

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

Wednesday,
October 22, 2003

Staten Island, NY

INTERVIEW OF:

LIEUTENANT JAMES LANE

PRESENT:

ROB JONES, NTSB
JACK CALDERONE, FDNY
RICHARD GONZALEZ, USCG

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P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. JONES: It is October 22. This is an interview with James Lane. And if you could start, please, just where you, how you are employed with the fire department, what rank and everything.

LIEUTENANT LANE: Lieutenant, Ladder 114, Brooklyn.

MR. JONES: I need you to speak up a little bit or sit a little closer.

LIEUTENANT LANE: Okay. I am a quiet talker.

MR. JONES: Okay.

LIEUTENANT LANE: Employed for 17 1/2 years, lieutenant for six, almost six. And that day I took the three o'clock ferry. A friend of mine, a Major Shanahan, I don't know if you want to contact him. He is with the courts. We sat on the upper level, back left from the accident.

MR. JONES: Upper level would be the next deck up from the --

LIEUTENANT LANE: The top level, we were on the top level.

MR. JONES: All the way up top.

LIEUTENANT LANE: Yes.

MR. JONES: Okay.

LIEUTENANT LANE: In the back, towards the

1 back of the boat, back to mid. And we were, our seats
2 were facing Manhattan and heading to Staten Island, so
3 we were looking away from where the accident would be.
4 The trip was uneventful until we got closer to that
5 point. And looking backwards, I would, you know, I
6 didn't have, I couldn't see exactly where we were
7 coming close to the dock, but I would look over and I
8 would see Brooklyn, because I worked over that way. I
9 looked down a little bit more, and then I see the
10 Verrazano Bridge, so I knew we were getting close and I
11 see people get up and walking towards the front. And I
12 was engrossed in conversation with a friend of mine, so
13 I really didn't see it, but I realized, we are getting
14 close, but he didn't reverse the engines, they do that.
15 I never heard that sound. I have taken the ferry, you
16 know, numerous times and that never happened.

17 Right prior to impact, I heard a lot of
18 commotion up front, I guess it was the people gathering
19 up in the front to get off the boat. They, a group of
20 them turned, I heard yelling, they turned and they were
21 running towards the back of the boat. And right, right
22 after that, I heard the first impact. But, it really
23 wasn't, it wasn't a violent impact. A couple of people
24 got shaken up, you know, thrown off balance, but nobody
25 went sprawling down on the ground. I didn't get pushed

1 out of my seat. I was still sitting at the time. We
2 didn't get up and go to the front.

3 A lot of commotion after that. People still
4 running to the back of the boat, getting life
5 preservers. And we heard a loud, and a grinding noise,
6 first the impact, grinding noise and then like a series
7 of boom, boom, boom. And I couldn't figure out what it
8 was, so a friend of mine, we got up, we looked over the
9 side, and that is chaos, people screaming and yelling.
10 I looked over the side and saw a few pylons in the
11 water on my side of the boat, the left side of the
12 boat, facing Staten Island.

13 MR. JONES: Okay.

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: So I just assumed it was a
15 pylon got hit with the prop or whatever. I went down,
16 we took a look on the next level and people with life
17 preservers all over, gearing up, still nothing
18 appreciable. So, we went down to the bottom level and
19 that is when we saw what happened. And the boat was
20 opened up maybe, from the front to mid point, maybe
21 even two thirds of the way back. And the booms, I was
22 just assuming were the columns being snapped. So, we
23 took a look around, people, again, panic on that bottom
24 level, what was left on there that didn't already go
25 upstairs, was screaming. So I saw Rudd, who is a black

1 PD cop, she was trying to get people away from the
2 scene, away from that side of the boat. So, I went
3 over, identified myself as did my friend and to
4 somebody with a white shirt, ferry type, I really
5 couldn't tell you if it was the captain or whoever it
6 was, I don't know who it was.

