

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ABOARD *KODIAK ENTERPRISE*
NEAR TACOMA, WASHINGTON
ON APRIL 10, 2023

Accident No.: DCA23FM026

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Interview of: JEFFERY LORING, Deckhand
Trident Seafoods

Trident Seafoods Facilities
Tacoma, Washington

Wednesday,
April 26, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

GREGORY HELLER, Special Agent
Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms & Explosives

NATHAN PETRULAK, Special Agent
Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Jeffrey Loring:

By Lt. [REDACTED]

4

By SA Heller

9

I N T E R V I E W

(10:04 a.m.)

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2
3 LT [REDACTED]: All right, so the time is 10:04, Pacific.
4 The date is Wednesday, April 26th. I am
5 Lieutenant [REDACTED]. That's spelled [REDACTED].
6 I'm located at Trident Seafoods. In the room with me today is --

7 SA HELLER: Special Agent Greg Heller with the Bureau of
8 Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, ATF. I'm a federal
9 fire and explosives investigator.

10 SA PETRULAK: And also, I'm Nathan Petrulak, special agent
11 with ATF. My last name is spelled P E T R U L A K.

12 LT [REDACTED]: All right, and [REDACTED]?

13 CWO [REDACTED]: Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] with the U.S.
14 Coast Guard. I'm a marine investigator. Last name is spelled
15 [REDACTED].

16 LT [REDACTED]: And Jeff?

17 MR. LORING: Jeffrey Loring, L O R I N G, I'm a deckhand on
18 the *American Constellation*.

19 LT [REDACTED]: And Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] and Mr. Loring
20 are virtual on Teams. The three of us are in the room, those two
21 are virtual and we're just here today to talk to Mr. Loring about
22 what he saw on the morning of April 7th in relation to the fire on
23 board the *Kodiak Enterprise*.

24 INTERVIEW OF JEFFREY LORING

25 BY LT [REDACTED]

1 Q. So, Jeff, could you kind of just tell us what's your position
2 on board the vessel that you're on, what vessel you're on, and
3 what you were doing that evening?

4 A. I'm a deckhand on the *American Constellation*, you know, all
5 exterior deck stuff is what we do. I was currently on night
6 shift, midnight to noon, and taking out the trash at about, I
7 don't know 3:30, 3:45. I look over at the *Kodiak*, which is
8 probably about a hundred yards away -- a couple hundred yards and
9 I saw a little puff of smoke come out the front, not a whole lot.
10 So, I went a little closer and it smelled like fire, so I sprinted
11 up to the security guard for Trident to let him know and he had no
12 idea. His cameras didn't show anything, his alarms did go off.
13 Then on my way back, I called 911 and got my mate up and my
14 captain up and that was about it.

15 Q. Okay, so where -- could you tell us where the *American*
16 *Constellation* was moored in relation to the *Kodiak Enterprise*?

17 A. I think we were about -- I want to say a hundred yards
18 north -- I think it was north. It's kind of hard -- yeah, we were
19 on the end of the Tacoma pier, just at the very end the *Kodiak* was
20 in the -- kind of the middle of the pier. I don't really know
21 which direction. I think north.

22 Q. Okay, good. Okay, so when you were -- then you said you were
23 taking out the trash, were you on board the vessel or on the pier?

24 A. When I saw the smoke, I was on the pier.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Our trash bins were pretty much right at the end of our
2 gangway, so I didn't go too far from our ship.

3 Q. Okay, so you were looking -- what aspect were you looking at
4 the *Kodiak Enterprise*, then, from where you were with the trash
5 cans?

6 A. So, I guess I turned to the aft side of our ship, which is
7 the bow side of the *Kodiak* and I -- the smoke came out right from
8 the front of the bow.

9 Q. Okay, do you -- could you see specifically -- you said on the
10 bow, could you see specifically where that smoke was coming? Was
11 there a specific hatch it might've been coming from, a vent or
12 anything like that?

