



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary – DCA22FM024

Interview of: Ronnie Douget – Supervisor for Rigid Constructors
Date/Time: July 8, 2022 – 0840 to 1008 CDT
Location: USCG Marine Safety Field Office Lafayette Conference Room
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), Tommy Plaisance - LA Carriers Operations Manager (Party in Interest), Jeff Mizzi – Rigid Constructors President of Marine Operations (Party in Interest), Jill Willhoft (representing Rigid Construction interests)
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).

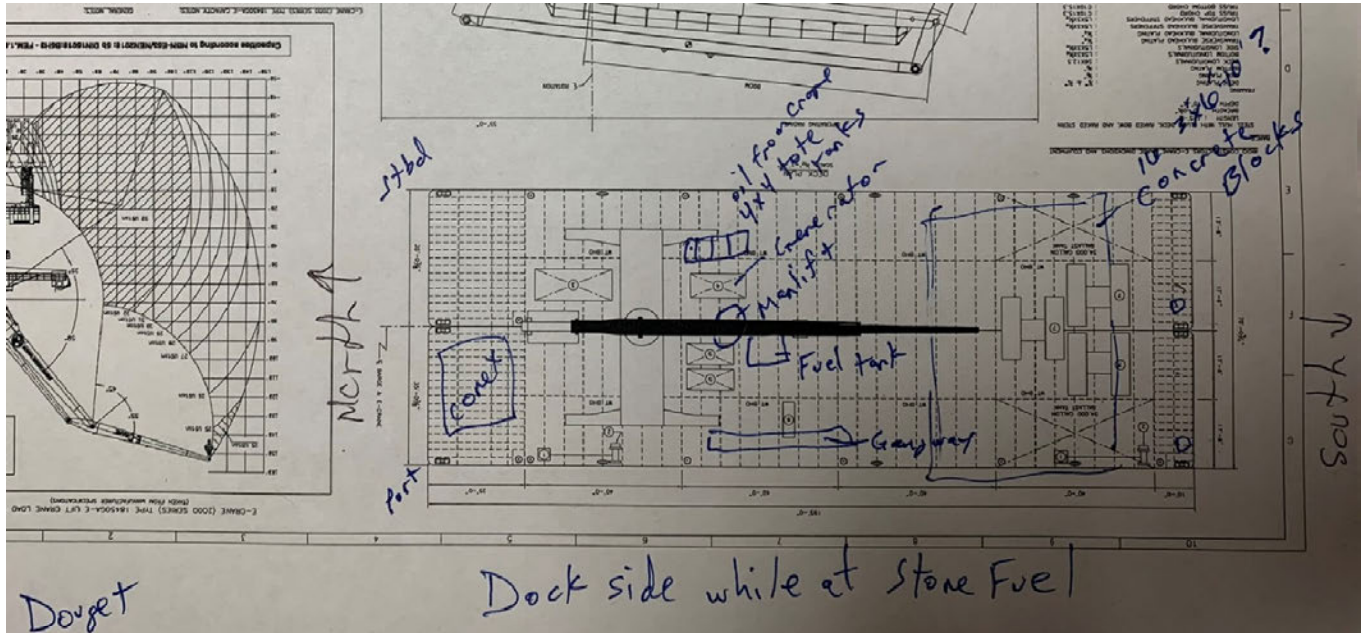
This interview summary has been compiled based on Coast Guard and NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of Mr. Ronnie Douget, supervisor for the Rigid Constructors crew assigned to secure the e-crane barge *Ambition*.

- Mr. Douget has worked with Rigid Constructors for two and a half years. He is a supervisor and crane operator. He does not hold a merchant mariner credential or any professional certifications. He stated he came to the company with experience and training as a crane operator. When asked if he had any past training or experience with barge operations, securing or maintenance, Mr. Douget said only what he has learned on the job and what has been passed on to him. He noted that he has about 37 years working around barges and the offshore industry while engaged in crane operations.
- When asked what date the barge *Ambition* was prepared for transit, Mr. Douget said he did not remember the day or date this was carried out.
- Mr. Douget said that he received a phone call from a Mr. Shane Lacosta instructing him to get a crew and go tie down the equipment on the deck of the barge *Ambition*. Mr. Douget recalled the phone call was received the night before they went out to the barge.
- The next day Mr. Douget got a bunch of straps and called his crew. The straps had a 2000 lb. breaking strength and they were 2 inch straps. Mr. Douget said there were five guys on his team, the four that had already been interviewed and Dalton was the fifth guy. There was a total of six including Mr. Douget and he noted this crew was under his supervision.
- When asked of his awareness of his crew's training and experience, Mr. Douget said he was not.
- The day they secured the barge, they all met at the dock where the skiff was put into the water. Mr. Douget said he conducted a safety brief with the crew and provided them instructions as to what to tie down on the barge. He did not assign specific tasks to any

crew and instructed all of them to tie down any loose cargo on deck to the *Karen Koby* captain's satisfaction.

