

DECLASSIFIED

- SIXTEENTH DAY -

The board reconvened in executive session at 0830 hours, 26 June 1969. During this session the board reviewed and approved the prior day's transcript and planned future proceedings of the board. At the conclusion thereof, the board reconvened in open session at 0930 hours, 26 June 1969.

All persons connected with the board, who were present when the board adjourned were again present.

Senior Member: The hearing is now open.

Counsel for the board: The board is now being held in open session. It is necessary to point out that any person who has been told he is a witness or who may be a witness is asked to withdraw from the board room. Sir, prior to calling the first witness, we have received an authenticated copy of a message sent from USS FRANK E. EVANS to HMAS MELBOURNE on the 31st of May concerning communications. This was referred to by Lieutenant Commander Arundel in his testimony and at this time we tender it as Exhibit 80 for inclusion in the record.

Senior Member: Very well, so received.

Lieutenant Commander George L. McMichael, U.S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was sworn and testified as follows:

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by Counsel for the board:

Q. Lieutenant Commander McMichael, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation, which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is believed that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law no witness may be compelled to answer any question, the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such questions. Do you understand the remarks I have just made?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Would you state your name, your grade and present organization?

A. Lieutenant Commander George Lee McMichael, U.S. Navy, presently Executive Officer, USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. And were you the Executive Officer of FRANK E. EVANS on 3 June 1969?

A. Yes, sir. I was.

Q. Lieutenant Commander McMichael, the board intends to call you later for more comprehensive testimony. However, at this time, having heard testimony from a number of witnesses from several parts of the ship, the board would like information of a general nature as to the number of personnel in various parts of the ship and those who were lost as a result of the disaster. Have you, at my request, prepared any document which summarizes the information on that question?

A. Yes, sir. I have. I have with me an inboard profile of the ship in which the various major compartments of the ship are delineated. I have annotated these compartments with the number of people who were physically located in the compartment at the time of collision and the number of people who were lost in each compartment.

Q. And at this time, would you produce the document so that it may be marked Exhibit 81 for identification?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. The figures that you have shown there are in two sets I believe. Those pertaining to the personnel in various parts of the ship at the time of collision, and those who were lost. Is that correct?

A. That is correct.

Q. What is the total number of persons who were on board at the time of collision?

A. Two hundred and seventy three.

Q. And what is the number of persons who were lost?

A. Seventy-four.

Q. And do the figures which you have shown there total those two numbers?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are there any other explanatory remarks that you would like to make with respect to that exhibit?

A. No, sir, except in one instance the location of a person shown here is only approximated because he was a roving patrol. I don't believe he remembers exactly where he was but the general area of the ship is shown.

Q. Who is that man?

A. I don't remember who had the watch. I believe it was Hudson, the Sounding and Security Watch.

Q. And where have you shown him in that diagram?

A. I have shown him in the port side passageway, just aft of the hatch leading into main control.

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Q. Have you indicated in any place on that profile view, where the break in the ship occurred?  
A. Yes, sir. There is a jagged line shown here at frame 92 and a half, which is the location of the separation.

Q. Is that at the approximate forward bulkhead of the Forward Engine Room?  
A. Yes, sir. It is.

Counsel for the board: At this time we will deliver that document to the board and ask that it be admitted into evidence.

Senior Member: It may be admitted.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

Questions by Counsel for the board:

Q. Lieutenant Commander McMichael, are you familiar with the distribution of life jackets on board FRANK E. EVANS prior to the time of collision?  
A. Yes, sir. I am.

Q. Could you state who was the custodian of the life jackets on board?  
A. The First Lieutenant, Ensign Robert Brandon.

Q. And did he survive the collision?  
A. No, sir. He did not.

Q. Do you have any documentation indicating the number of life jackets which were on board FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. Yes, sir. There was an inventory conducted in February of this year by Brandon. I have the inventory cards for that inventory.

Q. Do they bear his signature?  
A. Yes, sir. They do.

Q. What types of life jackets do they indicate that were aboard?  
A. They indicate that on board there were 70 kapok type life jackets and 245 yoke type inflatable life jackets - CO2 life jackets.

Q. For a total of?  
A. 315.

Q. And as I understand it, there were 273 men aboard on 3 June. Is that correct?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. And how were these life jackets distributed about the ship?  
A. The inflatable life jackets were distributed in the vicinity of general quarters stations. The kapok life jackets were distributed in the vicinity of line working stations for underway replenishments.

Q. And did some people use the kapok jackets also at general quarters?  
A. Yes, sir, especially on the open bridge and exposed areas.

Q. Are you aware of any measures that were taken to insure that all personnel had life jackets at their general quarters stations?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Would you describe them please?  
A. Each time the ship went to general quarters, in a drill situation that is - for example not on the gun line when we were doing it as a drill or in preparation for a gunnery shoot - the word would be passed on the LMC for any personnel not having a life jacket and also not having a gas mask to contact the Leading Petty Officer of their station. He was then to provide a list to the First Lieutenant of any missing life saving equipment. This was done on a normal basis. We never came up with any shortages. Sometimes, somebody would have taken a life jacket or two from one station and maybe found their way to another station, so we did reallocate resources a couple of times. Each time that we did this we did end up with everybody having a life jacket.

Q. And did you make any personal checks as to the adequacy of life jackets?  
A. Yes, sir. As a part of going to general quarters, I normally made a tour throughout the ship checking the setting of material conditions. As I did this, I also inspected for proper battle dress which included life jackets.

Q. By whose order did you do this?  
A. By the Commanding Officer's order.

Q. Do you recall the most recent time that you may have done this prior to the collision?  
A. The last time would have been the period shortly before we arrived on the gun line, when we were at a general quarters situation. This would have been early May.

Q. During the period on the gun line, how were the life jackets and other safety equipment checked?  
A. They were checked by the First Lieutenant with regularity. Then, also, all of the officers in charge of the various stations were directed to inspect for proper battle dress. If they found any shortcomings they were to report this also to the First Lieutenant to get the additional equipment. I don't know, of my own knowledge, of any shortages that were turned up at this time.

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Q. Have you indicated in any place on that profile view, where the break in the ship occurred?  
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Senior Member: It may be admitted.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

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A. Yes, sir. I am.

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A. The First Lieutenant, Ensign Robert Brandon.

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A. No, sir. He did not.

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A. Yes, sir. There was an inventory conducted in February of this year by Brandon. I have the inventory cards for that inventory.

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Q. You said there were no lights in the compartment. Did you see any emergency lighting in the compartment?

A. Only battle lanterns. There was one battle lantern burning in the emergency diesel room and one in the machine shop.

Q. Were there battle lanterns burning in your living compartment?  
A. No, sir.

Q. And when you went to the emergency diesel generator room, what action did you take to try to get the switchboard to take the load?

A. In order to restore the electrical load you have to have two electricians. One in the Emergency Diesel Room and one on the after switchboard and there was no answer. I could have closed the feedback and then went to the board myself.

Q. By the board, you mean which board?

A. The after switchboard. Then put the load on that way. I didn't know what the circumstances were and there was a possibility of electrocuting someone by me taking this action. The Engineman came in and we secured the diesel.

Q. What is the name of the Engineman that came in?  
A. Bare, Engineman Second.

Q. And through what means did you attempt to communicate with both the forward and after switchboard?

A. Soundpowered phones.

Q. Is that a phone that is manned in the Diesel Generator Room or did you have a call system?  
A. It's a call system.

Q. Do you recall the number of the circuit you used?  
A. 2JV.

Q. You indicated there was a possibility that you might electrocute somebody if you took the load the way that you outlined. How could that occur?

A. Well, if the After Engine Room had been flooded, which I didn't know, I could have closed the feedback and I would have been supplying power to number two switchboard. If there had been anybody in the water there is a good chance they would have been electrocuted.

Q. I see. "By close the feedback," could you describe that in a little more detail?

A. There is a breaker on the switchboard. It's called a feedback breaker and it connects the emergency switchboard and the diesel to the after switchboard. There are two breakers, one on each board. You close the after breaker on the emergency diesel and then you close the breaker on the after switchboard. You can supply electrical load to the ship.

Q. How about the supplying of electrical power to after steering. Do you know what occurred in the case of after steering in this case?

A. The power to after steering, I don't think was restored. Normally, if the load is dropped, the diesel will start automatically. ABT on the diesel will transfer to emergency and automatically start supplying power to after steering. I don't think it transferred.

Q. By ABT you mean what?  
A. Automatic Bus Transfer.

Q. And did you observe that yourself or are you making an assumption in that regard?  
A. It's an assumption. I don't remember looking to see if it had transferred.

Q. I did understand you to say that the diesel had started automatically when the electrical power went off. Is that correct?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Approximately how long did you stay in the Emergency Diesel Generator Room before leaving the compartment?

A. Approximately a minute and a half.

Q. Did you report to anyone what you had done - to anyone in authority on the fantail?  
A. Yes, sir. Mr. Covert, the Engineering Officer.

Q. And what were you directed to do at that time, if anything?  
A. Just hang loose and see what was going to happen.

Q. And how long was it before you left FRANK E. EVANS for the MELBOURNE?  
A. Possibly four or five minutes.

Q. What route did you use to board MELBOURNE?  
A. I climbed the ECM deck and up a rope ladder.

Q. At the time you were thrown from your bunk and went to the after diesel generator, was there any loose gear thrown around in your compartment?

A. Yes, sir. There were several upright lockers that had been moved from their mounts and the generator room itself. There had been a desk that had been shifted from the portside bulkhead and was lying against the generator.

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Q. How was that desk secured to either the bulkhead or the deck?  
A. It had been spot welded.

Q. Had the spot weld broken, is that what had happened?  
A. I think so.

Q. Do you have any knowledge as to how the upright lockers broke loose?  
A. No, sir.

Q. How had they been secured in place?  
A. There was a weld around the base of sheet metal, angle iron, to make a container for them, approximately, an inch high. They had been set in that.

Q. Had they been secured near the top in any way?  
A. Not that I know of.

Q. Based on your observation of the problems you experienced both with lockers and other gear breaking loose and with the diesel generator, do you have any design or other suggestions as a result of this event?  
A. Other than that the upright lockers should be braced some way at the top, no, sir.

Counsel for the board: Counsel has no further questions for this witness.

#### EXAMINATION BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q. Lares, you said that in your living compartment that you saw no battle lanterns lighted. Were there any battle lanterns situated there that you know of for sure prior to the collision or at the time of collision?

A. No, sir. There were no battle lanterns in our compartment.

Q. Where is the automatic bus transfer device which transfers the steering gear power source from one of the main boards to the emergency board?  
A. It's mounted in the switchboard in the After Diesel Generator Room on the righthand side.

Q. On the emergency board then?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Was it set up, to your certain knowledge, to effect automatic transfer?  
A. Yes, sir. When we are underway, it is always set up automatic. If the load is lost it will transfer automatically. The diesel will start and the ABT transfers automatically.

Q. When was the last time you checked to see that it was so set up?  
A. To the best I can remember, the second of June. It's generally checked everyday by either myself or one of the other electricians.

Q. Whose responsibility is it to check?  
A. Either myself or Powell, Electrician's Mate Second.

Q. Depending on what?  
A. Depending on who gets to it first that day.

Q. After the collision, during your time aboard FRANK E. EVANS, did you at any time see any battle lanterns of the automatic relay actuated variety that were not lighted?  
A. No, sir. I didn't see any that weren't lighted.

Q. Do you think there was an adequate number of automatic battle lanterns available for minimum requirements in such an emergency?  
A. Yes, sir. I think so.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions for Petty Officer Lares.

Counsel for the board: Petty Officer Lares at this time you are informed that you are privileged to make any further statement covering anything related to the subject matter of the investigation that you think should be a matter of record in connection therewith which has not been fully brought out by the questions you have been asked. Would you like to add anything to what you have stated?

Witness: No, sir.

The witness was duly warned regarding his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Donald A. Bakken, Machinery Repairman First Class, U.S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was sworn and testified as follows:

#### EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Petty Officer Bakken, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation, which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is believed that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law, no witness may be compelled to answer any question the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such questions. Do you understand the remarks I have just made?

A. Yes, sir.

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Q. Would you state your name, your grade and present organization?  
A. Donald A. Bakken, Machine Repairman First Class, USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. How long have you been in the Navy?  
A. Thirteen years, sir.

Q. How long have you been assigned to USS FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. One year and three months.

Q. To what division were you assigned?  
A. "R" Division.

Q. What were your general duties in that Division?  
A. For a period of time I was the leading petty officer, until the chief came aboard. My duties were the ship's MR. I was the only one onboard.

Q. And MR means machinery repairman?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. What was your general quarters station?  
A. Repair Five.

Q. And where is that located?  
A. Amidships just aft of main control.

Q. In the early morning of 3 June, what was the first indication that you had that something unusual was occurring?  
A. Well, we rolled over to the side and were actually hit.

Q. And where were you at the time?  
A. I was in my rack asleep.

Q. And where is your compartment?  
A. Compartment C-203-L.

Q. And when the ship rolled over and you were thrown from your bunk, what did you do next?  
A. My rack was on the starboard side, so I wasn't actually thrown out of it, I was laid up against the side of the bulkhead. Soon as the ship righted itself I immediately grabbed my clothes and went to my general quarters station.

Q. What was the state of the lighting in your compartment at that time?  
A. As I recall there were battle lanterns burning.

Q. Do you recall how many?  
A. No, sir.

Q. Were you able to see to get your clothes on and get out of the compartment?  
A. Yes.

Q. Was the illumination adequate for that purpose in your opinion?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. And when you got to your battle station what did you find?  
A. Well, I was standing in water. As I looked forward, where there should have been a passageway there was nothing. So I stepped out onto the port side, looked up and realized the extent of damage and returned to my compartment.

Q. Do you have any knowledge as to where the water came from that was in the repair compartment?  
A. No. I would have to assume that when the ship laid over on its side it shipped some water aboard, and this was lying in the passageway.

Q. And when you returned to the compartment, what did you find?  
A. There was still some people in the compartment getting dressed. I told them to get out of there immediately and get on the fantail.

Q. And what did you do then?  
A. I went up to the fantail.

Q. Did you observe anyone setting damage control conditions in the area?  
A. Yes, sir. They had already set Zebra on the after diesel hatch and the machine shop hatch which are in the compartment and also on the hatch going down to the JP5 pump room.

Q. And do you know who had set those conditions?  
A. No, I don't, sir.

Q. Now, can you give the board any idea of how long after the collision this was?  
A. 2 or 3 minutes I would imagine.

Q. And how long did it take the compartment to clear after you told the people to get out of it.  
A. They cleared out immediately.

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Q. From there, where did you go?

A. After I left the compartment, I went to the fantail and was standing by awaiting further orders as to whatever the officer in charge wanted me to do, sir.

Q. And who was the officer in charge at that time?

A. When I got - first got to the fantail - I believe it was LTJG Covert. Shortly after that Mr. Dunne showed up, sir.

Q. Did you receive any instructions as to what you were to do?

A. No. I was just standing by waiting.

Q. What did you do then?

A. Well, a fireman came back, Hudson, and he was up on the midships station. He said there was nobody in charge up there. So I went up there and took charge. I then sent word back to Mr. Dunne that I had done so.

Q. Did you establish any communication with the fantail?

A. Just by messenger, sir.

Q. What did you do after you took charge?

A. Well - they were rigging Jacobs ladders and trying to string cables - what it amounted to was that I saw to it that our personnel were standing by to receive these cables, put them where the Australian officers wanted them and secured the Jacobs ladders.

Q. And where did you put the cables?

A. The cable was run to our torpedo deck around the bottom of the stanchion that held the davit - our torpedo davit.

Q. Where were the Jacobs ladders run to?

A. They were run to the lifeline, sir.

Q. To the?

A. Lifelines.

Q. On the which deck?

A. Main deck.

Q. What personnel were there assisting you at the forward station?

A. There were quite a number of seaman, fireman, third class petty officers and also Mr. Murphy. LTJG Murphy came up there, sir.

