

**Transcript of the Testimony of
The Joint United States Coast
Guard/Minerals Management Service
Investigation**

**Date taken: May 29, 2010
AM&PM Sessions**

USCG/MMS Marine Board of Investigation

*****Note*****

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USCG/MMS BOARD OF INVESTIGATION
 INTO THE MARINE CASUALTY, EXPLOSION, FIRE,
 POLLUTION AND SINKING
 OF MOBILE OFFSHORE DRILLING UNIT
 DEEPWATER HORIZON, WITH LOSS OF LIFE
 IN THE GULF OF MEXICO, 21-22 APRIL 2010

SATURDAY - MAY 29, 2010
 AM & PM SESSIONS
 * * * * *

The Transcript of the Joint United States Coast Guard/Minerals Management Service Investigation of the above entitled cause before James T. Bradle, a certified court reporter authorized to administer oaths of witnesses pursuant to Section 961.1 of Title 13 of the Louisiana Revised Statute of 1950, as amended, reported at the Radisson Hotel, 2150 Veterans Memorial Boulevard, Kenner, Louisiana 70062, on Saturday, May 29, 2010, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

Page 1

* * *
 EXAMINATION INDEX
 Page

1	MICAH SANDELL.....
2	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS5
3	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL13
4	EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES14
5	EXAMINATION BY MR. KOHNKE16
6	EXAMINATION BY MR. EASON20
7	EXAMINATION BY MR. WHEATLEY21
8	EXAMINATION BY MR. LINSIN22
9	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN23
10	PAUL J. MEINHART III.....
11	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS24
12	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL35
13	EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES37
14	EXAMINATION BY MR. WHEATLEY38
15	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS42
16	EXAMINATION BY MR. GORDON43
17	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS54
18	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN55
19	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS58
20	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN58
21	CHARLES CREDEUR.....
22	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS60
23	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL72
24	EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES76
25	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS77
26	MICAH BURGESS.....
27	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS83
28	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL98
29	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS106
30	EXAMINATION BY MR. JONES113
31	EXAMINATION BY MR. EASON115

Page 3

1 APPEARANCES:

2 MEMBERS OF THE BOARD:

3 CAPTAIN HUNG M. NGUYEN
 4 CO-CHAIR UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
 5
 6 DAVID DYKES
 7 CO-CHAIR MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
 8
 9 JASON MATHEWS
 10 MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
 11
 12 JOHN McCARROLL
 13 MINERALS MANAGEMENT SERVICE
 14
 15 ROSS WHEATLEY
 16 UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
 17
 18 LT. R. ROBERT BUTTS, COURT RECORDER
 19 UNITED STATES COAST GUARD
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

17 REPORTED BY:

18 JAMES T. BRADLE
 19 CERTIFIED COURT REPORTER
 20
 21
 22
 23
 24
 25

Page 2

1	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL117
2	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN119
3	EXAMINATION BY MR. GODFREY119
4	EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES120
5	ALLEN SERAILE.....
6	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS121
7	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL131
8	EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES133
9	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL135
10	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS136
11	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS136
12	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN142
13	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS143
14	HEBER MORALES.....
15	EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL153
16	EXAMINATION BY MR. WHEATLEY155
17	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS157
18	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN162
19	DAVID SIMS.....
20	EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS166
21	EXAMINATION BY MR. WHEATLEY186
22	EXAMINATION BY LT. BUTTS196
23	EXAMINATION BY MR. GORDON210
24	EXAMINATION BY MR. JONES222
25	EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN227

Page 4

1 (Pages 1 to 4)

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1 PROCEEDINGS
2 CAPT. NGUYEN:
3 The Board will now call on
4 Mr. Micah Sandell with Transocean.
5 * * * *
6 MICAH SANDELL,
7 after having been first duly sworn as a
8 witness by Capt. Hung M. Nguyen, was
9 examined and testified as follows:
10 CAPT. NGUYEN:
11 Thank you. Please be seated.
12 EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS:
13 Q Good morning, Mr. Sandell.
14 A Good morning.
15 Q For the record, could you please
16 state your full name and spell your last?
17 A Micah Joseph Sandell,
18 S-A-N-D-E-L-L.
19 Q And by whom are you employed, sir?
20 A Transocean.
21 Q And what position do you hold with
22 Transocean?
23 A Crane operator.
24 Q How long have you been a crane
25 operator with them, sir?

