

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

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Interview of: SHAWN RIVERA
Deckhand

Friday,
January 19, 2018

APPEARANCES:

BRIAN YOUNG, Senior Marine Engineer
National Transportation Safety Board

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

CWO [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- with the NTSB.

3 MR. YOUNG: Yeah. We introduced before. I told him who I
4 was.

5 So typically, Shawn, what we do during an interview is we
6 record it so that we can pay attention to what you're saying, and
7 we can understand it.

8 MR. RIVERA: Yes, sir.

9 MR. YOUNG: And it gets transcribed, and then that would go
10 to the Coast Guard, and sometimes they bring it out to yourself
11 just to make sure everything that's been transcribed is accurate.

12 MR. RIVERA: Okay.

13 MR. YOUNG: So just want to let you know that we'll be
14 recording the conversation.

15 MR. RIVERA: Yes, sir.

16 MR. YOUNG: Thank you.

17 INTERVIEW OF SHAWN RIVERA

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. So, Shawn, can we get with -- can you describe your
20 background?

21 A. My background, I am half Puerto Rican.

22 Q. Oh, I just need to know maritime employment, employment
23 history.

24 A. Oh, okay. Prior to this, I was living in New York, and I
25 worked for a cleaning company, Nelson Services. Prior to that, I

1 was just promoting for comedy clubs just off the books.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So I really didn't have a job on the books, but I was
4 promoting for some clubs out there.

5 Q. Any maritime employment?

6 A. Maritime?

7 Q. On vessels, on boats?

8 A. No. This is my first job on a boat.

9 Q. Okay. And how long have you worked for Tropical Breeze?

10 A. About 5½ months.

11 Q. Okay. And what's your position at Tropical Breeze?

12 A. Deckhand.

13 Q. Okay. And describe your workday on January 14th.

14 A. I was supposed to be there at 9:30 in the morning. Dan
15 called me at 11:20, and told me the 11 a.m. was cancelled, and to
16 be there at 5:30 that day. So okay. And he called me around 2,
17 2:00, and said that I had to be there at 3:30 because the casino
18 went out. He really didn't describe what happened. He just said,
19 can you be here at 3:30? I was like, okay. So from 5:30 it went
20 to 3:30.

21 Got ready, got a cab, and I got to work at like 3:20. Dan
22 was in the parking lot, and he said, just head inside. When I got
23 out of the cab, went inside. I didn't get to sign in that day
24 because everyone was already pretty much ready to get on the boat,
25 and the boat had already come from the sticks over to the dock.

1 So Jon and Tyler were already on the boat. So I just proceeded to
2 the boat. I got on the boat. And coffee wasn't made, so I
3 started making coffee. Once I did that, I opened the register,
4 started opening the register, counting money. Yeah, they started
5 letting people on.

6 Usually there's two deckhands, but since Jon was transferring
7 over to the casino that day, there was three of us. So Jon just
8 said stay at the bar; I didn't have to do a stern. Usually I'm on
9 the stern and either Jon, Cody or Tyler are on the bow. So I went
10 to the bar, proceeded to count my money for the register. And Jon
11 and the pre-hire, they were getting people on the boat. Jon was
12 standing because I remember Tyler was on the bow. So Tyler was
13 clicking everyone on. Everyone was coming on the boat and I was
14 still opening the bar. Once everybody got on the boat, they --
15 Jon and the pre-hire went to the back to the stern to release
16 those ropes once the bow was ready, and I was at the bar.

17 Once we backed up -- like normal, we just backed up like
18 usual. And usually, if I'm on the stern, once you let go of those
19 ropes, you have to go up top and give a thumbs up to the captain
20 while he reverses and then starts heading down the channel when he
21 turns the boat around. Did that. I didn't do that. I was at the
22 bar the whole time.

23 And everything was normal. We turned the boat around,
24 started heading towards -- down the channel. Coffee was done.
25 Finished making the coffee. I served one beer that day to one of

1 our regulars. I served ice water to Sandy and Jon, and the
2 pre-hire came next to the bar. You know, we usually just talk.
3 We were talking about something. I forget what we were talking
4 about, and I mentioned pull-tabs because we have to sell pull-tabs
5 on the way out before we hit the casino. So I started counting
6 pull-tabs, and I told Jon, Tyler has to do the pull-tabs. Oh,
7 okay. So he's like, where's Tyler? And Tyler was in the front of
8 the boat -- not outside, but in the front, the bow area where
9 employees sit sometimes. And Jon went over there with the
10 pre-hire, and then he came back and he said, oh, Tyler's eating.
11 I was like, okay. So he decided to pass out pull-tabs.

12 So Jon's was passing out pull-tabs. And then Tyler comes up,
13 and at that point we were already -- we're like getting close to
14 coming out of the channel. So the boat picks up.

15 Q. Can you -- all right.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. Can you draw on here where you're referencing? Or can you
18 tell me on here where you're referencing?

19 A. So this is the S-turn, right?

20 Q. Yes, sir. This 15 is where the vessel sits approximately
21 right now.

22 A. Okay. So we were coming up here, and then right around here
23 he picked up.

24 Q. So, and you're -- I'm going to state that -- or it looks like
25 you're showing me channel marker between 14 and 13?

1 A. Yeah. Right around here.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. He picked up, and not even 30 seconds -- so he got like, I'd
4 say, right around here.