Q. And what actions did you and Mr. Murphy take from that point on?

A. Well, our first concern was to get the injured people off. We couldn't do that off the Jacobs ladder. We notified the Australians that these guys couldn't possibly climb a Jacobs ladder. They sent down a rigid aluminum ladder to us that these people could climb.

Q. Did they send down any stretchers at any time?

A. Yes. They threw approximately seven stretchers on board.

Q. Did you use those for any purposes?

A. Just one. One man went off by stretcher.

Q. Do you recall who that was?

A. I believe it was Peters.

Q. Did you eventually leave EVANS from that station?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you recall the personnel left on board at the time you left?

A. The only three I know of that was there, was Mr. Hiltz, Mr. Murphy and myself.

Q. Do you recall how many were still on the fantail at that time?

A. Mr. Hiltz came up, sir, and notified me and Mr. Murphy that everybody was gone and we should leave also.

Q. Can you estimate how long that was after the collision?

A. Maybe fifteen or twenty minutes I suppose. I don't know.

Q. Based on your observations from the time of the collision until you departed FRANK E. EVANS, can you make any comment as to the performance of duty by the crew of FRANK E. EVANS?

A. I would say it was very outstanding. There was no panic. All the men did their job as they saw it or as they were assigned and just carried out their normal duties.

Q. Can you comment on the assistance you received from the crew of MELBOURNE?

A. Outstanding, sir.

Q. At anytime, do you recall anyone from FRANK E. EVANS asking anyone on the MELBOURNE for portable pumps?

A. No, sir.

Q. After you went aboard MELBOURNE, where were you taken?

A. To the wardroom, I believe it was.

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Q. Were you injured in anyway?  
A. No, sir.

Q. How long did you remain aboard MELBOURNE?  
A. About an hour.

Q. And did you subsequently leave?  
A. Yes.

Q. Would you state the circumstances?

A. Well, I was standing on the fantail talking with Hanna, BT1, when LTJG Covert came up and stated he was going back to the ship. Hanna asked if he wanted someone to go with him, and he said he would not ask nor order anyone to return with him. Hanna and myself volunteered. We went back with him.

Q. By what method did you return?  
A. MELBOURNE's small boat, sir.

Q. Do you recall the approximate time of this occurrence?  
A. I had no idea at all what time it was. I know it was light now.

Q. It was light at the time?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you return directly to FRANK E. EVANS?

A. No. We circled the EVANS in the MELBOURNE's boat. Then we went alongside the LARSON and we went on with the LARSON's salvage party.

Q. And when you circled the stern section of EVANS, what did you note as to the state of its buoyancy and stability?

A. It appeared to be holding at the state it was at.

Q. Had it deteriorated since you had left it earlier?  
A. Very little, I believe, sir.

Q. Can you estimate how much freeboard there was in the most forward section?  
A. Five feet, I would imagine, sir.

Q. And how about the stern?  
A. It was at normal waterline level or a little above.

Q. In other words tilted up?  
A. Right.

Q. And when you went aboard EVANS with the LARSON salvage party, what were you directed to do or what did you do?

A. We went with Mr. Covert first. Then we went up and looked at the main control. Then we went back to the fireroom, After Fireroom, and realized that there was slow progressive flooding there.

Q. What was the water level when you first entered the fireroom?  
A. I wouldn't have any estimate. I stood at the hatch. I didn't go down into the fireroom.

Q. Who did go down in?  
A. Mr. Covert and Hanna did. I believe the salvage officer of the LARSON did also.

Q. Would you then continue?

A. Well, right after this, we went back and opened the disbursing office, got all the ship's pay records and took them to the LARSON's boat. Next, we went and got all the personnel records out of the personnel office and took them to the boat. We salvaged the ship's store records. At about this time, an officer wanted to go around and sound all the after tanks. He asked me if I would accompany him to show him where as many of the sounding caps were as I knew of - which I did. While we were going through the compartments, we checked to make sure there was nobody still down there.

Q. Did you find anyone there?  
A. No, sir.

Q. It was empty?  
A. It was empty.

Q. And then, after you completed the soundings, did you take any other actions?

A. They rigged P250 pumps with eductors and were pumping out the After Fireroom. This controlled the flooding. Also, they cut away the ship's small boat which was dangling by the after davit only.

Q. Did you do any other jettisoning of topside weight?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. What equipment did you jettison?

A. Pieces of metal that were lying around. I believe they cut off the loading machine. We threw the liferafts that were lying on deck over the side, the boat and that's all I can recall, sir.

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Q. Did you take any action with respect to the VDS?  
A. No. Not while I was aboard, sir.

Q. Did you attempt to use the FRANK E. EVANS' P250 pump?  
A. We did use our pump, sir.

Q. Did you manage to get it going?  
A. Yes, sir. We took the one from Repair Five and took it out on deck and it lit off.

Q. Did you actually use it for pumping?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Approximately how long did you remain aboard?  
A. I would say from 45 minutes to an hour, sir.

Q. What was the reason that you left?  
A. They had quite a bit of classified material that they wanted taken and delivered to our Executive Officer. They had it sacked up in canvas bags. So they informed me and Hanna to go on back to the LARSON, well, back to the MELBOURNE via the LARSON, and to deliver this material into the hands of our Executive Officer.

Q. And who was left aboard at the time you departed?  
A. From the ship's company, I believe, Mr. Dunne, Mr. Lare and Mr. Covert.

Q. Mr. Dunne and Mr. Lare - had they come aboard subsequent to you?  
A. Yes. They came aboard after I did. Also Mr. Suhr came aboard and opened his disbursing safe and removed the cash. Cook, PNL, came aboard and got the ship's diary.

Q. Personnel diary?  
A. Yes. He got that out of the personnel office and he had left. Mr. Suhr got the cash and he had left. Mr. Lare was aboard and Mr. Dunne was aboard taking care of classified and what-not material, sir.

Q. And when you went back to MELBOURNE, to whom did you report?  
A. Mr. Hiltz.

Q. And did you turn over the material to him?  
A. No. We left the material on the LARSON with our Executive Officer and at this time he told me, "When you get back aboard MELBOURNE report to Mr. Hiltz that myself, Mr. Dunne and Mr. Covert will return to the ship as soon as we have cleared all classified material."

Q. And, at approximately what time did you leave the FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. Well, I'm not sure of the time. I believe it was 9:15 when we got back on the MELBOURNE.

Q. Going back to the point where you said you were jettisoning topside waste, you indicated that certain liferafts were thrown over. What types of liferafts were these?  
A. I believe they were liferafts, sir - the ones that are wrapped up in a rubber-like sack. There were two of these lying on the main deck portside forward. We rolled these over the side.

Q. Were they still in their sacks?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you make any attempt to inflate them?  
A. No, sir.

Q. Did they inflate themselves when they got into the water?  
A. No. Not that I know of. They were just lying there still bundled up the last time I looked at them.

Q. Do you know what happened to them after they got into the water?  
A. No, sir. I do not.

Q. How many of them were there?  
A. There were two of them that me and Mr. Covert rolled over the side.

Q. That was which side?  
A. Portside.

Q. Did it appear that anyone attempted to open them previously?  
A. No, sir.

Q. They were intact as far as you could tell?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you observe any other liferafts on board at that time?  
A. No, sir. That is the only two that I saw.

Senior Member: I have a question. Bakken, were there static lines attached to these two liferafts bundled up when you threw them over the side?

Witness: No, sir. They were just lying loose out of their brackets and lying loose on deck.

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Senior Member: Therefore, there being no static lines they would not have been expected to inflate?

Witness: I would imagine that they wouldn't, because there was nothing to pull the trigger on them.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Did you note any particular performances by any persons that you think are worthy of special note?

A. I would say Silvers, Machinist Mate Third, in his assistance in getting the injured people off the ship.

Q. Were they working under your direction at the midships station?  
A. Yes, sir.

Counsel for the board: Counsel has no further questions for this witness, sir.

EXAMINATION BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q. Did you see any relay actuated battle lanterns between the time of collision and the time you initially left the ship to go to MELBOURNE which were not in operation?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are you certain you are talking about the automatic relay actuated...?  
A. Yes, sir. The ones in the port passageway, the midships passageway, none of those battle lanterns were on, sir. It was dark.

Q. How many is that?  
A. There is three in that area that I know of, sir.

Q. Was there any other illumination that you know of in that passageway?  
A. Other than the normal ship's lighting, there are battle lanterns at each cross hatch.

Questions by a member (Capt Rusk):

Q. This passageway where you indicated that the battle lanterns were inoperative - which passageway was that in particular?  
A. This is the fore and aft passageway, sir.

Q. How far from the point of impact aft, was your station - where you go to battle stations?  
A. I would say it was probably 10 feet from my repair party to the end of the floating section of the ship, sir.

Senior Member: The board has no more questions.

Counsel for the board: Petty Officer Bakken, at this time you are privileged to make any further statement covering anything related to the subject matter of the investigation that you think should be a matter of record in connection therewith which has not been fully brought out by the questions you have been asked. Do you have anything to add?

Witness: No, sir.

The witness was duly warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Senior Member: We will recess for ten minutes.

The board recessed at 1040 hours, 26 June 1969.

REF ID: A31428

*CONFIDENTIAL*

The board reconvened in open session at 1100 hours, 26 June 1969.

All persons connected with the board at the time the board recessed were again present.

Signalman First Class Byron R. Pruden, U. S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was duly sworn and testified as follows.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Signalman First Class Pruden, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS because it is understood that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law no witness may be compelled to answer any question the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such question. Do you understand what I have said?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Would you state your name, your grade and present organization?

A. Byron R. PRUDEN, Signalman First Class, USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD-754).

Q. How long have you been in the Navy?

A. 14 and one half years.

Q. How long have you been assigned to the EVANS?

A. Since September 1968.

Q. And to what division were you assigned?

A. OC Division.

Q. And what were your duties in FRANK E. EVANS?

A. I was the Leading Signalman.

Q. And what was your living compartment?

A. C-205-L.

Q. Early on the morning of the 3rd of June, where were you on the first notice you had of collision?

A. I was in bed, sir.

Q. And what occurred at that time?

A. I was awakened by a loud crunching noise and the ship being thrown about pretty violently.

Q. And what happened to you?

A. Well, I wasn't thrown out of my rack, sir.

Q. What did you do then?

A. I recognized the noise as a collision. I got out of my rack and put my shoes and pants on and started for my General Quarters Station, which was the signal bridge.

Q. What was the status of illumination in your compartment?

A. Totally dark, sir.

Q. Did you observe any battle lanterns on?

A. No, sir.

Q. Do you know whether there are any automatically actuated battle lanterns in your compartment?

A. Not on the OC Division side of the compartment, no, sir. I don't believe there were.

Q. Did you observe the actions of other personnel in the compartment at this time?

A. I saw people trying to get up and get their clothes on and get to their General Quarters Stations.

Q. Was any gear thrown about by the initial impact of the collision?

A. Yes, sir. Mattresses, lockers had been - there was one upright locker that had been torn loose at the head of my rack - and clothes and laundry bags.

Q. The locker that was torn loose, do you know how it had been secured prior to the collision?

A. Yes, sir. Quarter 20 bolted to a piece of flat stock that was welded to the bulkhead.

Q. Was it secured top and bottom or top only?

A. It sat in a bracket on the deck and was bolted at the top.

Q. After you got your clothes and were headed for your GQ Station, what occurred next?

A. I headed for my General Quarters Station through "M" Division Compartment, which is the next living compartment. Went up through the ship store passage and encountered a quartermaster that was injured. I instructed him in first aid and went out on the main deck on the starboard side and started forward. I got up approximately 15 feet forward of where the boat was just hanging in the water and noticed that I couldn't get to my General Quarters Station. From there I turned around and went back to "M" Division compartment and started running people up onto the fantail. I don't believe the people in the compartment knew how serious it was. Another man and myself, a Second Class Quartermaster....

Q. What was his name?  
A. Sissel - QM2 Sissel. He and myself started setting ZEBRA in the after berthing compartments of the ship and running the people up onto the fantail through the centerline hatch there to the scuttle.

Q. Did the people respond to your direction promptly?  
A. Yes, sir. They did, very promptly.

Q. Was there any confusion or panic on the part....  
A. No, sir. None.

Q. Approximately how long after the collision was it before the compartment was cleared of people?  
A. I'd say approximately five minutes - three minutes. I'm not real sure of the time lapse.

Q. During any of this period was there any illumination in the compartment?  
A. Yes, sir. One of the men from 'M' Division had brought a damage control light into the compartment. We used this light and a flash light to set ZEBRA in the compartment and check for any personnel who might have been under mattresses or laundry bags or in corners.

Q. Did you yourself check to ensure that all personnel were out of the compartment?  
A. I did personally. Yes, sir.

Q. And were you the last man out of that compartment at that time?  
A. I believe so. Yes, sir.

Q. After you set ZEBRA and evacuated the compartment, where did you go from that point?  
A. I was checking over on the 2nd Division side of the compartment and I noticed After Steering was brightly lit. I went into After Steering. The After Steering Watch consisted of MM3 Robertson and SN Vejr. Vejr was trying to get communications with the bridge. He still had his head set on, and I stopped and asked him what he was trying to do. He told me he was trying to get communications with the bridge, and I told him there was no sense in trying to get communications because the bridge was gone. I instructed VEJR and Robertson to leave After Steering and go up on the fantail and stand by the scuttle that was up there. Then I dogged that hatch down.

Q. Did you observe any actions by either Vejr or Robertson with respect to the rudder. Did they take any actions with respect to positioning the rudder?  
A. Not at that time. No, sir. I was only in After Steering approximately 30 seconds.

Q. Did you notice whether there was power to the rudder at that time?  
A. No, sir. I didn't.

Q. I believe you indicated that the lights were on in After Steering?  
A. Yes, sir. But After Steering has battle lanterns in it, and it was emergency power that....

Q. What type of illumination was it you were seeing. Do you recall?  
A. No, sir. I can't for sure. I know it was lit up....

Q. Was it brighter than the battle lantern illumination?  
A. No, sir. I couldn't say if it was or wasn't. I know that After Steering did have lights in it.

Q. At any time did you see any mechanical foam in the compartment or space?  
A. I didn't see any in the compartment. However, when I was going to my General Quarters Station, right after I encountered Crabtree, who was the man who was injured, I noticed that there was this stuff that looked like blood on the bulkhead. I smelled it and right away I knew what it was. There were mechanical foam racks on the port side of that passageway. Apparently, due to the collision, these cans had come out of their racks and split open.

Q. And where were these located?  
A. On the port side of the fore and aft passageway, right next to the crew's wash room and crew's head.

Q. After you had instructed Vejr and Robertson to go to the fantail, what were your next actions?

A. I went up on the fantail and here's where I met Lieutenant Dunne and told him exactly what I had done. I had set ZEBRA in the compartment and checked for any injured people. At this time Mr. Dunne had asked for two volunteers to go into the water after some life rafts which were just off the port side of the fantail. Myself and BT3 Arrington went into the water and tried to get these rafts to the fantail of the EVANS so we could put the injured people on them in case the after section of the ship sank.

Q. And how far away from the ship were they?  
A. Between 50 and 100 feet I'd say, sir.

Q. And were you able to do what you had set out to do?  
A. We got to the rafts and tied three of them together and tried to swim them to the ship. These rafts are awfully heavy.

Q. Do you know where the rafts came from?  
A. Yes, sir. They were MELBOURNE rafts.



Q. You then stated, I believe, that you went back into the water again after a second group of rafts?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Why did you go back into the water?

A. Well, the boat shoved off. It was looking for people that were swimming around and in trouble. They knew that neither me or Arrington were hurt. So they shoved off looking for other survivors in the water.

Questions by the senior member.

Q. Pruden, where did you get the life jacket you said you had on when you went into the water?

A. This life jacket was given to me by PNI Cook, because he knew that myself and Arrington were going into the water. He took it off and give it to me.