- When Mr. Douget got on the barge, he walked around with the crew and they checked everything. He told the crew to check the manhole covers and he went to speak with the captain. After he met with the captain, he got back in the skiff and went to his truck where he went to Stone Fuel [Stone Oil Distributor, LLC] in Cameron where he met his crew there. He had to go to Stone Fuel in advance while the crew finished tying things up on the barge.
- When the captain was happy with things being secured, the crew got off the barge with the skiff and they met Mr. Douget at Stone Fuel.
- Mr. Douget said it took the captain of the *Karen Koby* about an hour trying to dock the barge *Ambition* at Stone Fuel where it normally takes about 10 to 15 minutes to tie up.
- When asked of the weather, Mr. Douget said it was nice, with a little bit of wind and some current, but it is always like that. It was a little choppy.
- After the captain's third attempt to dock the barge, one of the guys at Stone Fuel told the captain of the *Karen Koby* to put the barge in on the point.
- Once the barge was alongside, they put fuel and water on board. The fuel went into the metal tank on the deck of the barge. Mr. Douget said he was on the dock at the time of the refueling and taking on water. He was on the port side of the barge which was port side alongside; he was walking up and down the dock.
- When asked of the ballast water added to the barge, Mr. Douget said they opened two hatches and filled water into them. There were two guys refueling and two guys filling the ballast water.
- He witnessed the guys remove the manhole covers for the tanks they were going to ballast. The port side aft manhole had a metal plate on it. It was maybe 3 by 4 feet, and he said that it was a "pretty big" metal plate. That was the only manhole opening that had a metal plate over it.
- Mr. Douget went to speak with the captain of the *Karen Koby* and in speaking with him, he said the captain told him he was satisfied with all, so when the Rigid crew were done fueling and ballasting, they all left.
- After that, Mr. Douget received a call from the captain while he was at Stone Fuel sorting out paperwork and payment. The captain told Mr. Douget that the crew forgot to secure a manhole cover on the starboard ballast tank on the inboard side of the starboard barge.
- Mr. Douget called the crew back to place the manhole cover over and once done, Mr. Douget heard from the captain that the barge was seaworthy.
- When asked how often the *Ambition* transited the Gulf of Mexico offshore, Mr. Douget said a few times, but he was exactly not sure how many.
- When asked if there was any policy, procedure, or checklist for preparing the barge for transit, Mr. Douget said there was none.
- When asked who secured the e-crane, Mr. Douget said that he did. He put the boom down as low as possible and put the bucket on deck. He noted the boom was placed in the

down position like it was depicted in the drawing in front of him (Naval Architecture Assessment Drawing H01-010 July 17, 2020).



- The crane can be locked from the hydraulic controls inside the crane cab. There is a switch that shuts down all the hydraulics which “locks it down”.
- When asked of any crane movement when the hydraulics were shut off, Mr. Douget said it is “not too bad”, and that when the crane is locked down, it is locked down.
- When asked how much water he instructed to place in the aft tanks of the barges, Mr. Douget said he told the guys to put in “enough to get the barge level”.
- When asked how much water they put in the tanks, Mr. Douget said it was 8000 gallons. The tanks were about half full when done ballasting. After the ballasting of the aft tanks, the *Ambition* barge was “perfectly level”.
- When asked of any past stability issues with the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said he was not aware and noted that he “don’t do boats” and he is “just an operator”.
- When asked about when he met with the captain of the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Douget said that he met a deckhand who went to get the captain. The captain came out of the wheelhouse door and Mr. Douget spoke to him from the barge. That was when the *Karen Koby* was at the starboard hip of the barge.
- When asked about when he got off the Barge, Mr. Douget said he had the skiff take him from the *Ambition* to the boat launch because it was a 25-to-30-minute drive to Stone Fuel from there. At Stone Fuel, he informed the staff there that the *Ambition* was coming for fuel and water.
- When asked how much fuel and water was taken at Stone fuel, Mr. Douget said they took 1800 gallons of diesel and 8000 gallons of water.
- When asked if he went on board the *Ambition* when it was at the Stone Fuel facility, Mr. Douget said he did not.

