

TELL ME WHAT HAPPENED

Season 5 - Episode 7

Musicians Rescue Hundreds on Sinking Ship

Torah Kachur:

Just off the coast of South Africa, on the deck of a cruise ship, stands a woman named Rose. No, not that Rose. And this is not the *Titanic*. It's the *Oceanos*. But it is a huge ship loaded with passengers, and it is sinking.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

I was actually quite frightened because you could see how badly the ship was listing. If you didn't hold on, you could have slidden down and gone into the ocean.

Torah Kachur:

The senior crew has snuck away in a lifeboat. The captain is paralyzed with shock, and the fate of 500 people rests in the hands of a singer, a bass player, and two magicians.

Moss Hills:

Because I went down below to check on things for the second time and saw water actually coming in and seeing that water sloshing around from side to side, that was the moment when I realized, we are in dire straits here. This ship is sinking.

Torah Kachur:

I'm Torah Kachur, and this is *Tell Me What Happened*, true stories of people helping people, an original podcast by OnStar. We tell these stories because every day when you wake up, you don't know if you'll be a person who needs help, or if you'll be a person that helps someone else. It's important to remember that it's in all of us to be either one of those things every day.

Rose-Marie Rowe is 27 years old, living in Johannesburg, South Africa, and looking to have some fun.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

They were advertising cruises from Durban to Cape Town. And I think it was four or five days, but it was really, really cheap. I'd never been on a cruise before. So it was quite exciting.

Torah Kachur:

It's July — the middle of winter in South Africa. That's part of the reason the cruise

is so affordable. But the weather is still nice enough to enjoy some sunny days at sea.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

We were going to party and just enjoy it.

Torah Kachur:

It's 2 in the afternoon when Rose and her best friend Gwen board the ship.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

The sun was shining. It was a nice day. You know, there was a little bit of a breeze, but other than that, it was actually a really nice day.

Torah Kachur:

The ship is small by today's standards, just 5 decks high. The maximum capacity is 550 passengers and 250 crew. But for this trip, it's only about half full.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

The entertainment crew were on the deck and they were keeping the people entertained

Torah Kachur:

There are comedians, magicians, dancers — but what really appeals to Rose is a pair of musicians — a husband-and-wife duo.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

They were playing songs on the side of the ship. They were just really good.

So wherever they were playing music, we'd go and grab a beer and go and sit down and listen to them.

Torah Kachur:

The route for this cruise is pretty simple: Leave Durban, follow the South African coast to Cape Town, then return.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

We were on the ship for two days and then we got to Cape Town. And it was a bit of a rocky ride. The ship was sort of rolling from side to side. There were a lot of people on the ship who were quite ill from the motions. A lot of passengers actually got off the ship because they said they weren't going back on that route.

Torah Kachur:

Late in the afternoon, the ship departs. Rose tries to get a glimpse of Table Mountain looming over the harbour, but the clouds are too thick. Considering the ship was only half-full to begin with, and some people have gotten off in Cape Town, and then others are stuck in their cabins with seasickness. The huge ship feels empty.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

It actually felt like we owned the ship. I remember that thinking, you know, this is so great. You know, I'd do a cruise anytime. (laughs)

Torah Kachur:

The next port-of-call is the sea-side town of East London — Rose and Gwen spend the day at a casino and doing some shopping. Midafternoon, it's time to get back on board.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

I remember seeing one of these corrugated iron roofs blowing off somebody's house. So that wind was treacherous. And I remember there was a man with his family and he said, "I'm not getting on that ship in this wind."

Torah Kachur:

With so many empty cabins, the cruise line makes a business decision. They offer a one-night cruise back to Durban at a hugely discounted rate. And hundreds of people take them up on it.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

So they decided they were all going to get on the ship and just party for the night. After being like only a hundred and whatever people on the ship, we now we're 500, over 500 people.

Torah Kachur:

Dinner that night is late, and very different than the first three days.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

It was pretty wild. We got our dinner, but you had to hold your plate while you were eating because otherwise it would slide off the table. There were people even falling off the chairs in the dining room.