Page 5

1 A Eight years.
2 Q Have you had any other experience
3 with Transocean outside of crane operator?
4 A No.
5 Q Have you had any other oil and gas
6 experience outside of Transocean?
7 A No.
8 Q Can you please briefly describe
9 your job responsibilities as crane operator?
10 A I unload and off-load boats, move
11 equipment around on the deck, get tools
12 ready to go to the rig floor.
13 Q And how long have you been
14 assigned to the DEEPWATER HORIZON? Is that
15 the only rig you have been on with
16 Transocean?
17 A No.
18 Q What other rigs have you been
19 with, sir?
20 A I have been with the RICHARDSON
21 and the F.G. McCLINTOCK.
22 Q How long had you been on your
23 hitch prior to the incident?
24 A It was Thursday, the 15th, when I
25 come on.

Page 6

1 Q I'm going to get a board up, and I
2 would like for you to display where you were
3 at the time of the incident. We're going to
4 get you a mike, too, sir.
5 Can you please tell us where you
6 were on the rig at the time of the incident?
7 A Yes, sir. I was on the port aft
8 deck in the gantry crane, which was about
9 right here (indicating).
10 Q Okay. You can return to your
11 seat. I just want to ask you a few
12 questions about that. You can keep it up
13 during the conversation. Thank you.
14 At the time of the incident, you
15 were on this side. What did you witness,
16 sir?
17 A Right at the time of the incident?
18 Q No. You were working. Obviously,
19 there was some time up to the incident. Can
20 you please tell me if you heard anything,
21 saw anything, and then what happened at the
22 time of the incident?
23 A I was making up tools for
24 Dril-Quip, and we done made up one tool, was
25 fixing to start on another tool, and I seen

Page 7

1 the guys down on the deck looking up to the
2 rig floor, so I looked up to see what was
3 going on, and that's when I seen mud
4 shooting all the way up to the derrick.
5 Q Did you hear anything, any type of
6 release of gas or air?
7 A Not at that time.
8 Q In your written testimony -- your
9 written statement, excuse me, you said that
10 you saw gas coming out of the degasser. Is
11 that accurate?
12 A Yes.
13 Q Okay. From that, you thought they
14 were trying to divert through the degasser
15 or did you just think it was flowing through
16 the degasser at that time?
17 A I didn't know.
18 Q After the incident occurred, can
19 you please lead us up to the point of once
20 you evacuated?
21 A After everything had done
22 exploded?
23 Q Yes, sir. Well, can you start
24 after the rig floor, when you saw the mud
25 shooting up through the derrick, up to that

Page 8

2 (Pages 5 to 8)

1 point up to the evacuation?
 2 A After I saw the mud shooting up,
 3 just several seconds, and then it just quit
 4 and went down. And at that time, I yelled
 5 at my roustabouts to go to the front of the
 6 rig. Whether they heard me on the radio,
 7 I'm not sure.
 8 But several seconds after that, I
 9 took a deep breath, thinking that, "Oh, they
 10 got it under control," and then all of a
 11 sudden the degasser mud started coming out
 12 of the degasser, and the degasser is on
 13 the -- I'm sure you -- I don't know if you
 14 all know. It's on the starboard aft of the
 15 derrick, and it's in a gooseneck, and it
 16 points back down to the deck.
 17 And it come out of it so strong
 18 and so loud, that it just filled up the
 19 whole back deck with gassy smoke, and it was
 20 loud enough that it was like taking an air
 21 hose and sticking it up to your ear. And
 22 then something exploded. I'm not sure what
 23 exploded, but just looking at it, where the
 24 degasser is sitting, there's a big tank and
 25 it goes into a pipe. I'm thinking that the

Page 9

1 tank exploded.
 2 And that started the first fire,
 3 which was on top of the motor shed and on
 4 the starboard side of the derrick. And then
 5 that's when I jumped up and I turned my air
 6 conditioner off, because I feel we got this
 7 gassy smoke, and I'm not sure if it's --
 8 what kind of gas it is or if it's going to
 9 suck in my air conditioner.
 10 I turned my AC off in my crane and
 11 didn't know if I should get out or not. And
 12 about that time, everything in the back just
 13 exploded at one time. It went all -- The
 14 whole back deck went all over me and knocked
 15 me to the back of the cab. I fell to the
 16 floor there. And then at that time I didn't
 17 know what to do. I fell, put my hands over
 18 my head, and I just said, "No, God, no,"
 19 because I thought that was it.
 20 And then the flames went away from
 21 where I was at and it was shooting straight
 22 up to all over the derrick. And at that
 23 time, I just took off out the door and
 24 started down the stairs, and I went around
 25 the port side of the rig and to the forward