5 Q. And you are pointing between channel marker -- in between,
6 I'm going to say, channel marker 9 and 10. Somewhere in between
7 channel marker 9 and 10.

8 A. Yeah. Yeah. So --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. Between 10A and 10.

10 MR. RIVERA: Yeah. It's like --

11 CWO [REDACTED] He pointed right here.

12 MR. RIVERA: Okay. The boat stops. I remember telling Tyler
13 -- no, Tyler saying that something was wrong. So I didn't really
14 notice. Usually we slow down if there's another boat coming. So
15 my first assumption was there's probably another boat, that's why
16 we slowed down. Tyler went upstairs. When he went upstairs, the
17 boat's picked up again. So now the boat's getting past that
18 little island, Durney Key.

19 BY CWO [REDACTED]

20 Q. Okay. So you're --

21 A. Durney Key.

22 Q. Do you recall being past Durney Key?

23 A. I wouldn't say past. I'd say like right before the end of
24 it, like --

25 Q. Can you point where?

1 A. I'd say like right around here. If this is Durney Key?

2 Q. It is.

3 A. Yeah. Then we were like right around here.

4 Q. So we're looking at channel marker 7?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. So when we were right there, the boat stops again, and Tyler
8 runs downstairs and tells everybody to get off the boat. Not get
9 off the boat, to go upstairs. So Tyler says, everybody needs to
10 go upstairs, everybody needs to go upstairs. So we started
11 directing everybody to go upstairs through the back doors of the
12 boat. So everyone starts going up to the back, and we didn't know
13 what was going on.

14 So the only people that stayed was me, Jon, the pre-hire,
15 Tyler and Izzy. Izzy is the entertainer. And not even 25 seconds
16 later, Captain Mike comes down. When he comes down from the
17 bridge, he opens the hatch. He opens the middle hatch, opens the
18 middle hatch, and a big puff of white smoke comes out. After that
19 he tells me -- because I'm already by the bar, and there's a hatch
20 right in front of the bar, so he tells me to open that. So I open
21 that hatch and white smoke comes out. Not as much as the first
22 hatch. White smoke comes out, and he says, open the doors, air it
23 out. So Izzy --

24 Q. The captain told you all this or did someone else?

25 A. It was Captain Mike.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Captain Mike said, open the doors up, air it out. So I was
3 back there. I forgot who opened the other door, but I opened door
4 one that's next to the bar. I opened that door, aired it out.
5 Izzy was in the front with Jon; they opened those doors. And we
6 stood around for like 2 or 3 minutes while the smoke was airing
7 out. Captain Mike had already went back up to the bridge. Me and
8 Izzy were just wondering what was going on.

9 And then Jon comes back down. No, Jon was still down, and
10 Jon just went up to the bridge. So I followed Jon up to the
11 bridge, and Captain Mike. And Tyler was already up there because
12 he went through the back, I guess, because he was talking to
13 guests. So we were all on the bridge. Captain Mike gives Jon a
14 fire extinguisher and gives Tyler a fire extinguisher.

15 And at this point the boat was already turned. So I guess
16 when Mike, Captain Mike went up, he turned the boat. And we
17 weren't paying attention to that because he was telling us to get
18 to the fire. Well, whatever was down there, he said put it out.
19 So he gave Jon a fire extinguisher. I followed Jon out. And
20 there's a ladder in front of the bridge area, followed Jon down
21 that. When we came back in, there was black smoke coming out of
22 the engine room, the first hatch.

23 Jon went down into the hatch. When he went down, I kind of
24 got scared because I didn't know what was going on at that point.
25 Like went from like white smoke in there till when we went from

1 the bridge back down, there was black smoke coming up. So we went
2 in. Jon went down. I see Jon start heading down there, and I
3 just go out through the back. When I go out through the back, I
4 go up top, and I look on the side of the boat. Because there was
5 a couple guests looking over the side. So I look over the side,
6 and there was black, black and brown smoke coming out of the side
7 of the boat.

8 Yeah, when I was up there, I went to the bridge real quick,
9 and nothing was going on. Captain Mike wasn't saying nothing. He
10 was just driving. And Joanna was in there; she was freaking out.
11 Tyler walks out, and I walk out back to where I was standing on
12 the side of the boat to look over. When I looked over, there was
13 more smoke. So I ran back to the bridge, and Captain Mike said,
14 get everyone off the boat. Said that to me and Tyler.

15 Tyler comes out, and he said, "Everybody follow me, follow
16 me, everybody follow me." So I followed suit, and I yelled with
17 Tyler, "Everybody needs to come follow us." So in front of the
18 bridge there's a ladder. Tyler goes, and everyone's just rushing
19 to that area to the front. Tyler goes, I go. When I'm going down
20 the ladder, I see Tyler jump. Tyler jumps off the bow. So Tyler
21 was the first one off the boat from my point of view from the bow.

22 Tyler jumps off. When Tyler jumps off the boat, there was a
23 black gentleman right before me, and he was scared, but he got
24 over and he was hanging on the anchor, the gray anchor there. He
25 was hanging, and Tyler's telling him like it's muddy, it's muddy;

1 you can jump down. Like he was yelling to everybody because a lot
2 of people were scared to jump. So Tyler was telling everybody,
3 you need to jump; look, I'm okay, there's sand down here.

