

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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FIRE ON BOARD THE *ISLAND LADY*  
PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA  
JANUARY 14, 2018

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA18FM010

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: CASSANDRA IRVIN  
Barstaff

Wednesday,  
January 24, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED]  
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED]  
U.S. Coast Guard (Civilian)

BETH FIFER, Company Representative  
Tropical Breeze Casino

STACY FALCONE, Company Representative  
Tropical Breeze Casino

JAMES CARLSON, Attorney  
Hamilton, Miller & Birthisel

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I N T E R V I E W

CWO [REDACTED] -- the *Island Lady* boat fire. We're going to record this interview and that's just so we can pay attention to your answers and not have to write so much.

INTERVIEW OF BETH FIFER

BY CWO [REDACTED]

Q. And so, as we get started here -- do you still live on [REDACTED] ?

A. Um-hum.

Q. In Holiday?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Great. And can you give me your background, education and work experience?

A. I've been working with *Tropical Breeze* for about 5 years. I do cook and I bartend. And then prior experiences, I worked at SPC as a financial assistance and I worked at Target being a cashier.

Q. Okay. And your 5 years of employment with SunCruz, were you always a cashier or bar assistance?

A. No. I was mostly their cook --

Q. Cook.

A. -- for about 4 years and then I became a bar.

Q. So the bar has been the last year?

A. For about.

Q. Okay. On the morning -- or on your workday, on the 14th of

1 January, can you just walk us through your workday?

2 A. Like any other day, you sign in. You go onto the boat. And  
3 that day was pretty chilly out, so I was in the little cubbyhole  
4 and we were starting to ride out and, of course, I'm on my phone.  
5 And I seen smoke, so I thought maybe it was because it was chilly,  
6 it was just a cold day and, you know, the exhaust was just a  
7 little bit thicker that day.

8 And a few minutes go by and one of the deckhands come in and  
9 just ask everybody to move upstairs. And so, we try and move as  
10 many customers up to the upstairs, and I was one of the few that  
11 was still downstairs trying to get the remaining passengers to go  
12 upstairs. And we went upstairs and a lot of the customers were,  
13 you know, kind of crowded around because we were upstairs. And  
14 so, we were -- sorry. It's just kind of nerve wracking to relive  
15 it.

16 Q. I'm sure.

17 A. And so, we went upstairs and, you know, everybody was  
18 nervous, everybody was wanting to know. So we tried -- all the  
19 employees tried to calm down. And I didn't really see much of  
20 anything. I was mostly just concerned with whatever customers I  
21 could see and, you know, where my employees were that I work with.  
22 Because down in the cubbyhole I was sitting next to three other  
23 employees of mine.

24 So we all kind of followed and tried to stay around each  
25 other, trying to figure out what was going on. And I want to say

1 that we -- that somebody -- I forgot what deckhand it was that  
2 said that we had to go jump overboard. And so they tried to take  
3 as many customers down first. And I remember there was this one  
4 customer that was so, she was so -- like I don't even know how to  
5 describe it. She was just so anxious and, you know, and she kind  
6 of like tugged me. So I was like -- so it was -- another co-  
7 worker was in front of me so we allowed her to go.

8 And then the smoke was so thick at the time, so when I was  
9 trying to go down the stairs -- I'm afraid of heights, so I was  
10 going kind of slowly down the stairs to go to the bow and -- I  
11 forgot -- it was -- I don't know who did what that day, and I do  
12 apologize for that. But I remember somebody opening the hatch to  
13 -- for the boats to go -- I don't know what that's called.

14 Q. So this port right here?

15 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. And so you're talking about the port side --

17 A. Port side --

18 Q. -- transfer port?

19 A. Yeah, yeah. So one of -- I don't know who opened it, but  
20 somebody opened it so that more people can, you know, get off the  
21 boat safer. And, so I'm deadly afraid of heights, so I sat there  
22 in shock and hyperventilating, not knowing what to do and not  
23 knowing what was going on behind me, until I seen, you know, the  
24 video. And so one of my co-workers came beside me and, you know,  
25 to tell me that, you know, hey, it's safe; the water's okay to go

1 in.

2 So he goes in first and he's, you know, there trying to get  
3 me to go down. And like I said, I'm very scared and I  
4 accidentally kicked him. Didn't mean to kick him, but I did. And  
5 I don't know how many minutes this goes by. It wasn't very long  
6 and it felt like either somebody pushed me or I just finally got  
7 the nerve to go down, and then I finally hit the water and -- you  
8 know, it takes a few minutes to try to realize what you're doing.