7 MR. JONES: Do you remember any stripes?

8 LIEUTENANT LANE: I don't. It was a white
9 shirt. It was a ferry type shirt.

10 MR. JONES: Okay.

11 LIEUTENANT LANE: I identified myself to see I
12 could help and he was looking over towards the accident
13 side of the boat. There was one, I didn't see up to
14 the front yet, because it was still a lot of concrete
15 dust.

16 MR. JONES: Let me interrupt one second.

17 LIEUTENANT LANE: Go ahead.

18 MR. JONES: Have you seen pictures of both
19 captains in the papers right now?

20 LIEUTENANT LANE: Yes, I did see pictures of
21 both of them, but I couldn't tell you if it was, it
22 definitely wasn't the younger guy.

23 MR. JONES: Okay.

24 LIEUTENANT LANE: Was it the other guy, I
25 really couldn't say.

1 MR. JONES: Okay. All right.

2 LIEUTENANT LANE: But, it wasn't Gansas,
3 whatever his name is.

4 MR. JONES: Yes.

5 LIEUTENANT LANE: Yeah, it wasn't him.

6 MR. JONES: Okay.

7 LIEUTENANT LANE: Took a look right next to
8 him, where he was kind of holding everybody back, where
9 this guy was, there was a body right there. And I was
10 going over the help and goes no, he is gone. He is
11 gone already. So, like I said, I couldn't see a face.
12 There was a lot of concrete dust and people back and
13 forth. So, I think it was right about that time, I
14 made the first call to our dispatcher, Staten Island
15 dispatcher. I told him there was accident to the side
16 of our boat, it was opened up. I said, you know, set
17 up the land units and maybe get a boat going, too, and
18 I don't know what else I said to him.

19 After that we passed that little barrier
20 where everybody was kind of staying still, and as we
21 went pass there, and there a black guy on the floor, we
22 kind of did an assessment on him. All the way I am
23 looking forward seeing more and more casualties. And I
24 was worried about the decks above, because I have no
25 idea what is holding them up at this point.

1 MR. JONES: Right.

2 LIEUTENANT LANE: I know there is two decks
3 above it.

4 So, we saw the first guy, it was a black
5 gentleman on the floor, he was banged up, but, he was
6 okay. After him, there was another guy, it looked a
7 construction worker, he was pretty banged up. There
8 were three more casualties that were definite DOAs
9 right, in that vicinity which is probably mid point.
10 Another guy we dug out, he was right along side the,
11 where the boat was opened up, but he wasn't too bad.
12 We kind of stabilized him. We kept going further and
13 further and just came across numerous injuries. There
14 was a gentleman there who had lost his legs. He was in
15 a state of shock. There was a woman with him. I
16 think it turned out to be that English.

17 MR. JONES: Right.

18 LIEUTENANT LANE: I didn't speak to them,
19 actually I think my friend spoke to her. I think she
20 identified herself as a nurse. So, we kind of left him
21 to her, because there wasn't much I could do for him.

22 When a little further, there was a woman
23 there who also had lost her legs. I think there was a
24 police officer with her. I think he might have been
25 even in uniform. He might have been working the ferry

1 detail. We went up a little further, there was
2 another person we helped dig out. You know, there is
3 all dangled, did you see the scene?

4 MR. JONES: Yes.

5 LIEUTENANT LANE: Dangle of chairs, we were
6 pulling them off, but trying not to further damage any
7 people that are down there.

8 MR. JONES: Yes.

9 LIEUTENANT LANE: So, we dug out another,
10 probably another two people, closer to the front of the
11 boat. And went a little further and there was another,
12 other guy that I couldn't get to. And I guess,
13 actually when, the first black gentleman I saw, the
14 next guy, the construction worker, I think I made
15 another phone at that point, to ask for, you know,
16 advanced life support or advanced help.

17 MR. JONES: Okay.

18 LIEUTENANT LANE: And after that we were just
19 back and forth, doing whatever we could, dug out, like
20 I said, maybe dug a total of three, four people,
21 whatever. Some people obviously dead. There was one
22 guy that was not decapitated, but, his head was, you
23 know.