4 So I was like, okay, okay. And I'm telling the guy, like,
5 and he's telling us that he can't swim. So we're telling him
6 like, it's okay; he's standing up, he's standing up. He's like,
7 can one of you guys grab me? So I told Tyler, grab him, grab him.
8 So when he falls, Tyler grabs him, and kind of puts him to the
9 side, like, you're good, and stand up. So the guy stands up and
10 starts going.

11 When I see him go, I climb over the bow and I jump off. When
12 I jump off the boat, right when I looked, I saw fire and I saw
13 people still coming down the ladder that we were just at. So I
14 started heading back to shore, and I'm crawling because I tried
15 standing at first and I see a couple people next to me crawling.
16 So I figured that would be a better idea. So I got down and I
17 started crawling. When I got halfway back to shore, I looked
18 behind me, and everybody is pretty much -- I only saw like three
19 more people jumping off.

20 I turned around, and I saw that one of the dealers -- I
21 forget his name -- he was helping Harold. Harold's a deaf
22 customer, and Harold was on his back. And I saw the dealer grab
23 him, but he was struggling to grab him, and I could see he was
24 scared because of the smoke. So he's trying to help Harold, but
25 he's also like by himself. So I went back out into the water. I

1 grabbed Harold, and both of us were dragging Harold, but we're
2 both falling at the same time. We get Harold, we jump, we get to
3 the shore.

4 There was two EMTs there already. And they're just saying
5 get everybody out of the water, and pretty much everybody was out
6 already. There were some people still on the right side still
7 coming to the shore. And, yeah, I let go of Harold. When I let
8 go of Harold, the EMTs still needed help getting him up to safety
9 because they thought the boat was going to blow up or something
10 like that. There was just people yelling that the boat's going to
11 blow, something like that. So everyone was freaking out about
12 that.

13 Some people were calling for head count. And we -- nobody
14 was really giving that information because we didn't know. Like I
15 didn't know because I was at the bar. Tyler was like, there was
16 50 that got on. So Tyler's yelling to the EMTs, there's 50
17 people, 50, that's including crew and everything. So they're
18 like, we got 50. So they started counting.

19 I carried Harold up on the boat -- no, not from the boat. I
20 mean I carried him up the stairs that were there on the shore.
21 Carried him with the EMTs, and then Harold kind of pushed
22 everybody off and he sat up. Once he did that, I looked back, and
23 Mouse, one of the other dealers was down. But I don't know who it
24 was, I think it was another dealer, helping him up, but he
25 couldn't stand. So they were waiting for paramedics to get there

1 to help him. And then everyone just kind of crowded to where the
2 firefighters and everybody was.

3 From that point, we got up there and they started asking of
4 anybody needed medical attention to sit in a certain area.
5 Everyone who didn't needed to line up. So they wanted to line us
6 up in order to get a count. They lined us up. They started
7 counting, and then adding the people that went into the ambulance.
8 Then they started handing out water, and there was people from the
9 neighborhood passing out like clothes and stuff like that.
10 Everyone was drenched.

11 And then from there, we just waited. And then -- I forget
12 her name, but there was a woman and a man that they opened up
13 their house to everybody there because we were all freezing out
14 there. They opened up the garage. That was like 30, 45 minutes
15 into us actually out of the water. They sent us there, and from
16 there we just waited.

17 Q. So Dan, can you tell me who is Dan?

18 A. Dan --

19 Q. What's his name and what's his position?

20 A. Dan works dockside. It's either him, Diane, Terry or Ray.

21 Q. Okay. So he's your dockside contact. He's the one who tells
22 you when to come in and when you're off?

23 A. Yeah. They usually text or they call. Dan calls; Diane
24 usually just texts: This got cancelled, the 11 a.m. got
25 cancelled, don't come in until 5.

1 Q. Did you hear a safety or a passenger safety brief? Do you
2 know if one was given?

3 A. On the mic when we were out there?

4 Q. Yes, sir.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Who did that and what does it sound like?

7 A. It was -- I think it was Tyler that did it, and it comes on
8 the speakers. He just lets everybody know where the safety
9 equipment is. I've never done it. It's usually the person that
10 does the bow just goes up to the bridge, gets on the open -- the
11 mic. And when we're heading down the channel, they make those
12 announcements.

13 Q. Okay. And you heard one and Tyler did it. Okay.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. What's a pull-tab?

16 A. A pull-tab is like a scratch-off, but it's -- it's like a
17 lottery ticket that you pay a dollar for. So we go around, does
18 anybody want to buy a pull-tab? And they pay a dollar and you
19 give it to them. They can buy as many as they like.

20 Q. Okay. You said that Tyler and Jon had fire extinguishers.
21 Do you recall what size they were? Was one large, one small?

22 A. They were both pretty large.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. They were both pretty large, yeah.

25 Q. Okay. And when was the last time you did a drill on board

1 the boat in your 5½ months?

2 A. I never did a drill.

3 Q. Okay. Any training, either man overboard, fire, or abandon
4 ship?

5 A. I did one man overboard, it was brief, with Chad. He's a
6 previous employee. I did one with him, but it was on the casino.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And that was like my first month.

9 Q. Was that drill logged? When Chad trained you, was that
10 logged anywhere?

11 A. I don't think so.

12 Q. Or documented?

13 A. It was -- we were getting ice for the bar, and he was like,
14 oh, in case -- it was one of those like, oh, okay, so this area,
15 and he just said this is what you do if you have man overboard.
16 He said about the ladder, you put the ladder down into the water
17 to get people out. It was only once that he did that. So I
18 really don't remember the drill.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. But yeah.

