

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: NELSON EBORA
Assistant Engineer

Friday,
December 7, 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

ROY HALL, JR.
P&I

WARD GRASSEL
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I N T E R V I E W

(11:50 a.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED]: Nelson, I'm going to record this conversation.
4 So we have here Mr. Nelson Ebor. Your position is assistant
5 engineer; is that correct?

6 MR. EBORA: Yes.

7 LT [REDACTED]: On board the fishing vessel *Jeanette*. My name
8 is Lieutenant [REDACTED]. We have Frank Thomsen, Mr. Roy Hall
9 Jr., here as a PII. Over there we have Ward Grassel, also PII.
10 And on the phone we have Mr. David Flaherty with the NTSB.

11 MR. FLAHERTY: Hello.

12 LT [REDACTED]: The time is 11:50, December 7, 2018.

INTERVIEW OF NELSON EBORA

13
14 BY LT [REDACTED]:

15 Q. Mr. Nelson, can you please go over everything that you can
16 remember, starting from the beginning, of what happened? Just go
17 nice and slow. Tell the story, everything, all the details you
18 can think of. Take your time, and at the end, we'll ask some --
19 just some follow-up questions. Just be honest and truthful so we
20 can figure out more about the story.

21 A. That day, it was Wednesday, I guess -- Wednesday?

22 Q. Yeah, Wednesday.

23 A. When the fire happened. At 7'o clock, I already start my
24 daily roving. I go around, check all the places. Then I started
25 working with hot walls at the auxiliary engine. That's our number

1 -- that's our starboard generator. So from time to time, every
2 time I went to go some parts of the bow and I have a chance, I am
3 also going to walk around and visit what the welders have been
4 doing, the other guys been doing, because at that time the chief
5 left me the list that I need to check off if it's done or not. So
6 I always try to keep those records updated.

7 And around 11-something, 11 to 11:30, Mike told me that
8 there's smoke coming out of the hallway. So when I came up, I saw
9 the smoke is really heavy and all the guys is already coming out.
10 We tried to set up a fire hose, fire extinguisher, and we couldn't
11 do anything, so that's the time we called 911 to get some help.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How did you find out about it? Who
13 told you? Or did you hear an alarm? What was your first
14 indication of a fire?

15 MR. EBORA: Mike told me that there's smoke at the hallway.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mike, the --

17 MR. EBORA: Mike, the welder.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The welder?

19 MR. EBORA: Yeah, Mike, the welder. He informed me about the
20 smoke --

21 BY LT [REDACTED]:

22 Q. Michael Batralo?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Told you that there was smoke?

25 A. Yeah, there is smoke over there.

1 Q. And what were your actions after you were informed of the
2 smoke in the hallway?

3 A. So I immediately run towards the -- to go to the hallway and
4 check what the situation is, and I see that the guys already
5 coming out, the smoke's rushing out. So the only thing we can do
6 is to set up something, like, at the fire hose. That's the thing
7 that we did when I came, because we really cannot go inside
8 anymore.

9 Q. Where did you set up the fire hose?

10 A. There is a fire hose cabinet before the entrance.

11 Q. At the stern of the vessel or at the bow?

12 A. At the vessel, at the top of the vessel, the net deck.

13 Q. On net deck.

14 A. Net deck.

15 Q. So behind the pilothouse?

16 MR. FLAHERTY: Sir?

17 MR. EBORA: The next deck, lower to the front to the
18 pilothouse.

19 MR. FLAHERTY: By chance, do you know if the fire hose had
20 water to it? Was the water turned on to the fire hose?

21 MR. EBORA: Yes, because the fire pump is always running
22 every day.

23 BY LT [REDACTED]:

24 Q. But was the hose hard, or was it --

25 A. It's hard. It's hard.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. FLAHERTY: And did you or any other crew members take the
3 hose and start spraying it on to the area of the fire?

4 MR. EBORA: I'm not sure if they are spraying at the area of
5 the fire because the smoke is rushing, coming out on the hallway.
6 So the only thing I saw is they are doing what they could so that
7 they can hit the fire at least. I don't know.

