

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION AND SAFETY BOARD

- - - - -x  
In the matter of: :  
: :  
THE INVESTIGATION OF THE :  
CAPSIZING OF THE WATER TAXI : Docket No:  
LADY D IN BALTIMORE HARBOR, : DCA04MM015  
MARYLAND :  
ON MARCH 6, 2004 :  
: :  
INTERVIEW OF: :  
: :  
MACHINIST JERRY NEBLETT :  
NAVAL RESERVE CENTER :  
BALTIMORE :  
: :  
- - - - -x

NTSB  
Office of Marine Safety  
MS-10  
490 L'Enfant Plaza East SW  
Washington, DC 20594  
Wednesday, March 10, 2004

The above captioned interview convened, upon agreement  
of the parties at 11:20 a.m.

BEFORE:

Mariette Burer  
National Transportation Safety Board

P R O C E E D I N G S

11:20 a.m.

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MS. BURER: Okay, today is the tenth, Wednesday, the tenth of March and it's approximately ten o'clock in the morning. My name is Mariette Burer with the National Transportation Safety Board and to my left is -

MM NEBLETT: Machinist ... Second Class Jerry Neblett, NRC Baltimore Staff.

LT. BARANOWSKI: Lieutenant Scott Baranowski, Sector, Baltimore, US Coast Guard.

(inaudible)

MS. BURER: Okay. Can you go ahead and give me a little description about your educational background?

MM NEBLETT: Yes, I attended public schools here in Baltimore, graduate high school here. I attended college in San Diego.

MS. BURER: Okay, which year did you graduate from high school?

MM NEBLETT: '98.

MS. BURER: '98. And do you have a college degree?

MM NEBLETT: I'm up to an Associates.

MS. BURER: Okay. Can you give me a little bit of history of your work experience?

MM NEBLETT: Yes. At the age of 14 I started

1 on a ship as a machinist at a vo-tech high school.  
2 Joined the Navy as a machinist. Attended their A  
3 school for it. Once I was in San Diego, I went to  
4 college for general machinery and tool making. Studied  
5 computer design and pneumatic control design ... CAD,  
6 CAM. I've got five years' work experience while in the  
7 Navy.

8 Later I went to instructor training school in  
9 San Diego, and then I worked here in NRC Baltimore as  
10 an instructor.

11 MS. BURER: Instructor in what?

12 MM NEBLETT: (inaudible)

13 MS. BURER: Okay, when did you exactly join  
14 the Navy? What year?

15 MM NEBLETT: '98.

16 MS. BURER: '98, okay. What I would like for  
17 you to do is go back in history, maybe Thursday or  
18 Friday morning and then tell me what your normal  
19 schedule would be - and are you currently staff NRC?

20 MM NEBLETT: Yes, ma'am.

21 MS. BURER: Okay, so if you can just kind of  
22 tell me through a - what a normal day would be for  
23 you, normal work day? From the moment that you wake up  
24 - at what time you wake up, all the way to when you  
25 went to bed.

26 MM NEBLETT: All right. Thursday I was down  
27 to port working in a local ... I'm a longshoreman down

1 there. In the National Longshoreman's Association. I  
2 worked Thursday night and got home around one in the  
3 morning. I went to bed about three. Got back up at  
4 five. Came to work, did a light workout in the weight  
5 room, showered, and went to muster with Petty Officer  
6 ...

7           At the end of the work day, my brother came  
8 down - his name is William. We worked out in the  
9 weight room approximately until five p.m., 1700. We  
10 departed the building at that time, went back up to the  
11 union hall, got another job. Friday night we did not  
12 work. I went home, sat with my wife and doing some  
13 things on the computer. Got ready for the drill  
14 weekend.

15           Came in on Saturday. We had a pretty normal  
16 day, and that's when at 2:30 my brother showed up, we  
17 were going to work out that evening, 1600.