21 Q. But -- and no drills on the *Island Lady*?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. Okay. What about firefighting capabilities on board the
24 *Island Lady*? Were you ever trained in those or do you know about
25 them?

1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. Okay. Was there ever an announcement, let's say, from the
3 captain to the passengers and crew from the time the vessel slowed
4 down, on the PA?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. And you -- so now you also said that you saw smoke,
7 and you looked. You know, you went out through, I believe you
8 said the -- to the stern, up the -- out the stairs. And when you
9 looked over, did you look over and could you identify where the
10 smoke was coming from?

11 A. The back of the boat. It was the back of the boat on -- I
12 really don't know the terms.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think I have a picture of that.

14 BY CWO [REDACTED]

15 Q. Well, on the very back of the boat, there are exhaust ports.

16 A. Okay. So this is the bow then. This is the bow.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. I went up the stairs. So I'd say the stairs are back here.
19 So I went up the stairs. Now I'm on the top deck.

20 Q. Yes.

21 A. So being on the top deck, I looked over the right side.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And there was smoke coming out of the right side.

24 Q. Was it coming out of an opening in the starboard side of the
25 ship or could you tell?

1 A. I know it wasn't coming out of the windows, so it must have
2 been -- it looked like it was coming out of the water.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But it was towards the back of the boat, and it was just
5 coming up, and I was looking over because a lot of the guests were
6 asking, you know, do you know what's going on? And so I just
7 looked over. And I didn't want to freak anybody out, so -- I was
8 freaking out, but I didn't want anybody else to panic because it's
9 bad enough that one person is panicking. To have 50, you know,
10 that just didn't seem right. So I just looked over and I saw
11 smoke and I just went straight to the bridge.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then from there Captain Mike told me and Tyler get
14 everyone off.

15 Q. Did you ever look at the transom or the very back side of the
16 boat?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Just the starboard side?

19 A. Just the starboard, over -- I just looked over the railing,
20 and that's it.

21 Q. Okay. And as far as deckhands go, is there a senior deckhand
22 and junior deckhands or is there a hierarchy of deckhands?

23 A. Yeah. There's senior and -- there's senior mate and then
24 regular deckhand.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. The only senior deckhand that I knew was Chad, and Chad
2 doesn't work there no more. So I guess they made Jon senior mate.
3 Yeah, and then the rest of the deckhands.

4 Q. Did you ever see a fire extinguisher discharged into the
5 engine room or --

6 A. No. When I saw Jon going down into the engine room, I just
7 went to the back. So him and the pre-hire were there. That's all
8 I saw. I saw him and the pre-hire, and I just left.

9 Q. Okay. And can you describe the engines? So you know the
10 difference in sound and feel between idle and, you know, an
11 increase in rpm on the ship? You've been on board long enough.

12 A. I know that when it goes from slowing down to speeding up.

13 Q. So can you describe the -- basically the engine rpms, you
14 know, the shaft? What was the vessel doing from the time it
15 slowed down until the time it actually beached itself or until it
16 was driven into the mud?

17 A. So he picked up twice. So the first time he picked up, he
18 slowed it down, nothing. We -- that's when I assumed that there
19 was probably another boat in the water or that's why we're slowing
20 down. And then Tyler came down and told everyone to go upstairs.
21 That was after the second time he picked up.

22 So after he picked up, everything seemed normal from what I
23 can -- you know, from what I've experienced on the boat.
24 Everything -- when he picked up, there was no shakiness, there was
25 no -- he just picked up, the boat sped, then he slowed down. And

1 then we got a little -- like in the middle of Durney, and then he
2 sped off again, and then slowed down, and that's when everything
3 -- started turning the boat around, and we went upstairs, asked
4 for the -- well, we didn't ask for the fire extinguishers. He
5 just gave them to Jon and to Tyler. And Tyler -- I don't know
6 where Tyler went. I just know I followed Jon, and when I followed
7 Jon then downstairs.

8 Q. Did the engine rpms ever increase from that point on that you
9 recall or if you remember?

10 A. Like did we start going fast?

11 Q. Yes.

12 A. No. I think Captain Mike, when he turned around, he went as
13 fast as he could towards -- because when he started turning
14 around, we -- I figured in my mind that we were going back to the
15 dock, you know, that we would make it to the dock. We didn't see
16 fire at first. And then when I went down and I saw the black
17 smoke, and Jon go down into the engine room, I was like we're not
18 going to make it. And he -- the boat didn't -- it wasn't full,
19 like full throttle where we're like (makes noise), like it wasn't
20 like that. He was coasting towards the coastline.

21 Q. Okay. Did you ever hear an engine shut down during the time?

22 A. No.

23 Q. So in your mind were they running the entire time?

24 A. Yeah. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Okay. Did Jon say anything when he was in the engine room?

1 Did he yell anything?

2 A. No. When he went down, I -- again, I just left. I went to
3 the back, and him and the pre-hire were there. I know that when
4 he had the fire extinguisher, he's like I can't see nothing.
5 That's all I heard him say. Like, I can't see nothing. But he
6 still turned around and got into the engine room. And then I
7 didn't see Jon until we got back to the shore. So the last time I
8 saw Jon on that boat was him going down into the engine room. I
9 don't know how he did it, but he did it.