24 MR. JONES: Yeah.

25 LIEUTENANT LANE: Mushed around and another

1 guy lost his legs. He was kind of like split in the
2 middle and a lot of gruesome deaths.

3 MR. JONES: Yes.

4 LIEUTENANT LANE: Other than that, I mean,
5 looking at the boat like I said, I was concerned, not
6 only for myself, but for everybody working, I kept
7 looking at the decks, because there was, I don't know,
8 10 columns gone, or I don't what there was.

9 MR. JONES: Yes.

10 LIEUTENANT LANE: Did you get a total on it, I
11 mean, do you know how many, just out of curiosity?

12 MR. JONES: I would say, I would say it is
13 around that number, eight to ten.

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: Yeah. Okay.

15 MR. JONES: I wasn't looking at that, but,
16 but, we have good pictures and it is amazing.

17 LIEUTENANT LANE: Yeah.

18 MR. JONES: Now did you stay with the boat?

19 LIEUTENANT LANE: We stayed on the boat.
20 After the accident, all this while now, the boat is
21 stopped after the accident, kind of hung out there for
22 a second, I really couldn't tell you how long, then we
23 started backing up. We spun around, I think we spun
24 around and then a tugboat came along side, and we asked
25 that guy, whoever the tugboat was, I couldn't tell you,

1 we asked that guy for any kind of medical kits or
2 whatever he had on the boat.

3 MR. JONES: You actually asked them.

4 LIEUTENANT LANE: They bumped the boat.

5 MR. JONES: Yeah.

6 LIEUTENANT LANE: Before, I guess they pushed
7 a little bit, but they came right nose to where the --

8 MR. JONES: Yeah, they came --

9 LIEUTENANT LANE: I could see the guy and I
10 was speaking to him.

11 MR. JONES: Right.

12 LIEUTENANT LANE: And they had nothing.

13 MR. JONES: Who was speaking to them?

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: I was speaking to them.

15 MR. JONES: You were speaking.

16 LIEUTENANT LANE: One of the deck hands.

17 MR. JONES: Okay.

18 LIEUTENANT LANE: They had nothing to give us
19 as far as medical stuff.

20 MR. JONES: Yes.

21 LIEUTENANT LANE: At that point we drifted, I
22 guess, I am guessing 20 minutes, I really couldn't tell
23 you. Somewhere, we backed up, we hung around, we
24 floated around. I didn't hear the motors go on, so I
25 don't know if they actually drove the boat or the tugs

1 pushed it in.

2 MR. JONES: Yeah.

3 LIEUTENANT LANE: I couldn't tell you.

4 At that point, you know, 20 minutes later,
5 whatever, they pushed it back into the slip. I didn't
6 see anybody get off, I was too busy. And that is when
7 the FD and the PD and the EMS came on the boat. And I
8 hung around for another 45 minutes to an hour, to give
9 a hand.

10 MR. JONES: So you were down on the lower
11 level the whole time?

12 LIEUTENANT LANE: The whole time, yeah.

13 MR. JONES: So, when you, when the other first
14 fire responded.

15 LIEUTENANT LANE: Right.

16 MR. JONES: Was anybody directing them?

17 LIEUTENANT LANE: I knew --

18 MR. JONES: Like crew.

19 LIEUTENANT LANE: I knew the guys, I knew a
20 few guys coming in, you know Bobby Nola? I knew Bobby
21 and I saw Bobby coming on. I go, Bob, you have got a
22 few definite DOAs. You have got some people in rough
23 shape. You are going to need backboards. I said, I am
24 assuming you have the binds with the advanced
25 parameters. I said, you are going to need, you have

1 got amputees, you have got a few different things. I
2 said, you are going to need the heist tool, torch.

3 MR. JONES: What is the heist tool?

4 LIEUTENANT LANE: The jaws of life.

5 MR. JONES: The jaws of life.

6 LIEUTENANT LANE: You are going that, you are
7 going to need a torch and you need, I said, bring the
8 airvax. I told him and Richie Simms. I saw those two.
9 Then a bunch of firemen, but those guys were officers,
10 so, I kind of gave them a heads up.