13 A. I couldn't really tell and it wasn't a whole lot of smoke at
14 the beginning. It was just a couple smokes coming from the bow
15 somewhere over there. I guess kind of on the portside. I'm not
16 positive where it was really coming from.

17 Q. Okay, and that initial smoke that you saw, could you -- I
18 know it was night, but could you tell -- was it white smoke, black
19 smoke? What was the color and what did it smell like?

20 A. It was -- it smelled like, you know, kind of like a campfire
21 and it was definitely white smoke -- or white-ish smoke. It was
22 not black smoke.

23 Q. Okay, and then you said you proceeded to the Trident guard
24 shack. Where was that guard shack located?

25 A. It was about a hundred more yards to the south of the *Kodiak*.

1 Yeah, I didn't really know if they -- you know, if they were doing
2 something specific on there or something, so I wanted to let him
3 know first before I, you know, got all the fire and ambulances and
4 stuff like that. So, yeah, I just sprinted up there as fast as I
5 could and he had no idea. So, he came -- we hopped on a little
6 golf cart, and he came and looked at it, and then he called 911,
7 and I called 911. Then that's about it. I went back to my ship
8 and got my mate up.

9 Q. Okay, and then what occurred after that? So, after you got
10 your captain and your mate up, did you guys leave port thereafter
11 or how much longer were you in port?

12 A. We stayed there, I think, two more days afterwards. We were
13 far enough away that the captain said we should be all right.
14 Then I think it was Monday, the -- Trident came up to us and said
15 there's freon on board it would be safe -- it would be better if
16 you guys left. So, we left and then just kind of looped around to
17 the other side of Tacoma. But we were definitely there a few
18 days.

19 Q. Okay, and then throughout the rest of that evening, were you
20 watching what kind of went down or did you just go back to your
21 duties inside the ship?

22 A. Yeah, we pretty much -- all of us kind of -- every time we
23 were outside, we were checking on it and looking. You know, it's
24 exciting to see firefighters putting out a fire, so pretty much at
25 all times, someone was looking.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And throughout the four or five days that we were there, you
3 know, they put it out and then a new set of fire would pop up.
4 So, it, you know, didn't really go out for a long time.

5 Q. Right, so in that first evening that you -- you know, you saw
6 it initially and then you maybe saw it a few more times that
7 evening, did you ever see flames out from -- you know, from your
8 vantage point?

9 A. I did and we -- I have, actually, a picture of flames coming
10 out the bow-side door -- you know, the door that leads to the bow.
11 A few times, I saw separate flames come out there.

12 Q. And do you have your phone with you? Could you see what time
13 that picture was taken?

14 A. Actually, that's a good call. Let me see. It feels so long
15 ago now. There we go, 4:16 a.m.

16 Q. Okay, and then can you just hold it up for us to see real
17 quick?

18 A. Sure.

19 Q. And then I'll just have you email me the picture as well.
20 But yeah, if you could just hold it up so we can see what you're
21 talking about?

22 A. I don't know how well you can see it. I'm outside.

23 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay, yeah.

24 LT [REDACTED]: Okay.

25 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah, if you'd be willing to share that photo with

1 us, that would be -- at some point, that would be helpful.

2 MR. LORING: Okay, yeah, just -- I'll email it to the same
3 one I got the link from.

4 LT [REDACTED]: Yes, that would be perfect. Well, Jeff, that
5 kind of concludes my part of the interview. I'm going to turn it
6 over to Mr. Heller, here, I know he has some follow-up questions
7 he'd like to know.

8 BY SA HELLER:

9 Q. Yeah, first of all, I mean, thanks for being alert and
10 actually flagging somebody down on this. It could've been a worse
11 outcome for those on board if you had not taken action, so we
12 appreciate that, first of all. So, a couple of quick questions,
13 so how long had you guys been in port before this happened? Were
14 you there all day?