10 Q. Did he ever call out for, let's say, a fire hose or more fire
11 extinguishers or --

12 A. From the time that I saw him go down and go out through the
13 back door, I didn't hear him.

14 Q. Okay. Did you hear any alarms during this whole process, a
15 fire alarm?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. Heat alarm?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. Engine alarms?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. Okay. Did you hear any -- was there any whistles or horns or
22 bells or radio calls that you recall?

23 A. No. I didn't hear any of that.

24 Q. Was there -- I don't want to have an awkward pause here while
25 I'm thinking.

1 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

2 Q. Inside, have you ever been in the engine room of that vessel?

3 A. I've been in there, yes, sir.

4 Q. How many times do you think you've been in there?

5 A. Like three or four times.

6 Q. During your whole 5-month employment?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. What circumstances or what brought you into the engine room?

9 A. Usually to bring Cody water. It's to fill, I guess, to fill,
10 put water somewhere. So they take water every time we go, when we
11 board the shuttle. So it was just handing them water. And I
12 would just go down there because it was towards like the last
13 month, I'd say, they wanted me down there because the main people
14 that we usually -- starting the boat up, they weren't there
15 anymore except for Cody, so they wanted me to learn. So I would
16 just watch, and I never really --

17 Q. Do you know where Cody was putting the water? Engines? Do
18 you know where it went or --

19 A. I know where the water went.

20 Q. Where did it go?

21 A. To the top of the engines.

22 Q. To the main engines?

23 A. Yeah. There's two. So water went in this one, and water
24 went on the other one.

25 Q. Okay. What else did you do down in the engine room?

1 A. I watched him do sea strainers.

2 Q. Did you ever do sea strainers?

3 A. No. Every time I was down there, I was just watching. So --

4 Q. What else? Sea strainers, anything else?

5 A. He would check the oil on the -- there's four generators down
6 there. So he checked the oil on the big, the two big ones and the
7 two little ones in the back, he would check the oil. Just pull
8 the -- like a car; you pull the thing out. You check it, and then
9 he would show me where the line was.

10 Q. During your employment did you receive any training on
11 firefighting?

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. Other than the fire extinguishers that you saw, do you know
14 of any other fire extinguishers or firefighting capabilities on
15 board that vessel?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Have you ever had any training on what to do if there's a
18 fire on the boat?

19 A. No.

20 Q. Do you know what the -- do you know anything about fuel
21 shutoffs?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. That's okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who is Cody?

25 MR. RIVERA: Cody is another deckhand.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is he still employed?

2 MR. RIVERA: Yeah.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. And Joanna, was she an employee
4 or a passenger?

5 MR. RIVERA: She's an employee. She's a bartender.

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

7 Q. Ballpark, how many trips do you think you made out on the
8 shuttle boat to the casino? Dozen, two dozen?

9 A. On the shuttle?

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. I'd say about like 80 to 100.

12 Q. And you were serving as a -- were you serving as crew? What
13 was your capacity when you're going out on those?

14 A. Like my job?

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. Trash, bathrooms, make sure the tables are clean, make sure
17 the windows are clean and there was no trash on the floor. And
18 then whoever works bar, so they would switch, like, which deckhand
19 worked the bar on the shuttle. So sometimes I would work it,
20 sometimes Jon would work it, Josh.

21 Q. So when you -- I'm sorry. You were operating as a trainee,
22 right?

23 A. A trainee? No. I was a regular deckhand.

24 Q. You were a regular deckhand?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And have you ever had a -- you said you did one man
2 overboard drill on the casino, but only one -- no man overboard
3 drills on the shuttle?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Communication on the -- with the crew, generally, on your 80
6 to 100 transits, how does a crew communicate? Do they have
7 walkie-talkies? Is it line of sight?

8 A. They have walkie-talkies.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I never got one. I was told to buy one, but I never did.
11 It's just I don't have the money for it. I was told to buy a
12 walkie-talkie. But usually Jon is the one that communicates with
13 the bridge. So I know that Jon had one. But Cody doesn't have a
14 walkie-talkie. Just communication is usually us just talking to
15 one another.

16 Q. At any time during the trip -- at any time during the last
17 trip were you in the bridge at all where the captain operates the
18 vessel?

19 A. Only following Jon the one time. Well, twice, because I
20 followed Jon when he got the fire extinguisher. And when he went
21 down, I went to the back. When I went up to the top, I went to
22 the bridge, and that's when Captain Mike told us to get off the
23 boat.

24 Q. When you were in the bridge did you hear any alarms?

25 A. No, sir.

1 Q. Do you know of any mechanical deficiencies with the boat
2 during the last transits or anything that happened to the engines
3 or anything?

4 A. No. I know that that night I mentioned -- you were asking me
5 did I recognize any smoke smells. There was only one other time
6 in the 5 months that I've been there that the smoke that I smelled
7 when we were -- the engines, when he opened the hatches, I
8 recognized that smell just because we cancelled one day because
9 that same smoke came up, and we cancelled, and we went to the
10 sticks. And I was working with Jon that day.

11 Q. When you say you went to the sticks, what does that mean?

12 A. That's where the boat is parked.

13 Q. Okay. So when you smelled that, what happened on that
14 incident?

15 A. Jon opened the hatch and smoke came out, and we just stepped
16 back, and I ran up to Captain Mike and I told him, hey, there's
17 smoke coming out of the hatch. And he said, what? And then he
18 ran downstairs, and then from there everything else was handled.