Q. What was the total number of people in the group of signalmen under your supervision in FRANK E. EVANS prior to the collision?

A. Five, sir, not counting myself.

Q. And what are their rates please?

A. I had two 2nd Class Signalmen and three seamen.

Q. Were any of the seaman designated strikers?

A. Yes, sir. I had one SMSN and one SMSA.

Q. Would you describe the watch system in effect during Exercise Sea Spirit?

A. We were on port and starboard watches. Six on and six off. I had a 2nd Class and a seaman in one section and a 2nd Class and a seaman in the other section. There was also myself and a seaman who was on watch from six o'clock in the morning until 2200 or 2300 at night, depending on the operational load of the signal gang.

Q. You and your seaman who were augmenting the day watches would secure only if the traffic load would permit. Is that correct?

A. That is affirmative, sir.

Q. Was there a great deal of traffic at night?

A. No, sir. There was very little traffic at night. The only place where we had quite a bit of night traffic was in Manila. We stood port and starboard watches in there. I stood them myself. And when signalmen who wanted to go ashore, I let them go ashore and the other people would augment the watch. I always had either myself or a 2nd class on watch.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board.

Q. Based on your observations of the actions after collision, do you have any comments or recommendations as to design changes or other matters which would assist in future disasters of this nature? I'm thinking specifically of the locker that came loose or other things of that nature, emergency lighting or any other matters.

A. Well, sir, I think all your berthing compartments should have your automatic battle lanterns actuated if the ship loses power. I know that the Navy is doing away with the old type battle lantern now and getting more and more into the automatic battle lantern. That is the only comment that I would have.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions.

Counsel for the board: Petty Officer Pruden, you are informed that you are privileged to make any further statement covering the matter which is the subject of the investigation that has not been brought out by prior questions which you were asked. Do you have any additional statements?

A. No, sir.

The witness was duly warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Seaman Apprentice Christopher A. Dewey, U. S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was duly sworn and testified as follows.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board (CDR Glass):

Q. You have been called as a witness for this board of investigation that is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS because it is understood that you may have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law no witness may be compelled to answer any question the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such questions. Do you understand what I have said?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Will you please state your full name and your grade and present organization?

A. Christopher A. Dewey, Seaman Apprentice, United States Navy.

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Q. Since when have you been a member of the U. S. Navy?  
A. I joined September 27th, 1968.

Q. And how long have you been assigned to USS FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. Since February 1st, 1969.

Q. And to what duties are you assigned in that ship?  
A. I was in 1st Division, deck force, but I was temporarily mess cooking at the time.

Q. And where was your berthing compartment in USS EVANS?  
A. It was the 1st Division Berthing Compartment. Up forward of the mess decks and down one level.

Q. Were you sleeping in that compartment when the collision occurred?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Are you able to tell us how many men, all together, were in that compartment at the time of the collision?  
A. Well, I think that there were about 32 in the compartment at the time.

Q. Are you able to tell us how many of those that were there survived the collision?  
A. There were 6 people from the compartment that survived.

Q. Well, what was the first consequence of the collision which you noticed?  
A. Well, the ship, the forward section, was thrown over on the starboard side. Everyone, I presume, was thrown out of their racks and against the starboard bulkhead or against anything that was in their way.

Q. And did you hear any comment from those that were in the compartment as to what had taken part?

A. Someone on the port side of the compartment said that they had dropped the anchor, which wasn't too feasible. Someone else mentioned that we had run aground. Those were about the only voices that I heard down there.

Q. Were you able to get your bearings at that time?

A. At that time, I could not tell where I was. I had no idea of the relationship of where the hatch was or any other part of the compartment.

Q. Was there any illumination in the compartment?

A. Yes, I believe there was. There seemed to be enough light for me to make out one person down there which would have been impossible if there had been no light on.

Q. From where did that illumination come?

A. I think that it was probably the battle lantern over - it was by the hatch to the reefer deck which was below the ladder.

Q. How did you make your way out?

A. I was standing on the starboard bulkhead and there was a line going up through a clear place to the hatch that somebody had found. I went straight up across the... or straight up the overhead, through a jungle of racks that were laying over the place and hanging from the... - up top. I went straight up and through the hatch.

Q. Did you see what other persons were able to exit through that hatch from your compartment?  
A. The only other person which I saw and knew had got out of the compartment was SN Vargo.

Q. How was it you were able to find the location of this hatch?

A. Someone else had preceded me up there and had found it and called back down to the people there in the compartment that he had found the hatch, and that he was showing the way to it.

Q. When you came out of that hatch, what compartment were you in?

A. I was in the passageway near the forward head.

Q. And which direction did you proceed?

A. I proceeded towards the mess decks which was where the general flow of traffic was going at that time.

Q. How many other people did you see moving at that time?

A. Well, I could see about four other people from where I was in the passageway.

Q. And was progress easy or difficult?

A. At that point, it wasn't too difficult. The route was relatively clear of debris.

Q. But later on was it different?

A. When I reached the mess decks it was an obstacle course trying to get across there.

Q. What was producing the obstacles?

A. The ship. Being on the side that it was and with the water filling part of the mess deck, you had to either go across the tables - the table bases were four or five feet apart and you had to jump from one to the next - or you had to go across the overhead.

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Q. Could you see how the water was entering the compartment?

A. I could not see how it was entering. My own personal guess was it was coming from the starboard side through the hatch up near the starboard break and down through the scullery and into the mess decks.

Q. Were there any objects that had come loose on the mess decks?

A. I heard tell that the rings around the table tops were coming off because they were not screwed down, but I did not see it myself.

Q. What was the state of illumination in the mess decks?

A. There was a battle lantern on, just as you entered the Mess deck from 1st Division Compartment. It was on the right hand as you entered the hatch.

Q. When you were in the mess deck area, how many other sailors did you see there?

A. I think there were possibly 6 or 8 other men there. I can't be too sure as to the number.

Q. And were they all heading in the same direction?

A. They were all heading towards the "steam line."

Q. And is that the direction you went?

A. Yes, sir. It was.

Q. And when you got there, where did you go?

A. I went through the "steam line" and made my way up into the passageway on the port side of the ship and out through the hatch at the port break.

Q. That brought you out on the main deck, didn't it?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What did you notice about the angle of the main deck to the water when you got out?

A. As far as I could tell, the ship was at a 90 degree angle from what it should have been at, however, I'm not too sure. I think the ship was starting to roll back over again. Anyway, the water was starting to come up over the side.

Q. When you say roll back over, roll back to port do you mean?

A. Yes, sir. Rolling to port.

Q. Were you able to observe how the bow section was lying, comparing the bow with the stern part of it?

A. I do not know the angle that the bow section was lying. I did not see the stern section at all.

Q. Which side of the ship did you go over?

A. I went off the port side and swam straight out from there.

Q. And how long was the bow section afloat after you had left it?

A. I can't be too sure, but I think it was somewhere between 45 seconds and a minute.

Q. Did you observe what happened to the 6 or 8 people whom you saw in the mess decks?

A. No, I didn't. I know that there were three maybe four people on the port side with me when I went into the water, but I don't know what became of anyone on the mess decks at that time. I know that two of them did not survive that were down there.

Q. Did you observe anything about the behavior of the bow section, before it finally sank?  
A. As I was swimming away from the ship, I can remember seeing the bow section right itself and then sink stern first.

Q. When you say right itself, you mean go back to port?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. And before it went down stern first, did the bow come up further?

A. The bow came further out of the water and then went straight down stern first.

Q. How far were you when the bow section disappeared?  
A. I think I was probably several hundred yards away.

Q. Did you feel any suction?

A. No, sir.

Q. Where did you swim to?

A. I swam straight out off of the port side as far as I thought would be necessary to escape the suction.

Q. And did you come upon some means of support?

A. As I was swimming out, I heard some people calling to me, maybe 75 feet further out. I swam out to them and hung on the wooden bridge deck plates that they were already on.

Q. Did you recognize any other persons clinging to that?

A. Yes, sir. Lieutenant Hopson, Lieutenant Ramsey and Seaman Beughman, one of the lookouts.

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Q. Did you have any conversation with them about what had happened?  
A. Well, I asked both Lieutenants Hopson and Ramsey what had happened, but I got no reply as to what had happened from them. Lieutenant Hopson just kept - he was very shocked and he kept saying, "Oh my God."

Q. Did Mr. Ramsey say anything?

A. Mr. Ramsey didn't say anything the whole time we were in the water that I remember.

Q. Did you make any observation about Mr. Ramsey's appearance and behavior?

A. He seemed very quiet and subdued. He seemed to be in a state of shock, but I couldn't really tell for sure.

Q. Could you give us an estimate of the rate at which the Mess Deck Compartment was filling?

A. By the time I reached the mess decks, the water had already come up to within a foot or so of the hatch. The hatch is located at about mid-way between the two bulkheads and as I left it, I'm sure it was up several feet more. I don't know exactly how much further though.

Q. Had the water, by then, started spilling into the berthing compartment from which you had come?

A. I really don't know. I didn't look around to see if it was going in there.

Q. On the basis of your experience, have you any suggestions how any items of gear on the ship might be differently designed to secure them in position in an event of this kind?

A. No, sir. I have no suggestions of that nature.

Q. Can you tell us where your rack was located in relation to the hatch through which you escaped?

A. As you come down to 1st Division, you come down to the bottom of the ladder. My rack is directly to your right on the top, located about 4 feet away from the hatch as it normally sits.

Q. What was your position in relation to the hatch after you had been thrown from your rack?

A. Afterwards I was on the starboard bulkhead. I was laying there and it was directly down from the hatch.

Q. And how far?

A. Approximately 8 feet.

Senior Member: The board has no questions.

Counsel for the board: Seaman Apprentice Dewey, you have the privilege to make any further statement you wish to make covering any subject under investigation that has not been brought out by questions to date and which you wish to place on record. Do you wish to say anything further?

A. No, sir.

The witness was duly warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Robert A. Codemo, Radarman Seaman, U. S. Navy, was called as a witness for the board, was duly sworn and testified as follows.

#### EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Seaman Codemo, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS because it is understood that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law no witness may be compelled to answer any question, the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such question. Do you understand what I have said?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Would you state your name, your grade and present organization?

A. Robert Allen Codemo, Radarman Seaman, USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. And how long have you been in the Navy?

A. One year and nine months.

Q. And of that one year and nine months, how long have you been aboard EVANS?

A. Approximately four months.

Q. And what ship were you assigned to prior to that time?

A. USS PREBLE (DLG-15).

Q. And did you serve in the same rate on board the PREBLE?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. To what division were you assigned aboard the FRANK E. EVANS?

A. OI Division, Operations, Intelligence.

Q. And where would your normal duties be in that Division?  
A. In Combat Information Center.

Q. And to what sleeping compartment were you assigned?  
A. I don't know the compartment number. It was OI Division Compartment. It was up forward, under the mess decks.

Q. And is that just aft of the First Division Compartment?  
A. Yes, sir. It is.

Q. And can you tell us, approximately, how many men were in that compartment at the time of the collision?  
A. 21.

Q. And do you know of that number, approximately how many survived the collision?  
A. I believe it's 10.

Q. And were you asleep in that compartment at the time of the collision?  
A. Yes, I was.

Q. What was the first notice you had of the collision?  
A. The noise and being thrown out of my rack.

Q. Where is your bunk located?  
A. Right under the ladder - right by the hatch.

Q. And where were you thrown?  
A. I don't know.

Q. Do you know where you ended up?  
A. No, I don't.

Q. And what was the state of the lighting of the compartment immediately after the collision?  
A. Well, from what I saw it was pitch black. I saw no battle lanterns.

Q. Could you recognize anyone at that time?  
A. I saw one person that I recognized his face.

Q. What was the source of the illumination that allowed you to recognize his face?  
A. He was about six inches away from me I guess. I just made it out in the dark.

Q. Do you know if there were any battle lanterns of the automatically actuated type in your compartment?  
A. Yes, sir. There were I believe 3 or 4.

Q. And did you see any of them come on?  
A. I didn't see any of them.

Q. After you were thrown from your bunk, what was the next thing you remember?  
A. The person that I recognized...Somebody yelled out, "What happened," and he said he thought we had run aground. He said, "Let's get out of here."

Q. Do you remember who that was?  
A. Yes.

Q. Who was it?  
A. It was George Laliberte, our first class. I started following people...I wasn't the first one out, I was probably in the middle. I started following people and climbing over tables and chairs....

Q. How did you get out to the hatch in your compartment?  
A. I can't honestly say. It was just confusion.

Q. When you got to the hatch, what compartment did that lead you into?  
A. The mess decks - the place where you eat.

Q. And at the time you got into the mess decks, was there any illumination in that compartment?  
A. I saw one battle lantern in the corner on the starboard side which was down and it was under water.

Q. And can you recall what the level of the water was at the time you got into the mess decks?  
A. I'd say it 3 to 4 feet. You could hear it. It was pouring in there real fast.

Q. Do you know what the source of the water was - where it was coming from?  
A. I could give a good guess, but I can't honestly say.

Q. And when you got into the mess decks, what was the situation there? Did you recognize any other people?  
A. No, I didn't recognize anybody I just...Most of the tables were still intact and turned sideways. I heard people, you know...Well, there was a guy up there yelling, "This way, this way."

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Q. And where was he yelling from?  
A. The hatch.

Q. Which hatch?  
A. I don't know the number of it. It leads right out by the wardroom where the mess line is.

Q. Would that be the one that leads from the wardroom area down into the steam table area?  
A. Yes.

Q. And at this time, where were you, when you heard this yelling?  
A. I was somewhere in the mess deck, about halfway through.

Q. And where was Laliberte at this time?  
A. I don't know. I saw him and he was climbing with everybody else. I don't know.

Q. Did you observe any action taken by Laliberte about this time?  
A. No.

Q. How did you manage to get from the hatch in your living compartment over to the steam table area?  
A. I climbed through the mess decks.

Q. Were you using the tables?  
A. The tables, mostly, and chairs.

Q. And was there much gear strewn around in the mess decks and the "steam line" area?  
A. Yes, it was a shambles. It was all messed up.

Q. What type of gear?  
A. All the "steam line" equipment there had come off and was laying all over the place and....

Q. Trays?  
A. I can't say I saw any trays.

Q. Do you know how many men were in the mess deck area at about the time you were going through?  
A. I'd say about 10 were climbing up through there.

Q. And after you got over into the area of the steam tables, what did you do?  
A. I climbed - I was just following the guy in front of me and guy behind me was following me.

Q. Do you know who you were following?  
A. No.

Q. Do you know who it was earlier that told you the direction of the hatch?  
A. Seaman Petty.

Q. And did you see Petty after that time?  
A. Yes, I did.

Q. And where did you see him?  
A. He was holding open what was left of the hatch, which enabled everyone who got out to get out.

Q. I see. And do you know how long he held this hatch open?  
A. He got it open. I'd say he held it about a minute until the ship started to go down - the forward part.

Q. Do you have any knowledge whether he originally opened it or was it already opened?  
A. No, it would have been closed because we were at darkenship. Well, the whole hatch wasn't there. Part of it was there and part of it was gone. There was so much confusion, I didn't recognize too many details about it. His head was split open and he was...I learned that he was on the bridge and he had swum back onto the ship after the collision and opened the hatch.

Q. After you went through the hatch, where did you find yourself?  
A. Well, I was standing on the port side which was horizontal.

Q. Could you tell at what angle the ship was lying at in the water at the time?  
A. I would say at an angle of about...Well this is normal and I'd say about like this (indicating with a book the usual angle of the deck and the angle at which he was standing upon coming out of the hatch).

Q. Would you say about 80 degrees?  
A. About that, 75 to 80 degrees.

Q. And that was on the starboard side?  
A. It was laying on its starboard side, port side up.

Q. When you got to the main deck, I believe you said you were standing on the port side. That would have been the bulkhead normally?  
A. That would have been the bulkhead normally.



