

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

SINKING OF THE FISHING VESSEL *

JEANETTE OFF THE COAST OF PAGO PAGO * Accident No.: DCA19FM010

DECEMBER 5, 2018 *

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Interview of: ALVIN RAMORES
Crew Member

Monday,
December 10, 2018

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED], Supervisor, Marine Safety Detachment
American Samoa United States Coast Guard

FRANK THOMSEN, Assistant Supervisor, Marine Safety
Detachment
American Samoa United States Coast Guard

DAVID FLAHERTY, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

WARD GRASSEL
Hull & Machinery Underwriters

ROY HALL, JR.
P&I

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:36 a.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah, he's on.

4 David, you're there, right?

5 MR. FLAHERTY: Yeah, I'm still here.

6 LT [REDACTED]: All right. So we have here Mr. Alvin Ramores.
7 Alvin is a -- what's your position on board?

8 MR. RAMORES: I was working on engine and also the carpenter
9 for the boat.

10 LT [REDACTED]: Engine and carpenter --

11 MR. RAMORES: Yeah.

12 LT [REDACTED]: -- on board.

13 We're going to be doing an interview today with you
14 concerning the fire on board the fishing vessel *Jeanette*. I'm
15 Lieutenant [REDACTED], MSD, American Samoa Coast Guard
16 supervisor. And we have here Mr. Frank Thomsen, assistant
17 supervisor, MSD American Samoa U.S. Coast Guard. Over here we
18 have Mr. Ward Grassel; he's representing the underwriters of the
19 vessel. And then on the phone we have Mr. David Flaherty of the
20 NTSB.

21 We're going to be doing an interview with you today. Today
22 is -- time is 10:36 a.m., December 10th, 2018.

INTERVIEW OF ALVIN RAMORES

23
24 BY LT [REDACTED]:

25 Q. I'd like you to start from the beginning, like Mr. Thomsen

1 said, when you wake up. Go through your day nice and slow. Any
2 times you remember, be sure to mention those. And just go through
3 the day, don't leave any details out, and at the end we're going
4 to ask you some follow-up questions.

5 During this interview, a man named Roy Hall, Jr.'s going to
6 come and sit down here, probably ask you some questions also.
7 He's on the phone right now.

8 But anyway, yeah, go ahead and get started if you don't mind.
9 Take your time.

10 A. So, sir, that day the fire happened, I came from the house
11 and I arrived at the boat around -- before 7 o'clock in the
12 morning. Then I changed my clothes to go to work. So I take a
13 little bit, I ate a little bit on the galley for breakfast. Then
14 at around before 7:30, I go down and check what I'm going to do on
15 the -- down below.

16 So I clean out some mess, take the rubbish to the drums, and
17 then at around -- I see Ronaldo working on a pipe, so I help him.
18 Maybe around 8 or 8:30, I help him with his job, changing small
19 pipe for the air pressure going to the sanitary. So we work on
20 that one on the wet deck. And I see the guys working, Anthony on
21 the welding and Michael Batralo on the welding too, and cutting
22 something. And I see, I think, Tinifu and some guys are working
23 too, because we're busy. I don't know who. I think Armando and
24 -- I just see they pass by, because some guys are working so pass
25 by on the wet deck.

1 And then, so we're working on the pipe, me and Ronaldo, so
2 we're busy. And after around 11, past 11, it's break time, so we
3 go -- I go up and go to my room to change my clothes. So I'm
4 going to wait for the bell for lunch break, when I heard a smoke
5 alarm, a smoke detector is alarming. I heard that one, and was
6 almost, I think, 11:30 when I heard the alarm and I heard Vincent
7 shouting at the hallway.

8 So I go out and run towards Vincent. I saw them in front of
9 the storage room with the cook, Ruel Lopez, to open the door for
10 the storage room. So when they open, I was there and see the box
11 of paper towels burning, and beside them was sacks of charcoal.
12 So -- but they already bring a fire extinguisher.

13 I ran -- I see them stop the, they try to stop the fire by
14 the fire extinguisher. I ran towards going to the wet deck and to
15 get my own fire extinguisher. When I go up on the stern door for
16 the hallway, there's already a lot of smoke. I see some guys
17 running. I see Vincent, who said to me the smoke is so -- there's
18 a lot of smoke, cannot breathe, so he go run outside. So I still
19 go to, try to go close to the storage room because I bring my fire
20 extinguisher.

