

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ON SCRAP BARGE NEAR

BOWERS BEACH, DELAWARE IN THE

DELAWARE BAY ON MAY 23, 2022

Accident No.: DCA22FM019

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Interview of: MARTIN JOHNSON, AB on Daisy Mae
Coeymans Marine Towing, LLC

Via Telephone

Friday,
May 27, 2022

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

BART BARNUM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MIKE TUCKER, Attorney
(On behalf of Coeymans Marine Towing LLC)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 LT [REDACTED] Do you have any objections to me recording this
3 conversation?

4 MR. JOHNSON: No.

5 LT [REDACTED] Thank you very much.

INTERVIEW OF MARTIN JOHNSON

6
7 BY LT [REDACTED]

8 Q. So first and foremost, how are you doing, Mr. Johnson?

9 A. I'm fine, good.

10 Q. Okay. Have you guys been able to get some rest and
11 everything since the incident?

12 A. Oh, yeah.

13 Q. Okay, good.

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. Well, so my name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm the Coast Guard
16 investigating officer, so today I just want to ask you a series of
17 questions. I am conducting a fact-finding investigation just to
18 try and determine, if possible, you know, what were the
19 contributing factors that led up to this incident.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. So first, I kind of want to learn a little bit about you,
22 sir. You're Martin Johnson, correct?

23 A. That's correct.

24 Q. Okay. What is your date of birth, sir?

25 A. [REDACTED]

1 Q. Okay. And do you have a Merchant Mariner's credential?

2 A. Yes, I do. I have a 200 ton masters near coastal and a
3 mate's towing endorsement near coastal.

4 Q. Okay. Do you have that with you?

5 A. It's down in my cabin.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Do you want to --

8 Q. Yeah, don't worry about it right now, we'll -- I'll just need
9 to get the --

10 A. Okay.

11 Q. -- reference number from you later, but I think Mr. Tucker
12 might be able to get that for me.

13 A. Okay.

14 MR. TUCKER: Yeah, that's fine. Whenever you need it, we can
15 send that over to you.

16 LT [REDACTED] Okay, I just want to make sure that I have the
17 correct Martin Johnson in our system when I do my report.

18 BY LT [REDACTED]

19 Q. How long have you been a mariner, sir?

20 A. Fifty-five years.

21 Q. Okay. And how long have you been a crew member on towing
22 vessels?

23 A. Well, I have been a crew member on towing vessels all
24 together about four years.

25 Q. Four years?

1 A. I was up in Canada. Yeah, in Canada --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- as well.

4 Q. And how long have you been operating in the -- this operating
5 area, so the New Jersey, New York, Delaware area?

6 A. I've been on just one week. Put me on two weeks now.

7 Q. Okay. So this was your first voyage on the Delaware Bay?

8 A. Yeah. Well, I've been up to the Delaware before, not on this
9 vessel, you know --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- on another vessel.

12 Q. Okay. And what company do you work for?

13 A. Well, I work for the Carver Group, through Coeymans.

14 Q. Okay. You said Carver Group?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Are they a subcontractor of Coeymans?

17 A. Well, they're part owners.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. They're the owners, yeah.

20 Q. Got you.

21 A. It's all part of the group.

22 Q. Okay. And how long have you worked for them?

23 A. Just two weeks.

24 Q. Okay. So one of the things that we had sent over was a 96-
25 hour work/rest history. Were you able to fill that out?

1 A. I haven't seen it.

2 Q. Okay. That's fine, I can just ask you a series of questions
3 really quick. So leading up to the incident, if you go back 96
4 hours from, you know, early Monday morning, what was your work
5 schedule, watch rotation, and things of that nature?

6 A. Well, I was on the 12:00 to 6:00 watch and -- which it's
7 just -- it's doing the regular, you know, hanging lines and
8 letting go barges and on watch, doing that sort of thing.

9 Q. Okay. What date did you get on board the Daisy Mae?

10 A. I'm trying to think now. I think it's the 13th. Thirteenth.

11 Q. Okay. The 13th of May?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. And then when were you due to sign off?