19 Q. Jon went down?

20 A. No. No, Captain Mike.

21 Q. So Captain Mike went in the engine room and saw it at that
22 time?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Do you remember what he said what was the problem with the
25 boat?

1 A. No. They didn't really communicate with me or Jon.

2 Q. What day do you think this was or rough guesstimate on when
3 this happened?

4 A. It was like 2 months ago, 2, 3 months ago.

5 Q. Do you know was it an engine or a generator or what was
6 causing that smell?

7 A. I don't know.

8 Q. Anybody ever tell you?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay.

11 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

12 Q. Was it a -- like a -- what trip was it? Do you recall?

13 A. It was probably the 3:30.

14 Q. 3:30.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Inbound or outbound?

17 A. Outbound. We hadn't even left the dock though. So we never
18 left the dock. We were still setting up. Because when we go from
19 the sticks over, me and Jon have to get ice, have to get the beer,
20 have to get the pull-tabs, and whatever is not done on the boat we
21 still have to do. We have to clean and stuff like that. So I was
22 making coffee that day, and Jon was like, do you smell that? And
23 I was like, yeah. And he's like, hey, go tell Captain Mike. Then
24 that's when I ran up, told Captain Mike. And then after they
25 looked at it, we cancelled that day.

1 Q. Do you recall, did you do a run or was there a trip scheduled
2 and completed the following day?

3 A. I don't remember.

4 Q. You don't remember. Was there a repair technician that day
5 or that night or the following day?

6 A. Josh, he's an engineer.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who's Jon anyway? I'm sorry.

8 MR. RIVERA: Jon is the other deckhand, senior mate now.

9 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

10 Q. But you said Josh was the engineer, right?

11 A. Yeah, Josh is an engineer. Josh and Will are the engineers,
12 but that day it was Josh.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are they company employees? Are they
14 subcontractors or --

15 MR. RIVERA: I think they're company. They're there every
16 time I'm there, so --

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So if there's a repair on the vessel,
18 who would take care of it?

19 MR. RIVERA: Josh or Will.

20 BY MR. YOUNG:

21 Q. Thanks for you time, Shawn. This is Brian Young with the
22 NTSB. Do Josh and Will ride the vessel or are they stationed
23 shore side?

24 A. They're stationed shore side. Josh sometimes or recently
25 he's been, like, on the shuttle as a deckhand because I think

1 we're short people. So Josh has been out on the water with me at
2 least like three times I've worked with Josh. I've never worked
3 with Will. So --

4 Q. And during your 5½ months working here, have you ever seen
5 anyone outside of the company engineers come out to work on the
6 engines?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Say someone in some sort of a uniform or --

9 A. No.

10 Q. The main engines, do you know what color they were?

11 A. Green.

12 Q. Green? I'm just trying to establish the brand. If they were
13 Caterpillars, sometimes the Cat's are yellow.

14 A. Oh, I don't know.

15 Q. Okay. I know you had said that there wasn't any training on
16 the boat for firefighting, but before working here or any time
17 prior to working here, did you ever do any sort of firefighting
18 training, a class in a classroom?

19 A. No, sir.

20 Q. And you said the day of the fire that you had been called and
21 delayed to go out. Was it frequently that trips were cancelled?

22 A. Only if people didn't show up. If they don't have enough
23 people, they don't send the boat out, for reasons I don't know.
24 But they just, if there's not enough people, they don't send out.

25 Q. Say maybe in a week's time, how frequently would that happen

1 about?

2 A. Two or three times.

3 Q. A week?

4 A. A week, recently. Not when I first started. I assume
5 because of the weather, slow season. But recently there's been a
6 lot more cancels than from when I first started. When I first
7 started it was consistent and we would go out every day. And then
8 recently, I guess, it's gotten cold, and then only nine people
9 will show up at 7:00, and we won't go out with nine people so
10 they'll cancel. And it's usually just a people issue. If people
11 don't show up, then we don't go out.

12 Q. During the incident when Captain Mike and yourself were
13 looking and opening up the hatches, you maybe had a familiarity
14 with the smell of the smoke. Can you describe what it may have
15 smelled like at all?

16 A. I want to say like -- it smelled like melted wire, like
17 melted rubber. That's what it -- I could identify it with, just
18 melted rubber. I remember that day that happened Jon was like, I
19 think it's electrical. So I kind of just went with what Jon said
20 because he's had experience on it. So I was like, okay, then, you
21 know. But I'd just say it smelled like burned rubber.

22 Q. And you were able to lift the hatch and smell the smoke and
23 see the smoke. Do you remember putting the hatch back?

24 A. Which day? Sunday?

25 Q. Yes. The most recent time.

1 A. Oh, no, no. Once that hatch was open, it stayed open.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I opened it for Captain Mike, and stepped back. And he said
4 open the doors.

5 Q. Now when you say open the doors, what do you mean by them?

6 A. He said because there was so much smoke in there. Said vent
7 it out. So we all went to a door and let it vent out.

8 Q. And I'm not familiar with this vessel, but how many doors are
9 there on that deck?

10 A. Four.

11 Q. Four. Two port, two on starboard?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And did all four doors get opened too?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And did that clear out the smoke or --

16 A. Yeah. It cleared out most of the smoke, if not all of it.
17 And he was just -- we were just standing by the doors, and then we
18 just put the -- well, I didn't. I left the door open, and then
19 when we walked in, I just -- we stood around for like 2 or 3
20 minutes, then I saw Jon go to the bridge and I just followed Jon.