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Q. Also, if I understood you, it was pitch black in there?

A. Yes, sir. It was, but he was so close. I'd say he was about this far away (indicating with his hands a distance of about 6 inches), and I just saw his face.

Q. Doesn't that mean that there has to be some illumination, however faint, to recognise the face?

A. I don't know.

Q. Is it possible that you recognized him from his voice?

A. Well, I recognized his voice, but I did not recognise his face.

Neither counsel nor the board had any further questions for the witness.

Counsel for the board: Radaman Seaman Codemo you have the privilege to make any further statement you wish to make covering any subject under investigation that has not been brought out by questions today, and which you wish to place on record. Do you wish to say anything?

A. I'd just like to say that the rescue operations of the MELBOURNE were outstanding.

The witness was duly warned concerning his testimony, and withdrew from the board room.

Senior Member: The board will recess until 1330.

The board recessed at 1155 hours, 26 June 1969.

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The board opened at 1350 hours, 26 June 1969.

All persons connected with the board, who were present when the board recessed were again present.

Counsel for the board: This is an open hearing and anyone who may be a witness should at this time withdraw from the board room.

Machinist's Mate Second Class John B. Backinger, U.S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was sworn, and examined as follows:

Counsel for the board: Machinist's Mate Backinger, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is understood that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law, no witness may be compelled to answer any question, the answer to which may tend to incriminate him, and you may refuse to answer any such question. Do you understand that?

MM Backinger: Yes, I do.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Would you state your name, your grade and your present organization?  
A. My name is John Backinger, Machinist's Mate Second Class, USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. How long have you been in the Navy?  
A. Five years - in about two weeks it will be five years.

Q. How long have you been assigned to USS FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. Since the early part of March.

Q. Of 1969?  
A. 1969. Yes, sir.

Q. What has been your Navy experience prior to joining EVANS in March?  
A. I'm qualified as a Nuclear Power Machinist's Mate. I've been to Sub School, qualified on submarines.

Q. You served on submarines primarily prior to coming to EVANS?  
A. Yes, I have.

Q. To what division were you assigned on board FRANK E. EVANS?  
A. "M" Division.

Q. What are your principal duties in the "M" Division?  
A. I was second in command of the engine room you could say.

Q. Which engine room?  
A. Forward Engine Room, sir.

Q. To what berthing compartment were you assigned on board EVANS?  
A. "M" Division compartment.

Q. Do you recall the compartment number?  
A. I sure don't.

Q. Is that in the after section of the ship?  
A. Yes, sir. It is.

Q. On the early morning of the 3rd of June when the collision occurred, where were you located?  
A. I was sleeping in the berthing compartment.

Q. What was the first indication you had that the collision was either about to occur or had occurred?  
A. The first indication I had was when it did occur.

Q. How did you feel it?  
A. I was almost knocked out of rack - just happened to hold on. That's all I could do.

Q. Where is your bunk located in the compartment?  
A. Fairly near the hatch, as you come down the ladder it is on the lefthand side.

Q. After you were almost knocked from your bunk what did you do?  
A. Well, after the first initial roll, which was a starboard roll, I got out of my rack, proceeded to the ladder and went topside.

Q. Did you get dressed before going topside?  
A. No, I did not.

Q. What was the state of the illumination in your compartment after the collision?  
A. Almost totally dark.

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Q. To your knowledge were there any battle lanterns burning?  
A. I wouldn't swear that there wasn't, but I didn't notice any.

Q. Could you see any light at all in the compartment?  
A. No, I didn't.

Q. Do you know if the compartment in which you live has automatically actuated battle lanterns?  
A. Yes, it does.

Q. Do you know how many?  
A. No, I do not.

Q. At least one?  
A. At least one.

Q. Did you observe or hear the reactions of other personnel in the compartment when the collision occurred?  
A. As it was to be expected, it was like a mass reaction, everybody yelling, "Get out of the compartment", "Get out of the compartment." Most people conducted themselves in an orderly manner and proceeded through the hatch out of the compartment.

Q. That mass reaction was only momentary do I understand?  
A. I would say, yes, momentary.

Q. Was the procession out of the compartment in an orderly manner?  
A. As orderly as could be expected.

Q. Where did the people go when they left the compartment?  
A. I can't speak for other people, but I headed directly for Main Control. This is my General Quarters Station.

Q. How were you clothed at the time?  
A. In my skivie shorts, only.

Q. What did you find when you went forward toward the engine room?  
A. Well, as I proceeded forward I noticed there was water on the deck.

Q. What was your route going forward?  
A. Well, there is only one passageway forward in the inner part of the ship.

Q. Is that the port interior passageway?  
A. That's affirmative. As I walked forward, ran forward almost, I noticed water on the deck like I said. There was practically no light at all. You had to feel your way most of the way.

Q. Was there steam in the passageway?  
A. Yes, sir. There was.

Q. Did you notice any battle lanterns on in the passageway?  
A. At the time, sir, no I didn't.

Q. Was there any illumination at all that you could see?  
A. Well, there must have been some but I didn't notice where it was coming from. I was in a hurry to get where I was going.

Q. You may proceed from when I interrupted you.  
A. Like I said, I was in a hurry to get where I was going so I didn't really pay much attention to where the light was coming from, if there was any at all.

Q. What did you find when you went to the forward part of the passageway.  
A. Well, on my way forward I only made one brief stop on the way. One of the outboard hatches was open and I just looked out and I seen a ship there. I have no idea what kind of ship it was. I then proceeded forward to Main Control. When I got to Main Control, there was total darkness up there also. I looked down the hatch and, of course, that was totally dark also, but you could see water, at least I thought I saw water. How deep it was I couldn't say for sure, I'd say maybe four or five feet from the hatch.

Q. Did you see any personnel at that point that you recognized?  
A. Are you referring to by the hatch.

Q. In the vicinity of Main Control?  
A. Well, when I got to Main Control they were in the process of pulling Peters through the outboard hatch.

Q. Who was pulling Peters through the outboard hatch?  
A. I can say only one person for sure and I'm not really positive of that. I believe it was Mulitsch, Fireman Mulitsch.

Q. Did you see Peacock in the vicinity?  
A. I did not.

Q. Do you recall anyone else in that immediate vicinity?  
A. In the vicinity of the hatch, no.

Q. Were there any remaining people in the forward engine room at that time, after Peters was pulled out?

A. To the best of my knowledge, no.

Q. Did you see Lockwood emerge from the hatch?

A. I did not.

Q. Do you know where the water had come from that was in the passageway?

A. I sure don't know.

Q. You said that you looked out an open door and saw a ship, how was the ship lighted, could you tell?

A. There was no way of telling how the ship was lighted because the ship was sitting right next to our ship and all you could see was the ship. You couldn't even see the main deck.

Q. You saw the side of the ship?

A. The side of the ship, yes, sir.

Q. After Peters was pulled through the hatch what action was taken as to him?

A. He was pulled by his arms through the outboard hatch to the outside passageway on the starboard side. He was laid face down, because he was badly burned. So he was screaming "Let go of my arms," "Let go of my arms." We got a stretcher, we placed him in the stretcher face down again then realized that we had to turn him over, but he turned himself over. He wasn't so badly that he couldn't turn himself over, he just didn't want nobody to touch his arms.

Q. Where was he taken then?

A. After we had him secured in the stretcher, myself and two other people carried him to the fantail.

Q. When did you first notice that the forward part of the ship was missing?

A. I would like to say that I noticed it when I looked through the Main Control hatch, but I can't truthfully say that I did. I should have, I suppose, because it was only four or five feet forward of there. The first time I actually noticed it was when I stepped out on the starboard side, outside. I looked forward and noticed there was no more ship forward.

Q. At the time you removed Peters to the fantail, do you recall where Lockwood was?

A. When Peters was dragged out of the hatch I saw two other guys that were on watch in the Forward Engine Room at the time of the collision. Lockwood was directly to my right. He was standing next to the railing there.

Q. Was he . . . ?

A. Well, he complained of being . . . but he was on his feet, you know, and he started yelling and we calmed him down. But it didn't seem at the time that he was . . . as bad as Peters, so we took care of Peters first. The only other one I remember seeing there, that I could really swear on, is Mulitsch.

Q. Did you see Chief Macayan at any time?

A. No, I did not see Chief Macayan at all.

Q. After you helped carry Petty Officer Peters to the fantail, what further action did you take?

A. Well, when we were still up there with Peters, I made sure that everybody had been out of the Forward Engine Room. Mulitsch informed me of this, that everybody indeed was out of the Forward Engine Room. So when we carried Peters back, there was not much else we could do I guess. We just formed a line and started going on board the MELBOURNE.

Q. Did you notice who was in charge on the fantail?

A. There was a couple, when I say couple, maybe two, three, I don't know the number. But there were officers there which one or who was in charge I don't remember.

Q. Were things in a fairly orderly condition on the fantail?

A. Yes, they were, surprisingly.

Q. How did you leave the FRANK E. EVANS?

A. We proceeded up the ladder to the helo deck and then up one more ladder to another. I don't know the name of the deck.

Q. The ECM deck?

A. Yes, I think that was it. And from there we climbed on a rope ladder on board the MELBOURNE, with their assistance.

Q. Can you estimate how long it was from the time of the collision until the time you went on board the MELBOURNE?

A. I completely lost track of time.

Q. Based on your observations of personnel, are there any personnel that you believe are deserving of special mention in connection with this disaster?

A. I would like to bring up the name of Mulitsch, Fireman Mulitsch.

Q. What actions did you observe him taking?

A. The only one that I can say that I observed myself was helping to pull Peters out. But it is my understanding that he also helped two other people out of the hole.



Q. Which is your berthing compartment?  
A. C-203-L.

Q. And where is that situated, in the forward or after part of the ship?  
A. That is in the after section of the ship, sir.

Q. What was the first indication you received of the collision?  
A. Well, I was thrown from my rack into the rack that is next to me. I didn't know what had happened.

Q. Where is your bunk located in relation to the nearest hatchway?  
A. It is almost on the centerline of the compartment.

Q. What distance from the ladder?  
A. About 20 foot, sir.

Q. Did you hear any comments made in your compartment?  
A. The only comments that were made after I was awakened was to go to our General Quarters stations. I didn't hear anything on what had happened to the ship or anything to that effect.

Q. What was the state of illumination in your compartment?  
A. Well, there is one battle lantern and that was the only illumination at the time.

Q. One was burning. How many are provided in your compartment?  
A. I believe there is one relay type battle lantern and one manual type battle lantern.

Q. Were you able with that one battle lantern to see about you?  
A. Yes, sir. I was.

Q. Which one was burning, the relay or the manual?  
A. The relay type, sir.

Q. What did you do?  
A. Well, as soon as I was awakened I heard after diesel start up and that is my Condition Three Station, after diesel. So I went over there to see if the diesel was inoperative or if we could feed power to the ship... A Second Class Electrician and myself went over there and we couldn't get power past, to the after switchboard. It was grounded out, sir.

Q. It was what?  
A. Grounded out, sir. We couldn't feed any power past that switchboard.

Q. Where did you go from there?  
A. I went to my General Quarters station, or was on my way to my General Quarters Station....

Q. Where is your General Quarters station?  
A. That is Repair 2 and it is up on the mess decks.

Q. How far did you get in that direction?  
A. I got to about midships before I realized that there was no more forward part of the ship.

Q. Were you on the port or starboard side going forward?  
A. Starboard side.

Q. Did you see anything there on the starboard side midships, in relation to boats?  
A. No, sir. I didn't.

Q. Did you see a motorboat?  
A. I saw a motor whaleboat that was hanging from one of the boat davits, vertical at the time.

Q. Did you see any other men in that area?  
A. Yes, sir. There were a few other men coming out of Main Control outboard hatch. They were trying to assist some men that were down inside the engineroom.

Q. Can you identify those men?  
A. I can't really say who they were, sir. Just people out of the fireroom and engineroom.

Q. Did you see Chief Macayan there?  
A. I passed Chief Macayan as I was going forward. He was on his way back towards the fantail.

Q. What did you notice about him?  
A. I noticed that he was burned very badly.

Q. Who else did you see at that time?  
A. I saw a Fireman named Baughman. He was also walking back towards the fantail.

Q. Where did you see him come from?  
A. Right at the outboard hatch of main control.

Q. Did you see anyone else?  
A. I noticed Peters, a Third Class Machinist's Mate. He just crawled out of the hatch....

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Q. He did what out of the hatch?

A. Crawled out of the hatch, pulled himself out of the hatch. He was lying on the deck and he couldn't move.

Q. Was there no one there to help him out of the hatch?

A. I don't know if somebody helped him out of the hatch or not, sir. When I got up there he was lying on the deck right next to the outboard hatch.

Q. What condition was he in?

A. Seemed to be in a state of shock, sir,

Q. Did you see that he had?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What help did he receive?

A. Well, when I got up there I got him away from the outboard hatch of the ship and had him move himself, we couldn't touch him. So he moved away and crawled away as far as we could get him. Then I ordered somebody to get a stretcher and we put him into the stretcher and two other men, I can't identify them both, they carried him back to the fantail for evacuation.

Q. You say that you don't know who they were?

A. I can identify one man.

Q. Who was that?

A. That was Fuchs, Fireman.

Q. Did you do anything about checking the condition in the main control compartment?

A. What do you mean?

Q. Looking in to see if there was anyone there?

A. Yes, sir. I went in the midships passageway and ripped a battle lantern off the bulkhead. I shone it down into main control to see if there was anybody else down there.

Q. What sort of battle lantern was that one?

A. That was a relay type battle lantern.

Q. And that was working properly, was it?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you see anyone in that compartment?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. What was the next thing you did?

A. Then I proceeded to go aft to After Fireroom. When I got to the inboard hatch of After Fireroom I ran into Fuchs again.

Q. What was the condition of that passageway with regard to water?

A. There was about two inches of water on the deck.

Q. Could you see where it was coming from?

A. No, sir, I didn't.

Q. When you ran into Fuchs again what did you and he discuss?

A. Well, he thought he heard someone knocking down in After Fireroom and he said he wanted to go down into the compartment to check it out, and there was steam coming out of the hatch. I was a little reluctant at first, but I grabbed a portable flood light and we both went down into After Fireroom.

Q. What was the state of the water level there?

A. It didn't seem unusual down in the fireroom itself. I didn't notice any leaks, well, we weren't looking for leaks. We were looking for the person that he thought was knocking.

Q. Did you find anyone?

A. No, sir. We didn't. We came to the conclusion that it was a steam line that had been cooled by water or something like that.

Q. Did you then leave that area?

A. After we searched about as long as we could, which was about two minutes, we left the compartment and sealed off the hatches, secured the outboard and the inboard hatches.

Q. Did you go somewhere from there?

A. Then we went to, back to After Engine Room.

Q. With what particular purpose?

A. Just to check to see there were any people left down in there that might be injured.

Q. And did you find anyone there?

A. No, sir. We didn't.

Q. Did you secure the hatches of that space after leaving?

A. Yes, sir. We came up the ladder and I secured the inboard hatch. I believe the outboard hatch was already secured.

Q. You told us that you used a battle lantern to illuminate the Forward Engineroom. From where had you taken that battle lantern?

A. It was in the midships passageway, right outside the ship's office.

Q. And when you finished using it did you replace it?

A. No, somebody else asked me if they could have the light. I can't remember who it was.

Q. Did you give it to him?

A. Yes, sir. I did.

Q. Did you know why he wanted it?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. Where was it that you gave it to him?

A. This is by the inboard hatch of Main Control.

Q. How many different kinds of battle lanterns were there on board F. E. EVANS?

A. We have a hand type battle lantern and a relay type battle lantern.

Q. Would you be able to describe how each one works?

A. The relay type battle lantern is connected into the power circuit and when you lose the load, lose power to that circuit, the relay closes - closes the contacts and the light will come on.