8 BY MR. THOMSEN:

9 Q. Where were they positioned at?

10 A. At the -- by the entrance.

11 Q. Outside? Main deck outside?

12 A. No. It's already inside. We have two entrances. There's a
13 first entrance that goes down to the engine room and the second
14 entrance goes to the hallway. They're on the middle of that two
15 entrances.

16 Q. So they were inside?

17 A. Yeah. Little bit inside.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You guys have got that little cuddy
19 when you first walk in, right?

20 MR. EBORA: Yeah.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You either go down the stairs, get
22 down to the wet?

23 MR. EBORA: Yes, yes. They were there.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Or you can go through one more door
25 and into the passageway into the (indiscernible) --

1 MR. EBORA: Yes.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- correct?

3 MR. EBORA: Yes.

4 MR. FLAHERTY: I'm sorry, just one more question. Sir, did
5 you ever see flames? I know you said you saw smoke, but did you
6 ever see the actual fire?

7 MR. EBORA: No, sir.

8 BY MR. THOMSEN:

9 Q. Never saw fire?

10 A. Never saw fire.

11 Q. So you said they entered inside the corridor?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. So were they at the area where it branches off into two
14 corridors?

15 A. I don't know if they can reach on that part of the hallway,
16 but I know they are somewhere inside that first -- second, second
17 door. Because I was helping at the fire hose assisting them when
18 they came.

19 Q. And how many fire hoses that were charged? How many teams?

20 A. We have one fire hose cabinet and we also use our deck
21 cleaning hose. It's also connected to our fire pump. So
22 basically, we have two hose at the time.

23 Q. And where was the other fire hose -- where was the other
24 group entering from?

25 A. It's on the same way, same --

1 Q. So two fire hoses in that same corridor?

2 A. Same corridor.

3 Q. Just a question on the dry goods, you know, the storeroom?

4 A. Um-hum.

5 Q. What's inside of that storeroom?

6 A. It's basically canned goods, toilet paper, soap, dishwashing
7 soap and laundry soaps, and some condiments that the cook use for
8 cooking.

9 Q. Anything on the deck?

10 A. On the deck, I'm not sure because the cook has the control on
11 the key, so we don't know what's -- I don't know what's the status
12 in the room that time.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who would know the contents of that
14 best, the cook?

15 MR. EBORA: Yeah, it's the cook.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's one of the cook's storage
17 areas?

18 MR. EBORA: Yes. He's the one who possess the key.

19 BY MR. THOMSEN:

20 Q. Nelson, when you were doing your rounds and checking on the
21 welders, did you see anybody up above on the main deck, you know,
22 where the dry goods is? Was anybody there as a fire watch?

23 A. Didn't go there.

24 Q. Huh?

25 A. At that time I didn't go there because I was working at the

1 generator. So from time to time, I pass by the wet deck so I can
2 see the welders are doing their job and check what's going on,
3 then I go back to my job. So I didn't know if there's anybody up
4 there.

5 Q. Do you give the work schedule for your crew?

6 A. Basically, I'm just -- those job list is Chief Jonathan's
7 job's list. So when he's at the boat, he's the one in charge,
8 disseminating the jobs, including me. If he just go home or go
9 for a vacation, he left the job -- the list to me, and make sure
10 that everything was done. All the instruction was given, like the
11 wet -- what happened to the wet deck, the instruction was given to
12 the welders beforehand by Chief Jonathan. And that's -- then I
13 check -- when I look, every time he go, I check if it's done.

14 BY MR. FLAHERTY:

15 Q. Sir, do you know what specifically was the work that they
16 were supposed to do in there, do you know?

17 A. Yes, sir. Basically, the job is to crop and patch as
18 necessary, because it's a wet deck, it's mostly holes. It's
19 cropping and patching as necessary.

20 Q. Were they filling in the holes or are they putting on
21 doublers?

22 A. If it is really big, they can crop it and put a piece on the
23 cropped area. If it's like a small hole, they just can put patch
24 on it.

