



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary – DCA22FM024

Interview of: Antonio Clay – Ordinary Seaman of *Karen Koby*
Date/Time: July 11, 2022 –0930 to 1128 CDT
Location: Jones Walker Office, 201 St. Charles Ave., New Orleans, LA
Interviewed by: CWO3 [REDACTED] – USCG, Adam Tucker – NTSB
Attendees: Alan Breaud – Breaud & Myers (representing Rigid Constructors interests), Jefferson Tillery – Jones Walker LLP (representing LA Carriers interests), Wayne Zeringue – Jones Walker LLP (representing LA Carriers interests), Tommy Plaisance - LA Carriers Operations Manager (Party in Interest), Jeffery Mizzi – Rigid Constructors (Party in Interest),
Accident: June 15, 2022, Capsizing and sinking of the e-crane barge *Ambition* in the Gulf of Mexico, about 18 nautical miles offshore of Freshwater Bayou, Louisiana (NTSB No. DCA22FM024).

This interview summary has been compiled based on Coast Guard and NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of Mr. Antonio Clay, deckhand of the *Karen Koby*.

- Mr. Clay has worked with LA Carriers for 4 years and 3 months in the capacity of ordinary seaman and performs the duties of a deckhand on the boat. His training and qualifications are in the line of rigging, towing, cooking, cleaning, chipping and painting and other daily chores. He was on the *Karen Koby* for over a month before the accident date.
- When asked if he had safety training with the company, Mr. Clay said they have safety training every other day and that it is frequent.
- When asked how often he is underway on towing vessels, Mr. Clay said quite a lot. He said he has about 4 years of experience working with barges.
- When asked how often he worked with crane barges, Mr. Clay said not too often, maybe about four in the past four years.
- When asked about the handling of crane barges versus deck barges, Mr. Clay said they handle differently because the weight capacity and the cargo on deck. It depends on the capacity of the barge compared to the weight of the crane and cargo. When asked if they are easier or more difficult to maneuver, Mr. Clay said they are about the same.
- When asked if the size of the crane affects the maneuverability of the barge when it is transiting, Mr. Clay said no it does not.
- When asked when he was first aware the *Karen Koby* would be handling the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said they picked up the barge on June 14th.
- When asked to recall the events of the day from when the *Karen Koby* picked up the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said he laid down at midnight after his watch and got up at 0530 for his shift on the 14th. They were still underway to the barge at that point. He

thought they arrived at the barge early afternoon of June 14th. He got off watch around noon and then slept for a couple of hours. When they arrived at the barge, they tied up to the barge, and then shut down the engines. They then got the bridles and stuff out to get ready for towing. They laid up the bridles at the bit on the barge. The barge crew came and tied down items and they then got underway down the river with the boat tied off to the barge. They stopped to regroup in the Lake Charles area.

- When asked how long they were underway before they had to regroup, Mr. Clay said 45 minutes if that. The *Karen Koby* then began to push the barge.
- When asked why they moved to push the barge, Mr. Clay said he heard on the radio there was a ship coming in and the *Karen Koby* was on the outside so they did not want to be in the way of the ship, so they faced up to the barge to push it to the fuel dock.
- When asked if they hit a waterway marker, Mr. Clay said he recalled they “grazed” the marker. The marker popped back up after it was hit. No one checked for damage.
- When they got the barge to the fuel dock, it took them a while to get in because there was a boat at the dock next to where they were to dock, and it was in the way. They had to back up and regroup. The tide was coming in and pushing the tow sideways.
- They finally tied up at the dock and the barge crew took on fuel and filled some ballast tanks.
- When asked to clarify who came to tie everything down, Mr. Clay said it was the crew for the barge. He saw four people but noted there might have been more.
- When asked if anyone from the *Karen Koby* was on the barge while it was being prepared, before they left for the fuel dock, Mr. Clay said no.
- Mr. Clay said one of his duties is to do barge inspections and make sure the tow is secured like it is supposed to be and to make sure the ropes are tied up. They also make sure everything is locked down and tight like it is supposed to be.
- When asked how many crew were on the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Clay said there were four. There was him, Terry Allen Scott, Jarrod Williams, and Chester Murphy.
- When asked of his responsibilities with respect to the barge, Mr. Clay said he had none.
- When asked if he was on the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said he was on when it was tied up to the fuel dock. When he was on the barge he walked around and did an inspection on the barge.
- When asked what his inspection of the barge entailed, Mr. Clay said it was an inspection of the hatches, the hatch covers, look for any dents and dings, rust, damage, and stuff like that.
- When asked when he did the barge inspection, Mr. Clay said he did while they were mooring up at stone fuel. When asked if anyone was with him at that time, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he recalled seeing any damage to the *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he recalled how many hatches there was on the barge, Mr. Clay said he did not know. He thought there were over 10 hatches.
- When asked if it was part of his responsibility to make sure each hatch had a hatch cover, Mr. Clay responded “correct”. When asked if each hatch had a hatch cover on the