Q. And the other?

A. It is a hand type and it is operated by toggle switch.

Q. By a toggle switch?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Which operates batteries?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Where is the after emergency diesel in relation to your berthing compartment?

A. After diesel is on the other side of our compartment. I believe it is C 201 or 202 E.

Q. For what reason did you go there before proceeding to your General Quarters station?

A. Because I heard the diesels start up, and I didn't know if anyone was there or not.

Q. Was it part of your duties to attend to that diesel engine or not?

A. Not during General Quarters, sir. But it is part of the Electrician's job when a diesel is started.

Q. Is there one type of relay operated lantern or more than one?

A. I believe there is only one type of relay.

Q. You know of only one - the one you just described?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. How is power provided to those relay operated battle lanterns?

A. They are tied into this lighting circuit, to one side of the lighting circuit. There is always power to one side of it.

Q. When the main power is off, how are they illuminated?

A. That closes a contact inside the relay.

Q. What powers it, a battery?

A. It is battery operated. Yes, sir.

Q. After leaving the After Engineroom, securing the hatches, where did you go?

A. I tried to go back to my berthing compartment to get my wallet and shirt. There was a first Class IC man and he wouldn't let nobody down into the compartment. They were checking compartments and he secured it. He secured the compartments so that no other personnel could go down there. They didn't know if the ship was going to sink or what. They wouldn't let no one down there.

Q. Being unable to go to your compartment, where did you go?

A. I went onto the fantail.

Q. How many men did you find there?

A. There were about 40 men out on the fantail waiting to be evacuated onto the carrier.

Q. Who was in charge of them?

A. I believe it was Mr. Hiltz, sir, or Mr. Auhr.

Q. How did you get from the fantail on board MELBOURNE?

A. They ordered us to climb up on the helo deck and then up to the ECM 2 deck. And there were life nets on the flight deck of the carrier. It was just about parallel with the ECM 2 deck and we climbed right on board the carrier.

Q. And how long after you reached the fantail was it before you boarded MELBOURNE?

A. It was about four or five minutes, sir.

Q. Did you see any liferafts in the water near the fantail?

A. There were three or four rafts floating off from the ship at the time, but they weren't manned. One man on the fantail jumped into the water to bring the rafts to the ship since there was no line attached to them.

Q. Do you know who that was?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. Do you know whose rafts they were, yours or MELBOURNE's?

A. I don't know that either, sir.

Q. Were they fully inflated?

A. Yes, sir. They were.

Q. I asked whether there was an orderly situation on the fantail and you said there was. What was the position with regard to your berthing compartment?

A. At first, nobody really knew what happened and you couldn't see too well down there. That was the only real problem there was - to keep from bumping into each other and jumping out of our racks on top of somebody.

Q. How many men were in the compartment?

A. I would say about 30 men, sir.

Q. Did any particular person take control of the situation?

A. I can't say for sure. Before I left for my General Quarters station, I can't say.

Q. When you came back from your General Quarters station, did you see who was in charge in your compartment?

A. Yes, sir. It was a First Class IC man, named Perkins. He was taking charge of the compartment.

Q. Did everything then seem to be under control?

A. Yes, sir. It did.

Q. You told us earlier about the emergency switchboard, do you recall?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What gave you to understand that the ER switchboard was grounded out?

A. We just figured that at first, because we couldn't feed back anywhere, just opened our breakers on the emergency diesel. I mean, this is what I have been told, that it opened the circuit breakers and we figured that it was a ground.

Q. When you looked down in the Forward Engineroom, were you able to see the ladder which led into that space?

A. Is that on the inboard or outboard hatch, sir.

Q. Well either?

A. The outboard hatch you could see the ladder or four foot of the top of the ladder. The rest was flooded. On the inboard hatch the ladder was sheared off.

Q. How far below the level of the hatch was the water?

A. I would say approximately four feet, sir.

Q. Could you tell how the water was coming into the ship?

A. No, sir. We couldn't.

Q. Is there any person who, in your opinion, should be mentioned for outstanding performance?

A. Right now, sir, I think the whole ship should. There was no panic. If anyone, I think the whole ship.

Counsel for the board: Counsel have no further questions, sir.

#### EXAMINATION BY THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q. Frey, when you went into the Emergency Diesel Room did you notice the position of the automatic bus transfer?

A. No, sir. I didn't.

Q. You didn't look at it?

A. No, when I got into the diesel there was a Second Class Electrician already over there, Laras, EM2, and I imagine... I don't know if he told you or not, I didn't see his switchboard.

Q. You didn't look at the switchboard?

A. I didn't get past the door to after diesel.

Q. Was there a light on in there?

A. I really couldn't say, sir. I had a battle lantern.

Q. Where did you get that battle lantern?

A. This battle lantern was in "E" Division. It was a manual battle lantern, a hand type battle lantern.

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Q. That was in your living compartment?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you took that off the bulkhead before you went to the emergency diesel room?  
A. I found this battle lantern lying on the deck.

Q. Is that it's normal location?  
A. No, sir. It isn't. I don't know how it gotten the deck.

Q. Was it anywhere near the normal stowage of battle lanterns?  
A. Yes, sir. There is stanchion right above the storeroom just below the ladder coming down into our compartment. It is supposed to be connected to that stanchion.

Q. Was this a manual or relay operated type?  
A. This was a manual type battle lantern.

Q. What did you do with that after you... As I understand it, you had it in your hand when you arrived at the doorway of the Emergency Diesel Room?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Then you turned away?  
A. Well, there was a Second Class Electrician and a Second Class Engineman in the diesel.

Q. How were you able to recognize them? Did you shine your lantern in there?  
A. Yes, sir. I had the light on.

Q. Then what did you do?  
A. I left the battle lantern right there at the door. There was a desk that was inside the diesel and it was thrown over on its side. I left the battle lantern sitting on top of this desk, and then I left the compartment.

Q. Was that the only illumination then in the diesel room?  
A. Yes, sir. I believe so.

Q. What were your responsibilities in the ship with respect to servicing of battle lanterns, if any?  
A. Well, the general duties of an Electrician - lighting circuits.

Q. Was there any one of the men in the electrician's organization that was responsible for the battle lanterns?  
A. That was the responsibility of the whole division, sir.

Q. Do you happen to know how many total battle lanterns of both the relay operated and the manually operated types were on board FRANK E. EVANS before she was cut in two?  
A. No, sir. I can't say how many there were.

Q. Do you have knowledge of the maintenance program for these battle lanterns?  
A. Yes, sir. I do.

Q. Would you describe it?  
A. Our monthly checks on the battle lanterns?

Q. Whatever maintenance was performed. Would you describe what is the procedure for checking them or maintaining them?  
A. I believe the battle lanterns are supposed to be checked once a month and if necessary change the batteries in the lanterns. I believe the last time these battle lanterns changed batteries was sometime in May, or as many battle lanterns as we could get to. We didn't have sufficient batteries to go around to all of them.

Q. Did you change them whether they needed it or not on a regular schedule, or did you check to see whether they needed them before you changed the battery?  
A. We checked to see if they needed them. If they were dim, I don't know what the rate of time is on them or how long they are supposed to burn, but if they are dim we would change the batteries.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions for this witness.

Counsel for the board (CDR Glass): You have a privilege to make a further statement covering anything related to the subject matter of the investigation if you think it should be a matter of record, and has not been brought out by questions so far. Is there anything you wish to add?

Witness: No, sir. I think I have said all I know that could be of use.

The witness was warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Fireman Aaron C. Fuchs, U.S. Navy, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was sworn, and examined as follows:

Counsel for the board: Fireman Fuchs, you have been called as a witness for this board of investigation which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of NMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is understood that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law, no witness may be compelled to answer any question, the answer to which may tend to incriminate him, and you may refuse to answer any such question. Do you understand what I have said?

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Witness: Yes, sir.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Would you state your full name, grade and present assignment?

A. My full name is Aaron Charles Fuchs, I am a Fireman and I was on board the USS FRANK E. EVANS. I was a Machinist's Mate.

Q. How long have you been in the Navy?

A. Two years and seven months.

Q. How long have you been assigned to FRANK E. EVANS?

A. About a year and seven months.

Q. To what division are you assigned?

A. "M" Division.

Q. What are your principal duties in the "M" Division?

A. I worked in After Engineroom as a Machinist's Mate.

Q. To what compartment were you assigned for berthing?

A. It was "M" Division compartment.

Q. Do you recall the number?

A. No, sir, I don't.

Q. Is it just aft of the Emergency Diesel Generator Room?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Were you asleep in that compartment at the time of the collision?

A. Yes, I was.

Q. What was the first notice you had that a collision was about to occur or had occurred?

A. Well, I have no warning of it ahead of time, but when it happened I was thrown out of my rack. I sleep approximately two feet from the lower part of the gun mount, the after gun mount, and I flew up against the gun mount and I flew back into my rack actually before I was even awake.

Q. Is that on the port side of the compartment or starboard side?

A. It is on the port side. Excuse me, it is on the starboard side.

Q. You say you were thrown against the gun mount and back into your bunk?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did that wake you up pretty well?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Were you shocked or dazed by the impact?

A. At first I didn't have any idea what happened and then the ship.... Once I got back into my rack, the ship went on a 90 degree angle and so right then I figured that we might be going down. Before I could even get out of my rack it levelled off so I figured we might have hit something. I thought we hit aground.

Q. What happened in the compartment then after the ship became upright again?

A. At first there was a little confusion because everybody was trying to get out of the hatch. We have a air conditioner back there so we keep our hatch closed with just the scuttle open and, well, there was too much confusion to try to get out of that scuttle. So there was a big mass confusion there, but then there was a lot of PO's yelling for everybody, saying that we were okay and to calm down. And when we got it calmed down everybody made it out real easy.

Q. Did you all go through the escape scuttle or did you open the hatch?

A. A couple of guys went through the scuttle and opened up the hatch for the rest of us.

Q. Do you recall what the status of the lighting was in the compartment immediately after the collision?

A. I saw no light.

Q. Do you know how many battle lanterns there are normally in the compartment?

A. I have only seen one.

Q. Is that a relay operated or manual operated battle lantern?

A. I think it is a manual.

Q. Do you recall whether it was turned on during this period?

A. No, sir.

Q. Do you recall whether anyone attempted to turn it on?

A. No, sir. I don't.

Q. If there was no illumination, how did you find the hatch?

A. I knew where the hatch was for one thing. All I have to do is get out of my rack and there's the ladder, more or less, to go up the hatch.

Q. After the Petty Officers called for everyone to quiet down, was it fairly orderly at that time?  
A. Yes, sir. Everybody worked together after that.

Q. Where did you go after going out the hatch?

A. Nobody knew exactly what to do so they were saying, "Man your General Quarters stations. So mine was After Engineroom and I went to the After Engineroom and I took a whiff down there and it smelled like live steam. I was barefooted and I didn't have a shirt on so I didn't go down there.

Q. What did you do instead?

A. I turned around and right behind there we have a repair locker. I got one of the emergency floodlights out of there and I went back aft to the compartment to help people to get out of the compartment, because there was so much debris and everything around that we couldn't move around very well.

Q. What did you observe when you went back aft?

A. First I went back to "M" Division compartment and there was still a lot of guys there trying to find clothes to get on. Nobody knew what was going on. So first, I tried to help them out. And lot of the Machinist's Mates had flashlights, so it was pretty well lit up back there. And the compartment right behind us is "OC" Division and there was a First Class Signalman Pruden. He yelled to me 'cause he saw my light. He wanted me to come back there and help him.

Q. What was he doing at this time?

A. He was trying to get all the personnel back to get all their clothes on and get out of the compartment as soon as possible.

Q. Did you assist Pruden then?

A. Yes, sir. I went back there and we set Zebra and got everybody out of the compartment.

Q. Can you make any estimate as to how long this process took?

A. I would say from five to seven minutes.

Q. After you had completed getting the people out of the "OC" and "M" Division compartments, what did you do then?

A. I went out and I was going to go up the midships passageway. There were three or four guys hovering around the After Fireroom. They saw my light and they said, "Come here, we think there is somebody down in the fireroom" - they had heard a loud tapping noise. So I went there.

Q. Do you recall who they were?

A. All I can remember is that there was one, he was a Shipfitter by the name of Hay.

Q. Did you see a man by the name of Frey there?

A. He came up behind me and we both went down together.

Q. What did you find when you went down there?

A. Nothing really. We looked all over. You couldn't stay down there, it was too hot and there was no ventilation. We couldn't find nothing. There was a loud tapping noise but we figured that it was probably just a steam line.

Q. Had the boiler been secured by this time?

A. This I couldn't say. I didn't pay that much attention.

Q. After you completed your search what did you do then?

A. Frey and I then proceeded to the After Engineroom to check and make sure that everything back there was okay. We went down there and by this time the After Engineroom had been secured.

Q. Was anybody in there when you went down to the After Engineroom?

A. No there wasn't.

Q. Do you recall whether the main bulkhead stop valve was closed at that time or not?

A. No, I didn't check that but I saw the main steam gauge and it was on zero, so it must have been closed.

Q. Going back to the point where you said you got a light from the repair locker, how did you get into the repair locker?

A. The repair locker had been opened.

Q. It had been opened?

A. Yes, sir, it had.

Q. Was the door open or just unlocked?

A. No, it was just unlocked.

Q. Was this Repair 5?

A. No, sir. It was Repair 3.

Q. Was there anybody there at the time other than you?

A. No, sir, there wasn't.

Q. After you left the After Engineroom, to where did you proceed?

A. I proceeded to the main deck port side and there I found one of the Machinist Mates, Peters. He was badly hurt and the guys were strapping him into a stretcher.

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Q. Was this on the fantail?

A. No, sir. It was just a little bit forward of the fantail.

Q. They were strapping him into a stretcher for what purpose?

A. He was burned. He was in the Forward Engineroom when it happened and he was burned in the... He thought he was worse than he was - he was a little delirious.

Q. Was this in preparation for taking him to the MELBOURNE or take him to fantail?

A. This was in preparation for taking him to the MELBOURNE.

Q. He had already been removed from the vicinity of the Forward Engineroom, is that correct?  
A. Yes, he had.

Q. How was he taken to the MELBOURNE?

A. Myself and couple other guys grabbed a hold of the stretcher and we took him to midships. They hadn't quite got enough lines over yet. He is a real good friend of mine so I talked to him and tried to calm him down, which helped a lot. And then the MELBOURNE threw a line over to me and I tied it to the hook above the head of the stretcher and they had a ladder coming down. So I walked half way up the ladder to help level out the stretcher so they could get him on board the MELBOURNE.

Q. Did you go on board the MELBOURNE at that time?

A. No, I didn't.

Q. What did you do?

A. I came back down the ladder. There was still some Machinist's Mates that were on watch, that were badly burned. I helped them by tying life lines around their waists so they could go up the ladder.

Q. Did you see a man by the name of Bakken in the vicinity?

A. Yes, sir. Bakken was with me.

Q. What was he doing?

A. He was more or less doing the same thing that I was doing. He was right there at the ladders. He was more or less taking charge of getting all the personnel onto the MELBOURNE. The MELBOURNE was throwing cables and ropes over to us to tie onto our structure which we were doing.

Q. What was the midships station that Bakken had taken charge of?

A. Yes, sir. It is.

Q. When did you eventually leave FRANK E. EVANS?

A. After all the enlisted personnel, I was the last, more or less, non-rated one there. There was still a couple of first class still on the ship and then the rest were officers.

Q. How were you treated when you got on board the MELBOURNE?

A. Very good. Really been treated good.

Q. Based on your observation on the fantail of FRANK E. EVANS before you left, how did you think the crew of FRANK E. EVANS behaved during this period?

A. I think they behaved exceptionally well. When I went up to midships the first time, that was the first time I noticed the forward section was missing and it kind of bothered me then. But the whole time before this it hadn't bothered me. I think most people didn't know what was going on really and actually they were real calm compared to what happened.

