last three days -- What time you went to sleep and what
5 time you got up? To the best that you can remember.

6 MR. SYLVESTER: I went to sleep around 2:30,
7 three o'clock, got up around 11. That is my routine.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that is --

9 I don't have any more questions.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No questions.

11 MR. TURRELL: All right.

12 (Pause.)

13 MR. TURRELL: I have no other questions. I
14 would go around, if there is anyone else have any
15 additional questions. I would remind you that we have
16 to contact you in the future, putting pieces together.
17 I just want to let you know that.

18 MR. SYLVESTER: Okay.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, Robert Rush, when
20 was the last time you saw Rush down with you on the
21 main?

22 MR. SYLVESTER: When we left from New York.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When you left from --

24 MR. SYLVESTER: New York. And then we were on
25 the -- below the gate.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, and then where did
2 he go, did you know where he went?

3 MR. SYLVESTER: I don't know. I didn't see
4 where he went. Actually, he was making his rounds, I
5 don't know.

6 (Pause.)

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I am sorry, go ahead.

8 MR. SYLVESTER: He was there when the boat
9 took off from the New York side -- I don't remember
10 seeing him, no.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And he didn't tell you
12 where he went?

13 MR. SYLVESTER: No. I didn't see him.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did you see him at the
15 scene, where the crash came from?

16 MR. SYLVESTER: I saw him when we were pulling
17 into the -- Everything was going so crazy, I didn't
18 really remember seeing him. It was so crazy. I was
19 just, it is a blur to me.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Was he, the prior trip,
21 was he with you all the time?

22 MR. SYLVESTER: On the prior trip?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

24 MR. SYLVESTER: He had to go to the engine
25 room on the boat -- stay on the main deck.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: When does he usually
2 come back to the main deck? Does he usually comes back
3 to help you?

4 MR. SYLVESTER: No, he doesn't clean up. I
5 clean one side and the other deck has --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And just one other
7 question. What made you, prompted you to go upstairs
8 to the bridge deck?

9 MR. SYLVESTER: I don't know, I was
10 downstairs, things were looking so bad, go upstairs and
11 see what the Captain wanted to do, see what the Captain
12 was doing. So I just ran upstairs.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Thanks.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. So, I just
15 wanted to real quick, for my mind, you have -- You and
16 Ennis would have been the deck hands on that deck and
17 you guys do the clean up for that deck. The maids
18 usually kind of roam the whole boat.

19 MR. SYLVESTER: Right, they will make, they
20 are doing their, they roam around the boat cleaning,
21 make sure everything is okay.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. They have
23 paperwork type issues to deal with also?

24 MR. SYLVESTER: No, I don't think they have
25 paperwork. It depends if they have to write up, if

1 there is something wrong with the boat, they have to
2 write that up --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Okay. That is
4 all the questions I have.

5 (Pause.)

6 MR. TURRELL: One final question, before I
7 pass. Are you aware of any safety matters, I mean, if
8 you had a problem onboard the ship and you wanted to
9 report something that you thought would make the ship
10 safer, is there a process that you can take to report a
11 safety problem?

12 MR. SYLVESTER: Usually you have go to the
13 mate, supervisor --

14 MR. TURRELL: Is that a formalized process or
15 just informal? Do you know if there is a set
16 procedure?

17 MR. SYLVESTER: I don't know.

18 MR. TURRELL: You don't know, okay. That is
19 fine.

20 That is all I have. I think, I thank you for
21 your patience, and some interruptions. I apologize for
22 that. We will have probably some follow up questions
23 perhaps in the future and we will contact you. And
24 thanks again.

25 MR. SYLVESTER: Thank you.

1

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)