Ambition, Mr. Clay said no, there were two without hatch covers. When referencing the schematic of the barge *Ambition* (below) Mr. Clay said it was missing a hatch cover on the most forward port side forward and the most aft on the port side.



- When asked if he had to ensure that the hatches were covered at the time he was on the *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said no, not at that time.
- When asked if he had to check the hatch covers to make sure they were secured, Mr. Clay said no, he had to verify they were there only.
- Mr. Clay said when they picked the barge up, all the hatches were open. When they got to the fuel dock Mr. Clay said he called the captain to let him know there were two lids missing. The captain called the barge crew back and they got on the barge, but they couldn't find the two lids. For one manhole the barge crew put a pump on top of it and the other manhole they put a piece of metal on top of it.
- When asked when the barge crew returned to place those items over the manholes, Mr. Clay said it was about 5 minutes after they left. They came right back, and they were still at the fuel dock at that time.
- Mr. Clay said the barge crew used a "trash pump" to cover one of the manholes. When asked if a trash pump is a dewatering pump, Mr. Clay said correct.
- When asked if the pump over the manhole was running or hooked up to anything, Mr. Clay said no, it was just sitting on top of the manhole.
- The other manhole had a piece of sheet metal laid over the top of it. Indicating on the schematic, Mr. Clay said number 4 had the sheet metal and number 5 had the pump on top. Mr. Clay said the stern port manhole cover that was missing the cover had the sheet metal over it and the froward manhole above the rake had the pump over the top of it.
- When asked how big he estimated the manholes to be, Mr. Clay said about 18 inches. When asked how big the sheet metal that was over the manhole cover was, Mr. Clay said it was about 3 to 4 feet and it did not cover the manhole cover entirely. The pump did not entirely cover the other manhole either.
- When asked about the pump that was covering the port side forward manhole, if it had a flat bottom or was open on legs, Mr. Clay said it was open on legs.

- When asked if he informed anyone related to the two missing hatch covers and how the manholes were covered, Mr. Clay said after letting go the barge from the dock and getting back on the boat, he let the captain know what was going on. At that time, the captain was looking back and double-checking things, but he did let the captain know.
- When asked of what items he recalled being on the deck of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said he recalled there was a round metal fuel tank, and there were another two tanks, and a man lift. In front of the man lift and strapped down was the basket. There were little totes and there were cement blocks of “pretty big size”. He thought there might have been four or five blocks. The cement blocks were across the deck. In addition to the blocks, there was a bunch of trash in bags. Behind the crane there was a Conex box which had gas and waste containers.
- The two fuel tanks were about midship port and starboard. One fuel tank was forward right behind a manhole cover that was used for ballast. The totes that were on the starboard side just forward of the crane. The cement blocks were just forward of the arm of the crane which looked to be evenly distributed on the deck. The trash bags and garbage were forward of the cement blocks, the Conex box was on the rake. There was a fuel cleanup kit on the starboard side beside where the Conex box was.
- When asked when he walked the barge what he saw secured, Mr. Clay said the only thing he saw that was secured was the bucket. There were a couple straps on the man lift but that was it. One fuel tank was strapped down.
- When asked if the cement blocks were strapped down, Mr. Clay said they weren’t strapped at all. He did not recall the thickness or the type of straps that he saw.
- When asked if any of the *Karen Koby* crew checked the barge for any type of water in the spaces, in the manhole covers, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked after they departed the fuel pier where the tow went, Mr. Clay said they went offshore.
- When asked of the picture taken of the *Ambition* from the *Karen Koby*, referencing the blue rail in the foreground (belonging to *Karen Koby*), when asked who took the picture, Mr. Clay said Jarrod did. It was taken on June 14th on the way to the fuel dock.



