

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: TYLER DAWSON  
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

BETH FIFER, Company Representative  
Tropical Breeze Casino

STACY FALCONE, Company Representative  
Tropical Breeze Casino

JIM CARLSON, Attorney  
Hamilton, Miller & Birthisel

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:30 a.m.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's Friday, 0930.

## INTERVIEW OF TYLER DAWSON

BY CWO [REDACTED]:

Q. Tyler, what was your position on the boat?

A. Deckhand.

Q. And you were a -- were you a full-time employee or were you a deckhand in training, or --

A. A full-time employee.

Q. Okay. How long have you been with the company?

A. I just recently just got hired back on, but I used to work for them about a year ago for a little over a year.

Q. So, in totality, how much experience do you have with them?

A. A little over a year.

Q. Okay. If I could, if you can just go ahead and tell us kind of what happened, you know, from -- pretty much you can take us from when, you know, you loaded passengers.

A. Okay.

Q. And we'll sit here and ask some questions, and maybe interrupt you a little bit. (Indiscernible) we'll be writing, so don't let that distract you.

A. Yeah, no problem.

So from loading passengers, our routine that we do is, you know, we check every passenger, look in their purses, you know. A

1 security check. We get them on the boat. From then, we get the  
2 okay to -- from dock master, you know, let him know that that's  
3 everybody so we can depart from the dock.

4 From that point, we untie the boat from the bow and stern,  
5 and we go up top and we signal for Captain. You know, make sure,  
6 you know, there's nothing in the water for him to -- you know, no  
7 debris, no kayakers, no nothing like that. And then he reverses  
8 the boat and does a 180 -- you know, turns the boat around so we  
9 can start heading out in the channel.

10 From that point, you know, deckhands -- whoever is, you know,  
11 senior mate on the shuttle at the time goes up to the wheelhouse  
12 and does a safety announcement. And then from there, we have the  
13 other deckhand, he tends bar and sells, you know, like the pull-  
14 tabs, lottery tickets and stuff that are on the boat. Then we had  
15 a pre-hire on board that day, too, as well. He was just  
16 observing.

17 Oh. Okay, so we head out to -- we're heading out in the  
18 channel. And we got to -- we got right out of the S-turn. It's  
19 the curve there; we call it the S-turn. I'm not entirely sure  
20 what channel marker that is.

21 Q. Yeah, and when you say, when you say "right out," do you mean  
22 right out the end or in the beginning? Are you at the beginning  
23 of the S-curve closer to land or are you at the small key there?

24 A. Here; I can show you.

25 Q. That's probably the better one, I think.

1 A. So is this coming out?

2 Q. Yes, sir.

3 A. Got to right here, that channel marker, that purple triangle  
4 right there? The last purple triangle.

5 Q. So you're pointing to day marker -- it looks like 14?

6 A. That one.

7 Q. Okay. All right. So -- actually you're pointing to day  
8 marker 13.

9 A. Thirteen.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. So we get there, and at that point we had three deckhands  
12 because one was jumping off the shuttle onto the *Breeze*. So I --  
13 we had -- I had a deckhand with me on the bow -- or in the cabin,  
14 but towards the bow. And then we had a deckhand at the bar, which  
15 only deckhands are on the beverage bar there when the shuttle  
16 runs.

17 But when we got to this channel marker, the boat started to  
18 slow down. And that's when I looked at the other deckhand and  
19 said, hey, you know, go check with Captain, you know, something  
20 doesn't seem right here. You know, we shouldn't be slowing down  
21 in the channel here. You know, this is usually where we start to  
22 pick up pace, you know? And we're on the front of the bow. We  
23 have a clear view of the front of the bow. There were no incoming  
24 boats or nothing like that for him to slow down.

25 So Deckhand Jon went up to the wheelhouse to go check with

1 Captain. It was about a minute or so. He hadn't returned. So I  
2 took the initiative to go up top to the wheelhouse, you know, to  
3 see what's going on. At that point I see Captain, Deckhand Jon  
4 and one of the bartenders in the bridge, and I see Captain Mike  
5 with the radio obviously notifying the dock that, you know, he's  
6 having engine trouble, engine troubles. Then he orders me and the  
7 other deckhand to, you know, go downstairs, go to the -- you know,  
8 look at the engines, make sure there isn't anything, you know --  
9 like if we see anything that's -- you know, if anything, you know,  
10 popped out of place or anything like that, you know.