18           About 1530 he went over to grab some  
19 refreshments from the snack stand, coming back into my  
20 office he told me that everybody was at the window, it  
21 looked like a boat flipped over out in the harbor.  
22 Initially, I thought he was joking. I said just in  
23 case something did happen, I would grab the digital  
24 camera. I just assumed the duty of the PAO - the  
25 public affairs officer there at the center. I said I'd  
26 take the camera and do some photos in case anything did  
27 happen out there.

1           When I reached the side of the building  
2 where the harbor was in view, I did indeed see a boat  
3 capsized in the water. I used the camera to zoom in  
4 and I seen people on - one of the deck of the boat  
5 waving for help. The boat appeared to be floating back  
6 down the bay. When I lowered the camera away from my  
7 face, I seen my shipmates from the Reserve Center back  
8 gathered together ... one of the ... boats. I  
9 immediately turned around, moved towards the door to go  
10 out.

11           On the way down, I seen one of my shipmates,  
12 and I grabbed him and I told him, come on, we've got to  
13 go. And that was Petty Officer Tate. Still having the  
14 camera in hand, we rushed out to the boat, jumped on  
15 and we assisted in getting the boat underway.

16           At this time, it was raining, and we still  
17 had pretty strong winds. As we approached the capsized  
18 vessel, I picked the camera up and I took several  
19 photos as we approached them. Once we got close enough  
20 to start lowering the ramp and boarding the personnel  
21 from the capsized vessel, I wrapped the camera up in a  
22 t-shirt, set it where it wouldn't get wet, and I went  
23 down to the front of the ramp.

24           A gentleman started screaming that his eight  
25 year old daughter was under the water, and as we were  
26 approaching, I kicked my boots off that I had unlaced  
27 on the way over. I took off my working blue top and I

1 informed my chief that I was going in the water.

2 MS. BURER: Okay.

3 MM NEBLETT: I believe his response was  
4 unless you - unless you absolutely have to, I don't  
5 want you to go in the water. And at that point in  
6 time, I went on and jumped in.

7 People on the boat were telling me there was  
8 an entrance to get within the cabin of that capsized  
9 boat directly beneath me. I went down several times to  
10 find this entrance and it wasn't there. Apparently  
11 they were a little confused of the exact placement of  
12 where they were on the boat and where the entrance was.

13 Convinced that I wasn't going to find it, the  
14 visibility being about 18 inches to 24 inches, I came  
15 up on top of their boat - and that was after I almost  
16 got pinned between the two boats. I got up on top of  
17 the boat with the people on top. I assisted them in  
18 getting across to our boat which we had the ramp down  
19 in the front, you could pretty much walk across, to  
20 make something like a human ladder, holding arm to arm  
21 to guide them across.

22 I went in the water several more times trying  
23 to find the entrance to get the little girl out, and  
24 those attempts were unsuccessful.

25 I got up on top of our boat to look down into  
26 the water around their boat to see if I could see any  
27 bodies floating out. At that time, Senior Chief

1 Scardina - he operated the ramp of our boat to wedge  
2 it up under their pontoon, to kind of like capsize that  
3 boat and shake it, trying to get the bodies to float  
4 out, or flip it over so we could at least see how to  
5 get in there.

6           When he lifted that boat out of the water, I  
7 think I seen the little girl under the seat and the  
8 water flushed her out of an exit. At that time, two  
9 bodies came out, a little girl, and what we initially  
10 believed to be a gentleman, it turned out to be a  
11 female.

12           The chief of that command named Eisenstein -  
13 he was in the water at the time and he grabbed the two  
14 bodies. ... got a hold of two bodies and grabbed on to  
15 the rope on our side of the boat, and we told him to  
16 let one go. He held on to the child.

17           MS. BURER: Okay.

18           MM NEBLETT: I ordered my shipmate to lower  
19 me down into the water because I was the smallest one -  
20 I weigh about a 150 pounds, and no one could reach down  
21 far enough to the surface of the water to grab hold of  
22 the little girl. So they lowered me down, pretty much  
23 by my ankles. I put both arms and wrapped around the  
24 girl in a fireman's hold and they pulled me back up.  
25 Once they got me up high enough, they grabbed onto the  
26 girl and pulled she and myself on board.