9 So it took me a minute to try to get back and to see what I  
10 was doing. And I -- then I tried to go back onto shore and then  
11 trying to see who I can grab to try to help bring back on shore.  
12 And I seen -- everybody is -- you know, I hadn't -- I think Tyler  
13 was yelling at me to try to get out of the water, and so that --  
14 you know, because we were all afraid that it could blow.

15 So I remember going -- taking my bag back to shore so that it  
16 wouldn't -- you know, the tide wouldn't take it away. And I put  
17 that -- and I tried going back to help whoever I could and I kept  
18 falling because of how muddy the water was. So I tried to help  
19 whoever I could. And I look back, and that's when I seen what  
20 actually happened and why we had to jump off the boat so quickly.

21 And so, I remember they were trying to like -- the ERs or  
22 whoever were there, the first responders, were trying to get us to  
23 go towards the houses and try to go more towards land. And I  
24 tried to help and tried to make sure that whoever was, you know,  
25 on the ground was at least okay and was able, you know, have a

1 first responder to respond to them.

2 I do remember helping the lady that passed up the stairs.  
3 She was on those walkways. We have a -- I don't know why she  
4 didn't take the stairs, but there is a path that was rocky and I  
5 helped her. And I remember she said, you can't handle my weight.  
6 I said I will handle your weight because I want you more towards  
7 land. You know, you need to get onto land. So I helped her and  
8 then we all ran to, you know, the houses and just tried to stay  
9 calm and try to get everybody -- whoever needed help, got help.  
10 And that's as much as I can remember.

11 Q. Who was the passenger? Who was the lady that said you  
12 couldn't handle her weight?

13 A. The lady that passed away. I was just trying to help her  
14 come up the stairs so that she could get help from whoever. And I  
15 believe either a first responder was -- either her significant  
16 other was behind me or maybe a first responder, but somebody later  
17 grabbed -- like I tried helping her up wherever the rock way was  
18 and then somebody behind me came and got her.

19 And after that, I don't know what happened because I was  
20 trying just to, you know, find whoever I could and make sure they  
21 were okay. I think I made sure that whatever faces I could  
22 remember, just making sure that they were okay, if they needed  
23 anything. I even remember chasing our customer, Steve, with a  
24 towel. Like, you forgot your towel. Because I didn't want him to  
25 go to the ER without being cold. So that's as much as I can



1 remember.

2 Q. Okay. So what time did you get to work?

3 A. Well, my boyfriend does work with me, so I had to be there  
4 about -- I think he had to be there around 2:30 or 3, and then I  
5 don't have to be there until 3:30. Because we were taking the  
6 *Island Lady*, so I didn't have to be there till 3:15.

7 So I was probably just in the waiting room just waiting to go  
8 out and watching the customers come in the dockside. Just waiting  
9 for them to come in and just waiting for myself to go out on the  
10 boat. I believe I had a Chipotle. Me and Tyler wanted to go to  
11 Chipotle's. I was eating in the dock, and I think I was eating on  
12 the boat too because I got hungry again.

13 Q. Okay. And you said that you were located in the cubby, which  
14 is basically the forward passenger area of the boat on the main  
15 deck. And, you said you saw smoke before the crew members came  
16 down into the salon?

17 A. Yes. I just thought it was just the exhaust. It was pretty  
18 cold that day. I was pretty chilly. So I don't know anything. I  
19 thought maybe it was just the exhaust blowing a little bit thicker  
20 that day. I don't really know much about engines or even cars  
21 that much. So that's what my first instinct was. And so I went  
22 to the bar and I think I asked whoever was behind the bar for a  
23 glass of water because I didn't want to, you know --

24 Q. This bar? To the stern?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. To the aft bar?

2 A. Yeah, the bar area.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And then I asked whoever was behind the counter for a water  
5 because I didn't want to, you know, freak anybody out. You know,  
6 we have a lot of older customers on that boat that probably  
7 wouldn't do well with, you know, craziness and I didn't want to  
8 get anybody upset or anything.

9 So I just went there and I could see that the other -- you  
10 know, the customers were kind of getting -- you know, wanting to  
11 know what was going on. And I seen, you know, deckhands -- you  
12 know, we had I believe three or four that day, come on and they  
13 were all over the place. I seen, I think, somebody went, you  
14 know, off this way to go up the stairs to go see the captain. And  
15 then, you know, we had the deckhands trying to figure out what was  
16 going on.