- When asked about his decision to have water put into the aft tanks, of both barges of the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said it was because the stern was 6 inches higher. He said there was about 4000 gallons of fresh water added to each tank. He was not sure if the tanks were full or not and noted that the *Ambition* was level with the quantity of water added to the aft tanks.
- When asked about the draft of the barge, Mr. Douget said that it was 4.5 feet and with an even keel.
- When asked about the big plate that covered the aft port manhole that ballast water was pumped into, Mr. Douget said it was a big flat plate that did not have any handles on it.
- When asked if the plate had any kind of gasket or sealing on it, Mr. Douget said it did not.
- When asked how he knew that each tank had taken 4000 gallons of ballast water, Mr. Douget said he did not check the exact amount.
- When asked how the captain of the *Karen Koby* notified him of the missing manhole cover that was forgotten to be put back on, Mr. Douget said the captain called him on the radio. Mr. Douget said he called his crew back who were waiting for the ferry. The manhole cover that was forgotten to be put back on was on the starboard side aft tank on the inboard side.
- When asked if he had any pictures of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said he did, but he lost his phone on the way to Stone Fuel. The phone was in the bed of his truck when he last saw it.
- When asked about how the e-crane is locked into place, Mr. Douget said when the hydraulics are shut down, the swing brake is locked in place. The bucket was attached to the boom for the transit. He boomed down to where the bucket was on the deck of the barge.
- When asked how the generator for the crane was secured, Mr. Douget said it was welded to the main deck of the *Ambition*.
- When asked if there were any hydraulic leaks on the crane, Mr. Douget said there were not.
- When asked about when he saw the deckhands of the *Karen Koby* on the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said the deckhands were checking things and were there to untie the ropes. When one of his crew returned to place the cover on the manhole that had been forgotten, a deckhand from the *Karen Koby* was there and said things were “OK” after the manhole cover was set in place. After his crew got off the *Ambition*, the deckhands untied the *Ambition*, and they left after that.
- When asked of the towing arrangement when the *Ambition* departed Stone Fuel, Mr. Douget said he did not notice and that he and his crew left before the barge departed.
- When asked if the *Karen Koby* captain relayed any concerns to him other than the open manhole, Mr. Douget said he did not.
- When asked if the captain of the *Karen Koby* made any comments to him about the multiple times it took to get the *Ambition* alongside at Stone Fuel, Mr. Douget said he did not.

- When asked about communication between him and the captain of the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Douget said he had his VHF radio on the same channel as the *Karen Koby*. He asked the captain what channel to be on and the captain told him.
- When asked about the cement blocks that were on the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said they were seabed blocks which belonged to the Jeff Davis Electric Company. The blocks were left over from a previous project. That project was 3 miles east of where he met the barge on the skiff. The blocks were light enough to be moved with the cranes bucket.
- When asked if when the e-crane was in operation if there was any list induced due to the movement of the crane, Mr. Douget said there was no problem with the barge heeling due to the use of the crane. He noted as well that when the crane was in use, the spuds would be down so this would not affect the reach of the crane.
- When asked where the barge *Ambition* was going for it to be picked up by the *Karen Koby*, Mr. Douget said he did not know.
- When asked if he was aware of the *Ambition*, when it was under tow hitting a navigation channel marker, Mr. Douget said one of his crew told him of this. No one checked for any damage to the barge.
- When asked if there was any kind of tool needed for the securing of the manhole covers in place on the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said there was and that it was in the Conex box on deck. He noted that the crew was aware of the location and use of this tool.
- When asked if he was aware of the captain of the *Karen Koby* having any kind of checklist or paperwork for taking the barge *Ambition* under tow, Mr. Douget said he did not see anything.
- When asked about when the *Karen Koby* initially took the *Ambition* under tow, Mr. Douget said that in Lake Charles, the *Karen Koby* was on the starboard bow of the *Ambition* with the tug facing aft (the stern of the barge). As the *Karen Koby* approached the fuel dock with the barge *Ambition*, the *Karen Koby* was pushing the *Ambition* then.
- When asked where he was when the crew were loading fuel onto the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said he was in the Stone Fuel office at that time.
- When asked about when he called the crew back after being notified of a manhole left open, Mr. Douget said the crew had just left and he called them on the radio for them to come back because he didn't know how much was left to do on the barge.
- When asked when the crane was secured, Mr. Douget said it was secured the day before the barge was taken under tow.
- When asked if there was any policy or procedure for the transit of the barge *Ambition* or the ballasting of the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said he did not know.
- When asked if the barge *Ambition* had a certificate of documentation (COD), Mr. Douget said he did not know. When asked if the barge had a load line, Mr. Douget said he did not know.
- When asked if the *Ambition* was inspected by the Coast Guard or any third party, Mr. Douget said he did not know.
- When asked about the job safety analysis conducted, Mr. Douget said he used an iPad to complete this with his crew. There was no sign in or attendance record.

- When asked who he delegated as responsible for securing the manhole covers on the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said it was all the Rigid crew on the barge. They were all walking around and checking the barge.
- When asked what he recalled about the steel plate over the aft port side of the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said that the manhole cover was missing so the steel plate was used. He said the captain of the *Karen Koby* told him the steel plate was good enough when they were at the Stone Fuel dock.
- When asked how items were secured on the deck of the *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said there were pad eyes.
- When asked about what manhole cover that was forgotten to be placed, Mr. Douget said that a deckhand from the *Karen Koby* showed a Rigid crewman what cover needed to be put in place.
- When asked how long the barge *Ambition* had been with the company, Mr. Douget said he did not know. It was not with the company when he started in January of 2020.
- When asked if he was aware of any previous or existing damage to the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said he was not aware of any.
- When asked of what the operational limitations were for operating the crane, Mr. Douget said they can't operate if the winds are above 25 mph or when there is lightning.
- When asked if he or his crew had been previously tasked to secure the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said they had never been tasked with that before.
- When asked why they had to put water in the aft tanks of the barge *Ambition*, Mr. Douget said, because someone had pulled the water out of those tanks, they had to put the water back in.
- When asked of the aft ballast tank configuration which he had his crew put water in, Mr. Douget said those tanks run the width of each barge.

End of summary