14 A. Today.

15 Q. Okay. Hopefully, we can get this done quickly for you so you
16 can go enjoy your shore leave.

17 A. It's all right, my flight's not until 7 o'clock tonight.

18 Q. Okay, okay. Do you know about what time and where you got on
19 board the Daisy Mae?

20 A. I'm trying to think now. I believe it was around about
21 lunchtime, yeah, on the 13th.

22 Q. Okay. And where did you join the vessel at?

23 A. At Ken's (ph.), at Ken's yard.

24 Q. Is that New Jersey or New York or --

25 A. Yeah, that -- yeah, that's up, just up in the Kills.

1 Q. Okay. Okay, so on the date of -- or the day before the
2 incident, when you guys picked up the CMT Y NOT 6, was the barge
3 already in tow or were you involved with loading operations at
4 all?

5 A. No, it was --

6 (Crosstalk)

7 MR. TUCKER: Hey, Lieutenant, real quick.

8 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

9 MR. TUCKER: Mike Tucker on. Just so you have an idea of the
10 timeline, so the incident happened on or about, you know, 0030 May
11 23rd, they actually picked the barge up on Saturday the 21st.

12 LT [REDACTED] Okay, thank you. So it was a little bit of a
13 voyage before, got you.

14 MR. TUCKER: Yeah, yeah, just so you have an idea of the
15 timeline.

16 LT [REDACTED] Okay, I appreciate it.

17 MR. TUCKER: Sure.

18 BY LT [REDACTED]

19 Q. So when you guys picked up CMT Y NOT 6 on -- that would've
20 been Saturday, then, was it already loaded?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. Do you have any prior experience with the HMS light
23 iron or scrap metal cargo?

24 A. We had some up in Canada, but not down here.

25 Q. Okay. So not in the U.S.?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Okay. Was there anything different about -- about this load
3 than what you were used to before, seeing up in Canada?

4 A. No, I don't believe so.

5 Q. Okay. What kind of materials did you see on the barge?

6 A. It was just scrap, that's all I saw.

7 Q. Was there --

8 A. I couldn't tell you what it was.

9 Q. Okay, yeah, I was going to say if you had anything specific,
10 anything that stuck out to you, any -- just random items that you
11 saw in the piles.

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. Did you have any concerns about how the barge was
14 loaded?

15 A. No.

16 Q. And did you have any concerns with the cargo?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. So now I'd like to shift focus towards the actual
19 voyage. Do you remember what time the Daisy Mae departed the dock
20 with the CMT Y NOT 6 under her tow?

21 A. I'll have to look. I'll have to look at the logs here.
22 Because, you know, I was working on deck, so I don't --

23 Q. Okay, fair enough.

24 A. -- have that data.

25 LT [REDACTED] So Mr. Tucker, I don't know if we'd already

1 requested it, but would it be possible for us to get a copy of the
2 deck logs or the bridge logs?

3 MR. TUCKER: Yeah, absolutely.

4 LT [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

5 MR. TUCKER: Yeah, absolutely.

6 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

7 BY LT [REDACTED]

8 Q. Okay, Mr. Johnson, do you remember who was all on board?

9 A. Yes. Yes, I do. We had the whole crew on board.

10 Q. Okay. How many people?

11 A. Five.

12 LT [REDACTED] Five, okay. And I believe -- Mr. Tucker, I
13 believe you sent us the list of those five crew members?

14 MR. TUCKER: Yeah, I believe the owner sent that over, too.

15 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

16 MR. TUCKER: And might've sent the other Coast Guard forms,
17 the 2692s and the 96-hour. This will all be sent over, I believe
18 today, to you.

19 LT [REDACTED] Okay, awesome. Thank you.

20 BY LT [REDACTED]

21 Q. Okay, Mr. Johnson, what was your understanding of the voyage
22 plan or the route that you guys were taking?

23 A. Well, I don't do the -- because I'm working on deck, I don't
24 do the navigation of the vessel.

25 Q. Okay. Okay, did you guys have a safety meeting or anything

1 like that before you got under way?

2 A. We have meetings, but we just do our regular things, you
3 know, checks.

4 Q. Okay. Did you guys discuss the weather at all?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Because it was fine.