Torah Kachur:

Outside, the wind speed is now 40 knots, and the ocean swells are 30 feet high.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

You could see that the waiters weren't amused. They obviously knew something that we didn't know.

Torah Kachur:

After dinner, Rose, Gwen, and their new friends head to the lounge to catch the show. It's the same husband and wife duo they had listened to in the sunshine their first day onboard. But the mood has changed.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

Then suddenly they were handing out life jackets and it's like, "Did I miss something here?" It was just, "We're all of this just to make sure that everybody's okay."

Torah Kachur:

Just then, around 9:30, the power goes out. Only the dim orange glow of the emergency lighting keeps the room from falling into total darkness. In an effort to maintain a sense of normalcy, the musicians start playing again.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

You know, at the time, like I'd never really thought about a ship sinking or that kind of thing. So it was like, okay, so if the ship's in trouble, they'll probably just get somebody to tow us back to shore.

Torah Kachur:

The lead musician, who had left the stage for a few minutes and then returned, makes an announcement. "All women with children please go out to the deck and get in a lifeboat."

This is *Tell Me What Happened*, a podcast created by OnStar to showcase how important a human connection is when you need help, whether you're lost in a blizzard, hunkering down in a hurricane, or on a dream cruise that is becoming a nightmare. Moss Hills grew up in Southern Africa. He started playing in a band as a teenager and hasn't stopped.

Moss Hills:

I've never had a day job my whole life. I've always just been a musician.

Torah Kachur:

That career took him aboard cruise ships. It's a great way to be a professional musician and also see the world. His wife, Tracy, plays bass and sings with him.

Moss Hills:

Tracy and I were working as a duo playing music on a ship called the *Oceanos*. We'd play at sail away parties, we'd play on the pool deck at lunchtime when we were out at sea or we'd play cocktail sets in the evening and late night sets. That's it, we were just, we were musicians.

Torah Kachur:

Moss and his wife have worked on lots of ships, so they've seen some foul weather. The Bay of Biscay off the coast of France, the Caribbean on the edge of hurricane season, but even they are surprised at the conditions.

Moss Hills:

Boy, we could really feel the ship. Immediately when we left the harbor area and into the open ocean, we could feel this is a heavy storm and the skies were darkening heavily and we just sailed out into that storm.

Torah Kachur:

They play for the guests as the ship departs, then go to have their dinner.

Moss Hills:

And Tracy and I were sort of saying to each other, wow, this is, this is a lot rougher than usual.

Torah Kachur:

When they finish eating, Moss goes to the lounge to get ready for their evening set.

Moss Hills:

I was a little concerned. I thought, well, you know, can we actually play? Are we able to stand on the stage with, with a guitar on or a saxophone?

Torah Kachur:

Tracy, meanwhile, goes back to their cabin.

Moss Hills:

She said, "Look, I'm just going to prepare a few things in case this gets really bad." She said, "I'm just going to pack a small bag in case we're out in a lifeboat or something." And I said, "That's not going to happen. It'll be fine." She said, "Look, I just like to be prepared."

Torah Kachur:

The restaurant is on one of the middle decks — almost at the water line, so although it might have felt rough for the diners, it was nothing compared to what was going on three floors up in the lounge.

Moss Hills:

It seemed to just start getting really much worse quite quickly and the ship was really rolling around badly.

Torah Kachur:

Passengers start arriving in the lounge — either because they're expecting an evening performance — or because they just don't know where else to go.

Moss Hills:

I think the more people that came into the lounge it kind of became sort of the meeting point and people just started streaming in there. And then suddenly, boom, all the lights went out.

Torah Kachur:

The emergency lighting comes on giving the lounge a soft, spooky glow. The room is crowded.

There are waiters and waitresses, musicians and comedians, and lots of concerned passengers. But there is no sign of the ship's crew.