- When asked if the *Karen Koby* change positions any other times during the voyage, Mr. Clay said when they left the fuel dock, they swapped back around, and hooked the bridles up. They were faced up to the barge. Then they swapped back around, untied from the dock, and swapped around for a tow offshore.
- When asked to confirm how the tow was configured, Mr. Clay said they were faced up for the approach and mooring at the fuel dock. They swapped around and tied up at the hip of the barge. They got all the bridles ready. When they untied from the dock, they came off the dock, and swapped around for a stern tow to head offshore. Leaving the dock the tow was 2 to 3 feet, “not far”. More towline was let out when they got a little bit into the jetties and off the jetties, they let out some more tow line. After that more tow wire was let out. It took about an hour to two hours. The tow stayed at about 300 feet until they hit the gulf and they then let some more of the tow line out.

- When asked how a tow follows behind the boat, Mr. Clay said it normally follows straight. When asked of how the *Ambition* was following, Mr. Clay said it was following straight.
- When asked what time the boat got in the gulf with the *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said he was not sure on the time.
- When asked when his next watch change was, Mr. Clay said he got off around midnight. The tow was in the gulf at that time. When asked of what the shift change entails, Mr. Clay said that it entails letting the other guy know what is happening, and what work and chores he needs to do. He will also let him know the condition of the tow and if the seas had changed, which there was no change. At midnight, Mr. Clay was offgoing. The oncoming deckhand was Allan Terry Scott. Mr. Clay went to sleep shortly after he got off watch.
- When asked how they monitor the barge at night, Mr. Clay said they use the GPS system. He noted that you can also just turn around and look to see what the barge is doing. They would use the binoculars and the spotlight to see the barge. The spotlight does not light up the barge and can just be used to verify it was there. The barge had running lights on it. The running lights could be seen from the tug without the aid of binoculars.
- When asked if they would be able to see if the barge was listing at night, Mr. Clay said yes if they were using the binoculars. When asked if he saw the barge *Ambition* listing, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked when he next woke up, Mr. Clay said he was awakened by a knock on the door from Terry Scott. He looked at his watch and it was 0335. Mr. Scott opened the door and told him to get up because they had a problem with the barge and that it was listing. When asked of what he saw of the barge after getting up, Mr. Clay said by the time he got up to the wheelhouse, the barge had already gone over. When asked to confirm the next time he saw the barge, after getting off watch at midnight to the time he was awakened if the barge had already gone over, Mr. Clay said that was correct. By the time he got up and dressed and upstairs, the barge had already top sided.
- When asked if there was anything out of the ordinary as compared with past voyages with crane barges, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he had any idea as to what caused the barge to capsize, Mr. Clay said he didn't know.
- When asked about his watch schedule on the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Clay said his watch was from 0600 to noon and from 1800 to midnight.
- When asked who he works with on his watch, Mr. Clay said he normally works with the second captain, who is Chester Murphy.
- When asked of his hitch duration, Mr. Clay said it is 28 days on and 14 days off. At the time of the accident, he was a little over his 28-day hitch.
- When asked of what he saw after the barge rolled over, Mr. Clay said it stayed in one position. When it became daylight, he saw debris like ropes and trash floating around.
- When asked how they used GPS to monitor the location of the barge in tow, Mr. Clay said they used it to see other boats around them. There was no GPS on the *Ambition*.