17 And then, you know, I thought the reason why we were going  
18 upstairs just so that, you know, if it was dangerous smoke, they  
19 didn't want the customers, you know, inhaling that. So that's why  
20 I thought we went upstairs. I didn't know that we had a fire  
21 going on until I was off the boat.

22 Q. Okay. And so, the first time you saw the smoke, was it in  
23 the salon area or could you see it through the windows on the back  
24 of the boat?

25 A. You could see it through the windows. Like I said, I thought

1 it was the exhaust. At first, it was, I wouldn't say -- like a  
2 whitish grayish and, you know, I didn't think anything of it. I  
3 seen exhaust. I've been on that boat so many times that I thought  
4 it was just the exhaust going on from that side of the boat. Not  
5 really think anything of it.

6 Q. Could you tell which side of the boat it was originating  
7 from?

8 A. Well, where I was sitting -- I was sitting up here, so where  
9 I was sitting, it came off -- you know, because I was sitting down  
10 and I just seen it come over the window. So I thought, because I  
11 -- there was like -- honestly, there was me and three other  
12 people. And I remember what one of the employees -- like he's  
13 like you are going to move -- he said -- he was too funny. He's  
14 like, you're hogging up all the space. I'm like, I'm cold. And  
15 so, but I was on my phone so I didn't really think anything of it.

16 We have some time going onto the big boat so, you know, a lot  
17 of us, we just chit-chat. Employees, we chit-chat, catch up, and  
18 all of us are on our phones and stuff like that. But where I was  
19 sitting, I want to say -- I was sitting maybe over here, so I seen  
20 it come maybe out this window. But I just thought maybe it was  
21 the exhaust kind of going a little haywire that day.

22 Q. When you got on the boat, when you first approached it, was  
23 the exhaust heavy?

24 A. I honestly just went and sat down because it was just so cold  
25 that day. I didn't really -- I wanted to go upstairs, and so I

1 just kind of sat down and -- then I believe I even went to go use  
2 the restroom before, you know, a lot of the customers came on.  
3 And I just watch all the customers come on like any other day that  
4 we're out there.

5 Q. Okay. And how long do you think it was from the time you saw  
6 the smoke to the time everyone was asked to go up to the upper  
7 deck? So did you have time to go get the water from the bartender  
8 and --

9 A. I was able to drink it and then I believe I even asked him,  
10 I'm like, you know, what's that from? Like is that from the  
11 exhaust? And, you know, we didn't really understand what it was  
12 from. And you could see some of the customers kind of getting  
13 nervous and stuff, so we tried calming them down and just trying  
14 to tell them like, you know, if we know anything, we'll try to let  
15 you guys know as soon as we know something.

16 And it wasn't shortly after, I believe maybe one -- because I  
17 stayed after. Like, because we tried getting all the customers to  
18 go and I was -- like I said, I was one of the last ones. Because  
19 there was some -- we had some customers that were dangling still  
20 down there, so I tried having them to go upstairs with me. And I  
21 don't know if they went downstairs to check to see if anything was  
22 okay. I can't really remember. But it wasn't shortly after, you  
23 know, I seen the smoke, maybe 5 to 7 minutes later, they asked  
24 everybody to move upstairs.

25 Q. Okay. And so, while everyone was moving upstairs and you

1 were located in the passenger area, what did you see? Did you see  
2 the crew members?

3 A. Oh, I seen every crew member go every which way, honestly.

4 Q. That's fine. Tell me.

5 A. I think I seen somebody go past me while I was still sitting  
6 down, to go and talk with the captain. We still had one of the  
7 deckhands, you know, still do the bar, if anybody needed anything.  
8 I think we had maybe one or two other crew members still upstairs,  
9 you know, just trying to figure out what was going on and looking  
10 to see where it was coming from and all that.

11 Because I can't remember -- because I was one of the last --  
12 like I said, I was one of the last ones trying to get whoever  
13 customers still downstairs. But if they were going in there, I  
14 don't know, because the -- whoever the crew members were, they  
15 kind of pushed everybody to go upstairs. If they went to go check  
16 the engine room, I can't --

17 Q. Okay. So you never saw a crew member enter the engine room?

18 A. I was trying to get whoever customers downstairs. You know,  
19 we had two or three deck people that day, so I wanted to make sure  
20 that they were upstairs and they were okay. And I remember we had  
21 one customer and he is -- he's one of our regulars, and so I was  
22 trying to get him to come upstairs and I was trying to see whoever  
23 my co-workers. Because, like I said, I sat with three of them and  
24 I was trying to figure out where they went. So -- because I  
25 didn't know what was going on and, you know, I get scared easily,

1 so I tried to figure out who was all upstairs.