Moss Hills:

Tracy came up from our cabin and she said that she'd seen the chief engineer. She

said he came past her in the crew corridor looking sort of very wild-eyed. She said his hair looked wet and she was sort of asking what's happening. He kind of just pushed past or went into his cabin and then came out with a little duffel bag. And we all thought, wow, you know, what is going on here?

Torah Kachur:

The movement of the ship is now so violent it isn't safe to stand up.

Moss Hills:

We were shouting to people and just saying "sit down," "find a seat," "stay on the floor." And then we thought, well, let's just try and entertain people to stop them from panicking until the power comes back on.

Torah Kachur:

Moss sits down with his acoustic guitar and starts to sing. Tracy and a few other performers join in. Even the crowd starts getting into it.

Moss Hills:

One of the songs we were doing was "American Pie," the Don McLean classic. Such a great song with that great chorus. "Bye, bye, Miss American Pie. Drove my Chevy to the levee, levee was dry. Them good old boys were drinking whiskey and rye singing, this'll be the day that I die. This'll be ..." And we thought, that's not great. So we, we thought we'd better not be singing this, "it'll be the day that I die." We just kind of faded that one out and I started playing some Beatles songs.

Torah Kachur:

Amid the music, the singing, and the wind and waves outside, he realizes there is one sound he doesn't hear. The engines. The engines are the heartbeat of a ship. A low throbbing or a constant hum. The kind of noise you only notice when it stops. Moss knows instantly what that silence means. Without the ability to move forward, the ship can't steer.

Moss Hills:

And we were going broadside into the waves instead of just going nose into the waves and the ship was just being thrown around wildly and everything that wasn't fixed was moving to one side of the lounge, the starboard side, the right-hand side of the lounge. Chairs, pot plants, ashtrays, glasses, people. And it's all kind of moving to that side of the mix. I think is the ship gradually tipping over?

Torah Kachur:

Leaving Tracy and the other performers to keep the passengers calm and distracted, Moss and Julian, one of the magicians, start exploring the ship, looking for answers. They head for the lower decks and when they reach the engine room they find... nothing. No lights, no noise, no people.

Moss Hills:

... and that's a little shocking to suddenly discover. But we couldn't see any water.

Because that's what we were thinking, is the ship taking on water or is the ship on fire?

Torah Kachur:

But there's no sign of anything like that. So they head back up to the lounge.

On the way, they run into the cruise director, Loraine Betts, and she's got some frightening news. The captain has told her they need to abandon ship.

Moss Hills:

But I felt like that sounds really extreme. If we're going to abandon the ship, why are we doing that? Are we on fire, or are we sinking? And the captain's saying, no, this is just a precaution.

Torah Kachur:

The normal plan for an evacuation is to sound the siren: Seven short blasts followed by one long one. Then an announcement telling crew and passengers to go to their muster stations. Lastly, the captain will give the order to abandon ship. But none of that is happening. Moss and the other entertainers start bringing groups of passengers to the outside deck where the lifeboats are.

Moss Hills:

And none of us knew how to launch lifeboats, got absolutely no clue.

Torah Kachur:

The *Oceanos* is taking the full force of the waves on her side.

Moss Hills:

The ship was rolling from left to right, port to starboard. And as it rolls one way, the lifeboat swings out on the davits with the cables and then swings back and smacks into the side of the ship. And as the next big swell hits, it goes out again and smashes against the side of the ship. And none of us knew how to fix it to the side of the ship.

Torah Kachur:

Moss is worried about damaging the lifeboats. He's also trying to figure out how to get people into them.

Moss Hills:

I would stand with sort of one leg on the *Oceanos* and one leg on the edge of the lifeboat and then maybe get two or three people and help them in. And as I could feel a big swell coming, I'd jump back onto the *Oceanos*, stay there and the lifeboat would swing out and swing back in, bang, bang, bang, bang, and bang against the side of the ship. And I'd put my foot back on it and we'd load a few more.

Torah Kachur:

They get 50 people into the first lifeboat. Maybe a few more, or a few less. No one is keeping track.

