

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY

In the Matter of:
"FIRE ON BOARD M/V COLUMBIA"

Docket No.:
DCA00MM030

Recorded Interview LEO BESAW.

ASD Shipyard
Ketchikan, Alaska

June 16, 2000

BEFORE:

TOM ROTH-ROFFY
Interviewer

P R O C E E D I N G S

MR. ROTH-ROFFY: ...Transportation Safety Board. And we are conducting an investigation of the fire accident that occurred on the Motor Vessel Columbia on June the 6th this year.

For the record, could you please state your name, sir?

MR. BESAW: My name is Leo Besaw.

Q And how do you spell that last name, Leo?

A B-e-s-a-w.

Q And, Leo, what's your position with ASD?

A I work as a production superintendent.

Q How long have you been working with ASD, Leo?

A Oh, probably, four -- three to four years on and off...

Q And could you give me a description of your duties as production superintendent?

A Production superintendent I work with the crafts and between the crafts, coordinate the work and keeping the ship's superintendent informed as to the progress and what's going on with the vessel all the time.

If there's any problems, you immediately get with the ship superintendent and try to get it

resolved...

MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And just to let you know, Leo, NTSB is conducting a safety investigation of this accident. We have no legal authority. We're not trying to establish any sort of --

MR. BESAW: Fault.

MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Yes, we're not trying to find fault or trying to pinpoint any person or agency or whatever. Our sole intention is to, number one, determine what happened, if we can, which we call probable cause of the accident; and the second part is to make recommendations to agencies, individuals, companies to prevent the reoccurrence of a similar accident.

None of what we do has any legal reason. We're not trying to determine liability or anything like that.

So just to make sure that, you know, this is not a legal proceeding of any kind.

E X A M I N A T I O N

BY MR. ROTH-ROFFY:

Q Could you just kind of give me a little background on what your specialty is?

A Building construction.

Q Okay.

A I work for Tienet mainly.

Q So part of your time you spend at the shipyard. Part is with Tienet?

A Construction...

Q So, when you say three to four years with ASD, that includes over a three or four-year period?

A Probably, fourteen months -- about twelve or fourteen months I was with the ASD.

Q And the rest of the time is probably with Timet.

A Yes.

Q Did you have any involvement in any of the electrical work that was going on?

A No. I don't really have the work itself. I have absolutely no control. That's left up to the crafts to do.

My main job is to make sure that one craft doesn't override another craft. And if there is a need for more manpower or something has to be taken care of as far as safety on a vessel, that's mainly what my job is.

Q So you reported to the ship superintendent as your supervisor. Who was responsible to you? Anybody in your chain of command below you?

A I had no control over -- I don't have

anybody's timecards or anything. And, actually, all of them were responsible to me up to a certain extent.

But, as far as me having a crew of men that actually worked under me, I don't have any of those. Any of the jobs that I'm here I never had anybody.

Q Okay, so you were not directly supervising anybody. You're more just a coordination -- sort of like project manager kind of --

A I do the same thing here as I do on a building. I'm superintendent. I control the crafts and direct the functions of the work so that they're not going to be over here wiring something up and have that machinist come over and have the wiring out in front of you instead of...

Q So how did you control the crafts? Who did you deal with to control the crafts?

A It would be usually the foreman that would be in charge. With the electricians it would be Charles.

And if it were the painters, it would be Jim. The steel crew -- and then, when Dave showed up, he was foreman.

Q So you're referring to Charles like Charles Lawrence?

A Yeah.

Q Does he have the equivalent job of Dave

Johnson?

A Yeah.

Q They're both pretty much -- what would you call them?

A They was the foremen. They handled the crew, direct orders. Do the ordering for the parts and stuff...

Q Did you have any occasion to have a look at the electrical work that was going on just from a...

A The only thing that I done was whenever we went in there with the Coast Guard and we looked to see if wires or anything had to be tied up and that.

Charles and I walked around when we made the initial runways just to where the wires were going to run to. And then I got steel - for them, and put the holes in for the penetration and stuff like that.

So I would stay ahead of the fire crew...
That's basically what I...

Q Did you have at any time an occasion to look inside the main switchboard, for any reason?

A No. I've never been in that board. The only thing that we had to do was we pulled part of the ceiling down in order to air some electric to get some stuff pulled... cameras and stuff like that.

I never did look inside there. That panel,

in fact, was never off except when they went in it to tie in to the other line...

The ship was dark and the only ones there were the electricians at that time. There was nobody else there. It was in the evening so they could shut it down...

Back Q I've heard from a couple of people about a little arcing incident that occurred on the collar of panel P2 near the emergency diesel generator.

Could you describe what you know about that event, how it happened?

A Dave got an accident report on that. And if I remember right, I think he had it pretty well-covered. It was the fact they weren't getting out... He was the first one that was back there. He was at the site when they did have... it was something shorted against the box. I'm not sure. Something from the top it was in. And the electricians were down there tightening up a connector or something like that. I'm not sure... at that time.

But there was a report on everything done in the ship's own records. And then there were safety meetings afterwards to keep the... advised...

Q The electricians that were working on that, were they under your direction? Did you show them the

work or the layout?

A No. Dave's the one that done that. He's the one, he done all the directions. I seen that the top wasn't secure, you know, and told him that the top had to be -- the connector had to be secured and everything.

Q What do you mean was not secured?

A Well, when I looked up on the top, I could see that it wasn't. It was at a little bit of an angle, and I didn't think that it was secure.

I didn't get up and go up and touch it or nothing. Just from where I was standing I couldn't see what was there but I could see that it wasn't flat across the top.

Q Right.

A So I went to the craft that was doing the work and told them to go take a look at it. That's what I do with any craft. I wouldn't try to fix it myself. I wouldn't even touch it.

Q Right. So you didn't direct them to fix it?

Back A I don't direct anybody. I don't control anybody in the whole yard. I don't.

Q Okay, I just wanted to make sure I understood how that works.

Now, the Columbia had a switchboard fire. Do

you have any thoughts about how that might have happened? You know, any theories at all that you may have of any of the work you may did?

A The switchboards, as far as I know about the switchboards, if you'd done something bad, then you'd turn them on and... I've never known... any problems had been immediate. They didn't have any later down the road. They didn't...

...the further I can stay away from it, the better I feel on it.

Q So you're not trained as an electrician?

A That's a good thing to do with it. Stay away from it.

Q Can you tell me a little bit about your test inspection program at the shipyard? Are you involved in presenting or doing any of the tests, or overseeing the tests, or doing any of the paperwork for tracking of tests?

A I have no testing. I have no quality control functions whatsoever. The closest to quality control I ever did was ----.

Q Do you usually measure twice and cut once?

A Sometimes, I don't even do it.

MR. ROTH-ROFFY: I think that's all I have. So it's now about 1410. This will conclude the

interview with Mr. Leo Besaw.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)