2 And I sat -- I didn't really sit. I was standing. I was  
3 just trying to figure out what was going on. But you could see a  
4 lot of the customers like move over because they were just wanting  
5 to know what was going on and try to get any information that they  
6 could from any one of the employees that knew anything. And we  
7 were trying to calm them down the best we could.

8 And but, if -- I couldn't see, because they were just -- they  
9 were trying to figure out what was going on so, you know, you  
10 don't really see much. But they were everywhere and I was just  
11 trying to stand -- just trying to figure out what was going on and  
12 I kind of just stood in one place and just kind of, I guess, in  
13 shock about what was starting to go on. Because all of the  
14 sudden, you'll see the smoke go from what you think is just in the  
15 exhaust to a thicker gray to black smoke. So you kind of were  
16 like getting scared and you're not knowing what's going on until  
17 you could get onto land and you see what happened and why we had  
18 to go off the boat.

19 Q. So when you left the passenger area, the salon, was there  
20 smoke inside that space?

21 A. Not at that time, sir. Like I said, when I first saw it, I  
22 just thought maybe it was just thicker exhaust. And, you know, we  
23 -- I've been on that boat for so long that that's -- you know, it  
24 doesn't surprise me. I used to be a smoker, so I would go out  
25 there and, you know, watch the water and do that.

1           But no, there was no smoke until you got to the upper deck  
2 and that's when you could see the smoke and smell the smoke.

3 Q.   When you were up on the upper deck, could you physically --  
4 or did you ever actually see where it was coming from on the boat?

5 A.   No.

6 Q.   Or you could just look out and see smoke?

7 A.   I do recall that, I believe, like when the smoke started  
8 getting thicker, you could see that the customers try to get where  
9 the smoke wasn't so heavy just to, you know -- but where it  
10 started, I can't really say.

11 Q.   Okay. At what point did you know there was an emergency on  
12 board?

13 A.   Probably when we were asked to go upstairs. That's when  
14 something kind of clicked and maybe something maybe wasn't right.  
15 But then I didn't know, because I didn't really want to ask, you  
16 know, any of our crew members because I didn't want to freak out  
17 some of the other customers. Because, like I said, we had one --  
18 we had a few customers on the boat that were a little shaky and  
19 nervous and, you know, she kind of like pushed me to try to go  
20 down the stairs. And me and another co-worker were like, well,  
21 you know, if you want to go ahead of us, you're more than welcome  
22 to go ahead of us. And we -- but that's --

23 Q.   Okay. So when you departed the vessel, you jumped off the  
24 port side, you said. Do you recall who went in before you or who  
25 went in after you?

1 A. Stephen. He is one of our dealers.

2 Q. Longarello?

3 A. I don't know his last name.

4 Q. Okay. I think he's the only Stephen, right?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And he went in front of me. He was just, you know, trying to  
8 calm me down and just say that, hey, you know, we're in good  
9 waters, you know, nothing's going to happen. And I was  
10 hyperventilating and scared, because I was sitting on wherever I  
11 was sitting just because I wasn't sure how deep the water was. So  
12 I was trying, you know, crawl my way down the stairs. Or not the  
13 stairs, but just crawl into the water, not really thinking  
14 anything of it. And -- who was behind me? Shelly? Shelly.  
15 Yeah, Shelly. Her name's Michelle. She goes as Michelle, but she  
16 goes as Shelly too.

17 Q. That's Ottinger or Nitz?

18 A. Nitz.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I remember her passing all of our bags to Stephen. And so --  
21 and, like I said, I don't if somebody just finally pushed me or if  
22 I jumped myself off. And I want to say that -- well, Shelly,  
23 finally jumped off, and I think shortly after her maybe another  
24 employee. Because we all kind of -- whoever -- because we kind of  
25 all stayed together, the ones that were in the cubbyhole; we all



1 kind of stayed together.

2 And then we started to walk. And then we tried to -- well, I  
3 tried walking back on shore and I kept falling, but I tried to  
4 help whoever I could. So I was able to come back onto land and I  
5 dropped my bag off, and then I went back into the water to try to  
6 save whoever I could, but I kept falling. And I remember, was it  
7 -- somebody tried getting me to come out of the water because we  
8 just wasn't sure if it was going to blow or not.