- When asked if the barge had a depth finder on it, Mr. Clay said he could not recall.
- When asked referencing the picture taken by Jarrod with the *Ambition* on the push on the way to the fuel dock, and the two open manholes with hoses running into them what his memory of that was, Mr. Clay said that as seen in the picture what the barge crew did was place the manhole covers over the manholes with the hoses still in them. They laid the lids on top of the hoses at the fuel dock. Mr. Clay said he asked a barge crewman about pulling the hoses out and the crewman replied “we do this all the time”, so if they take on water, they pump it out and that was the way they did it. They put the lid on top and did not pull the hoses out.
- When asked to clarify the person he spoke to who told him, “we do this all the time”, Mr. Clay said it was one of the barge crew members, but he did not know his name.
- When asked to clarify that the hoses remained in the tanks and the manhole covers were placed on top of the hoses, Mr. Clay said that was correct. When asked if the hoses were connected to any pump, Mr. Clay said yes that one hose was connected to a pump, which was from the tank and one hose was going to the middle of the barge on deck, so if they need to pump out, water will just pump out onto the barge.
- When asked about the manhole covers being placed over the manholes with the hoses running into them, if the hoses flattened, Mr. Clay said the hoses did not flatten out. The lid was laid on top of the hose.
- When asked to clarify who put the hatch covers on top of the hoses going into the manholes, Mr. Clay said it was the barge crew. The hatch covers were laid on top and were not secured and this is the way it was when the barge *Ambition* left the fuel dock to and taken under tow.
- When asked the size of the hoses, Mr. Clay estimated they were 2-inch hoses.
- When asked, referencing the picture of taken by Jarrod, if the *Karen Koby* was pushing the barge from the rake side, Mr. Clay said that was correct. Looking at the picture, the manhole covers were on the starboard side of the barge at the rake end.
- When asked how they hand over the watch, Mr. Clay said he will normally start the watch handover process about 0530 and the handover will take place about 0545.
- For the offgoing watch on June 14th, Mr. Clay said he and the oncoming deckhand did their handover in the galley which commenced about 2330.
- When asked if the *Karen Koby* had any CCTV system, Mr. Clay said no. There was no video recording on the boat.
- When asked if they must keep track of their work rest hours or hours worked, Mr. Clay said they do not and that they work on their routine schedule. When asked on June 14th if he had to work beyond his normally scheduled watch hours, Mr. Clay said that he could not recall.
- When asked about what he said about the cement blocks not being strapped at all, Mr. Clay said that was correct and that when they walked the barge for the last time, he noticed the rocks were not tied down. There were only a couple of things tied down on the barge.

- When asked about how big the concrete blocks were, Mr. Clay said they were pretty big to be moved by hand but if there was a shift of the barge, they could be moved.
- When asked about the pump that covered up the manhole on legs, and its size, Mr. Clay said it was a small pump that a person could lift and move around. He noted that in the picture taken by Jarrod, there were several of the pumps in front of the Conex box.
- When asked if the pump that was placed over the forward port side manhole that was missing the cover had any hoses connected to it or running into that tank, Mr. Clay said no, the pump was just placed right on top of the manhole. When asked if the pump belonged to the barge *Ambition* or the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Clay said it belonged to the barge.
- When asked about the metal plate that was placed over the manhole at the aft port manhole which was missing a cover, and if it completely covered the manhole, Mr. Clay said no it did not completely cover it. It just went straight across it, on both sides of the manhole.
- When asked about the missing manhole covers, and if anyone attempted to find them, Mr. Clay said he talked to the guy on the barge and said he was told they couldn't find them, so they put the pump and metal plate over each hole.
- When asked if he saw any gaskets around any of the manholes or lids, Mr. Clay said he didn't check.
- When asked how he checked the manholes that were in place, and if he checked that they were tightened or screwed down properly, Mr. Clay said he just visually checked them, and the barge crew said they were tight, and everything was good to go.
- When asked when they let out more tow line after they initially had 3 to 4 feet out, Mr. Clay said it was about 2 to 3 hours after when they let out more tow wire. There was roughly 600 to 800 feet of tow wire let out.
- When asked about the towing bit on the *Karen Koby*, and how far it was from the stern of the boat, Mr. Clay said they were not towing off the towing bit. There is a tow wire going out to the bridles. The bridles are 65 feet long.
- When asked if the *Karen Koby* took on any fuel or water at the fuel dock, Mr. Clay said that it did not.
- When asked where he was when the barge crew were fueling and ballasting the *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said he got back on the *Karen Koby* and did a walkaround the vessel and then went inside to get something to drink and then came back out and made a around on the tug. When he noticed the barge crew were done, he got on the barge and made a round before going to untie, and that is when he noticed two lids were missing. The barge crew came back and put whatever they could on the manholes.
- When asked if he had a radio with him when on watch, Mr. Clay said yes. They use channel 72.
- When asked about what he reported to the captain about the two lids missing, Mr. Clay said the captain said he contacted the guys from the barge and that they would come back to check the lids and make sure everything was secured down. One of the barge guys came back and said he couldn't find the two lids, but he covered up the two manholes.