Q. At any time between the time of the collision and the time you went to MELBOURNE, did you see any personnel carrying battle lanterns around?

A. The only one that I saw with a lantern at all was Frey. Frey, he had a floodlight like myself.

Q. And you had gotten your floodlight from the repair locker?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you know where Frey got his?

A. I think he said he got it from Repair 5.

Q. But you saw no one with a battle lantern walking around?

A. No, I didn't. I have heard at the barracks, guys saying that they took battle lanterns off the wall but I have never seen nobody.

Counsel for the board: I have no further questions for this witness, sir.

EXAMINATION BY THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q. How big is the floodlight that you were carrying?

A. Well, the floodlight I would say is as bright as a car light. It is a pretty heavy light. It has got a couple of big batteries in it and a real big bulb on it.

Q. How does it compare in size with a battle lantern?

A. I would say its about twice as big and twice as bright.

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Q. What color is the body painted?  
A. The body is painted gray.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions of this witness.

Counsel for the board: Fireman Fuchs, at this time you are privileged to make any other statement concerning anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation that you think should be a matter of record in connection therewith, that has not been brought out by the previous questions that have been asked. Do you have anything to add?

Witness: The only thing I would like to add is as far as the battle lanterns back aft, I don't think there are enough battle lanterns back in the compartment. In the passageways and the engineer rooms we have quite a few of them but not in the compartments. And it did make it rough in this situation.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Let me ask a clarifying question. Do you mean there weren't enough mountings for battle lanterns or that some were missing from where they were supposed to be?  
A. I would say that some were missing.

Q. If some of the mountings had been full would there have been enough?  
A. Yes, sir.

EXAMINATION BY THE BOARD

Questions by a member ( CAPT Shands):

Q. Do you think any of these lanterns fall off their mountings when the ship rolled about 90 degrees?  
A. No, sir. I don't. I have seen the mountings empty before this happened, within weeks before.

The witness was warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

The board recessed at 1455 hours, 26 June 1969.

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The board reconvened at 1515 hours, 26 June 1969.

All persons connected with the board who were present when the board recessed were again present.

Senior Member: The hearing is open.

Counsel for the board: Anyone who may be a witness should withdraw from the room. Sir, at this time, counsel have two affidavits marked as Exhibits 82 and 83, the affidavits respectively of Chief Florentino F. Macayan, and Seaman Apprentice Marcus Rodrigues, Jr., persons who were air evacuated from the KEARNSARGE immediately after this collision. These affidavits were obtained from the United States Hospital at Cam Ranh Bay, Republic of Viet Nam, and we tender them at this time and ask that they be admitted into evidence.

Senior Member: Is there reason why these witnesses could not appear in person?

Counsel for the board: Yes, sir. They were both severely injured and Rodrigues has now been medically evacuated to the United States and Macayan is scheduled for medical evacuation within a day or two. They were both removed to Cam Ranh Bay from KEARNSARGE on the day of the collision.

Senior Member: They may be admitted.

Counsel for the board: With permission of the board I would like to read them at this time.

Counsel for the board read Exhibits 82 and 83 into the record.

LTJG George A. LARE, Jr., USNR, was called as a witness by counsel for the board, was sworn, and testified as follows:

#### EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q: LTJG Lare, you have been called as a witness to this board of investigation which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURN and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is understood that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law no witness may be compelled to answer any question the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such question. You are also cautioned that this hearing is open and classified information should not be given in answer to any question. Should the answer to any question require classified information, you are requested to advise the board and you will be given the opportunity to answer it later in closed session. Do you understand all that I have said?

A: Yes, sir, I do.

Q: Would you state your name, your grade, and your present organization?

A: My name is George A. Lare, Jr., LTJG, assigned to the USS FRANK E. EVANS (DD-754).

Q: And would you briefly state your experience in the U. S. Navy since commissioning?

A: Yes, sir. I went to Officers Candidate School in Newport, Rhode Island, and from there I went to Damage Control--

Q: When did you graduate from that school?

A: In March of 1968. From there I went to Damage Control School at TI in California. I graduated from there in May. I was then assigned to the USS LOWE, a DER out of Guam, which was decommissioned in September of that year. I was then assigned to the FRANK E. EVANS.

Q: And when did you arrive on Board FRANK E. EVANS?

A: 11 October 68.

Q: And to what duties have you been assigned?

A: I've been assigned DCA and "R" Division Officer.

Q: Would you state what DCA stands for?

A: Damage Control Assistant.

Q: And what department is that in?

A: That is in the Engineering Department.

Q: And how many personnel are in the "R" Division?

A: In "R" Division, I had approximately 29 men assigned.

Q: And what were the ratings of the personnel assigned to the "R" Division?

A: Electrician's Mates, Shipfitters, Damage Controlman and "A" Gang.

Q: "A" is auxiliary?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: On the early morning of 3 June, at the time of the collision, what was the first notice you had that something unusual was about to occur or had occurred?

A: I first heard a crunching sound of metal and the ship seemed to come to a complete halt. I also heard water back in After Officers. I was asleep at the time and this woke me up.

Q: And what room were you assigned to?

A: I was assigned to the same berthing space that LTJG Bowler was in. I do not know the number.

Q: And it's in After Officers Quarters?  
A: Yes, sir.

Q: And do you recall the ship rolling over to starboard at that time?  
A: Yes, sir, I do.

Q: What effect did that have on you?

A: When the ship rolled to starboard, I found myself lying up against the side of the rack. I would say the ship must have rolled close to 70 or 80 degrees to starboard for me to be in this position. When I jumped out of my bunk I found the water level in After Officers was up to maybe 3 or 4 inches below my knees. And at this time I knew that there was something seriously wrong.

Q: And do you know the source of the water which you heard and saw and felt?

A: At first, before I was out of my rack, I thought it may be the AC unit back in After Officers had busted a line, but when I jumped out of my rack I knew that that was not the cause and I did not know where all the water was coming from.

Q: And subsequently have you learned where it came from?

A: I did not know until after getting on the MELBOURNE that the water back in After Officers was from the portholes and possibly the door just forward of After Officers.

Q: And at the time you were thrown from your bunk or at the time the ship rolled over heavily, what was the state of the illumination in After Officers quarters?

A: I really don't remember. I remember it being pitch black and I don't remember seeing any lights at all in After Officers.

Q: Are there any automatic actuated battle lanterns in After Officers Quarters?

A: I believe there is one, and I know of one that is a manual type.

Q: Do you recall whether either of these was on?

A: No, I don't.

Q: Did you have a flashlight of your own that you used?

A: I had one, but I couldn't find it in the debris that was all over the room.

Q: Can you estimate the time that the ship remained over in the 75 or 80 degree roll that you described?

A: I would have to say roughly a second or two. It wasn't very long at all.

Q: It didn't pause there before coming back up?

A: That I can't recall.

Q: And after the ship righted itself, what did you do?

A: I then went to Damage Control Central which is in the general workshop forward of "R" Division, and tried to raise the bridge.

Q: Is that your General Quarters Station?

A: Yes, sir, it is. No one else showed up there and I tried to contact the bridge on the IJV phone line, and was unable to do so. I then went to the log room and tried to raise the bridge from there. Again I was unsuccessful. At this time when I stepped out of the log room I ran into Hudson, a fireman, and he informed that the forward part of the ship was gone.

Q: During the period of time when you went first to the Damage Control Central and the log room, did you observe the state of illumination in the passageways and compartments?

A: Yes, sir. The battle lantern directly outside of After Officers was on and there were quite a few that I saw on. I only saw one possibly two that were not on, and these were the manual type.

Q: And you do not know whether they failed to function or whether they just had not been turned on, is that right?

A: That is affirmative, sir.

Q: After you were in the log room and attempted to reach the bridge on the IJV, what did you do then?

A: I stepped out of the log room and as I said, I saw Hudson, the fireman, and he told me that the forward part of the ship was gone and it was at this time in going on the main deck that I ran into Mr. Covert and he told me to make sure that everyone was out of the holds and to make sure that were on the fantail.

Q: By the holds, he meant what?

A: The Engineering spaces.

Q: And what did you do in response to that directive from LTJG Covert?

A: I went forward and ran into Fritz, who is a first class Machinist's Mate. He said that he had just gone down and checked and there was no one down in the engineering spaces. I hollered down into the holds to check to see if there was anyone there. I received no response, except for down in the after engine room, there was one person down there with a light checking to see if there was anyone there. And then I told him, I don't know who this individual was, that everyone was to report to the fantail. And this is what we did.

Q: And whom did you report to when you went to the fantail?

A: I reported to LT Dunne.

Q: Was he the senior officer there?

A: Yes, sir, he was.

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Q: Did he give you any instructions as to what you were to do?

A: Yes, sir. He told me to go forward on the starboard side to the motor whaleboat, and try and get this into the water. I took about 4 or 5 people with me and one man climbed up on the davit to try and get the cotter key free. There was a preventer that was holding the boat. We did not have any tools, and we could not get it free. And it was at this time that I decided that since we couldn't get the motor whaleboat down that we should get the liferafts in the water, which we started to do.

Q: And who was assisting you in this job?

A: There was a Gunner's Mate Second Class, Lester, who was starting to do this when he saw that I could not get the motor whaleboat down.

Q: And what action did you take with respect to the liferafts?

A: We got approximately 3 or 4 in the water and there is a cord which you pull which will inflate them. We had inflated 2 of them. We had the other two in the water and it was at this time that an officer from the MELBOURNE who was on our fantail, and someone came down and told us to forget liferafts, that we were going on to the stern of the MELBOURNE.

Q: Did the two in which you pulled on the lines inflate normally?  
A: Yes, sir, they did.

Q: And how about the other two?

A: We never pulled the cords on them.

Q: And were they in the water floating in their valises?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: And what action did you take with respect to them when you decided not to inflate them? Did you leave them in the water?

A: Yes, sir, we did. We just went to the fantail and were directed by a Commander, I believe, to board the Jacob's ladder to go on the fantail of the MELBOURNE.

Q: Were the liferafts that you left in the water secured to each other or to anything else?  
A: That I don't know. I knew we threw them into the water and we had the cords. I would imagine that they drifted away.

Q: Did you observe anyone else taking any action with respect to liferafts?  
A: No, sir, I don't remember.

Q: And how did you board MELBOURNE?

A: We went to the fantail first and then 3 or 4 at a time were directed to go up to the port side and on the main deck they had Jacob's ladders strung down from the stern of the MELBOURNE, and it was by this means that we boarded the MELBOURNE.

Q: What did you do after you got aboard the MELBOURNE?

A: I was directed to go to a room, I believe it was a wardroom, at which time we wrote down our names and service numbers, and I stayed there for approximately a half hour to one hour. Then I went to the fantail of the MELBOURNE to see if the ship had gone down, and it was still afloat.

Q: At the time you left FRANK E. EVANS, what was your opinion as to the state of the stability and buoyancy of FRANK E. EVANS, of the stern section?

A: Yes, sir. At the time, I was concerned and I think everyone else was, that the ship might go down. The front end did seem to be going down, and I think this is the reason why Mr. Covert wanted to get everyone on the fantail. I thought that it might be going down also. It wasn't until morning, when the sun was up, and I was on board the LARSON looking down, but I could see in the front part of the EVANS, the hull extended, it seemed to me, out about another, 20 feet, but it did not break straight through. And I think it was possible that this part of the hull was riding underneath the MELBOURNE, which gave us the appearance that she was going down.

Q: Prior to leaving FRANK E. EVANS, did you observe the freeboard at the most forward section of EVANS?

A: No, sir.

Q: Did you take any soundings of any of the spaces, tanks, voids, and so forth?

A: Is this after we had left - -

Q: While you were on board immediately after the collision? Before you left the first time.

A: We were trying to make sure that everyone was out of the compartments on the fantail, and making sure that ZEBRA was set.

Q: And returning to the time that you went to the fantail of MELBOURNE to observe EVANS, what action did you take at that time?

A: When I was on the fantail of the MELBOURNE, it was at this time that I found out that Mr. Covert and two other people, I believe Bakken, Mrl and I cannot remember who the other individual was, had gone back to the EVANS, to try and save her. I also found out that our Executive Officer, Operations Officer, who is Mr. Dunne, and Mr. Suhr, our Supply Officer, and Ynl Cook, were going to go back to try and get some valuable information. I went back with them to see if I could be of any assistance to Mr. Covert. And we boarded one of the MELBOURNE's boats, started going back to the EVANS, at which time we passed the LARSON, and the CO of the LARSON told us to come aboard, which we did. We were there for approximately a half an hour before we received permission, Mr. Suhr and I, to go over to the EVANS to help. He went over to get, I believe, his pay records and I was going over to see what I could do to help Mr. Covert.

Q: At this time, did you know who was in charge of the efforts to save the EVANS?

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A: No, sir.

Q: Did you speak to the Commanding Officer of LARSON while you were aboard?

A: Yes, sir, I did. He was on the starboard wing of the bridge and I went up to him and asked him if I could go over to the EVANS. I told him that I was the DCA and that I would like to try and give Mr. Covert a hand. And he said, "yes," to go on over, that there was a person in charge on the fantail to give him my name and that it was all right to go over.

Q: And approximately what time did you board FRANK E. EVANS?

A: All I can say is the sun was up. I did not have my watch and I did not know what time it was.

Q: What did you do when you got aboard?

A: When I boarded the EVANS, I found Mr. Covert and asked him what I could do to help. He said to get with Mr. Wood, who was the DCA on the LARSON, to go around with him, take soundings, check the shaft alleys and small compartments to make sure that one ZEBRA was set and that we were not flooding elsewhere.

Q: At the time you boarded what was your opinion as to the stability and buoyancy of the stern section of EVANS?

A: That I'm not really sure. I know at Damage Control School, they say if a ship does not go down in the first 4 or 5 minutes, that the ship could be saved. I figured seeing that she had been afloat most of the morning, that there was a very good chance of saving her. But as to what her stability was, I was not sure.

Q: Had any pumping been initiated at the time you came aboard?

A: When I came on board, there were pumps, P-250 pumps, forward that were being used. I do not remember if there were one or two, but I do recall pumps being used forward.

Q: Do you recall whether the EVANS' P-250 was in use?

A: That I do not know. I know we had one P-250 outside the forward fireroom which was lost. We have another P-250 pump outside the after fireroom. I do not know whether this one was used.

Q: What other action did you take while you were on board?

A: This is during the rescue phase?

Q: Yes. The time you boarded from LARSON.

A: Other than checking soundings and making sure that ZEBRA was set and also to check to see if we were flooding elsewhere, I actually did nothing other than this. I was told to check, recheck, check again.

Q: Did LARSON come alongside while you were on board?

A: Yes, sir, she did. I had been on board for approximately...I would say an hour, and received word to come topside that the LARSON was going to come alongside.

Q: Did you examine the status of the paint locker?

A: Yes, sir. Our Executive Officer was on the LARSON and he said to check the paint locker, which I did. When I opened it up, paint was all over the place. The fumes in there were very strong, so I dogged the door back again and we have an installed 50 pound CO2 system there, and I activated that to make sure that a fire did not start in this space.

Q: Did the CO2 system work when you activated it?

A: Yes, sir, it did.

Q: Did you take any action at this time to remove valuable personal gear and ship's gear?  
A: Yes, sir, I did.

Q: What sort of action?

A: After we had been on board for, I would say, approximately two hours, Mr. Covert suggested getting a party of men to go back into After Officers and start taking out the valuable gear. Things in the line of tape recorders, record players, cameras, and these items we tried to find. We found most of them. There were a few that we did miss.

Q: And to whom did you deliver this for custody?

A: We delivered them to the LARSON. We put them in their torpedo storage and took an inventory list of this.

Q: Can you give the board an estimate of the total time you remained aboard this time?

A: You mean how long I stayed on the EVANS, the entire time?

Q: Yes, when you went back aboard hereafter sunrise.