15 A. We'd been in there probably most of the season. We were
16 there a couple of months, that's kind of where we ported for the
17 off season.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But I was only on board for about two or three weeks before
20 all of this went down.

21 Q. Got it.

22 A. So, I'm not actually positive how long they were there.

23 Q. Sure, makes sense. Okay, and when you were taking out the
24 trash on the -- so, you had been -- remind me, what was your
25 shift? You said 8:00 to midnight?

- 1 A. It's midnight to noon.
- 2 Q. Midnight to noon, okay. Had you been on the exterior of your
3 vessel most of that time or were you inside?
- 4 A. Inside most of the time.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. You know, we do rounds every out.
- 7 Q. Sure.
- 8 A. We kind of come outside and look, but there's not a whole lot
9 outside and it could've happened before I saw it.
- 10 Q. Yeah.
- 11 A. But yeah, it was about 3:30, 3:45 that was, you know,
12 outside -- in and out a lot more taking the trash out.
- 13 Q. Okay, the -- leading up to that for your shift, had you seen
14 anything going on over there at the vessel? Any people coming and
15 going or anything that struck you as unusual?
- 16 A. I know they were doing some maintenance on the board -- on
17 board a couple days prior. But apart from that, everything seemed
18 normal.
- 19 Q. Okay, but that night, from midnight on, had you seen anyone
20 around that ship or anything unusual on the pier?
- 21 A. Not that I can really remember.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. You know, I didn't pay a whole lot of attention to it.
- 24 Q. Of course, yeah.
- 25 A. But no, I mean, everything seemed normal.

1 Q. Okay, in general, at that time of night on the pier there, I
2 assume it's -- there's not a lot of foot traffic or much happening
3 out there?

4 A. The security gate actually closes between -- I think it's
5 9:30 and 6:00 a.m.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So, there's really nobody out there.

8 Q. Got it, and when you walked up to the -- you know, to kind of
9 go look closer and then eventually to go walk and find the
10 security guard, did you encounter anybody else on the pier at that
11 point?

12 A. Nope.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. It was just me and then the fire and the security guard.

15 Q. Got it, okay, and then when you said you saw the smoke, you
16 described it as, like, puffs. Was it, in fact, like, separate
17 puffs, or was it, like, one continuous thing of smoke?

18 A. It was one continuous, but -- it was definitely one
19 continuous, but there wasn't much of it.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So, maybe, you know, the wind was kind of pretty heavy that
22 night, so maybe that's where the puffs came from, they were
23 blowing it in certain ways.

24 Q. Okay, and was it in -- you said it was on the bow. I'm
25 assuming it was in front of the pilot house?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay, were you able to -- other than that, were you able to
3 see how far towards the bow or on what deck?

4 A. I can't really tell what deck. It seemed like it was coming
5 from the bottom.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. But rising up to the top. It's a little hard to tell.

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. But it was pretty -- far forward on the bow, you know, you've
10 got that door and then maybe, I don't know, 50 feet of bow and it
11 was somewhere on there.

12 Q. Okay, when you say that door, which door are you referring
13 to?

14 A. It's hard to -- I mean the -- just like on this vessel, you
15 know, the door that leads to that very front bow with all the
16 lines and stuff.

17 Q. Got it.

18 A. It's on this picture, here.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So, I can -- when I email it, you'll see better.

21 Q. Okay, so on that picture, where you're seeing flames, is that
22 where you were seeing smoke initially?

23 A. Actually, I saw the smoke a little -- you know what, yeah,
24 pretty much.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. So, I guess not quite the bow. There's kind of a deck right
2 above the bow, it looks like, and that's where that door is, and
3 that's where most of the smoke came from.

4 Q. Got it, okay, and you said it was a lighter colored smoke,
5 like white?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. But definitely not black?

8 A. Definitely not black.

9 Q. And then you said it was sort of like a campfire smell? So,
10 like, when you say that, you mean like a wood campfire, I assume?