Page 10

1 locker room deck.
 2 Q Was there anybody else around you
 3 that was helping you make up the Drill-Quip
 4 tool?
 5 A I had some roustabouts and a
 6 Weatherford hand working a bucking unit and
 7 a Drill-Quip hand making his tools up.
 8 Q And did they evacuate with you?
 9 A They -- I'm not sure when they
 10 took off, because it happened so fast, I
 11 don't know.
 12 Q And after you got to the
 13 lifeboats, can you please go from there?
 14 What happened?
 15 A Well, once we got to the
 16 lifeboats, my supervisor, the deck pusher,
 17 was taking roll and --
 18 Q Who was your deck supervisor, sir?
 19 I'm sorry.
 20 A Dennis Martinez. And there was a
 21 lot of screaming, a lot of screaming, a lot
 22 of hollering, a lot of scared people,
 23 including me scared, and trying to get
 24 people on the boats. It was very
 25 unorganized.

Page 11

1 We had some wounded we was putting
 2 in the boat. We had people on the boat
 3 yelling, "Drop the boat, drop the boat," and
 4 we still didn't have everybody on the boat
 5 yet. We were still trying to get people on
 6 the boat and trying to calm them down enough
 7 to get everybody on the boat, and there was
 8 people jumping off the side.
 9 We was trying to get a count, and
 10 just couldn't get an accurate count, because
 11 people were just jumping on the boat, and we
 12 were trying to get people to count, "one,
 13 two, three," around the boat, trying to see
 14 how many we had in there, and people
 15 couldn't even count right because they was
 16 too scared.
 17 So what we done, we just went
 18 ahead and filled the boats up to their max
 19 and loaded the wounded we got on there, and
 20 then lowered the boat.
 21 And once we got to the workboat,
 22 the DAMON BANKSTON, they loaded us on there,
 23 and then once we got everybody there, then
 24 we made a roll call there, and we done
 25 several roll calls there again to make sure

Page 12

3 (Pages 9 to 12)

1 they had everybody.
 2 Q Backing up, earlier you said the
 3 second explosion. Did you have any idea
 4 where that second explosion came from, sound
 5 or which direction or see where it come
 6 from?
 7 A No, sir. When it blew up, the
 8 whole deck blew up at one time.
 9 Q Did you see any off-loading
 10 configuration from your standpoint of how
 11 they were off-loading to the DAMON BANKSTON
 12 from the rig?
 13 A No.
 14 MR. MATHEWS:
 15 I have no further questions.
 16 Thank you.
 17 EXAMINATION BY MR. McCARROLL:
 18 Q Hello, Mr. Sandell. Just one
 19 quick follow-up.
 20 You said the degasser points down
 21 towards the deck; is that correct?
 22 A Yes, sir. It's a gooseneck.
 23 Q And it points down towards the
 24 back of the deck?
 25 A Yes, sir.

Page 13

1 Q So it would be where you could see
 2 it pretty plainly?
 3 A Yes, straight in front of me.
 4 Q And you saw mud coming out of
 5 that, shooting down towards the deck?
 6 A Yes, sir, mud come out first, and
 7 then the gas and smoke come out second.
 8 Q The gas and smoke?
 9 A Uh-huh (affirmative response).
 10 Q Did you see the workboat, the
 11 BANKSTON, at the same time?
 12 A I didn't see it at the same time.
 13 Q I mean, did you happen to notice
 14 it?
 15 A I knew it was on the side of it.
 16 Q Did you see what happened to it
 17 during the explosion or anything?
 18 A No.
 19 MR. McCARROLL:
 20 Thank you.
 21 EXAMINATION BY MR. DYKES:
 22 Q Let me get my notes straight here.
 23 You were in your gantry crane, you all were
 24 in the bucket, and the first thing you saw
 25 was mud and water and gas come up out of the