21 Q. And would you say pretty soon after opening the hatch did the
22 smoke rise and fill that entire deck pretty quickly or were you
23 able to --

24 A. Once Captain Mike opened, it was a big white puff of smoke.
25 So the moment he lifted that hatch, big smoke. And we all were

1 like -- then he said open that hatch. So I opened the next hatch,
2 and not that much smoke came. It was very little smoke that came
3 out of the hatch I opened. And left that there, and he said vent
4 it out.

5 Q. So which hatch had more smoke coming out of it?

6 A. The one that Captain Mike opened.

7 Q. And is that closer to the bar or right over the engines?

8 A. It's right over the engines.

9 Q. Over the engines. And it was mostly white in the beginning?

10 A. Mostly white, yeah. It was all white.

11 Q. When you did go to the engine room those few times, are you
12 able to stand in there or is it real shallow?

13 A. It's low. Like you would be -- if you're taller, you have to
14 bend down. I'm a little tall. So when I was down there, I had
15 to --

16 Q. Crouch a bit?

17 A. Yeah, crouch. Every time I was down there, I was just
18 watching Cody. So it was really just standing by the ladder, and
19 if he needed water, I'd go get him water. That's it.

20 Q. And being on the boat for about 5½ months, you're probably
21 familiar with the sound of -- like Mr. [REDACTED] was saying, the
22 sound of the engine when it comes up to speed, you can hear maybe
23 the boat rumbling a bit, the engine whining a little harder.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Did you hear any rapid increase in rpm or anything during the

1 incident?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Any strange sounds coming out of the engine space?

4 A. No.

5 Q. What is your normal daily schedule? What time would you
6 typically report to work?

7 A. Two o'clock.

8 Q. In the afternoon?

9 A. Yeah. As of late, I've been on the shuttle, so it's 2 to
10 9:30.

11 Q. And how many trips a day would you make on the shuttle?

12 A. Two.

13 Q. Two.

14 A. So it's the 3:30 and the 7:00. So from 2 to 3:30, we're just
15 setting up the boat, cleaning everything, getting the beer,
16 getting the ice and all that. And then we board everybody around
17 3:15. And then by 3:30, we're out. And then we get to the casino
18 at 4:30, and then we load everybody on, and then take the 11 a.m.
19 back. We get back to the dock at 5:30. Once we get everybody off
20 the boat, from 5:30 to 7 we clean. And then around 6:45 we start
21 boarding if there's enough people to go.

22 Q. During your time of employment here of the 5½ months, have
23 you ever been offered some sort of pamphlet or booklet on
24 familiarization that teaches you or instructs you about safety
25 features of the vessel?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Like an indoctrination almost?

3 A. When I first started?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. They give you booklets. So I have one booklet at the house
6 about rules and regulations and stuff like that. I was given that
7 when I got hired. But throughout working there, no.

8 Q. Okay.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So that one booklet was just basically
10 probably company policies on drinking and alcohol, drugs, stuff
11 like that?

12 MR. RIVERA: It's an employee handbook.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But anything germane to the operation
14 of the vessel?

15 MR. RIVERA: No.

16 BY MR. YOUNG:

17 Q. And just getting back to the accident and the hatches and the
18 doors. Once all four doors were open, could you feel that there
19 was a pretty good breeze coming through or wind coming through?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Was there one side stronger wind than the other?

22 A. I just remember the smoke coming out.

23 Q. Leaving the space?

24 A. The smoke was just leaving. There was no wind coming in. We
25 just made sure the doors are open. I just remember Izzy in the

1 front, he opened one, and he was at that door and we were -- you
2 know, and then I just walked in and it cleared up pretty quick.

3 Q. Have you ever been involved with fueling the boat?

4 A. No.

5 Q. No.

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. And you said by the time you got ashore the EMTs were already
8 there?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Do you know how they were notified?

11 A. No, sir. They were just there. It was two. So once I saw
12 them, they were asking for a count and help where you can, and
13 that's what I did. I helped wherever I could.

14 And the first person I saw was Harold, and he's a regular.
15 So I saw one of our dealers struggling with him, and Harold was
16 just on his back. So there was a pre-hire for the bar. It was a
17 girl, a blond girl, and she was just really scared. She was
18 freaking out and screaming that everybody needed help. So when I
19 got to the shore, I went back, and I helped where I could. Then
20 when I got Harold back to the shore with the dealer, they just
21 needed help lifting. So I was there, so let's go, and we -- I
22 grabbed him by the legs and they grabbed him -- he's a heavysset
23 guy. So, again, we got him a little closer to where we needed him
24 and then he kind of just pushed us off. And then from there it
25 was -- that's it.

1 Q. Do you have a lot of regulars that ride the shuttle back and
2 forth?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Would you say of the 35 passengers here, how many of them
5 were regulars?

6 A. About eight or nine. Yeah.

7 MR. YOUNG: I think that's all I had -- thank you -- for my
8 questions.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What was the demeanor of the captain?
10 Did you observe it? Could you characterize his demeanor and his -
11 - how did he handle himself?