8 Q. Okay. Do you remember who was on watch when the vessel got
9 under way?

10 A. I believe we were all on, actually, everybody.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. The whole crew.

13 Q. Okay. And then you said that you were on the 12:00 to 6:00
14 watch?

15 A. Yeah, that's correct.

16 Q. Okay. So you said that the weather was good. Did you have
17 any concerns about the weather at all?

18 A. No. No, not at all.

19 Q. Okay. Did you receive any weather alerts during your voyage,
20 like on your phone or the radio or anything like that?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay. Were you on watch or awake when the Daisy Mae and the
23 CMT Y NOT 6 entered the Delaware Bay?

24 A. No, I was not. I was off watch.

25 Q. Okay. And from what I understand, sir, were you on watch

1 when the fire was discovered?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. So I'm going to switch gears now and start talking
4 about the fire a little bit. Just kind of talk me through what
5 you witnessed and from the moment that you realized that the barge
6 was on fire, just kind of tell me your story.

7 A. Okay, well, I was on the -- I got up at 11:30 and at
8 midnight, I was down in the engine room checking everything out
9 and after I finished at 12:30, I opened the engine room door which
10 leads to the upper deck, just to look at the barge and check on
11 the barge, and I saw smoke and a glow, and then I quickly came up
12 and reported that to the mate.

13 Q. Okay. Did you hear any explosions?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Did you hear any thunder?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. Did you see any lightning in the area?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Okay. After you noticed the smoke, did you see flames?

20 A. No, not -- no.

21 Q. Okay, so no --

22 A. Just a glow.

23 Q. -- flames, just a glow, okay. And then you said after that,
24 you just -- you notified the mate.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. And was the mate on watch with you?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. Were there any other individuals on watch or awake at
4 that time?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Well, we were just switching over watches and then it's
8 midnight, so people go to bed and --

9 Q. Okay, fair enough. Let's see. So you reported it to the
10 mate. Okay. Is there any other information that you think of,
11 that you can think of that I should know, that would be beneficial
12 towards our investigation?

13 A. Not at all, really. No, I can't think of anything. That's
14 all I did, was just have a look and reported it.

15 Q. Okay, fair enough. And I definitely appreciate that and
16 definitely appreciate everything that you guys did, I know it was
17 a long couple days for everybody but, you know, definitely, thank
18 you for everything that you did during this situation, sir.

19 A. Well, thank you. Thank you, appreciate it.

20 LT [REDACTED] Yeah. I don't have any other questions right
21 now.

22 Does anybody else on the phone have questions or Mr. Barnum,
23 do you have questions?

24 MR. BARNUM: Yeah, Lieutenant [REDACTED] this is Bart Barnum,
25 NTSB.

1 BY MR. BARNUM:

2 Q. Mr. Johnson, I have a couple questions for you.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Thank you so far. Your experience with this light metal in
5 Canada, you said, in what capacity was that, was it on barges, was
6 it in a (indiscernible)?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Yeah, okay. Anything like this ever happen there, have you
9 seen this, the fire?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Have you heard of it or had this --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- issue before?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Obviously, it sounds like you are probably more familiar with
16 it than I. Could you explain to me, you said it was scrap metal
17 before, but could you give a little more detail, do you know like
18 what makes up the scrap metal?

19 A. You mean here?

20 Q. Yeah. Here, there, both. What do you see? What have you
21 seen?

22 A. Well, I couldn't tell you exactly what was in there, I just
23 know it was a scrap metal. To tell you the truth, it's hard to
24 tell what's in there.

25 Q. Okay. What do you know about where that scrap metal comes

1 from? You said the barge was loaded when you guys hooked up the
2 tow. Where did it come from and how did it get loaded?

3 A. I couldn't tell you how it got loaded, but I believe it came
4 from the shore.

5 Q. Okay. Is that something you think -- I mean, I can ask the
6 -- your colleagues in subsequent interviews, but is that something
7 Coeymans does there at their yard, load or repair or is it loaded
8 somewhere else (indiscernible) there?

9 A. Well, being that this was my first trip on this vessel, I
10 don't know, you know, I couldn't really tell you exactly, you
11 know. That's standard on us.