11 We open -- Jon, Deckhand Jon opened up the hatch. At that  
12 point, what looked like steam -- it was transparent smoke, but  
13 steam. And at that point we thought engine overheating. So, you  
14 know, we looked in there, shut the hatch, went to go notify  
15 Captain that the engine is overheating. And at that point, when  
16 you have an engine overheating, you can't continue. We had to  
17 turn the boat around. Because we thought, you know, get the boat  
18 back to the dock, you know, we'll have an engineer come look at  
19 it, you know, get it fixed. But by the time we got -- by the time  
20 we got to the next channel marker in -- because he did a 180. We  
21 started to move --

22 Q. Okay. So this started at 13, and then -- so you're  
23 traveling, you're traveling --

24 A. Yeah, so --

25 Q. So about what --

1 A. We slowed down. So this is where we slowed down.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. So we slowed down to about here, to the end of here.

4 Q. Okay. So you're identifying just after channel marker 12?

5 Okay.

6 A. Yeah. We slowed down. And then we were pretty much at --  
7 either at an idle or we were just with the way of the water at  
8 that point. We're just, you know, just kind of floating there.

9 Then at that point, after we notified Captain of the engine  
10 overheating, he turned the boat around. And then at that point,  
11 you know, you -- when you're on one engine -- you know how it is  
12 like with two engines, you get one engine is kind of like one is  
13 starboard, one is port. So like, if you were pushing that  
14 starboard, you know, you're -- or if you were pushing on  
15 starboard, yeah, you're going to be -- you're turning port side,  
16 you know. So we just slowly idled it back in as, you know, you  
17 normally do. I mean, sometimes in the channel we, you know, we --  
18 just to get going we put a little bit of force in there. But for  
19 the most part, we were idling back.

20 And at that point we've already went back up, you know, we  
21 were with Captain at that point when he was turning the boat  
22 around. And at that point we saw what looked like gray smoke,  
23 like exhaust, come from the back of the boat.

24 We know what exhaust looks like, and that was a little bit  
25 more than our normal exhaust for the boat. And we couldn't tell



1 which, you know, exhaust it was coming from because the wind was  
2 just blowing it to starboard side because at that point the boat  
3 had already been, you know, turned around.

4 Q. Okay. Could you tell where it was originating from?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Was it coming out of the exhaust port on the transom of the  
7 vessel --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. -- or was it coming out of, let's say, a ventilation duct?

10 A. Oh, you know -- yeah. So if it came out of an exhaust or  
11 ventilation, I don't know.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But at that point Captain ordered us again to go down to the  
14 engine room. He says just, you know -- for safety, he says, you  
15 know, make sure you have a fire extinguisher or something in case  
16 there is a fire down there. But at this point we still didn't  
17 think there was any kind of fire. We just figured the engine's  
18 just having a lot of problems so we have to go get them fixed, you  
19 know. An easy fix, overheating.

20 But we went back down there, opened the hatch up, saw that  
21 there was some more smoke. Me and Deckhand Jon, you know, we  
22 looked in there. He actually went down there. And at that point  
23 still there was no flame, still see no flame, you know. And it's  
24 pretty dim down there. I mean, they have a light down there  
25 always, like a work light, but you -- in the smoke and everything,

1 you know, we still didn't see any flames or anything like that.  
2 So nothing, you know, to be worried about. But that's when the  
3 smoke started getting real thicker and thicker and thicker. And  
4 when it got -- it got to the point where we couldn't see anything.  
5 So, you know, if there was flames down there, we couldn't see  
6 them, you know.

7 But it was at that point where we're like something's going  
8 on, you know, something's wrong here. So we -- well, at that  
9 point -- the first time we opened the hatch, I actually had -- I  
10 ordered all the passengers to go to the top deck.