Moss Hills:

And the people in the lifeboat are squealing in fear. It's just, it's really scary.

Torah Kachur:

Moss gives the order to lower the boat. While all this is going on, there's still been no official word about what is wrong with the ship. Setting people adrift in lifeboats, in the dark, in a storm, is an incredibly dangerous thing to do. Moss wants to know why. So while the others continue loading boats, he makes a second trip to the lower decks in search of answers.

Moss Hills:

And as I descended the one staircase, I could see the water. This whole big body of water is suddenly you know, sweeping to one side against the bulkheads and sweeping back again. And I realized that we were sinking because that was a passenger deck, which meant that all the very low decks, the crew accommodation decks and the engine room, must be full of water.

Torah Kachur:

Convinced that evacuation is the only option, he rushes back up to help more passengers get off the boat.

Moss Hills:

You can't just throw your arms up and think, "Oh my word," we're sinking. You've got to do something.

Torah Kachur:

Over the next hour, Moss and the entertainers load and launch all the boats on one side of the ship.

Moss Hills:

Now we went to the port side of the ship to launch those lifeboats. And now we had the opposite problem, whereas on the starboard side, the lifeboats were swinging away from the ship, now, the lifeboats on the port side were stuck on the side of the ship. So they were fixed there just by gravity holding it in place.

Torah Kachur:

That makes them easier to load, but harder to lower down. It's only possible because each time the *Oceanos* rolls, the lifeboat swings out a little bit.

Moss Hills:

It was awful to see it going down because it's half tipping in the front and nearly tipping people out and bang, bang, bang, bang, crash into the water. You can, can hear people squealing and, and we were thinking, my word, we're probably going to kill people just launching the port side lifeboats.

Torah Kachur:

They decide launching more lifeboats is too dangerous. So, in search of some

instructions about what to do now, Moss heads to the bridge to find the captain and the senior officers. With him are his wife Tracy, the magicians Robin and Julian, and Loraine, the cruise director. The bridge is up high and forward on the ship. The higher they go, the more extreme the motion of the boat gets. Moss grabs the handle and opens the door to the bridge.

Moss Hills:

We could see there's no one here. And that was another shock because all along we'd been thinking that we were all just sort of helping out with the rescue. And then when we got there and saw that the bridge of the *Oceanos* was abandoned, we suddenly realized the entertainment team is in charge of this rescue, we're running the whole thing.

Torah Kachur:

They find the radio. Moss presses the red button and starts yelling, "Mayday! Mayday!"

A man's voice answers. It's a low, strong voice. The kind of tone that adds a sense of calmness to even the most panicked situation.

Moss Hills:

So we'd say you know, "Mayday! Mayday!" and he'd answered you know, you know, "What, what is your Mayday," and we were saying, "Well, we're on the cruise ship *Oceanos*; we are sinking."

"Okay," he says. And then he asked us, you know, "What's your position?" And I'd said to him, "Well, we're about halfway between East London and Durban." And he was saying, "No, I need the coordinates." And so we said, "We don't know what the coordinates are." And he was saying, "Well, you know, what rank are you?" And we were saying, "Well, I'm a guitarist. We've got, you know, there's two magicians here. There's the bass player and the cruise director and nobody's of any rank."

Torah Kachur:

Moss learned later that the people who would have known how to run an evacuation had fled the ship in a lifeboat hours earlier.

Moss Hills:

And so, most of the senior officers were off the ship. But the captain was actually on the pool deck, and I think he was in a deep state of shock and was just sitting on the pool deck smoking.

Torah Kachur:

The captain of the ship they reached on the radio relays their situation to the South African Navy. They promise to send helicopters, but that will take a few hours. Moss heads below deck for a third time to see how fast the water is rising.

Moss Hills:

And as I went down the staircase, almost immediately I could hear water in the

restaurant that we'd just been eating in a number of hours before that. It was just such a shocking sight that this whole restaurant just full of water. Little emergency lights are on and you could just see everything floating in that water. You could see chairs and tablecloths and food.