21 MR. THOMSEN: From the stern, right?

22 MR. RAMORES: From the stern, the door on the hallway. So I
23 try to go close, but the smoke's -- I can't breathe, too. So I
24 try to go outside again. I see the fire hose. I dropped the fire
25 extinguisher, because I remember when I was in the Philippines for

1 (indiscernible), the fire hose, when you have water and your nose
2 close to the water, you can breathe.

3 So I tried to -- I shout for the open the water, but the
4 smoke is too much. There's still no water coming out. So I ran
5 outside. I see -- before I run outside, I see one guy. I pulled
6 that guy, I told him -- I think it was Remy, Remy Mendadel (ph.).
7 I told him let's go out because cannot breathe, maybe something
8 happen to us.

9 So then when we go outside, I see all the crew trying to get
10 the fire hose, everything. Ronaldo get the one with the oxygen,
11 the mask with the oxygen. And I run -- I go down, I get the gas
12 mask so maybe I can go inside again so we can try to stop the fire
13 in the storage room. But it's too much, the smoke, and it's too
14 dark already. So I go out, and I heard Vincent calling the 911.
15 All the people are busy, we're trying to stop the fire.

16 And later on, we try to go inside, me, Ronaldo, and Michael
17 Batralo, and the fireman came, but they don't have a fire suit.
18 He give me the nozzle for the hose, so I was the one trying to go
19 inside but the smoke's too hard. And I remember he's the fireman,
20 why I'm the one he's pushing me to go inside the hallway. So I
21 drop the hose because I cannot breathe, but he's the one -- a big
22 guy, pushing me to go inside, to go inside. So I drop the hose,
23 and I think Ronaldo grab it again because the fireman don't grab
24 the hose, just pushing us to go inside.

25 So I go out, I go to the speed boat deck, maybe -- I tried to

1 go to the bow. Maybe if I close the door, I think if I close the
2 door because there's not too much air go inside, maybe we can
3 control the fire. So I try to go to the bow, but lot of smoke
4 already coming up from the pilothouse.

5 So I go down again, and the security -- I saw the security.
6 They try to tell us to go up, go up away from the boat. So we go
7 out and they try to push us to go to the gate for the main deck.
8 That's when I -- they just push us. They don't want us to go back
9 to the boat. Because we were trying to go back to help because we
10 see some other crew, they're still there on the boat and try. So
11 we try to go back to help, but security and the police, they tell
12 us to -- push and go outside the main deck.

13 BY MR. THOMSEN:

14 Q. The fire department, when they were there and -- before you
15 left, did the airport fire personnel get there yet?

16 A. No, not yet. I think maybe 1 hour before they come. Because
17 we were outside the main deck. We go the other side so maybe we
18 can go on the front again because we want to help. So -- but
19 there's still a lot of security on the other side, so we're just
20 on the bench. We just watching what is happening. And I think
21 it's almost 1 hour or 1 hour past when we saw the airport firemen.
22 They already have a suit. Because the firemen in Panato (ph.),
23 no, they don't have anything, only the hose. So it's been a long
24 time before the one with the fire suit came.

25 Q. So from the time that you were told to leave, and from the

1 time that ARFF showed up, how long was the local fire department
2 fighting the fight before airport showed up, after you guys were
3 told to leave?

4 A. I think it's maybe 1 hour, or before 1 hour, like that.

5 Q. So for nearly an hour, it was just the local fire department?

6 A. Yeah, yeah, on the -- from Panato one, that's the only -- and
7 I remember, he gave me the nozzle and he was pushing me, go
8 inside.