Page 14

1 drill floor, correct?
 2 A Yes.
 3 Q Okay. It lasted five seconds, two
 4 seconds?
 5 A I'm not sure.
 6 Q A short time, a long time?
 7 A A short time.
 8 Q Okay. Then it shut off?
 9 A Yes.
 10 Q And you saw it come out the
 11 degasser?
 12 A Yes.
 13 Q And then the first explosion?
 14 A Yes.
 15 Q Now, where did you see the first
 16 explosion occur?
 17 A I didn't -- I didn't quite see the
 18 explosion. I just heard it, but from where
 19 it sounded and it looked like, it looked
 20 like it was coming right up about where the
 21 degasser is.
 22 MR. DYKES:
 23 All right. Thank you.
 24 CAPT. NGUYEN:
 25 Flag state?

Page 15

1 MR. LINSIN:
 2 No questions. Thank you, Captain.
 3 CAPT. NGUYEN:
 4 Transocean, any questions for you?
 5 MR. KOHNKE:
 6 Yes, maybe just one or two.
 7 EXAMINATION BY MR. KOHNKE:
 8 Q Good morning, Mr. Sandell.
 9 A Good morning.
 10 Q Mr. Sandell, I just want to
 11 understand the sequence that you described
 12 in trying to get a better understanding of
 13 the timing.
 14 The first thing you said after
 15 your attention was drawn to it, you saw mud
 16 shooting out of the derrick, and the mud may
 17 have had something else in it, but that's
 18 the first thing you saw?
 19 A Yes.
 20 Q And then you said your attention
 21 was then directed towards the degasser. Was
 22 the mud still coming out of the derrick when
 23 you turned to the degasser?
 24 A No.
 25 Q Okay. So the mud had stopped

Page 16

4 (Pages 13 to 16)

1 coming out of the derrick and you saw
2 something, which you thought was gas coming
3 out of the degasser?
4 A Yes.
5 Q Okay. You said it then quit and
6 went down, and I wanted to understand, what
7 went down? Was it no longer coming out of
8 the degasser or no longer going out of the
9 derrick when you said it quit?
10 A It was no longer coming out of the
11 derrick.
12 Q Okay. And how long do you
13 think -- I know you weren't looking at your
14 watch. That's for certain. But how long do
15 you estimate today that this "quit" period
16 lasted?
17 A Just several seconds.
18 Q You indicated that you had time to
19 yell to the roustabouts to go -- You told
20 us, and I didn't hear where you told them to
21 go. Where was it?
22 A I told them to go to the front of
23 the rig.
24 Q Okay. So you had time to -- The
25 quitting -- The noise had abated, it had

Page 17

1 slowed down, the noise had stopped?
2 A The noise?
3 Q The noise that had been associated
4 with gas coming out or mud coming out, that
5 had also stopped, too, or enough for you to
6 use your radio and be heard?
7 A No, sir. I told them before it
8 come out of the degasser. There was no
9 noise until it started coming out of the
10 degasser.
11 Q Okay. And when you said it quit,
12 was the gas still coming out of the
13 degasser?
14 A There was nothing coming out of
15 the degasser when it quit coming off the rig
16 floor.
17 Q Now, what would cause it to quit,
18 if you know?
19 A I don't know.
20 Q Okay. Would attempts to shut in
21 the well cause it to quit?
22 A I don't know that.
23 Q You weren't able to see the
24 driller, Dewey Revette, and toolpusher Jason
25 Anderson? You weren't looking at them

Page 18

1 during this time, were you?
2 A No.
3 Q Okay. And so you're not aware of
4 what they might have been doing with their
5 job responsibilities?
6 A No.
7 MR. KOHNKE:
8 Thank you, sir.
9 CAPT. NGUYEN:
10 Anadarko?
11 COUNSEL REPRESENTING ANADARKO:
12 No questions.
13 CAPT. NGUYEN:
14 MOEX?
15 Douglas Brown?
16 COUNSEL REPRESENTING DOUGLAS BROWN:
17 No questions, sir.
18 CAPT. NGUYEN:
19 BP?
20 COUNSEL REPRESENTING BP:
21 No questions. Thank you, Captain.
22 CAPT. NGUYEN:
23 Cameron?
24 COUNSEL REPRESENTING CAMERON:
25 No questions.