Torah Kachur:

The other thing he sees is that the ship is leaning over to the side even more dramatically. When a particularly big wave hits them, the starboard rail dips below the surface.

Moss Hills:

You're thinking, wow. Are we in danger of the whole ship just tipping over upside down and then we'll all be trapped inside the ship?

Torah Kachur:

Fearing that, they make sure everyone has a life jacket on and then usher them out onto the deck. If the ship does roll over, they'll be flung into the water, which is better than being trapped inside. And then they wait. No one knows how long the helicopters will take, or if they can even find them in the storm. One of those people waiting is Rose.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

So we were all sitting down on the deck and it was freezing. I just remember that it, you know, it's gone really, really cold. We all had evening dresses on or, you know, wearing light clothing.

I was sitting with two guys who had a bottle of Jack Daniel's and it was like, you know, they were passing this around and I thought, well, why not? It's going to keep me warm. So let me have some Jack. Yeah.

Torah Kachur:

Moss and Tracy leave the crowd and go to the bridge to be near the radio. But sitting inside would be too risky, so they huddle on the bridge-wing, an open balcony where the captain would normally stand to survey the horizon.

Moss Hills:

I remember sitting on the bridge wing with my wife Tracy, just the two of us sitting there looking out at the water. And us having an incredible conversation no one wants to have, and we were thinking if we go down with this ship, if both of us are lost at sea here, then our daughter Amber will have no parents, you know. And we were thinking, you know, at least one of us has to survive when the helicopters come. You know, one of us should get on as soon as we can even if the other one stays behind to continue helping with the rescue.

Torah Kachur:

But neither of them are willing to be the one who leaves.

Moss Hills:

We said, we're in this together and we're going to get out of this together. No matter what, we are going to survive this together and we're going to see our daughter again together.

Torah Kachur:

The light of the morning sun starts to brighten the horizon.

Moss Hills:

You've got this sort of rosy glow on the horizon and it kind of fills you with a little bit of hope.

Torah Kachur:

In that soft morning light, Moss and Tracy see a small speck in the distance. As they watch it, that speck becomes two, then six. Then they hear them. Helicopters. Six South African Navy helicopters are heading straight for them. When they arrive, one of them hovers over the forward deck. Moss goes to meet them. He grabs a piece of rope and ties himself to the railing, so he doesn't get washed overboard, and watches as two men in black wetsuits are lowered onto the deck.

Moss Hills:

They're kind of holding on the railing. I'm holding on the same railing and the three of us are there and I'm giving him a bit of an update on what I know of the situation. And they gave me an update of what it was like from the air, and they just said, "Look, there's a lot of people still on the ship. We can see from the air this ship is going down." And they said, "We don't know if we can get everybody off. We think there's too many people here. We think we might lose people today, but we're gonna do the best we can."

Torah Kachur:

The Navy divers had noticed a small inflatable boat secured on the bow of the ship. They say they want to have that in the water in case anyone falls out of the harness while being lifted off the ship. Julian, the magician, heads off with one of them to launch it. That leaves just Moss and the other diver to rescue more than 200 passengers.

Moss Hills:

He said what we need to do is run two helicopters at the same time. One in the forward section of the ship, one at the aft.

Torah Kachur:

Doing two lifts at the same time means you need two people capable of hooking passengers into the harness.

Moss Hills:

And he said, would I do it? So of course I said, yes, I'll run that.

Torah Kachur:

It's a two-person harness, which makes the evacuation faster, but also more complicated. Moss gets four minutes of instruction.

Moss Hills:

He said put the harness on properly under people's arms so it's right tight under their armpits. And he said if you get it wrong the center of gravity will be wrong and they'll tip the wrong way, and as they get pulled up, gravity will just pull them out of the harness, they'll fall onto the deck and you'll probably kill them. OK, let's go.

Torah Kachur:

With that, the diver heads to the stern of the ship leaving Moss alone on the foredeck.