A: I would say I was on board for approximately 8 to 10 hours. I was the last one of the others off.

Q: Can you recall approximately what time you left?

A: It was sometime in the afternoon. I would say somewhere around 1400.

Q: And were there any additional actions that you have not mentioned, completed while you were on board?

A: Not that I can recall.

Q: Did you pump out any additional spaces, or jettison any additional material or take any such action?

A: I do know that they, they meaning Mr. Covert and Mr. Haugh, he is the Chief Engineer on the LARSON, they were forward and they pushed over the practice mount which we have. I do not know ---

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Q: Loading machine?

A: Yes, sir, they pushed that over and also there were a few objects, there was a fan and also a press for clothes, that was thrown overboard also to help lighten up the forward part of the ship.

Q: What effect did these actions, the pumping out of spaces and the lightening of the ship have on the stability and buoyancy of EVANS that you could observe?

A: Evidently when the salvage party first boarded, they put marks on the forward part of the ship. Then they started to pump and I felt that the reason for this mark was to let them know whether or not they were improving stability. When I left, these marks were approximately 4 to 6 inches above the waterline, which was a definite indication that our buoyancy was increased forward. And also that stability had been improved.

Q: While you were aboard were there any preparations made for towing?

A: The only preparation that I can recall was the fact that the VDS was brought up out of the water. That's the variable depth sonar.

Q: You do not recall a bridle being rigged or anything of that nature?

A: No, sir.

Q: How had the weather remained during this period?

A: I would say the weather could not have been better. It was calm. There seemed to be no wind. The ocean was like glass.

Q: And what was the state of EVANS when you left her at about 1400?

A: When I left on the EVANS starboard side, the LARSON was there, and on her port side there was a tug?

Q: Do you recall the name of the tug?

A: I believe her name was the TAWASA--I'm not sure.

Q: TAWASA?

A: TAWASA. I believe that's who it was.

Q: And how long had it been there when you left the EVANS?

A: I believe it had been there for approximately an hour and a half. It was around noon time when she came alongside, I think.

Q: And do you know whether a salvage party from Subic had arrived by this time?

A: Yes, sir. There were some people on this tug that evidently were specialists in this. I did not see them, but this was the word which I heard.

Q: Who was in charge of the salvage party when you left FRANK E. EVANS?

A: I personally never did find out who was in charge until I spoke to Mr. Covert, and I believe he said that the Commanding Officer of the LARSON had taken control and that the Chief Engineer, LT. Haugh, was the one that was in charge on the EVANS.

Q: Do you have any additional significant observations as to your actions during the period following the collision?

A: No, sir.

Q: In that case, I would like to go back and ask a few more general questions as to the ship and its practices.

A: Yes, sir.

Q: First of all, how many damage control lockers did you have?

A: We had three. One was in the forward fan room, that was repair 2. We had one amidships, which was repair 5. And we had one aft of the log room, which was repair 3.

Q: And where was your general quarters station?

A: Mine was in, well, there is the general workshop, which is DC Central, and there was one more, that was the log room. The general workshop when we were on the gun line, was where DC Central was to be. When we left, we decided to keep it this way. The log room would become our alternate DC Central.

Q: Did you have repair gear stored in both DC Central and the log room as well as in the repair party lockers?

A: In DC Central we did not have any repair gear, no, sir.

Q: And what was the ship's practice prior to this collision, as to the locking of repair lockers?

A: On the gun line the lockers were left open all the time. After this they were locked, although from time to time daily I would find them open.

Q: And what action would you take when you found them open?

A: I would lock them.

Q: Do you have any explanation as to who was opening them and why?

A: I would have to say I do not know. Although the only people that had keys were my damage controlmen and my shipfitters.

Q: Following the collision, did you observe whether the repair lockers that were in the after section were open?

A: I did not see repair 5. Repair 3 was open. There were people there trying to get out the battle lanterns.

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Q: And what was the normal allowance of battle lanterns in the repair lockers?  
A: I believe we had 5 or 6 in each repair locker.

Q: Did you have any additional emergency lights in the repair lockers?  
A: There was one flood lamp in each repair locker also.

Q: And what types of tools are kept in this repair locker?  
A: Basically fire fighting gear, different types of tools that could be used for hooking up hoses. Repair 5 was the best repair locker we had. It had not only damage control gear but it also had a portable welding outfit. It was the largest locker we had.

Q: Did they normally contain tools that could have been used to cut down the motor whaleboat?  
A: Yes, sir.

Q: Was there any reason you did not obtain these tools before trying to do so?  
A: No, sir. At the time I did not think of that. I knew there were liferafts back on the after part, and Lester was getting these, and I figured that getting the liferafts into the water was the best thing to do at that time.

Q: When the repair lockers are locked, is there any way of obtaining emergency entrance into them. For example, keys under glass or any such measure?  
A: No, sir, we did not have keys under glass.

Q: Do you know whether any people reported to the repair parties immediately after collision?  
A: Repair 2, there was no one there because that part of the ship was gone. Where the people for repair 5 would normally meet, was where the ship had been cut in half. The only repair locker left would be repair 3 and they always assembled back in the after part of the ship, by the barber shop. And I did not see people congregating there. Everyone seemed to going in groups going to different parts.

Q: Were the people being directed to the fantail in general?  
A: Yes, sir.

Q: And where was the P-250 pump normally stowed?  
A: There are two. One is located outside the forward fireroom. And I do not know whether the pump was used.

Q: Do you know where it was found after the collision?  
A: No, sir, I did not go up that part of the passageway.

Q: How is this stored in its normal position? How is it secured there?  
A: There is a brace of angle iron that it sits into and this is what holds it in place.

Q: Are there any straps or additional retaining devices?  
A: No, sir. I feel that the pieces of angle iron that were holding it in place were quite sufficient.

Q: Would they hold it against a 90 degree roll of the ship?  
A: I think they would.

Q: Following the collision, did you observe any personnel in the after section of the ship carrying battle lanterns or flood lights?

A: Yes, there were people with battle lanterns. I saw a few people taking them out of repair 3 which was open. I saw some people down in the berthing spaces with battle lanterns also.

Q: Whose responsibility were the battle lanterns on board ship?  
A: We had an Electrical Officer aboard, Mr. John Stever, who was in the forward part of the ship and was lost. Being the Electrical Officer, he was responsible for battle lanterns.

Q: Do you have any responsibility for checking that they were in working order or in place on the ship?

A: Yes, sir. Being the Damage Control Assistant, I have certain men who are assigned to me, damage control petty officers, and these men, there is one from each division. They check monthly to make sure that, with a hull report, that everything works. They turn these reports in once a month. If they find battle lanterns during their weekly check, that are not operative, they take them off, put a tag on them saying where they are from and they take them down to the general workshop, which is where the electricians did all their work, turned it in there.

Q: And what was done about replacing a battle lantern from the place which they were removed?  
A: This I do not recall. I believe they had extra battle lanterns in the general workshop at all times. I'm not positive of this. I believe that they were replaced so that there was a continuous cycle.

Q: Did you make periodic damage control inspections of FRANK E. EVANS?  
A: From time to time, yes, sir.

Q: During the course of those inspections, what was your practice as to checking battle lanterns either as to their being missing or being inoperative?

A: I, along with my damage controlmen, which were two, would check periodically two maybe three times a week, going around and the way you check them if they are the manual type, you just throw the switch and the light will come on. The other type that are automatic, you just push the button down and the light will come on. We would check these and if we found discrepancies, we would get hold of the damage control petty officer who was responsible for that space, and notify him that that battle lantern should be turned in.

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Q: And what was the follow up action that was taken?

A: Well, my damage controlmen, as I said, we would check two or three times a week. If we found that the battle lantern was still there, we would get on this individual to make sure that this light was changed.

Q: Did you ever find any mountings for battle lanterns, where there were no battle lanterns?

A: Not that I can recall.

Q: Do you happen to know the ship's allowance for battle lanterns?

A: No, sir, I do not.

Q: Do you have any idea of the approximate number?

A: I would say somewhere near 200, but that could 50 either way.

Q: Do you know if the allowance included spares for use in replacing damaged or inoperative battle lanterns?

A: That I do not know.

Q: Going back to the water you observed in After Officers country when you got up. Was it customary to leave the main deck door open at night, when you were steaming?

A: I wouldn't say it was customary. I do know once in a while it would be open, held back by a hook, and it was a darkened ship door, which would be a dog ZEBRA. And the lights would be out.

Q: In addition, was there a curtain over the door, a blackout curtain of any sort?

A: Yes, sir, there was.

Q: Do you happen to know whether that door was open the night of 2 and 3 June?

A: That I do not know, because I did not go forward, in that part.

Q: Did you find it necessary frequently to leave the door open for purposes of ventilation in After Officers Country?

A: No, sir. After Officers was air conditioned and we had to keep our door closed back there if it was going to have any effect.

Q: Having observed the conduct of the crew of FRANK E. EVANS following this collision, do you have any comment as to particularly noteworthy performances by any individuals?

A: I don't know. I did see a few individuals, Lares, and an Electrician's Mate Second Class and Bare, and Engineman Second Class were in the after diesel, trying to feed the power to the board. It was on the MELBOURNE that I learned that they were unable to do so. Gustafson, a Shipfitter First Class, was getting people out of "R" Division, and he was dogging down the doors. He was setting ZEBRA back aft. I spoke to Robertson, Machinist Mate Third Class, and he said he set ZEBRA back in after steering and Pruden was also back there helping to set ZEBRA. But Gustafson was the only individual or person who I saw setting ZEBRA and making sure people were getting out "R" Division compartment.

Q: How about any of the people in a position of leadership, did you note their performances in any way?

A: Do you mean enlisted wise or --

Q: Or officers.

A: I thought Mr. Dunne and Mr. Covert both did an outstanding job. They seemed to have things fairly well organized and they worked more or less hand in hand. Mr. Dunne seemed to be running the show on the fantail and Mr. Covert was forward making sure also that people were going back to the fantail.

Q: Going back to my question about the door to the After Officers area, are there any spaces around the officers country, in which people would work or sleep which had better ventilation if that door were left open?

A: The only space that it might benefit would be the supply office, which was located forward of this door in the same passageway, approximately 5 to 6 feet to the port of the door.

Q: Was it an air conditioned space?

A: No, sir, it was not. At 3:15 in the morning though, I do not believe anyone would have been in it.

#### EXAMINATION BY THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q: After officers country has no door which opens directly on to the weather deck, does it?

A: No, sir, it does not.

Q: So the door you are talking about is just forward of --

A: Just aft of the door. It's approximately --

Q: ADQ is aft of the weather deck door, starboard side, is that right?

A: Yes, sir. There are two doors there. One directly forward and one directly aft.

#### EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

Questions by counsel for the board:

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Q: Based on your observations following collision, could you make any comments as to the state of damage control readiness and training of FRANK E. EVANS?

A: I would say damage control wise...the ship, material wise and personnel wise, were prepared for just any type of emergency. And I think that their performance during this collision was an indication of this.

Counsel for the board: Counsel has no further questions of this witness.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions.

Counsel for the board: MR. Lare, at this time you are privileged to make any further statement covering anything relating to the subject matter of the investigation that you think should be a matter of record in connection therewith, which has not been fully brought out by the questions you have been asked. Would you like to add anything to what you have said?

LTJG Lare: Yes, sir, there is one thing, and it goes to Forward Officers. The door in Forward Officers opens outward. I had received word from various people that said that the ladder outside Forward Officers had broken free and was lodged against the door. In which case the people in forward officers would not have been able to get out. To my knowledge, forward officers was the only space on the ship that did not have more than one access. And I think it would be a good idea for all ships of this type to, number one, turn the door around so that it would open into the space, also have one other access. That's all.

Senior Member: From where did you receive this information concerning a blockage of the door?

LTJG Lares: I received it, Admiral, from a few people, I do not remember who they were, they were from First Division which is located directly underneath Forward Officers. When they came up, they said they heard people in Forward Officers but the water at this point was getting high. And they said that they got out. I cannot name any one individual. I don't remember who they were.

Senior Member: Are these people who survived?

LTJG Lares: Yes, sir, they are.

Senior Member: Counsel will make an effort to determine if this point can be further developed.

Counsel for the board: Yes, sir. Do you have any further remarks as to design or other matters that should come to the attention of the board?

LTJG Lares: No, sir, that was my only matter.

The witness was warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

Senior Member: We will have a brief recess.

The board recessed at 1617 hours, 26 June 1969.

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The board opened at 1630 hours, 26 June 1969.

Senior Member: The hearing is now open.

All persons connected with the board, who were present when the board recessed, were again present.

Counsel for the board (CDR Glass): The board now being in open session, it is necessary to point out that any person who has been told he is a witness, or who may be a witness, is asked to withdraw from the board room.

Charles M. Garrison, Lieutenant (junior grade), U.S. Navy, was called by counsel for the board, was sworn, and testified as follows:

**EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD**

Questions by counsel for the board (CDR Glass):

Q. Lieutenant (junior grade) Garrison, you have been called as a witness for the board of investigation, which is inquiring into the circumstances surrounding the collision of HMAS MELBOURNE and USS FRANK E. EVANS, because it is believed that you have evidence which may assist the board in its investigation. Under United States law, no witness may be compelled to answer any questions, the answer to which may tend to incriminate him and you may refuse to answer any such question. Do you understand what I've said?

A. Yes, sir. I do.

Q. Will you please state your full name, grade and organization?

A. Charles Madison Garrison, Junior, Lieutenant (junior grade), U.S. Naval Reserve, USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. Since when have you been assigned to USS FRANK E. EVANS?

A. May 10th, 1968.

Q. Was that your first assignment after graduating from officer's school and being commissioned?

A. Yes, sir. It was.

Q. What duties were you assigned to in USS EVANS?

A. Assistant Navigator and Assistant CIC officer.

Q. At the time of the collision, were you on watch or in your stateroom?

A. No, sir. I was asleep in my stateroom in After Officers Country.

Q. What was the first indication you had that the collision had occurred?

A. I felt a jolt, and to my recollection, I did awake instantly. I sat up in my bunk and could hear metal against metal. Looking back I recollect what I surmise now to be a roll to starboard and water coming into my stateroom.

Q. Are you able to say from what source the water entered?

A. Yes, sir. I feel it was coming from forward because I assume it would be the door forward of my stateroom.

Q. And to what extent did it enter?

A. Approximately six inches of water which leveled off at that point.

Q. Did the ship right itself after that initial roll to starboard?

A. Yes, sir. It did.

Q. And at that stage, what degree of illumination did you have in the After Officers Country?

A. There was a battle lantern which was near, although I don't recall now its location... But this was the only initial light that I could see from my position in the stateroom.

Q. How did you make your way out of that space?

A. I had considerable debris on the deck. However, I had little difficulty exiting my stateroom.

Q. What caused the difficulty?

A. I had, of course, the water, and I had a couple of drawers that pulled themselves out and were on the deck in my stateroom.

Q. Was there anyone else endeavoring to exit at the same time as yourself?

A. Yes, sir. LTJG Suhr was directly across the passageway and LT Dunne, who has the stateroom forward of mine. We all seemed to exit at about the same time.

Q. Which hatchway did you use?

A. We walked forward and then proceeded to the starboard side in anticipation of going to our GQ stations.

Q. What did you find when you went on the main deck starboard side?

A. There was activity there, some talking. I think this is what attracted us to the starboard side. Normally, I would have gone by way of the port passageway to my GQ station. However, we did go to the starboard side and commenced walking forward at which time we discovered that we had been in a collision - in a serious collision - and that the forward half of the ship was gone at that point.

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Q. Was that the first point at which you appreciated the gravity of the emergency?

A. Yes, sir. It definitely was. Prior to this point, I certainly had no idea that the collision had been that serious, even though I had felt that I was awake from the point of impact throughout the collision itself.

Q. Well, to what part of the ship did you then proceed?

A. We then commenced walking to the fantail, telling those with us and, at that time coming out, to also proceed to the fantail.