- When asked about the time it took for the barge to be docked at the fuel dock and if he recalled if the barge struck the dock, any objects or if he felt something, Mr. Clay said he didn't remember the barge hitting anything at all.
- When asked if there were any problems when facing up to the barge, after the *Karen Koby* was repositioned and specifically if the tug hit the barge too hard, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he took any pictures of the barge, Mr. Clay said he did not.
- When asked if he had any mobile phone service while offshore around the time and location of where the barge sank, Mr. Clay said he did not.
- When asked if he noticed anything out of the ordinary with respect to heel or trim of the barge *Ambition* either at the fuel dock or the last time he saw it, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he noticed what the draft of the *Ambition* was, Mr. Clay said he did not notice.
- When asked of the weather when he got off watch around midnight, Mr. Clay said it was nice weather and it was "slick calm", and the wind wasn't blowing or nothing. When asked if conditions were rough, Mr. Clay said it was not.
- When asked if there was a risk assessment carried out prior to taking the *Ambition* under tow, Mr. Clay said he thought there was one carried out.
- When asked about the first captain and second captain, Mr. Clay said the first captain, Anthony Mills, was not on the boat at the time and Chester Murphy was the second captain. He considers the first captain to be the master of the boat.
- When asked if the tow line is fixed permanently to the bridle, Mr. Clay said the bridle has an eye on it that they hook to the bit and the other end is connected to the tow line. There is a shock line, and the tow line comes back to the boat. The bridle is used to hook the tow line to the barge. It is a 65-foot bridle. There is one bridle on each side of the barge that comes to one point which is connected to a ring connected to the shock line and then the tow line.
- When asked after the barge crew left the *Ambition*, if he heard the captain of the *Karen Koby* say, "it was all good", Mr. Clay said he could not recall.
- When asked if the *Karen Koby* had a voyage or tow plan, Mr. Clay said yes.
- When asked if there was any kind of load line exemption from LA Carriers, Mr. Clay said he did not know.
- When asked if there was a dead tow plan for LA Carriers, Mr. Clay said he did not know.
- When asked if he was a part of the preparation for the tow diagram, Mr. Clay said it is always the same and it don't change for a barge like that.
- With respect to procedures for preparation for the tow, Mr. Clay said their procedures are always the same as per their TSMS manual.
- With respect to barge inspections, they must make sure all the hatches are secured and there is no damage to the barge like nicks, dents, rust spots and stuff like that. They do a barge report.
- When asked who determines the length of the tow, Mr. Clay said the captain.
- When asked if he participated in the voyage planning, Mr. Clay said no it was the captain.

- When asked if the tow line was adjusted between the time of leaving Cameron to the time when the barge capsized, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked who was on duty at the time when the tow left Cameron, Mr. Clay said it would have been him and Chester Murphy.
- When asked if the running lights were from LA Carriers or the barge company, Mr. Clay said they were from LA Carriers and the tug crew set them up.
- When asked who was at the wheel of the *Karen Koby* when it left the fleeting area to go to the fuel dock with the *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said that it was Chester Murphy.
- When asked when underway if the *Karen Koby* crew had to do any inspections on the barge, Mr. Clay said no it is not possible since the tow line is stretched out.
- When asked if he or any *Karen Koby* crew ever pumped water off the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Clay said no, we don't do that.
- When asked if the captain was steering the boat at the time the barge capsized, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked if he gave a statement to any others related to this accident, Mr. Clay said yes, everybody had to do a statement at the office.
- When asked if there were any other pictures taken other than the one presented to him, Mr. Clay said he does not recall.
- When asked if he had been on any vessel that had towed the *Ambition* in the past, Mr. Clay said no.
- When asked about the blue hoses on the deck of the barge that were in the picture, taken by Jarrod, Mr. Clay said he did not know what they were used for.
- When asked about a physical description of the barge crewman who said they always have the hoses in the tanks, Mr. Clay said he couldn't recall what he looked like.
- When asked where the hoses were coming from when the barge was taking on fuel and water, Mr. Clay said he did not know as he wasn't on the barge at that time.
- When asked if there were any additional facts he would like to add, Mr. Clay said no.

End of summary