Moss Hills:

We had a couple of the entertainment team, a couple of the dancers, so they said okay fine we'll go first. So I put the harness on each one of them, gave the signals to the helicopter, lifted them up and I could hear them sort of squeal as they got lifted off the deck.

Torah Kachur:

It's scary, but it works. Quickly, they fall into a rhythm. Tracy sends two passengers out onto the foredeck. Moss hooks them in and then signals the helicopter to lift. Once a dozen people are loaded, that helicopter flies to the mainland to drop them off, then return. Meanwhile Moss and the team fill the next one. Eventually, it's Rose's turn. She's spent the last three days listening to Moss play guitar and sing. Now, he's strapping her into a lifting harness.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

You know, I went up there, Moss threw the harness over me. And he said, whatever you do, don't put your arms up because you'll fall out the harness. So he said, just make sure that you're in secure and don't look down.

Torah Kachur:

That's what he said to dozens of people, men, women, some of them elderly, some young. All of them, frightened.

Moss Hills:

You know, your hands are getting worn and your skin's getting chapped and sore. But you just got no, you're not focusing on that. You're just one focus. And that's the two people in front of you. Get them into harness. Get them up to the helicopter. Then it's the next two.

Torah Kachur:

It takes a couple of minutes for each pair of people to get hoisted off, and there are more than a hundred clustered on the forward part of the ship. Methodically, Moss keeps working.

Moss Hills:

I was starting to get really quite exhausted, and I'd put two people into the harness, two elderly ladies, and a big wave hit us as I gave the signal and the whole ship tipped over at a really steep angle. They lost their footing and they kind of swung out and they had this pendulum motion almost immediately and they swung out over the water and, and I could see them swinging back and as they just swung towards the side of the ship they were squealing a bit and they just hit the side of the ship with a sickening thud. And the two of them just hung in that harness and got pulled up to the helicopter and dragged inside. And I just didn't know what had happened to them. And I thought, have I have I injured them badly? Could I maybe even have killed them? And I kind of lost my nerve.

Torah Kachur:

Moss sits down on the deck, unable to continue. All night long he's been rushing around the ship looking after hundreds of strangers. Physically, mentally, emotionally, he's exhausted.

Moss Hills:

I remember sitting down on the deck and just staring down into that water and just trying to calm myself down.

Torah Kachur:

Robin, the other magician, tosses him a juice box. It's the first nourishment he's had since the power went out 12 hours ago.

Moss Hills:

Then thinking, you know, we've got to get back at it. We just got to get back at it and focusing myself again and stood back up again and just carried on rescuing people.

Torah Kachur:

After filling one of the helicopters another one moves into position, but this one doesn't lower a harness. Instead, the crew member is holding out his hand and touching each of his fingertips. He wants a count of how many people are left.

Moss Hills:

We had 12 passengers left: Tracy, me, and Robin on the bridge. That's 15 people.

Torah Kachur:

The guy in the helicopter starts giving more signals, pointing towards the back of the ship.

Moss Hills:

From the air they could see that not only was the ship tipped right over on its starboard side, it was now starting to go down in the bow, right in that forward section where we were. And the back of the ship, the tail, was starting to lift out of the water.

Torah Kachur:

They hurry to the stern and lift the final 12 passengers off the deck.

Moss Hills:

And then the only people left are me, Tracy, Robin and the Navy diver. It was just us. So we put the harness on us and the next thing we were all up and everybody was off.

and that was it. It was over.

Torah Kachur:

On land, a huge crowd is waiting in a grassy field.

Moss Hills:

And when the helicopter landed and we got out, loads of people started standing up and cheering because they knew that this was the entertainment team who helped rescue everybody.

Rose-Marie Rowe:

If it wasn't for Moss, there would have been a lot of panic. If it wasn't for him, most of us wouldn't be here today to tell the story.