27           When I turned around, ... 3 Dixon had already

1 initiated CPR on the little girl. He was doing the  
2 breaths and I was doing the compressions. A few  
3 moments later he informed that he was getting tired and  
4 needed me to take over. After I took over the CPR, the  
5 father showed up and he was like, hugging the girl by  
6 her legs, and I informed him that I needed him to back  
7 up some. I did several cycles of CPR, at which point  
8 the fire boat pulled along side our boat.

9           There were only two personnel on the fire  
10 boat, the driver and one passenger. They said they  
11 couldn't take any victims.

12           MS. BURER: They could or could not?

13           MM NEBLETT: They could not.

14           MS. BURER: Okay.

15           MM NEBLETT: We asked if anyone on board knew  
16 CPR to come over to assist us, because at the time we  
17 were performing CPR on two or three of the victims.  
18 I'm not sure. While we were still pulling people out  
19 of the water, we transported the eight year old onto  
20 the fire boat where I continued CPR until we got on the  
21 shore.

22           While on the fire boat and while to the  
23 shore, the father was also on board. He informed me  
24 that he was a physician, and he requested that I stop  
25 doing CPR. He said he was under the impression that  
26 the girl was gone. She was ... and she had been under  
27 the water too long to survive. I requested that the

1 father step back and let me continue CPR until I turn  
2 her over to the EMTs on shore. He did so without any  
3 hesitation.

4 We transported the girl on shore and I went  
5 back out to sea with the fire boat. When we got back  
6 to the site, I jumped back onto my ship where I got  
7 jackets from the crew - anybody with anything more than  
8 a t-shirt on, I told them to take it off, any jackets,  
9 overshirts, coats, blankets, anything we had on board  
10 to give to the victims because they all appeared to be  
11 going into shock.

12 Chief Johnson gave me his - his jacket to put  
13 on myself - I didn't have a shirt on at the time. I  
14 put his jacket on and I turned around and seen one of  
15 the victims - pupils contracting, he was turning blue,  
16 so I took the jacket off and gave it to him. And  
17 that's when I realized all of them were going into  
18 shock from the cold and the wind of us coming back in.

19 So when we got back in, I ... with the  
20 triage, getting everybody off the boat. I helped carry  
21 the elderly woman in with the fractured shoulder and  
22 collar bone. I assisted in carrying her in on the  
23 gurney. I instructed her husband not to tamper with  
24 the - with the paddle on her arm to stabilize it. She  
25 wanted it loosened up, she said it was too tight. I  
26 told him the pressure was good for her arm and to leave  
27 it there. He asked about his son and his son's

1 girlfriend, a 23-year-old male and a 23-year-old  
2 woman that he had not seen, and I knew we didn't pull  
3 any other persons out of the boat, or from the water,  
4 so I told him I would go check on that.

5 I checked with one of the firefighters and  
6 they told me divers were in the water at the time with  
7 sonar equipment and they were looking for the people.  
8 At that point in time our boat ...M1 Scott Wilson  
9 returned to the boat.