12 MR. TUCKER: Mr. Barnum, Mike Tucker here, just a point of
13 clarification. It wasn't loaded by Coeymans, it was loaded by EMR
14 at their facility, by them, they were the charter, the ferry boat
15 charter of the barge. So Coeymans involvement was simply -- yeah,
16 their involvement was simply just to bring the tug up to tow the
17 barge.

18 MR. BARNUM: Okay. And well, I guess, Mr. Tucker, that EMR
19 facility, is that nearby, was the Daisy Mae -- did they transfer
20 it down to the Coeymans facility, how did it get there?

21 MR. TUCKER: The barge?

22 MR. BARNUM: Yes, sir.

23 MR. TUCKER: This was the first voyage of that barge, I'm not
24 entirely sure how it got to EMR in Newark, New Jersey, but it was
25 already -- it was alongside and loaded by the time the Daisy Mae

1 came about.

2 MR. BARNUM: Okay. And how did it get up from Newark to --
3 the EMR facility in Newark to the Coeymans facility?

4 MR. TUCKER: No. No, no, no, no. I'm sorry if there was
5 some miscommunication, no, so she -- the barge was at EMR in
6 Newark at EMR's terminal. EMR loads their barge and then the
7 barge was getting towed to Camden. It never made it up to
8 Coeymans in Coeymans, New York.

9 MR. BARNUM: Okay. I was under the impression from
10 Mr. Johnson that it was already hooked up at the Coeymans facility
11 when he departed on the 21st, but that is not --

12 MR. TUCKER: No, she was -- the barge was -- yeah, the barge
13 was alongside in Newark at EMR's facility, ready to be towed down
14 to or around to Camden.

15 MR. BARNUM: All right, so just for clarification, on
16 Saturday, May 21st, the Daisy Mae picked up the barge at the EMR
17 facility in Newark?

18 MR. TUCKER: That's correct.

19 MR. BARNUM: Okay, thank you. Okay.

20 BY MR. BARNUM:

21 Q. Okay, back to Mr. Johnson.

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. One last final question. The barge, I haven't seen it yet, I
24 plan to make a trip up, but was that like a -- what type of barge
25 is it, it's 300 foot, is it a flat deck, a hopper, what type of

1 barge?

2 A. Well, it was a flat deck with side walls on it.

3 Q. Okay, how high was the side wall?

4 A. Maybe, I'm just trying to guess, probably eight feet, nine
5 feet.

6 MR. BARNUM: Okay. That's all the questions I have for you,
7 Mr. Johnson, thank you very much.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Okay, you're very welcome.

9 BY LT [REDACTED]

10 Q. Okay, I have a few follow-on questions really quick.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. So Mr. Johnson, when you noticed the fire, how far was the
13 barge away from the vessel?

14 A. About 600 feet.

15 Q. Six hundred feet?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And prior to that, had you guys worked the towline at
18 all to extend or reduce the length of the tow?

19 A. Just when we left. When we got offshore from when we left
20 New York, we straightened it out.

21 Q. Okay. So when you guys left the dock, was it in hip tow or
22 were you guys towing it from behind or what was the arrangement?

23 A. Towing it from behind.

24 Q. From behind?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Do you know about how long that tow was, like the
2 length of towline that was out?

3 A. Possibly, it's got to be at least a hundred feet.

4 Q. Okay. And then eventually it was let out to about 600 feet?

5 A. Yeah.

6 LT [REDACTED] Okay, that's all that I have, Mr. Tucker and
7 Mr. Johnson.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Okay. Thank you very much.

9 MR. BARNUM: Thank you. Mr. Johnson, can you kindly send up
10 (indiscernible)?

11 MR. JOHNSON: Yes, okay.

12 LT [REDACTED] Thank you, Mr. Johnson. I really appreciate
13 your time, sir.

14 MR. BARNUM: Enjoy your time off.

15 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, have a good day.

16 (Whereupon, the interview 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 ON SCRAP BARGE NEAR
BOWERS BEACH, DELAWARE IN
THE DELAWARE BAY ON MAY 23, 2022
Interview of Martin Johnson

PLACE: Via Telephone

DATE: May 27, 2022

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber