ORIGINAL

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *
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FIRE ABOARD YACHT *FLAGSHIP* NEAR *
MIAMI, FLORIDA ON APRIL 28, 2024 * Accident No.: DCA24FM035
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Interview of: STEVEN TIRALLA, Marine Carpenter
RMK Merrill-Stevens Shipyard

via telephone

Monday,
May 13, 2024

APPEARANCES:

DAVID FLAHERTY, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

ARNOLD AKGUN, Chief Financial Officer
RMK Merrill-Stevens

VICTOR IGLESIAS, Superintendent
RMK Merrill-Stevens

OZGUR DELI, Refits and Projects Manager
RMK Merrill-Stevens

DAVID FAMULARI, Esq.
Famulari, Butto & Higginbottom, PLLC
Representing RMK Merrill-Stevens

I N D E X

ITEM	PAGE
Interview of Steven Tiralla:	
By Mr. Flaherty	5

I N T E R V I E W

(1:37 p.m.)

MR. FLAHERTY: All right. My name is David Flaherty, I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board and I am the Investigator-in-Charge for the *Flagship* casualty. My last name is spelled F-l-a-h-e-r-t-y.

MR. AKGUN: My name is Arnold Akgun, I'm the chief financial officer of RMK Merrill-Stevens shipyards. My last name is spelled A-k-g-u-n.

MR. IGLESIAS: Who's next?

MR. FLAHERTY: You can go, sir, if you want.

MR. IGLESIAS: Okay. Victor Iglesias, superintendent at RMK Merrill-Stevens. My last name is spelled I-g-l-e-s-i-a-s.

MR. FLAHERTY: David.

MR. FAMULARI: Yeah, I am David Famulari, that's F-a-m-u-l-a-r-i. I'm legal counsel for RMK Merrill-Stevens.

MR. DELI: My name is Ozgur Deli, I am the refits and projects manager and my last name is D-e-l-i.

MR. FLAHERTY: And sir, if you could identify yourself.

MR. TIRALLA: My name is Steven Tiralla, T-i-r-a-l-l-a.

MR. FLAHERTY: And what's your position?

MR. TIRALLA: I am a --

MR. FLAHERTY: Oh, go ahead.

MR. TIRALLA: -- carpenter, marine carpenter.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right. And do I have permission to record

this interview?

MR. TIRALLA: Sure.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right. And just to be clear, sir, the NTSB, we're -- I don't know how familiar you are with the organization or the agency, our primary focus is safety, identifying the probable cause or causes of a fire, in this case, or a marine casualty and documenting it in a report in order to help other vessel operators, to help them prevent a similar type casualty. Do you have any questions before we begin?

MR. TIRALLA: No.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right.

INTERVIEW OF STEVEN TIRALLA

BY MR. FLAHERTY:

Q. So what was the last day you were on the *Flagship*?

A. It was the Friday. I don't know what date that was.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 1: (Indiscernible)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Yeah, I've got the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 1: Take a look.

(Pause.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Yes, Friday was the -- the 19th. (Indiscernible), April 19th.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 3: (Indiscernible)?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER 2: Nineteenth, yes.

MR. TIRALLA: It's April 19th.

MR. FLAHERTY: All right, sir.

MR. TIRALLA: The time is.

BY MR. FLAHERTY:

Q. And what time did you arrive that day for work?

A. I usually get there about 6:14 in the morning.

Q. All right. From that moment, sir, if you could describe in as much detail as you can, after you arrived at 06:14 to the time you left, if you could just describe what type of work you did on the vessel, anything that you encountered, any challenges doing that work, anything unexpected that may have been encountered? All I'm looking for is just for you to describe your work day for that specific incident.

A. Okay, my assignment for that day was to try and waterproof the forward door on the port control on the flybridge.

Q. And describe the events following, what tools you had to get, who worked with you, what the work was like.

A. I was working by myself, basically taking measurements, milling back (ph.) starboard to fix the area around the door. They had a keeper on the inboard side, so I had to do the top outboard side and the bottom, for splash hush reel (ph.).

Q. And how long did that work take you?

A. The better part of the day.

Q. So when you would say better part of the day, more than six hours?

A. More than six hours, yes.

Q. And could you describe what kind of tools did you utilize for

that type of work?
A. On board I just had a fluorescent light, the drill and the driver, hand screw drivers, right-angle ratcheting screw driver. It was very tight working conditions, so it was basically hand tools.
Q. And could you state again, which deck of the vessel were you working on again?
A. Flybridge.
Q. The flybridge. Did you encounter any difficulties outside of it being a tight space?
A. No, not really.
Q. All right. Did you take lunch that day?
A. Yes.
Q. What was your -- do you recall what time you were taking lunch?
A. Twelve to 12:45.
Q. All right. So after you took lunch, you were still working on the project, right?
A. I was working on the project, yes.
Q. All right. When you were on board and if you can remember back, who else was working on the vessel at the time?
A. Joel and -- I just saw Joel.
Q. Okay. And were you aware of what type of work Joel was doing?
A. They were working on the -- waterproofing the solar panels.

Q. Okay, all right. Did you assist them in any of that work at the time?
A. Negative.
Q. All right. So when you were on board -- and how many years have you been working on ships?
A. I've been here since 1982 and I had another four years on top of that.
Q. And you described yourself as a carpenter?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. All right. So that's been essentially your position all this time, since what, '78?
A. Basically, yeah.
Q. All right. So what kind of training do you have for this type of work, anything, any formal training in the last five years or so?
A. Apprenticeship at Maine Maritime Museum --
Q. Um-hum.
A. -- and as a -- a laminator's ticket from ABYC.
Q. Um-hum. And have you worked on a vessel, a yacht like this before, I mean --
A. Yes.
Q. All right. If you can give a description, what kind of condition did you find the vessel to be in?
A. New.
Q. New.

A. It was a new vessel, yes.
Q. Was there any challenges with the vessel that you encountered while you were working on it outside of the tight space, but anything that you found that was unusual?
A. No.
Q. All right. The day you were working, did you notice any unfamiliar smells or odors?
A. Negative.
Q. Were there any problems with the lighting on board the vessel or electrical problems?
A. I wasn't inside the vessel, I was up on the flybridge, so -- and like I said, I had a fluorescent light in the compartment with me, so --
Q. Was that a battery operated one?
A. No.
Q. It was plugged in?
A. Yes.
Q. All right. Was it plugged into the vessel or was it plugged into the facility?
A. Plugged into an extension cord, yeah.
Q. From the facility or from the vessel?
A. From the facility.
Q. Okay. Was that an unusual method of handling electronics when you're on the vessel?
A. Sorry, do you want to clarify that question?

Q. So you were plugged, your fluorescent light, into an extension cord that went to the shoreside facility.
A. Correct.
Q. Was that standard procedure to do that or was it also acceptable to plug in to the vessel's outlet electrical system?
A. The vessel didn't have 110, so --
Q. Oh, okay. So you needed 110.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And was there anything from what you recall when you were walking around the vessel -- now, you'd previously been on the vessel how many times, do you think?
A. I've been working there for probably three weeks, four weeks.
Q. All right. And during that previous three or four weeks, did you notice any unusual odors or smells?
A. Negative.
Q. Not getting into the detail, but the work you did previously, did you encounter anything unusual with any of the engine vessel systems or configuration?
A. No, sir.
Q. All right. I guess, finally, so when you were working up above during that time period or even prior to it during the three or four weeks, did anyone mention to you any concerns that they had with something about the vessel, either maybe that was giving them trouble or making it hard to do work or accomplish stuff?
A. Nobody talked to me about it.

Q. All right. All right, sir, and then what time did you leave that day?
A. We leave at 3:30.
Q. Okay. And then how did you find out about the fire?
A. When I arrived Monday morning.
Q. Oh, okay. And did anyone say, when you initially found out about the fire, did anyone say anything interesting, like -- or unusual about it that kind of stuck into your head?
A. No, sir.
Q. All right. Do you have anything you'd like to add, something as an investigator I should know about that maybe I didn't touch on?
A. No, mine was a pretty much straightforward day.
Q. All right. With that, I have no further questions unless, again, if you have anything you want to add?
A. No, sir.
MR. FLAHERTY: All right. It's 13:49 on May 13th, 2024, this concludes the interview. Thank you very much, sir.
(Whereupon, at 1:49 p.m., the interview concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	FIRE ABOARD YACHT *FLAGSHIP* NEAR MIAMI, FLORIDA ON APRIL 28, 2024 Interview of Steven Tiralla
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA24FM035
PLACE:	via telephone
DATE:	May 13, 2024

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.

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Karen D. Martini
Transcriber