25 Q. Okay. So is it in your opinion, like, so I can better

1 understand, was it an extensive amount of work, a fair amount of
2 work? Did they have to replace like -- was 50 percent of the
3 overhead needed work on it, or how would you describe the amount
4 of work that was required?

5 A. I am not sure of the entire scope of the job because the deck
6 guys are chipping the area. They try to chip the rust and the
7 paints so that they can see if the parts needed to be replaced or
8 needed to be patched.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. So when they see a hole, that's the time they make the
11 decision.

12 BY MR. THOMSEN:

13 Q. Do you know Tinifu? Tinifu?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. What was he doing that day, on Wednesday?

16 A. The last time I saw them, they are working together with the
17 welder. I know he's the watchman of our welders.

18 Q. Was he chipping that day?

19 A. Chipping, once in a while, I saw.

20 Q. You saw him chipping on Wednesday?

21 A. Yeah. Chip a little bit, then check, coordinate with Mike.

22 Q. So he was the fire watch and also the paint chipper down on
23 the wet deck?

24 A. That's right. That's right.

25 Q. Was he told to do that job?

1 A. I don't know who told him to do that job. But when the chief
2 go home, that's the time I saw he's working with Mike. Because I
3 didn't -- Chief Jonathan is the one who told our welders to do
4 that, and I don't who assigned for on that job.

5 LT [REDACTED]: Does T work for you?

6 MR. EBORA: If I see something wrong at the wet deck, I can
7 stop him or -- but I don't delegate him to another job because
8 he's a deck guy.

9 LT [REDACTED]: Was he working for you on Wednesday when he
10 was watching the welders?

11 MR. EBORA: No, no, no. I was working at the engine room.

12 MR. FLAHERTY: So, sir, after you saw the fire and they
13 charged the hose, what happened after that until you were off the
14 vessel? If you could just kind of go through that, what occurred?

15 MR. EBORA: What occurred when we were off the vessel?

16 BY MR. HALL:

17 Q. No, no. Take it from the -- I think what he wants is, from
18 the point where you saw the two fire hoses and the smoke pouring
19 out, what happened after that?

20 A. After that? Okay.

21 Q. The airport fire department wasn't there yet, right?

22 A. Yeah. We tried to extinguish the smoke --

23 Q. So you're still trying to put out the fire --

24 A. -- trying to put the fire until the --

25 Q. -- with initial fire department.

1 A. Yeah, till the fire department came.

2 Q. Okay. Tell us from there what happened.

3 A. Yes. Then when the fire department came, they responded to
4 the fire. They bring big hoses, trying to fight the smoke,
5 because I didn't see a fire.

6 Q. That was the regular fire department, correct?

7 A. Yeah. And one of our guys, I think, is still there, Mike,
8 trying to help them figure out what to do. I don't know. So
9 after that, I called Chief Jonathan about our situation at hand,
10 and I ask him what to do next with regard to situation. And told
11 me, shut all the power off at the topside area of the boat so that
12 nobody gets electrocuted. So I did that.

13 And the wet deck starts to flood in the port side, so I ask
14 -- we ask help from other boat to get portable pump to pump it
15 out, because I am scared that it will going to go inside the
16 engine room, it will create more problem. So we pump all the
17 water out at the wet deck at that time. That's what happened next
18 before they pull the boat out.

19 MR. FLAHERTY: So then at one point, everyone was told to get
20 off the boat; is that correct?

21 MR. EBORA: Yes.

22 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay.

23 BY LT [REDACTED]:

24 Q. Who told you that?

25 A. One of my -- one of the Filipino guys told me that we need to

1 come out because we are -- the fire is getting heavy at the top,
2 so we evacuate the area.

3 Q. Who told you? I'm sorry. Who told you that you need to
4 leave? Who?

5 A. Our Filipino guy, that --

6 Q. Your Filipino guy?

7 A. Yeah, because we were down below and we try to --

8 Q. Do you know his name or who it was?

9 A. I don't know his name.

10 Q. Just some random guy told you to leave?

11 A. Yeah, we were just -- we were panicking and I don't --

12 Q. Yeah. So someone came down and told you to leave?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. And you left?