10 MS. BURER: Did you go to the hospital at  
11 all?

12 MM NEBLETT: Yes. They took the whole group  
13 of us out to Bethesda Naval Hospital -

14 MS. BURER: Okay.

15 MM NEBLETT: -- where I received a tetanus  
16 shot and a hepatitis B shot.

17 MS. BURER: Did you guys have any kind of  
18 crisis intervention or debriefing?

19 MM NEBLETT: Yes, they offered it. I didn't  
20 felt as though I needed it.

21 MS. BURER: Do you remember what time you  
22 went to the hospital?

23 MM NEBLETT: We arrived there sometime around  
24 2000. I think we got out about 2200.

25 MS. BURER: 2000?

26 MM NEBLETT: Yes, eight o'clock.

27 MS. BURER: Okay. And then left at 2200.

1 MM NEBLETT: I was back at the reserves  
2 somewhere around 2300 and I departed about 2330.

3 MS. BURER: To go home, I assume?

4 MM NEBLETT: Yes, my brother came out and  
5 picked me up. I caught a ... to work that day.

6 MS. BURER: Okay, so did an ambulance  
7 actually drive you guys to the hospital?

8 MM NEBLETT: No, we took our ... van. One of  
9 the - HMT Spiegel who's staffed there, he drove us all  
10 out.

11 MS. BURER: Okay, so you didn't - okay. Your  
12 brother, William, he told you about it, right, that  
13 people were actually standing there by the window?

14 MM NEBLETT: Looking out.

15 MS. BURER: Is it a second floor window?

16 MM NEBLETT: Right.

17 MS. BURER: Looking out, and where were you  
18 at that time?

19 MM NEBLETT: My office is on this side of the  
20 building over here, and they were looking out of the  
21 back of the building ... back of the building on the  
22 second deck.

23 MS. BURER: Okay. How long do you think it  
24 took for the Navy reserve to get ready, from someone  
25 yelling, like your brother, to actually getting into  
26 the boat -- that would be one time frame, and then  
27 from the boat to actually reaching the capsized vessel?

1 That's two different times.

2 MM NEBLETT: From the time he told me until  
3 the time I was on the boat was probably 90 seconds.

4 MS. BURER: Okay.

5 MM NEBLETT: When I seen the boat was  
6 capsized and I see the personnel on top, I had already  
7 seen about 15 of my shipmates on the boat downstairs,  
8 getting ready to leave. I was one of the last ones to  
9 board the boat.

10 MS. BURER: So do you think approximately 16,  
11 17 people were -

12 MM NEBLETT: Yes.

13 MS. BURER: Okay.

14 MM NEBLETT: I think myself and Petty Officer  
15 Tate were the last two to get on board. Once we got on  
16 board, the ship was already started and they was  
17 already untying it. We pretty much jumped across to  
18 get on.

19 MS. BURER: Okay. And how long do you think  
20 it took to head out from -

21 MM NEBLETT: Two minutes or less.

22 MS. BURER: Two minutes or less.

23 MM NEBLETT: I think the whole thing may have  
24 taken maybe three and a half minutes.

25 MS. BURER: Okay. So that's from the moment  
26 that your brother told you all the way to you guys -

27 MM NEBLETT: To us getting out there to them.

1 MS. BURER: Right.

2 MM NEBLETT: It may have been three minutes,  
3 three and a half minutes.

4 MS. BURER: Okay, and then how long did it  
5 take for the journey from actually leaving to -

6 MM NEBLETT: To come back?

7 MS. BURER: No, no, no. From -

8 MM NEBLETT: From the time we got out there  
9 to the time we got back?

10 MS. BURER: No. From the time you actually  
11 left here to reach the boat.

12 MS. BURER: That's what I said. I think  
13 that time frame might have been about -

14 MS. BURER: Three and a half minutes?

15 MM NEBLETT: No, not from here to the people.  
16 I said three minutes from the time I first seen it  
17 until we got out there to the people.

18 MS. BURER: Oh, to the people.

19 MM NEBLETT: Just from here to out there  
20 might have been two minutes, ninety seconds. Somewhere  
21 in there. It didn't take long at all.

22 MS. BURER: Okay. Now as far as the rescue  
23 effort. So you arrive on the scene and you were  
24 actually heading back, what was that time frame?

25 MM NEBLETT: From the time I first jumped in  
26 the water, I went down several times to look for the  
27 girl - we got all the victims off of the boat, I went

1 back under the water trying to get in to get the rest  
2 of the people from under the boat, came back on board  
3 our boat, looked for victims - looked for - we didn't  
4 flip it, we rocked the boat around and the bodies came  
5 floating out, pulling unconscious bodies out of the  
6 water. Doing CPR on our boat, then on the fire boat,  
7 going back to shore, coming back out. Getting back on  
8 our boat - I have no idea what time frame that was.