12 MR. RIVERA: He was calm.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. RIVERA: As everything was happening, he was just making
15 sure that we got everybody off. I wasn't in the bridge when he
16 was driving. I was just following Jon. And the moment he told us
17 that we needed to get off the boat, he was just very serious,
18 like, it wasn't a joke. Get off this boat. And Tyler -- I just
19 give it to Tyler. Me and Tyler, when -- I was just repeating
20 everything Tyler said. Tyler said, "Everybody follow me." I said,
21 "Everybody follow me." And they followed us, and we went down. I
22 didn't see Captain Mike after that until we got to shore. Because
23 me and Tyler were at the bow helping people get off. And then
24 once everybody started jumping, it was just -- it was havoc then.

25 BY MR. YOUNG:

1 Q. Just a few follow-ups. Excuse me. Brian Young again with the
2 NTSB. Do you wear a uniform when you're on there as a deckhand?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. So it's --

5 A. I just have a button-up shirt. I tuck it in. I wore shorts
6 that day even though it was freezing, and this jacket. I washed
7 it. I was wearing this jacket.

8 Q. So the passengers could recognize you as a crew member based
9 on the uniform?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And was the same shirt being worn by the other deckhand?

12 A. Yes. We were all wearing the same uniform.

13 Q. And do you take any prescription medication?

14 A. No, sir.

15 Q. And a typical night of sleep for you, what would it consist
16 of? The night before the accident?

17 A. The night before the accident?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. I knew I had to work the next day. I like waking up early
20 just to say bye to my family when they go to work. So it was a
21 regular night. Went to sleep. I woke up at like 9:30 in the
22 morning. And then usually start getting ready. I would take my
23 bike. Usually I ride my bike to work, but lately it's been too
24 cold so I just take a cab. So I call the cab at 11, and that
25 morning I called a cab at 11, and I cancelled that cab at 11:30

1 because Dan called me and said that the 11 a.m. cancelled, to be
2 there at 5:30. So I was just hanging out at home. And then at
3 2:00 he called me again and said be here by 3:30. Okay. So --

4 Q. And what time do you typically go to bed at nights?

5 A. Typically?

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. 11.

8 Q. 11?

9 A. 10:30, 11:00.

10 Q. Is that pretty consistent?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And when did you resign from the company?

13 A. Officially 2 days ago. Beth asked me -- because I had told
14 Stacy. Stacy called and said, you know, she was checking if I was
15 okay and everything. I was letting her know yeah. And she asked
16 me if I was going back to work, and I told her I don't know. I
17 had to talk to my family about it. And then Beth called to let us
18 know about this, that we had to be here, and I told her, yeah, I'm
19 choosing to resign. I never worked on a boat before, and it's
20 been fine up until Sunday, and just going back doesn't feel right
21 with my soul, you know. I'm still scared. It's kind of hard to
22 admit that you're scared, but I'm scared.

23 We were so close to shore when we got off the boat. The
24 casino is 9 to 10 miles out, and I didn't panic on the shuttle,
25 you know, just knowing that the shore was right there. We could

1 jump; we could go -- to be 9 miles out, I didn't feel comfortable
2 working here no more just because, God forbid, something like that
3 happen, I don't know if it would turn out the same, and I wouldn't
4 want my family to lose me in that way. So it's just something I
5 don't want to experience.

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

7 Q. Do you know where the life jackets are kept on that boat?

8 A. On the shuttle?

9 Q. Yes, sir.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Where are they?

12 A. The bridge.

13 Q. Are they anywhere else?

14 A. They're on the first floor behind the -- I don't want to say
15 -- right when you walk in, there's a little entrance right there,
16 and there's life jackets in the entrance of the boat.

17 Q. When you say you walk in, are they stored in something? Are
18 they out?

19 A. They're stored in like this closet area.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. In these cabinets.

22 Q. Is that on the -- when you walk in on the boat, so you're
23 saying by one of the side doors?

24 A. Yeah. Right when you walk onto the shuttle, to your left,
25 you go around that little corner, and in those cabinets there's

1 life jackets.

2 Q. Okay. Are there any life jackets on the stern of the vessel
3 that you know of?

4 A. There's two, only the ones that we use -- we put those on
5 when we're tying the boats together. So I have to put that on
6 when I'm on the stern, and then there's one up there for the
7 deckhand that works the bow when we connect the bow to --

8 Q. So if you were instructed to hand life jackets to the
9 passengers, where would you get the passenger life jackets?

10 A. Where -- the beginning of the boat. I would know to go there
11 and get those.

12 Q. Do you know of any other lifesaving stuff that would keep you
13 floating other than the -- other than life jackets on the boat?
14 Are there any life rafts that you know of?

15 A. On the top of the bridge there should be a boat up there, a
16 life raft up there. And there were -- I never thought about those
17 things.

18 Q. Do you know how many there are up there?

19 A. Two.

20 Q. Okay. Do you know how to deploy them if you ever had to
21 deploy them?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. Did they have training on how to do it?

24 A. No, sir.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm done.

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks for your time, Shawn.

2 MR. RIVERA: No problem.

3 MR. YOUNG: Thank you very much for your help today.

4 MR. RIVERA: Yeah, no problem.

5 MR. YOUNG: Stop the recording.

6 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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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 Shawn Rivera

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA18FM010

PLACE:

DATE: January 19, 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.



Ka
Transcriber