15 A. It's getting -- the fire's getting heavy, and we got scared
16 and we all came out.

17 Q. Oh, okay.

18 MR. THOMSEN: On the port side, the hatch to the wet deck,
19 that was open, correct?

20 MR. EBORA: Yes.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What, the big unloading hatch?

22 MR. EBORA: Yeah. Yes, yes.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That was off?

24 MR. EBORA: Yes.

25 MR. THOMSEN: And the vessel left with that still off,

1 correct?

2 MR. EBORA: Yes.

3 MR. THOMSEN: Okay.

4 BY MR. FLAHERTY:

5 Q. Sir, is there anything else from what you recall that you
6 think we should know about the incident that happened and the
7 actions that you and the rest of the crew took?

8 A. That's everything I remember. I shut all the radar off
9 because the chief told me, so that nobody gets electrocuted. So I
10 shut the radar off and we did -- all the crew of the boat did
11 pumping out of the water from the wet deck.

12 Q. Was -- the fire department, when they responded, they put a
13 lot of water into the ship as well?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Do you know if -- was there any effort to de-water the
16 vessel while at the same time it was being -- the fire was being
17 fought?

18 A. Yes, at this time -- that's the time we are pumping the bilge
19 from the wet deck. We are trying to pump the water outside, that
20 the boat will not get more -- too much list while they are still
21 fighting at the top.

22 Q. How about internally, like within the bilge of the fishing
23 vessel?

24 A. Repeat the question again, please? I didn't understand.

25 Q. Internal -- the wet deck is out on -- I'm sorry. I haven't

1 seen the vessel, so I'm just trying to understand.

2 A. Okay.

3 Q. When you're talking about when you were pumping out the
4 vessel, was it the entire vessel or was it just a specific part of
5 the vessel?

6 A. It's only a specific part. It's just the port side of the
7 wet deck.

8 LT [REDACTED]: Port side of the wet deck.

9 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay.

10 MR. EBORA: Yes.

11 MR. HALL: Yeah, the lower engine room, the bilges down there
12 were still intact.

13 MR. EBORA: Yeah, still intact.

14 MR. HALL: There wasn't any water in the lower engine room.

15 MR. EBORA: Because I closed the -- I dogged off --

16 MR. HALL: My understanding is they closed the watertight
17 doors.

18 MR. EBORA: Yeah.

19 MR. HALL: But the wet deck, what they call the wet deck is
20 actually --

21 MR. EBORA: Fish deck.

22 MR. HALL: -- it's below the main, external deck where they
23 actually work the net and all. It's normally a watertight
24 compartment. It's pretty large --

25 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay.

1 MR. HALL: -- and all the fish well combings. So that --

2 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay. But it is separate from the bilges
3 which are located throughout the ship?

4 MR. HALL: Correct.

5 MR. FLAHERTY: Okay.

6 MR. HALL: They can be pumped independently. They typically
7 do have a lot of water sloshed around when they're working.

8 BY MR. THOMSEN:

9 Q. Did you activate the internal pump on the wet deck?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So that was pumping as well?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. I'm just going to ask a question. I know we asked this
14 question quite a bit, but -- for -- when there is a welding, how
15 many people are typically involved in the welding?

16 A. We have two welders and a assigned watchman.

17 Q. So there's always an assigned watchman?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. What is the job of that watchman?

20 A. To check up and down if that's necessary.

21 Q. Up and down?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. So they --

24 A. If there's a fire on the top, if there's a -- if the welding
25 is in the bottom, the watchman has to come up and down and check.

1 Q. Up and down. So that's the procedure for fire watches, to be
2 up and down?

3 A. Yes.

4 BY LT [REDACTED]:

5 Q. Is that written anywhere, or it's just --

6 A. Just verbal instruction from our chief and I reminded them of
7 the instruction.

8 Q. Is there anything else that they should be doing? I mean,
9 they're doing a fire watch, should they be doing anything else
10 other than a fire watch?