9 Q. This was when you were with Ronaldo and Michael?

10 A. Ronaldo and Michael Batralo.

11 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

12 Q. Who is Ronaldo? Is Ronaldo Remy?

13 A. No. Because he make a trip, last trip before -- the trip
14 that was before --

15 Q. Oh, okay. So he's not on this crew?

16 A. He's not. So, he's working because he's going to go back.

17 Q. What's his position, Ronaldo?

18 A. He's the electrician.

19 Q. Electrician.

20 A. Yeah.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

22 BY LT [REDACTED]:

23 Q. When you went to your room, you changed --

24 A. I going to change my -- I changing my clothes.

25 Q. You changed your clothes. No problem, right?

- 1 A. Yeah. No, no problem.
- 2 Q. No problem. All right. So you finished changing?
- 3 A. Then I heard the --
- 4 Q. Alarm.
- 5 A. -- the alarm.
- 6 Q. After you changed completely?
- 7 A. Yeah, my clothes.
- 8 Q. So then you leave your room?
- 9 A. My room, because --
- 10 Q. Can you show me where your room is?
- 11 A. Beside the navigator's room.
- 12 Q. Beside the navigator. Let me write that down. Do you have a
- 13 roommate?
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 Q. Who is it?
- 16 A. Michael Batralo and Nick, a Portuguese guy. But he's in --
- 17 Q. Michael Batralo, and then what?
- 18 A. Nick Martins. Oh, no, no, no. The brother of the deck boss.
- 19 Not the Martin --
- 20 Q. Not on here. Over here. This one?
- 21 A. Yeah, yeah, Nicholas (ph.).
- 22 Q. Were they there, or you --
- 23 A. Nicholas is in Madeira.
- 24 Q. Nicholas -- he was in the room with you?
- 25 A. Yeah, he was in the room, but is not on -- that day, he

1 already --

2 Q. When you were changing, were you in the room by yourself?

3 A. Yeah, yeah.

4 Q. Okay. That's what I'm asking you. And then after you
5 changed, you heard the alarm in your room?

6 A. Um-hum.

7 Q. You heard the alarm go when you were still in your room?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. You left your room and then you went to see the cook?

10 A. No. I heard --

11 Q. The cook and --

12 A. Yeah, I see --

13 Q. Heard the alarm and --

14 A. -- Vincent is shouting. He's shouting "What's that? What's
15 that?" I heard. So I already think something's wrong outside
16 because I heard the alarm.

17 Q. You saw Ruel and Vincent?

18 A. Yeah, on the storage room.

19 Q. They were already -- the door was already open?

20 A. No, no, no. Not yet. When I came, Ruel is just --

21 Q. They were unlocking?

22 A. Yeah, unlocking the door. And when he opened, I was there.

23 I saw the fire, the box of paper towels and besides are the
24 charcoal. So when they opened, the fire like this.

25 Q. The fire was just on the paper towels?

1 A. Yeah, paper towels and charcoal.

2 Q. Oh, the charcoal was burning too?

3 A. I think, I think because it's beside the --

4 Q. Paper towels?

5 A. -- beside the paper towels.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Maybe the paper on the outside, the
7 actual (indiscernible) --

8 MR. RAMORES: Yeah, outside box.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- saw some of that burning?

10 MR. RAMORES: Yeah, just the outside box.

11 BY LT [REDACTED]:

12 Q. Was that charcoal in the bags? Is it like the stuff you see
13 in the store where it's --

14 A. The charcoal, it has a cover of plastic, so --

15 Q. Oh, okay. So it was several bags and --

16 A. Yeah, yeah.

17 Q. -- they were wrapped together in plastic?

18 A. Yeah.

19 LT [REDACTED]: Okay.

20 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

21 Q. Was it the, you know, the kind -- I think what he means is,
22 you know the paper bags of charcoal?

23 A. No, the paper bags are in a box --

24 Q. And then you have the plastic after --

25 A. -- big boxes. Then the charcoals is in a paper sack but it's

1 wrapped with the -- when you buy that one, it's wrapped with a
2 plastic, like each of --

3 Q. About this size or a little smaller? Maybe half of that?

4 A. The charcoal?

5 Q. Yeah. Each bag.

6 A. Some are smaller and some are --

7 LT [REDACTED]: Bigger?

8 MR. RAMORES: Bigger.

9 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

10 Q. All in bags, right?

11 A. Yeah, they were, you know --

12 Q. Not the loose one in the big burlap sack?

13 A. No, no.

14 Q. Okay.

15 MR. THOMSEN: The charcoal, do you know what type it is?

16 Whether it was already presoaked with fuel? You know the ones
17 they sell, all you got to do is put a match to it, it lights up?

18 MR. RAMORES: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

19 LT [REDACTED]: Do you know the brand? Is it Kingsford or do
20 you know --

21 MR. RAMORES: Kingsford, the blue and white, the --

22 LT [REDACTED]: Blue and white. Yeah, it's Kingsford. And
23 that's what they always have on the island. That's what I ever
24 see.