Moss Hills:

I remember being just kind of overcome with this feeling of relief and just sudden kind of immediate exhaustion. I started this emotion coming through me, and I started to feel I was sobbing and I just collapsed, and, and I couldn't stand up. They had to take me away in a stretcher.

Torah Kachur:

As he recovers, Moss watches the live news footage of the ship disappearing beneath the waves.

Moss Hills:

And you can see the ship start to nosedive down. And as it's doing that, all the air that's inside it is now under pressure and just rushing out through little vents and open doors.

Torah Kachur:

On the screen, Moss can pick out the exact spot on the deck where he was standing just 45 minutes before.

Moss Hills:

And there's just white foam, deck chairs, and orange life jackets floating, and nothing left.

Torah Kachur:

The *Oceanos* disaster is notable in one very important way: everyone survived; 581 people were on board and every single one of them was rescued. The two women that smacked against the side of the ship had some serious bruises, but that's all. The

flooding on the lower decks was caused by a series of events. The violent waves had knocked a poorly fitted pipe out of place. That meant that pipes which should have carried sewage out to sea were allowing ocean water to come surging in. Even that could have been easily fixed, except the back-up valves had been removed for repairs, and not replaced. As for the crew, the captain and five other officers were convicted of negligence for fleeing the ship and failing to help the passengers evacuate.

The wreck of the *Oceanos* lies in 300 feet of water, roughly three miles offshore. A few divers have gone down to it, but the currents are very strong in that area, making it a difficult operation.

Mallory Haas is a diver and marine archeologist who spends her time scouring wrecks that are considerably older than the *Oceanos*.

Torah Kachur:

What can you tell us about the sinking of the *Oceanos*?

Mallory Haas:

It was an interesting tale of a crew being petrified and not doing what their jobs were. You just felt terrible for those poor people who had no idea what were going on. And it's all vacation as well, it's not even a working vessel, so everyone who's on a working vessel knows exactly how everything's supposed to work, because everyone's been through the health and safety training. I'm very sure that none of those people that were on board had run through a drill of how to abandon ship. Now, when you go on to any kind of pleasure cruise, they at least run through one or two. But that's all come because of something else has happened, like, you know, major disasters change how we deal with anything.

Torah Kachur:

Everyone knows about the *Titanic*. So, did we learn a lot from that too?

Mallory Haas:

Oh yeah, I think we learned that they didn't put enough life rafts on board because they didn't want the promenade deck to be over-cluttered. Because it was the unsinkable ship, you didn't need the life rafts. So we learned a lot from that. We also learned a lot from, know, they thought that the bulkheads and the sealed doors underneath would, you know, solve the problem. But when the gash is that big, you know, can only have so much water being taken on board. So, it's one of the other things that you end up learning is about how ship structure changed.

Torah Kachur:

Were life jackets required on the *Titanic* or was that after the fact?

Mallory Haas:

Umm. They were available. The other thing was that you couldn't get people to wear them. They weren't mandated. We're very conscious of seat belts. We've been instructed, we've been taught in school about safety, about why we have to have

them on. No one had been taught about the reason why you have to have a life vest on. So, if you haven't been taught that, why would you need it? And also, there's the option of choice. There should never have been a choice to put on a life vest. But they gave them a choice and a lot of people said no. So, when they did go into the water, they didn't have life vests on.

Torah Kachur:

Maybe more philosophically, do we need tragedies to learn about safety?

Mallory Haas:

I hate to say it, but yeah. You can't motivate people to spend more money, usually, for no reason. They have to be prompted to do that because why would you potentially be doing something more when it's not needed? So we only learn by failure to then create a better avenue.

Torah Kachur:

That's it for this episode of *Tell Me What Happened*, true stories of people helping people.

This is the final episode of our fifth season. I hope you enjoyed the entire series. You can add a comment on whatever app you are using, we love to read those. Maybe you know a story we could share in a future episode? And stay subscribed so you'll know when we roll out season number six! On behalf of OnStar — the wonderful people who make this show — I'm Torah Kachur. Please, be safe out there.

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