11 MR. JONES: At this point, after you said you
12 saw the first crew member, or what you perceived to be
13 was a crew member.

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: Right.

15 MR. JONES: Did they stick around that area
16 or --

17 LIEUTENANT LANE: He was there for a few
18 minutes, and then I don't know, then I passed, I passed
19 that part with the first DOA was.

20 MR. JONES: Right.

21 LIEUTENANT LANE: I passed him and then I
22 didn't look back, so I don't know.

23 MR. JONES: Okay.

24 LIEUTENANT LANE: I don't what he did. I
25 didn't really, couldn't tell you if I noticed any crew

1 members, although, no, I did see a few crew members on
2 the bottom level, what they were doing, I don't know.
3 But, there was some crew members there.

4 MR. JONES: Prior or during? Prior to the
5 accident or during?

6 LIEUTENANT LANE: Prior to the accident, I
7 don't know, I was on the upper level.

8 MR. JONES: Yeah. Okay.

9 LIEUTENANT LANE: When I got down there, there
10 was a couple.

11 MR. JONES: Okay.

12 LIEUTENANT LANE: There was an off duty PD
13 guy, he pulled his shield out. Like I said, the black
14 cop, the young white guy cop, on duty guys. And after
15 that there wasn't a whole lot of people down there. A
16 couple of construction guys stayed and helped their
17 friends.

18 MR. JONES: Yes. So, for the 20 minutes that
19 you estimate that it took to get back to the dock,
20 besides yourself, and passengers or friends that were
21 helping the injured.

22 LIEUTENANT LANE: Right.

23 MR. JONES: Any other crew members coming down
24 there to, that you could --

25 LIEUTENANT LANE: Like I said, once I passed

1 that first guy with the white shirt, I did see a
2 couple, but I don't know what they were doing, because
3 I was just making, like making a survey and seeing what
4 was going on, and myself and my friend, Major Shanahan,
5 we kind of stuck together.

6 MR. JONES: Okay. You said you saw the guys on
7 the tug.

8 LIEUTENANT LANE: Yes.

9 MR. JONES: Do you know how they got that line
10 onboard, did any of you, guys, help them or --

11 LIEUTENANT LANE: When I saw them, when I was
12 speaking to them, they didn't have a line. They just,
13 they just nosed up to the side of the boat.

14 MR. JONES: And pushed.

15 LIEUTENANT LANE: And pushed a little bit,
16 really they bumped and I didn't realize what they were
17 doing. I don't know if they were trying to push us or
18 they just bumped up, you know, very gently.

19 MR. JONES: Yeah.

20 LIEUTENANT LANE: And then I asked a question,
21 they couldn't help me, so I went back to what I was
22 doing.

23 MR. JONES: Okay.

24 LIEUTENANT LANE: So I don't know if they were
25 the actual tug that pushed us in.

1 MR. JONES: Yes. I think so.

2 LIEUTENANT LANE: I don't know. I think it
3 was blue. I couldn't tell you.

4 MR. JONES: Okay. Okay. That is all I have
5 right now. Richard?

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Richard Gonzalez.

7 When you came down to the first deck, and
8 which side, which ladders did you come down?

9 LIEUTENANT LANE: I came down the Manhattan
10 side. The rear of the boat.

11 MR. GONZALEZ: The undamaged area.

12 LIEUTENANT LANE: Well, if this were the boat,
13 I was over here, that is Staten Island. I came down
14 these stairs, and it was damage. The front one were
15 creased.

16 MR. GONZALEZ: Where in relation to the vessel
17 did you see that crew member with the white shirt?

18 LIEUTENANT LANE: Like I said, I was here, I
19 came down these stairs, this is mid point, he was like
20 roughly here.