Q. And when you got to the fantail, what action did you personally take?

A. There were a few injured people who were being brought to the scene, there on the fantail. I was talking to people who were injured and I found myself being asked several questions such as, "what do you think we will be doing?" "what is our next move?" etc., "how bad is it?" and also, well, just doing my best to assist LT Dunne who was at this time trying to get organization established and LTJG Covert who soon appeared getting his damage control organization going.

Q. How many men were by then on the fantail section?

A. When I first arrived, I would estimate perhaps 20 or 30.

Q. And later?

A. A figure which rapidly grew.

Q. Reaching what figure?

A. Just a guess on my part, perhaps 75, 80 people.

Q. What did you observe as to the state of morale and organization of the people who were there?

A. I think it deserves to be noted that there was perhaps an initial shock on everyone's part. However, calmness was prevalent and people did as they were told and did their best to support those who were taking charge.

Q. Did you observe what particular persons assumed leadership?

A. The people who were, the two people that I would note that were most in charge would be LT Dunne and LTJG Covert.

Q. How did you make your way from the fantail aboard HMAS MELBOURNE?

A. I had taken a rapid tour back up the starboard side and in the athwartship passageway back through officers country and back aft along the athwartship (sic) passageway back to the after athwartship passageway and back out the starboard side, after which people were thinning out. The injured had already left on the port side, and a few people at that time were leaving. The non-injured were also leaving along the port side and many people were leaving FRANK E. EVANS from the ECM deck. At this time, I joined a group which was at that time proceeding to the helo deck along the ladder just aft by mount 53, and then we were just proceeding to the helo deck and up to the ECM deck and with this group I did depart USS FRANK E. EVANS.

Q. What did you do when you boarded MELBOURNE?

A. I was taken below and had no personal injuries and assisted with muster reports and seeing what people were there and trying to comfort anyone and just doing about anything I could do.

Q. Did you think that efforts in HMAS MELBOURNE in this regard were well directed or not?

A. Yes, sir. I would say that with a tragedy of this nature that their response was not only rapid but the end results illustrate that the right things were done with a minimum of time.

Q. Are there any particular persons in EVANS whom you would wish to mention especially for outstanding performance of duty?

A. I think, in general, if I was to comment along this line it would be that from the seaman apprentice to the Lieutenant in charge, there was an overall togetherness in the realization of the problem we had and that the thing to do was keep calm and things would work out the best that way. And, in fact, it did, and this is where the credit lies, the fact that people did keep their heads and that the leadership was there that enabled us to come out pretty good.

Q. I would like to ask you a few questions about the practice that was observed in the CIC? Did the practice normally prevail for the CIC to decode messages received in shackle code?

A. Yes, sir, it did.

Q. And to what extent, if any, was there collaboration or consultation on this question with the bridge officers?

A. On any shackle code that would be received whether on PRITAC or SCREEN Tactical or the CI net there would be a relay of the breaking of this message to the bridge either on the MC unit or through the JL talker, and at which point there should be a concurrence that would come back into CIC from the bridge.

Q. Was it the practice of CIC to take the matter up with the bridge first or vice versa?

A. It would be the CIC's responsibility to relay the message, at which point the bridge could act accordingly - either disagree with our result or perhaps to ask for a verification etc.

Q. And if there was a disagreement, how was the matter further developed?

A. Probably by this time we would have gone to the MC unit itself - being a more direct communications, plus the OOD and the CIC watch officer would say the signal as they received it and the source by which they broke the message and how they did obtain their results.

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Q. According to the normal practice in the CIC, who was the person who decoded a message in shackle code?

A. In this particular exercise, in my section we had two officers on watch, and one of the two officers would verify any message that did come in. He may not have been the one to break the signal, but we would have it established so that one of us would see the signal and the break down of it and verify that its accuracy was correct.

Q. Would he consult with the other officer before communicating with the bridge?

A. Perhaps not, depending on the situation. If the other officer was perhaps on a maneuvering board problem he might at that time take the word of the other officer as having the correct authentication of the signal.

Q. What kind of qualifications did you have as CIC watch officer? Were they for independent steaming, port or fleet work?

A. I had as far as I know a fleet qualification.

Q. That was the highest qualification?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Why do you say as far as you know?

Admiral Stevenson: You asked him his CIC qualifications.

Counsel for the board: I'm sorry, I'll withdraw that.

Q. What are your qualifications as an officer of the deck?

A. I have no officer of the deck qualifications.

Q. In port?

A. I'm sorry, I have no officer of the deck underway qualifications.

Q. Did you ever stand watch in CIC when LTJG Ramsey was the officer of the deck?

A. No, sir, I've never. In fact I can't recall ever being in the same watch section with LTJG Ramsey.

Q. Did you ever stand watch in CIC when LTJG Hopson was Junior Officer of the Watch?

A. I feel that I have in all probability, although I cannot recall any particular time.

Q. What did you observe as to the state of communications between EVANS and MELBOURNE during SEA SPIRIT operations?

A. I felt that communications were quite good throughout the exercise, and felt that MELBOURNE's communicators were very good. We had very good communications.

Q. Did it seem to you that communications between the Australian and U.S. ships were any different than those between U.S. ships in each case?

A. No, sir. I would not think that there was anything that caused any real adjustment as far as working with the Australians.

Q. Which stateroom did you have in the After Officers Quarters?

A. My stateroom is directly aft of LT Dunne's stateroom - very close to center line.

Q. Port or starboard side?

A. It would be port side. Excuse me. What I mean is it would be to port of what would be the stateroom across from me, which would be starboard, although the stateroom itself would be in fact on the starboard side.

Q. Well, they are both on the starboard side of the ship?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And you were on the port side of the passageway?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. You mentioned drawers falling out onto the deck. Did they open up onto the port or starboard side?

A. They opened to starboard.

Q. And were these drawers that were under your bunk or other drawers?

A. Yes, sir. They were drawers that were directly under my bunk.

Q. Were there latches on them to secure them in position?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. What position were the latches in?

A. As far as I know, the drawers should have been secured.

Q. When you say they should have been secured, you mean that they were in fact in the locked position or they were not?

A. Normally, if I were to close a drawer in my stateroom I would just, out of habit, secure the latch. Therefore, I would assume that these drawers should have had the latches secured.

Counsel for the board: Counsel has no more questions of this witness.

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EXAMINATION BY MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

Questions by the senior member:

Q. Mr. Garrison, in your capacity as the Assistant Navigator, did you have anything to do with the ship's clocks?

A. I would say that my responsibility was to see that the quartermasters did, in fact, have a man whose responsibility it was to wind all clocks, and to see that they were accurately set.

Q. What frequency was this to be done?  
A. This was done on a daily basis.

Q. All clocks in the ship?  
A. Yes, sir.

Q. Do you think it was in fact done?  
A. Yes, sir. I do.

Q. Was a record kept of the errors found in the clocks?  
A. Yes, sir. There was.

Q. In what manner was the record kept?  
A. The quartermasters had a log book which would show specific clocks and their inaccuracies.

Q. Where was that log book stowed?  
A. This log book would be in the chart house.

Q. Was the log book then lost or is it available?  
A. I would assume that the log book is lost.

Q. What standard did the quartermasters use in setting the clocks?  
A. We had time ticks which would be taken to compare with the chronometers, and then set a stopwatch accordingly, and proceed to their tour of the ship to ensure that the various clocks were properly set.

Q. When they took a time tick what did they do?  
A. Sir, I don't understand your question.

Q. You said the quartermaster would take a time tick. What does that involve?  
A. This involves tuning in to a broadcast which would give a time which they could use to compare with the chronometers to and, therefore, have a basis for their tour of the clocks.

Q. This is a broadcast from what source?  
A. I do not know the source of the broadcast.

Q. It is some sort of a standard time signal?  
A. Yes, sir. It is.

Q. Would it be WWV?  
A. I cannot tell you, sir.

Q. Do you feel confident that this was done daily?  
A. Yes, sir. I do.

Senior Member: The board has no further questions.

Counsel for the board: Mr. Garrison, you have a privilege to make a further statement on any matter relating to the subject of the investigation that has not yet been placed on record and which you think should be recorded. Do you wish to add anything to your testimony?

Witness: I would like to say that I was sorry, of course, to see such a tragedy occur. But, also, the exercise itself was one that I enjoyed being in and one in which I was certainly sorry to see something like this occur, because I thought the exercise was going quite well and one which was certainly beneficial to the cohesiveness of the navies involved.

The witness was warned concerning his testimony and withdrew from the board room.

REF ID: A67145

Lieutenant Commander George L. McMichael was recalled as a witness by counsel for the board, reminded of his oath and testified as follows:

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. LCDR McMichael, when you testified this morning, you indicated you would develop more definitive information for the board as to the placement of life jackets in relation to general quarters stations in the after part of the ship and the number of personnel who were berthed and stationed in the after part of the ship under normal steaming conditions. Have you had the opportunity to prepare the document?

A. Yes, sir. I have put it in the form of a memorandum from myself to the senior member of the joint board.

Q. And do you have the document with you?  
A. Yes, sir, I do.

Q. And to your knowledge is the document complete and accurate?  
A. Yes, sir. To the best of my knowledge it is complete and accurate.

Q. Is it based on your personal knowledge?  
A. Yes, sir.

Counsel for the board: We therefore ask that it be marked as Exhibit 84 for identification and is tendered to the board for admission into evidence.

Senior Member: Very well, so received.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. Since LCDR McMichael testified as to the substance of this document this morning we see no necessity for reading it at this time. Mr. McMichael you will also recall that this morning you supplied the board with a profile view of the ship indicating the number of casualties in each space.

A. Yes, sir.

Q. The board's examination of this exhibit, which is Exhibit 81, indicates that in only one berthing space were there no survivors, is that a correct interpretation of this?  
A. Yes.

Q. And that's the Forward Officers Quarters?  
A. Yes.

Q. Have you had the opportunity to reflect on this and do you have any explanation perhaps for this part of the exhibit?

A. No explanation. Perhaps a guess, in that it is or was the lowest portion of the ship that was in the after portion of the starboard side which was apparently or I would assume flooded first in that the ship did settle rather rapidly and settle by the stern. I don't know but what the after portion of that compartment might have been flooded or that they might have already been dead at the time other people were getting out. The other possibility is they, like I in my stateroom, were disoriented for a short while. I had a little longer to go because I was higher in the ship's structure. I had an easier route out because I could go directly, whereas they would have to climb athwartships. Where they would normally walk across a deck to travel athwartships, they would have to climb up a bulkhead and either go aft through the mess decks, which was the route that most of the people that escaped from the forward area followed, or to go around the barbette of mount 51 and move up through chiefs quarters and out forward the way the chiefs did. In either way they had a long ways to go and no way that I could see to assist them to climb up these bulkheads or up the decks which had become bulkheads.

Q. Subsequent to your testifying, the board has received testimony that would indicate there is hearsay to the effect that the door to forward officers quarters may have been blocked, have you heard such rumors or hearsay?

A. I heard a similar rumor or hearsay shortly after I was brought aboard MELBOURNE after the collision. At that time I set about trying to find out just who had first hand knowledge of this. I had been told that the officers in Forward Officers Country had not been able to get out because a ladder had blocked their egress. I personally was able to contact part of the First Division personnel while on MELBOURNE. I had to stop my efforts there in order to go back over to FRANK E. EVANS. But when we got aboard REARSGE later in that day...The following day I directed the Weapons Officer to continue the search for information. We found two or three people who had heard the same rumor that the door had been blocked, but we were unable to find anybody in First Division that had seen this and knew it of their own knowledge that this door had been blocked. First Division personnel were the only ones who would have come by the door coming out of forward officers country. The chiefs slept forward and the people in OI were further aft.

Q. To your knowledge were all the surviving First Division personnel interviewed on this subject?

A. Yes, sir, they were.

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Q. And I believe there were only six of them...at least the testimony before the board would indicate that?

A. Six who were in the berthing area at the time of the collision, yes. That included the leading surviving petty officer, petty officer Crowsen who stated that he had heard the rumor but that he had been unable to find any substantiation.

Counsel for the board: That clarifies the two remaining points that were left from this morning, sir. If the board has no questions on those points, I will proceed with LCDR McMichael.

Senior Member: Please do.

EXAMINATION BY COUNSEL FOR THE BOARD (Cont'd)

Questions by counsel for the board:

Q. LCDR McMichael, although this is your second appearance before the board we will now go into the more general matters which normally would be expected the first time, so I will start at the beginning. Would you state briefly for the benefit of the board, your naval experience?

A. I was a Naval Reserve Officer's Training Corps product from the University of Southern California. I received a regular commission in 1957. I was ordered aboard USS LENAWEE (APA-195), as a gunnery officer in which capacity I served for approximately 10 months. I was then assigned to the Naval Intelligence School Language Division where I undertook a 36 week course in the Russian language. Following that I had 18 months service here in the Philippines at Naval Communications Station, San Miguel, and TAD assignments to the staffs of CARDIV 1, Commander Carrier Division 1, and Commander Carrier Division 5 during that period. I left here in 1960 and went aboard USS BRADFORD (DD-545), where I served as operations officer. Upon decommissioning of BRADFORD to transfer under the MAP program to Greece, I became first Executive Officer and then Officer in Charge of the transfer team. Upon transfer of BRADFORD to the Greek Navy, I was assigned to duty as Officer in Charge of USS HOLT (DE-706), which was in the process of being recommissioned being brought out of moth balls and prepared for transfer to the Republic of Korea Navy. Upon completion of that, which was in 1964...summer of 1964 - I served 9 months as OIC of 706 - I was assigned to USS WEISS (APD-135) as Executive Officer. I served aboard WEISS for 20 months. I was detached from WEISS in the summer of 1965, no 66, excuse me, and was assigned to the Postgraduate School for a post graduate curriculum at American University in Washington D. C., where I received a Master's degree.

Q. In what area?

A. In International Relations. I was then assigned in the Spring of 1967 to the staff of the Senior Member Military Armistice Commission in Korea where I served as advance secretariat and joint duty officer in Korea for a 12 month tour. Upon completion of that tour I was ordered to USS FRANK E. EVANS as Executive Officer and reported in May of last year.

Q. In addition to your duties as Executive Officer are you assigned any other principal duties?

A. Yes, sir, I am also the Navigator.

Q. Are you also responsible for the training program on the ship?

A. Yes, sir. I am responsible for overseeing the training program. We have a training officer but I am responsible under the commanding officer to ensure that the training program is followed and is pursued.

Q. Who is the training officer?

A. LTJG Hiltz is the training officer.

Q. Following the overhaul period last year, which this board has heard about from other witnesses, did FRANK E. EVANS go through a period of individual ship, type and intertype training?

A. Yes, sir, it did.

Q. How extensive was this period of training?

A. We spent a good proportion of our time at sea and it pretty well covered all aspects of destroyer operations. It covered shore bombardment. We gained our qualifications in shore bombardment, ASW, AAW, and task force operations as part of an ASW unit or group.

Q. Did it specifically include ASW Task Group screening and plane guard operations?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. For how long a period had FRANK E. EVANS been doing this subsequent to its overhaul, and prior to the collision on 3 June?

A. More or less continuously each time we went to sea from approximately the end of the holiday leave period, which would have been in early January. Of course we were in HUK ASWEX in December where also we did some screening. But then were broken up for a month and a half for the leave period. Then from Mid-January to the time of the collision we had been on and off deployed in a ASW group and engaged in plane guarding.

Q. Do you recall whether any particular preparations were made in FRANK E. EVANS for exercise SEA SPIRIT in the way of training or indoctrination?

A. Yes, sir. we held various briefings on portions of the various publications which led to SEA SPIRIT. As each officer would go to participate in a particular briefing which preceded both here and in Manila, preceded SEA SPIRIT, he would come back to the ship and we would have an officer training session referred to as officers tactical school to cover the material which he had learned from the briefing.

REF ID: A65142710