Page 19

1 CAPT. NGUYEN:
2 Halliburton?
3 COUNSEL REPRESENTING HALLIBURTON:
4 No questions. Thank you, Captain.
5 CAPT. NGUYEN:
6 Thank you, sir.
7 M-I SWACO?
8 MR. EASON:
9 Just one.
10 EXAMINATION BY MR. EASON:
11 Q Mr. Sandell, I am Tobin Eason here
12 on behalf of M-I.
13 A quick question for you. As I
14 understand it, when you're in the gantry
15 crane, you saw mud coming out of the
16 derrick?
17 A Yes.
18 Q In answering the question to
19 Mr. Dykes, you said mud and possibly water.
20 Can you distinguish if it was mud and water
21 or was it just mud when you first saw that
22 gushing coming out of the derrick?
23 A It just looked like mud to me.
24 Q So no water --
25 A No.

Page 20

5 (Pages 17 to 20)

1 Q -- that you could tell at that
2 particular time?
3 A I couldn't tell if there was
4 water.
5 Q Was there any time that you
6 actually saw water coming up?
7 A No.
8 MR. EASON:
9 Thank you, sir. That's it.
10 CAPT. NGUYEN:
11 Thank you, sir.
12 Dril-Quip?
13 COUNSEL REPRESENTING DRIL-QUIP:
14 No questions.
15 CAPT. NGUYEN:
16 Weatherford?
17 COUNSEL REPRESENTING WEATHERFORD:
18 No questions.
19 CAPT. NGUYEN:
20 Thank you, sir.
21 EXAMINATION BY MR. WHEATLEY:
22 Q Sir, I just have one question, and
23 maybe I missed this in your testimony. You
24 mentioned that you were making up some tools
25 at the time just preceding the incident.

Page 21

1 What tools were you making up and
2 what were they for?
3 A They were for Dril-Quip, and I
4 don't know what they were for.
5 MR. WHEATLEY:
6 Thank you.
7 MR. LINSIN:
8 Thank you, Captain.
9 EXAMINATION BY MR. LINSIN:
10 Q Good morning, Mr. Sandell.
11 A Good morning.
12 Q I had a question, sir, regarding
13 if you know the names of the roustabout and
14 the fellow from Dril-Quip that were working
15 with you in making up these tools. Do you
16 recall their names?
17 A I had -- Excuse me. I had Dustin
18 Johnson. He had the radio. I had Heber
19 Morales. And the Dril-Quip guy, I'm not
20 sure of his name.
21 Q Okay. Approximate age? Any
22 description you can give us of them?
23 A I would say -- I would say in his
24 forties, tall, slender.
25 UNIDENTIFIED PERSON:

Page 22

1 Handsome guy, right?
2 MR. LINSIN:
3 Thank you, Captain.
4 CAPT. NGUYEN:
5 Thank you, sir.
6 EXAMINATION BY CAPT. NGUYEN:
7 Q I have a couple of questions.
8 While you were on your duty station in the
9 crane, what communication do you have access
10 to? Radio?
11 A Radio.
12 Q Okay. Before you left the shack,
13 was there any radio transmission that you
14 heard over the radio, any transmission
15 between the bridge, the control, engine
16 control room or any transmission at all?
17 A No, I didn't hear nothing.
18 Q Okay. Mr. Sandell, are there any
19 questions that we didn't ask you or any
20 information that you would like to offer to
21 the Board of relevance to the investigation?
22 A No, sir.
23 Q Okay. I thank you for your
24 testimony, and if we need for you to come
25 back in the future for additional

Page 23

1 questioning, will you make yourself
2 available?
3 A Yes.
4 CAPT. NGUYEN:
5 Thank you, sir. You are
6 dismissed.
7 The Board will now call on
8 Mr. Paul Meinhart with Transocean.
9 * * * *
10 PAUL J. MEINHART III,
11 after having been first duly sworn as a
12 witness by Capt. Hung M. Nguyen, was
13 examined and testified as follows:
14 CAPT. NGUYEN:
15 Thank you, sir, for being here.
16 Please be seated.
17 EXAMINATION BY MR. MATHEWS:
18 Q Before we begin, sir, we just --
19 every day we just want to remind you that
20 you are represented by a Transocean
21 attorney. Is that okay with you?
22 A Yes.
23 Q Mr. Meinhart, for the record, can
24 you please state your name and spell your
25 last?

Page 24

6 (Pages 21 to 24)