21 MR. GONZALEZ: Roughly mid point.

22 LIEUTENANT LANE: Between me and the first
23 casualty.

24 MR. GONZALEZ: And --

25 LIEUTENANT LANE: Probably two thirds of the

1 way from the front of the boat.

2 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay.

3 LIEUTENANT LANE: I would estimate two thirds.

4 MR. GONZALEZ: On the damaged side.

5 LIEUTENANT LANE: On the damaged side, yes.

6 MR. GONZALEZ: Okay. That is all.

7 MR. CALDERONE: Chief Calderone. Jim, one of
8 the things we are trying to pinpoint is the location of
9 the deceased, those that were killed immediately.

10 LIEUTENANT LANE: Okay.

11 MR. CALDERONE: We have a diagram showing six
12 of them. This was the end of the tear and this guy was
13 up against the wall.

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: Okay. Right. That was the
15 first one that I had seen.

16 MR. CALDERONE: Okay.

17 LIEUTENANT LANE: I came down here, there was
18 a black gentleman, like if this is mid point, roughly
19 the stairs, I guess were here, well, anyway, this is
20 the, I don't know what you call it, engineering room,
21 whatever.

22 MR. CALDERONE: Right.

23 LIEUTENANT LANE: The first black gentleman
24 was here, but he didn't look like he was damaged, I
25 looked at a picture, I mean, he looked he was going out

1 of the picture. I looked at the, I didn't see him.
2 But, here -- Actually and over here was a construction
3 worker, and I don't know what happened to him. I think
4 he might have been the Frank Sullivan, because there
5 was a friend of friend, that is the only reason I know
6 the name.

7 MR. CALDERONE: Okay.

8 LIEUTENANT LANE: But, the definite DOAs were
9 this guy, and there were four here, and there was one
10 up here.

11 MR. CALDERONE: A male?

12 LIEUTENANT LANE: I believe so, yes.

13 MR. CALDERONE: What kind of injuries do you
14 remember?

15 LIEUTENANT LANE: I couldn't see, because that
16 is the one I couldn't get to. We started digging and
17 it was just too much debris and that is what I told
18 Bobby, Bobby Nola and those guys, I think actually, was
19 the Captain over there, Grasseanna(ph)?

20 MR. CALDERONE: Grasseanna.

21 LIEUTENANT LANE: I think he was the one guy
22 who started working over there with tools.

23 MR. JONES: Would this help at all, doing it
24 on here? Actually we can stop the interview just for a
25 second. We are going to do the drawing for the

1 deceased.

2 (Off the record.)

3 MR. JONES: Continuing the interview with Mr.
4 Lane.

5 MR. CALDERONE: You were on the third level,
6 on the same, on same level where the door to the pilot
7 house goes. Did you happen to see anybody come out of
8 that door?

9 LIEUTENANT LANE: I did not see, no. I was
10 sitting, I could probably roughly say, these seats
11 right here.

12 MR. CALDERONE: Okay. That is the only thing.
13 That is the only other question I had.

14 LIEUTENANT LANE: I didn't know, I couldn't
15 even tell you where the door to the pilot house was. I
16 wouldn't even, you know, have no way of knowing.

17 MR. CALDERONE: Okay.

18 MR. JONES: But, you did come down the main
19 stairwell.

20 LIEUTENANT LANE: I came down the rear stairs,
21 the main stairs, second level clean, third level,
22 bottom level is where all the damage was.

23 MR. JONES: Did you hear, after the crash, any
24 announcements at all?

25 LIEUTENANT LANE: There was some blurb, but I

1 couldn't decipher what it was saying.

2 MR. JONES: You were down the lower level at
3 that time?

4 LIEUTENANT LANE: I couldn't actually say
5 where I was, but I did hear something, it was
6 unintelligible and that was it. Just like a two, three
7 second bing, and that was it. That is the only --

8 MR. JONES: Okay. Okay. Any more, Jack?

9 MR. CALDERONE: No. That is all I have.

10 MR. JONES: All right, I am going to stop the
11 tape.

12 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)