25 MR. RAMORES: Yeah, that's what they have.

1 MR. THOMSEN: So it's not -- is it the one that's presoaked
2 with the fuel or no?

3 MR. RAMORES: No, no.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You have to use a fluid or something
5 to get it started?

6 MR. RAMORES: Yeah, yeah.

7 LT [REDACTED]: I haven't seen any presoaked ones on this
8 island.

9 MR. THOMSEN: I get it from the PX, and it costs you less.

10 LT [REDACTED]: I get it from there too. They're presoaked?

11 MR. THOMSEN: They're presoaked.

12 LT [REDACTED]: Oh, okay.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You guys get good stuff that nobody
14 else gets out here.

15 BY MR. THOMSEN:

16 Q. Was the lighter fuel, the charcoal lighter fuel, was that
17 also inside the dry store, do you know?

18 A. I don't know because the cook's the one that's putting the
19 stuff. We just bring it up there. I don't know if he put it over
20 there.

21 Q. I only got two questions. Do you guys know the location of
22 the SCBA?

23 A. SCBA, the one -- fire extinguisher?

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. Yeah, it's close to the dry stuff, where the other is.

1 Q. Okay. Where's the other one?

2 A. The oxygen is on the hallway, before the hallway, another
3 oxygen with a tank. That's the one we grab.

4 Q. Can you point out here, where you know the SCBAs are?

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All the fire extinguishers
6 (indiscernible)

7 MR. RAMORES: Over here.

8 BY MR. THOMSEN:

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And something -- the oxygen with the masks are here.

11 Q. When you first come in from the aft deck.

12 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's over here.

13 MR. FLAHERTY: I'm sorry. Where is he pointing to?

14 LT [REDACTED]: He's pointing at the portside entrance. It's
15 the main entrance, the quarter of the aft part of the vessel.

16 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay.

17 MR. RAMORES: Yeah. There's a box with oxygen. That's what
18 we grab. But the one on the --

19 MR. THOMSEN: Next to the dry store?

20 MR. RAMORES: -- next to that, the smoke is too -- we think
21 of that one, but the smoke was --

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's only one of each one?

23 MR. RAMORES: Um-hum. Yeah.

24 MR. THOMSEN: Is there any other SCBA that you know of?

25 MR. RAMORES: I don't -- that's the only thing I know.

1 BY MR. THOMSEN:

2 Q. Have you heard of an SCBA at the pilothouse?

3 A. No, I don't -- because during our fire drill, we always use
4 this one and this one.

5 Q. One follow-up question. When they were fighting the fire,
6 the cloud, the smoke that -- when you guys were spraying the fire
7 extinguisher in there, everyone was saying that, you know, it's
8 big smoke.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Do you smell it as smoke or do you smell it with like the dry
11 powder? You know when you --

12 A. Smell as the smoke. Because it's so dark and is different --
13 the smoke's very hard to breathe --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But what did it smell like? Did it
15 smell like gasoline?

16 MR. RAMORES: No, no, it smell --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did it smell like a burning fire --
18 leaves, or wood, or what?

19 MR. RAMORES: Burning like plastic, like that. You know,
20 plastic.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: A plastic smell.

22 MR. RAMORES: Because I think it's the insulation. That's
23 what -- because it's an old boat, so I think the insulation.
24 Because when I see the fire, almost it's the --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What color? What color was the smoke?

1 Was it gray or brown or really --

2 MR. RAMORES: Black. Black.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's already black?

4 MR. RAMORES: Very black.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the beginning?

6 MR. RAMORES: We cannot see. Too dark. That's why I see
7 Remy when I was going to the -- I told him let's go out because
8 too dark already. So I -- we go out, then we try to come in, go
9 out and try to come in.

10 LT [REDACTED]: Do you guys have any more questions?

11 David, do you have anything else?

12 MR. FLAHERTY: No. Actually, the questions you guys are
13 doing are spot on, but -- no, I don't have any follow-up
14 questions.

15 LT [REDACTED]: Frank?

16 MR. THOMSEN: Nope. Pretty much got a good story, picture of
17 the story.

18 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah.

19 Thank you, Alvin, for coming in.

20 MR. RAMORES: You're welcome.

21 LT [REDACTED]: We're going to stop the recording.

22 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: SINKING OF THE FISHING VESSEL
 JEANETTE OFF THE COAST OF PAGO PAGO
 December 5, 2018
 Interview of Alvin Ramores

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19FM010

PLACE:

DATE: December 10, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Transcriber