9 MS. BURER: Okay. Are you all trained - who  
10 is trained in CPR?

11 MM NEBLETT: Various personnel on board.  
12 It's an annual training for everybody in the Navy.

13 MS. BURER: Okay.

14 MM NEBLETT: But depends on what command  
15 you're at and the manning at the time frame, you may or  
16 may not go. Since I've been at this command I haven't  
17 had any CPR training, and I've been here for 18 months.

18 MS. BURER: Okay. Do you all do any kind of  
19 drills with the boats that you used to -

20 MM NEBLETT: Not the staff, no.

21 MS. BURER: No? Do you guys work together at  
22 all with the fire boats?

23 MM NEBLETT: No.

24 MS. BURER: How come they were not able to -  
25 there were two personnel on the fire boat, right? The  
26 one was a firefighter, and one was a passenger? Or was  
27 he --

1 MM NEBLETT: No, both of them were  
2 firefighters. One was driving and one was just on the  
3 boat. These were two older gentlemen and they were not  
4 equipped to transport passengers.

5 MS. BURER: They were not equipped to  
6 transport passengers, but yet -

7 MM NEBLETT: They did not come there as a  
8 rescue team.

9 MS. BURER: Okay -

10 MM NEBLETT: Those guys over there be  
11 firefighters. Naturally, when we seen the fire boat  
12 pull up with us - they got there about five minutes  
13 after us, and naturally you would have thought that  
14 they would have come out in wet suits, ..., cold water  
15 gear to get in the water and help find victims, and  
16 they was just two guys on a boat.

17 (Problem with recording)

18 MS. BURER: We should be okay. All right.

19 LT. BARANOWSKI: Question is what time frame  
20 do you thin - you said it was raining when you went out  
21 there, and coming back in it was sunny out. About how  
22 long do you think - what did you see the weather like?  
23 What type of storm did you see or -

24 MM NEBLETT: When we left - I'm no  
25 meteorologist -- it was raining when we left. When we  
26 got there, the sun was coming out. On the way back, it  
27 looked like a nice day to go sailing.

1           LT. BARANOWSKI: Do you know when the  
2 raining started?

3           MM NEBLETT: I know it had been raining ...  
4 unless it's sunny out, I'm not looking out the window.

5           LT. BARANOWSKI: When you came back with the  
6 passengers, back to the Naval Reserve Center, was there  
7 anyone else on scene when you left?

8           MM NEBLETT: You mean personnel that wasn't  
9 on the boat when we left?

10          LT. BARANOWSKI: No, any rescue personnel?

11          MM NEBLETT: No, when we left we left no one  
12 out there.

13          LT. BARANOWSKI: No further questions at this  
14 time.

15          INTERVIEWER: Do you remember whether - do  
16 you know a person named ...

17          MM NEBLETT: Yes, he's in the reserves.

18          INTERVIEWER: Was he in the water at any  
19 time?

20          MM NEBLETT: He could have been without my  
21 knowledge. Like I said, I left and came back.

22          MS. BURER: Do you have any further  
23 questions, Scott?

24          LT. BARANOWSKI: I'm looking in my notes to  
25 see if I have any. I think all my questions have been  
26 answered.

27          MS. BURER: Okay, this is Mariette. Do you

1 recall, when you arrived on the scene, how many  
2 people were on the capsized boat?

3 MM NEBLETT: I think I just counted upstairs  
4 on the photo. There were two people not on the boat,  
5 but they had on life preservers and they were like  
6 clinging on to the back. If I'm not mistaken, it was  
7 like 16 persons, total. Once I give you the photo, you  
8 can count them for yourself.

9 MS. BURER: Okay. When you go - when you  
10 went under and your visibility, I know, was 18 to 20  
11 inches in front of you, would you recall if you saw if  
12 the canopy was intact or not? I noticed you had  
13 mentioned that all the windows were closed.