9 Q. Did you suffer any injuries that day?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Oh, good. Did you take any pictures or video that day?

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. And in your 5 years, had you ever had a reason where you got  
14 on either the casino boat or the shuttle boat, headed out off  
15 shore, and then had to turn around and come back?

16 A. No, not that I can recall. We've always just went out and  
17 had customers enjoy their day, and if there was a problem, I  
18 wouldn't know anything about it. So I would just go out. But  
19 we've never had to turn around for, as far as I can recall, for  
20 any type of reason.

21 Q. Okay. And as a cook for 4 years and then bar person, what  
22 are your responsibilities out on the *Tropic Breeze*?

23 A. I believe ours is to calm down the customers and hand out  
24 life jackets.

25 Q. And have you had training in firefighting or abandon ship or

1 flooding?

2 A. Not that I can recall, no. But, I -- but we have booklets.  
3 So I've read up on the booklets of what my duties were.

4 Q. Have you ever had a practice drill with the whole crew? And  
5 that would be, the drill would be for firefighting, flooding or  
6 for abandon ship?

7 A. I did get where my emergency hatch is, like to try to escape  
8 where the galley is. So that would probably be my only training.  
9 And then I know where the life jackets are on the *Tropical Breeze*.

10 Q. So your training, did they -- was this egress? Like it would  
11 be called egress training, where if you're in the galley and you  
12 had to get out quickly, someone showed you the path out of the  
13 boat?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. I see. Okay.

16 CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED]?

17 BY MR. [REDACTED]

18 Q. When you boarded the boat, was it where the passengers  
19 embark?

20 A. Were they coming -- were they on the boat already?

21 Q. I'm sorry. The vessel was located where the passengers  
22 usually board? You didn't board it over at the other area?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Were the engines running, do you remember, when you boarded  
25 the boat?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. When the vessel gets underway, is there any -- does a  
3 crew member make a brief on safety?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Was that done that day?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But I was on my phone. I really wasn't paying attention, and  
9 I've heard that announcement so many times.

10 Q. Do you know who makes that announcement?

11 A. It depends on the deckhands that day. Or even, if the  
12 entertainers happen to be out there, entertainers usually do it  
13 too.

14 Q. When you first saw the smoke, what color was the smoke?

15 A. When I first seen it, it was about a white going into gray.  
16 I didn't really think anything of it.

17 Q. And you were sitting in the cubbyhole. Who else was there  
18 with you?

19 A. It was me, Shelly, I believe Debbie, and then Stephen,  
20 because I had to make room. I was taking up too much space for  
21 him. Do you want to know where we were all sitting?

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. I was sitting where you could go into that area, and then I  
24 believe Shelly was sitting next to me. Debbie was -- her back was  
25 towards -- we had like an area where they would put speakers and

1 on, so she had sat that way. And then Stephen was the one on the  
2 very back.

3 Q. Okay. Do you recall where the vessel turned around? That's  
4 okay.

5 A. I just know where I was able to go on, because that's where  
6 -- I believe that's -- because on video, that's where he's  
7 starting to turn around. But we were so in motion that we  
8 couldn't tell if we were -- you know, if the boat was moving on  
9 its own or if the wind happened. Because it was very windy that  
10 day. So we didn't know if it was just the boat moving or the wind  
11 moving. I couldn't tell either/or.

12 Q. How many trips back and forth on the shuttle do you think  
13 you've ever made?

14 A. On the *Island Lady*, oh my goodness.

15 Q. Ten, 20, 100?

16 A. I worked there for -- since we got the boat in -- probably  
17 like 2, 3 years, so probably 100 to 200.

18 Q. Suffice to say enough that it kind of gets to be repetitive  
19 in nature?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. So just to help out, I don't want to try to lead your  
22 questions or anything. But the boat goes out nice and calm and on  
23 idle speed?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Was it going out on idle speed that day?

1 A. Well, we only got to -- we only got to so far. So where we  
2 were, we were considered in the channel, so we were doing that  
3 speed.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Nothing out of the ordinary that day as far as I can recall.  
6 And, you know, all the customers were talking to one another,  
7 trying to catch up. A lot of our customers are -- well, all of  
8 our regulars are pretty close and they always want to, you know,  
9 check up how their grandkids are doing and stuff like that.

10 Q. So nothing out of the ordinary today?

11 A. Not that I can -- no.

12 Q. So on the way back was the vessel operating at the same speed  
13 as it was going out, after you turned around and started heading  
14 into shore?