11 A. Yeah. They can help a little bit while they are doing the
12 watch.

13 Q. Like, should they be doing that?

14 A. Yeah, but close to the area that the welders are doing. They
15 cannot go far away.

16 BY MR. THOMSEN:

17 Q. I'm just going to ask this question: Why does a fire watch
18 go up and down?

19 A. If the welder's doing something on the bottom, watchman has
20 to go to the top and check if there something is wrong. Then up
21 and down to check if everything is okay down below.

22 Q. So when the welding is done, the fire watch is next to the
23 welder. And then once in a while, he goes up, is it what I take
24 it?

25 A. Yeah.

1 BY LT [REDACTED]:

2 Q. Who works for you? The entire engine room, oilers, everyone,
3 they all work for you, right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. When the chief's gone, you're the chief? When the
6 chief engineer is gone, you're the chief engineer?

7 A. Yeah, the in-charge person.

8 Q. And all the welding that takes place, are you in charge of
9 all the welding that takes place?

10 A. The supervision.

11 Q. Supervision of all the welding that takes place on board the
12 vessel when the chief engineer is gone? Okay.

13 A. Before they start on the job, I told them to -- I gave them
14 advice to be very cautious. Check from time to time.

15 Q. You told who that, the welders?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. But they're just going to be welding, but you want them to
18 check for things and weld?

19 A. Yeah. Also, well certain thing --

20 Q. You want them to be fire watch and weld, that's what you're
21 saying?

22 A. No, very cautious on like, on the job.

23 Q. Okay. You just told them to be cautious, and that was it?

24 A. Yeah, be cautious. Yes.

25 Q. All right.

1 A. Because I also need to finish up jobs that I am doing myself
2 (indiscernible) --

3 Q. You had your own stuff that you had -- your own work you had
4 to do?

5 A. Yes.

6 BY MR. THOMSEN:

7 Q. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, I understand there was
8 welding throughout those 3 days, correct?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And who was the fire watch for all those 3 days?

11 A. I think that's Tinifu.

12 LT [REDACTED]: Every day he was the fire watch, all day long?

13 MR. EBORA: Yes.

14 LT [REDACTED]: Morning until whenever you guys stopped?

15 MR. EBORA: Yes.

16 LT [REDACTED]: And what if he had to go to the bathroom or
17 something? Was there a different fire watch?

18 MR. EBORA: I don't know. I don't know relieve him, I don't
19 know.

20 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah.

21 BY MR. THOMSEN:

22 Q. When the welders, when they go for a break, when the guys go
23 for break, 9 to 9:30 -- the break is 30 minutes long, correct?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. So when the welders go for break, the fire watch, do they

1 also go to for break?

2 A. I didn't break -- I didn't took my break that time so I don't
3 know if he also took his break.

4 LT [REDACTED]: But typically --

5 MR. EBORA: Yes.

6 LT [REDACTED]: -- if the welders stop to take a break, then
7 the fire watch --

8 MR. EBORA: Normally everybody --

9 LT [REDACTED]: Everyone just leaves, right?

10 MR. EBORA: Everybody takes a break.

11 BY MR. THOMSEN:

12 Q. So there's nobody to do the fire watch during break?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. One more question. For the fire watch, is there like a
15 rotation? What I mean by that is, is there like a time they're
16 supposed to go up and check? So, like, every 15 minutes, every 30
17 minutes, they go up and check? Is there like a time frame that
18 you are aware of?

19 A. I'm not aware of the timetable of the watchman.

20 Q. So is it up to the watchman when to go up?

21 A. I know it's a instruction from the chief, so I don't know
22 what's the interval.

23 MR. THOMSEN: Nothing else.

24 LT [REDACTED]: I don't have anything else either.

25 David, you got any -- do you have any other questions?

1 MR. FLAHERTY: No, I think I'm fine right now with this.
2 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Do you guys -- okay.
3 All right. We're going to go ahead and stop the recording.
4 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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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 Nelson Ehora

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19FM010

PLACE:

DATE: December 7, 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 ✓