11 A. Yeah, and that's kind of what I would sound. I really -- I
12 didn't notice it until I walked up there and then, you know, I
13 was like that definitely sounds like kind of a campfire. I knew at
14 that point that there was a fire.

15 Q. How close would you say you got to it when you were sort of
16 checking it out? Were you right next to it on the pier?

17 A. When I ran to the security guard, I was pretty close.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I would say probably a hundred feet from it.

20 Q. Okay, and so then you met with the security guard at the
21 gate, you both drove back to -- in the golf cart and then you both
22 made 911 calls, is that right?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I'm pretty sure his was first and then I was like, you know,

1 just in case, I'll do one too.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But yeah.

4 Q. Okay, and then what is your -- obviously, there was a lot
5 going on and it's been a while since then, what is causing you to
6 estimate the time at about 3:45? Did you look at your watch, or
7 look at your clock?

8 A. I called my mate at about 4:00 and, you know, between me
9 finding it and then running to the security guard -- we also do
10 rounds, you know, at the top of the hour and I hadn't quite done
11 mine yet, but I was getting ready to.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So, I'm going to say about 3:45 I saw it. But it is
14 definitely an estimate.

15 Q. Got it.

16 A. Between 3:30 and 4:00, for sure.

17 Q. Okay, would it surprise you if -- just to try to help you
18 orient in time, but the 911 calls were about 3:00 -- I think about
19 3:19.

20 A. Was it really that much? Oh, so maybe it was 2:45 and I just
21 have my hour wrong. Let me see --

22 Q. I guess more importantly, because we'll be able to see when
23 the 911 call was, how much time would you say elapsed between when
24 you first saw it and when you called 911?

25 A. Not too long, I guess, 30 minutes, maybe, 20 minutes. Not

1 too long. That'd be the max.

2 Q. Okay, about 20 minutes from when you first saw the smoke to
3 when you figure out and call 911?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay, do you still happen to have that 911 call in your call
6 log or has it been too long?

7 A. I don't.

8 Q. Yeah, that's fine. We'll get it on the other end. Yeah,
9 that's -- I'm not in any way criticizing you. It's been a while
10 and it's a lot to remember the timing. But it's important for us
11 to know --

12 A. Yeah, I was so nervous.

13 Q. Yeah, so it's about -- but it's somewhere around 20 minutes
14 or so between you see the smoke and then eventually when you place
15 your 911 call?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay, that's perfect. That's helpful for us, thank you.
18 Then I just -- can we get -- I know we have your email, can we get
19 a phone number for you?

20 A. Yeah, it's (801) 833-2780.

21 SA HELLER: Perfect. That's all -- I think that's all I
22 have.

23 Anything to add here, Nate?

24 SA PETRULAK: No, (indiscernible).

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

1 SA HELLER: Okay.

2 LT [REDACTED]: [REDACTED], do you have any follow-up questions.

3 CWO [REDACTED] No, I don't. I don't have any follow-up
4 questions.

5 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

6 SA HELLER: Well, Jeff, yeah, like I said, we appreciate you
7 taking action that night. As you probably know, there were people
8 sleeping on board that weren't aware there was a fire, so thank
9 you for doing that and thank you for your time and the information
10 you helped provide us today. We've talked to a lot of people and
11 we're just trying to piece together what happened. So, thanks for
12 your help.

13 MR. LORING: All right, yeah, thank you.

14 LT [REDACTED] All right, well the time is now 10:20. I'm
15 going to conclude the interview.

16 (Whereupon, at 10:20 a.m., 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: FIRE ABOARD *KODIAK ENTERPRISE*
NEAR TACOMA, WASHINGTON
ON APRIL 10, 2023
Interview of Jeffery Loring

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM026

PLACE: Tacoma, Washington

DATE: April 26, 2023

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.

Caro
Transcriber