15 A. I don't believe so because I kind of don't understand your  
16 question.

17 Q. Okay. So if we call a boat moving at idle speed --

18 A. Yeah. It's just going --

19 Q. -- it's just kind of moving along at the normal --

20 A. Moving along with the waves.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But where we were, like we didn't really go out very far. We  
23 went -- I don't even know where the channel would be for that, for  
24 those houses.

25 Q. So on the way back was the captain driving the boat faster

1 than he was on the way out?

2 CWO [REDACTED] This is the channel. This is Durney Key.

3 MS. IRVIN: Well, we didn't go out very far. We only went  
4 out until we had those houses, and then from there, we were asked  
5 to leave the boat. So we -- so he, the captain could have tried,  
6 you know, moving the boat -- I know he was trying to move the boat  
7 closer to land. If that's what you're asking.

8 BY MR. [REDACTED]

9 Q. No, did the boat seem like it was moving faster on the way  
10 back than it was when it was going out?

11 A. No. He just -- because we were still considered in the  
12 channel at that point so we have to go at idle speed.

13 Q. Okay. At any time did you go to the bridge of the vessel?

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. And are you familiar with -- did the *Island Lady* make any  
16 trips or have any mechanical issues that you may have known?

17 A. I don't really ask questions. I just go to work.

18 Q. Don't know if anything popped up out of the ordinary that you  
19 may have observed?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Have you ever been in the engine room of the vessel?

22 A. No, sir. Most of our employees are not allowed to be in the  
23 engine room.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Only the deckhands and engineers and the captains.

1 Q. Did you see any of the crew go into the engine room at all?

2 A. If they did, I may have already been upstairs or trying to  
3 get the last remaining couple.

4 Q. So you didn't see anybody?

5 A. Not -- well, I'm not saying -- I didn't see -- they may have  
6 went down there, but I didn't see them physically, no.

7 Q. Okay.

8 MR. CARLSON: Thanks. Again, I'm Jim Carlson. I'm Port  
9 Richey Casino's attorney, and I'm here representing them as a  
10 party in interest. I have, I think, just one clarifying question.

11 BY MR. CARLSON:

12 Q. The lady you helped from the rocky path -- I'm not sure --  
13 from the rocky path --

14 A. Well, it was a -- what they had was like a hill.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And it was rocky, and right next to it there was a flight of  
17 stairs. But I -- there was a, like there was -- I don't even know  
18 what they call, but they had -- I was trying to like lean on it so  
19 I could grab her weight more, just to try to help her come up, you  
20 know, to where land was.

21 Q. Okay. You said that she was the woman that passed out or --  
22 I'm sorry -- that passed away later.

23 A. I believe so, yeah.

24 Q. Why do you believe that?

25 A. Because she -- because I was trying to help whoever I could

1 and I remember helping a lady that looked just like her coming up  
2 the stairs. Because she was one of the last people to try to come  
3 up the stairs.

4 Q. So did she -- you saw a picture of the lady that passed away?

5 A. I -- well, I -- yeah.

6 Q. Well, I didn't know that her picture was in the news. I only  
7 saw one small picture. But you believe that the woman you helped  
8 was that lady based on what you saw in news accounts?

9 A. Well, I know that it's the lady that I had -- that passed.

10 Q. What's that?

11 A. I know it was the lady that passed.

12 Q. You know it was the lady that passed. Okay. Okay. That's  
13 all I wanted to know. Thank you.

14 BY CWO [REDACTED]

15 Q. I just had one follow-up. You said your boyfriend was Tyler?  
16 And have you guys talked? Have you heard anything where you think  
17 maybe the fire came from? Any theories?

18 A. No, we kind of try to keep work and home life kind of  
19 separate from one another. And that day, he was just so, you  
20 know, doing -- helping and trying to figure out what was going on,  
21 that I just kind of just stayed to myself and let him do whatever  
22 he had to do and try to help whoever I could.

23 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. Thanks for your time.

24 MS. IRVIN: Thank you, guys.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)



CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF:            FIRE ON BOARD THE *ISLAND LADY*  
   PORT RICHEY, FLORIDA  
   JANUARY 14, 2018  
   Interview of Tyler Dawson

ACCIDENT NO.:                DCA18FM010

PLACE:

DATE:                         January 24, 2018

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,  
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed  
to the best of my skill and ability.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Michelle Hermann  
Transcriber