14 MM NEBLETT: Yes, I encountered windows.  
15 Now, I saw when they pulled it out, the whole canopy  
16 was gone, so I don't know when that came off. When I  
17 went down it was windows, and when we flipped it over,  
18 there was windows on a white structure.

19 MS. BURER: Okay, and you said that the  
20 passengers - when they actually got transferred over to  
21 your boat, some of them were dazed, some were quite,  
22 some were crying, some were complaining, and you - I  
23 need to get in my mind ... of time frame. Was this  
24 when you came back for your second trip after you  
25 dropped off the little girl?

26 MM NEBLETT: I didn't start interacting with  
27 the passengers until after I got back. That's correct.

1 They were already on board. They were on board  
2 before we got the little girl out of the water.

3 MS. BURER: Okay.

4 MM NEBLETT: Before we got any actually  
5 victims of drowning out of the water, we had ... canopy  
6 on our boat. Once we had them all on the boat ...  
7 flipped our boat and that's when the rest of the bodies  
8 surfaced.

9 MS. BURER: And the rest of the bodies,  
10 you're talking about -

11 MM NEBLETT: The three victims that I know  
12 of.

13 MS. BURER: Okay. I don't have any more  
14 questions.

15 LT. BARANOWSKI: One more. ... visibility,  
16 do you recall what the visibility was under water? You  
17 said it once, but I just want to make sure we have the  
18 same figures again. What did you estimate the  
19 visibility to be?

20 MM NEBLETT: From the distance I was away  
21 from the boat -

22 LT. BARANOWSKI: Under the water.

23 MM NEBLETT: -- was three feet, so when I was  
24 under water, I could see from where I was at to the  
25 boat, and that was murky. So I'm saying the visibility  
26 was 18 to 24 inches.

27 LT. BARANOWSKI: 18 to 24. Do you have any

1 recollection of transferring the heavy woman -

2 MM NEBLETT: I didn't partake in that.

3 LT. BARANOWSKI: Okay.

4 MM NEBLETT: I was working on the small  
5 child.

6 LT. BARANOWSKI: Okay.

7 MM NEBLETT: The whole time I was out there I  
8 was working with finding the little girl, or pulling  
9 her on board, or doing CPR on her.

10 LT. BARANOWSKI: Okay. I think that's all I  
11 have.

12 MS. BURER: I have one more question  
13 regarding the little girl. When you were actually on  
14 the fire boat with her father, the two firefighters,  
15 the passenger -- the girl and yourself, correct? And  
16 the father at one point said that he wanted you to stop  
17 CPR.

18 MM NEBLETT: Yes, I was at the pier and he  
19 requested that, discontinue CPR. He thought I went  
20 farther than ... and he's gone. She was under the  
21 water for too long. In his state, he wasn't in a  
22 position to make that call. I'm not a doctor, I'm not  
23 going to make that call. I'm just going to do CPR  
24 until ... I requested that he step back and allow me  
25 to continue until I turned her over.

26 MS. BURER: Okay.

27 MM NEBLETT: The other firefighter that was

1 not driving, he went and got one of the bags to put  
2 on the face - he used that and then he left. He said  
3 we could use that, and I asked the father if he wanted  
4 to use it, and the father turned around and he started  
5 squeezing the bag and I continued to do CPR. And at  
6 that point he ...

7 MS. BURER: Okay, thank you.

8 INTERVIEWER: We'd just like to go up with  
9 you and see the pictures.

10 MM NEBLETT: Hold on for one second, let's  
11 finish this up first.

12 INTERVIEWER: Oh, yes, of course, right.

13 MS. BURER: Can you please acknowledge that  
14 this has been tape recorded?

15 MM NEBLETT: That's fine.

16 MS. BURER: All right.

17 (Whereupon, the interview in the above  
18 caption matter was concluded.)

19