11 Q. Were you at the forward hatch, the forward hatch or the aft  
12 hatch?

13 A. The middle hatch. Right in the middle.

14 Q. Right in the middle?

15 A. Right in the middle of the boat. It's where the -- like  
16 where the engine sits. The closest one to the engines.

17 But the first time we opened the hatch and we saw like the  
18 steam, at that point we ordered everybody to the top deck just so,  
19 you know, we can clear the area, you know, we can investigate the  
20 engines, you know, not have the passengers, you know, critique us  
21 and talk to us and stuff like that, you know. Because you know  
22 the people out there, you know.

23 But -- yeah, then when the smoke started getting thicker and  
24 thicker and thicker, we knew, you know, there was a problem. So  
25 we went back up to the top deck, you know, let Captain know, like,

1 we can't see anything down there, you know, smoke's getting way  
2 bad; we can't breathe or anything like that, you know. Captain  
3 said -- well, Captain radioed the dock, let them know, you know,  
4 like, it's more than what we thought it was.

5       Then that's when we saw a real big black cloud come from the  
6 back of the boat, swing around to the front. And at that point,  
7 you know, we abandoned ship. Captain -- you know, we made sure  
8 all the passengers -- you know, aware that we had to get off the  
9 vessel, and all jumped off. And from that, it was just helping  
10 people to shore and getting everybody off the boat at that point.

11 Q.   So at any time do you recall ever going past this key? Or  
12 what would you say was the farthest west that the vessel traveled  
13 through the channel, you know, where you turned around?

14       Let me know if this helps.

15 A.   What is -- what's this right here? Is that --

16 Q.   So, okay, this would be the southern side of the entrance.  
17 Okay. This is channel marker 15.

18 A.   Okay.

19 Q.   This is where the vessel lies right now. So you would have  
20 passed 15 and then headed west. This is that small key.

21 A.   Okay, that's Anne Cove -- or island or whatever the heck.  
22 Durney Key or whatever --

23 Q.   Yes, it's Durney Key.

24 A.   Okay. And then --

25 Q.   I guess there was some spoils out here.

1 A. From my remembrance, it wasn't too far from here. So I'd  
2 say, like, if we were to, you know, drift out, the furthest we  
3 would have got was probably maybe like right here. But from my  
4 knowledge --

5 Q. So you're --

6 A. -- I'm still, I'm still thinking right here.

7 Q. So you're pointing to channel marker 10A.

8 A. 10A.

9 Q. And when you said "no further than," you're looking at  
10 channel marker 7, 8 area? Well, here's channel marker 7.

11 A. That's the end of the channel there, huh? Right there?  
12 Well, I mean, up here, but this is getting towards the very end of  
13 the channel there, where it opens up. Yeah, there's no way we  
14 were that far out there.

15 Q. Okay. And I have a larger, I have a larger chart, if it  
16 helps. So this is a little bit harder to see, but -- so here's  
17 Durney Key.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. And there's spoils. Here's channel marker 15 where the  
20 vessel lays.

21 A. Yeah, from what I recall, we did -- I don't think we even got  
22 anywhere close to that.

23 Q. And you're pointing to Durney Key.

24 A. Durney Key.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah. Yeah, if anything, we only made it to that halfway 10A  
2 mark, you know. And that's, you know -- we flipped it around and  
3 went back. You know, but at that point, you know, I -- you know.

4 Q. So you said you had previous experience of over a year and  
5 then you had recently been rehired.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. So do you recall the date you were recently rehired, or what  
8 timespan are we talking?

9 A. Like a week and a day.

10 Q. A week and a day?

11 A. I'd say so. I don't know. I can't -- I don't remember the  
12 exact day.

13 Q. But less than 2 weeks?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Approximately a week and a day? Okay. What did you do  
16 before you were employed -- before you were hired here?

17 A. You mean my previous employment --

18 Q. Yes, sir.

19 A. -- before I got hired here? I had a few different jobs. So  
20 I was working overstock at a grocery store, I was working for a  
21 HIPAA compliance company, and I run a recording studio. So that's  
22 what I did.

23 Q. All three of those prior to being hired here?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. I see. Okay. And you said that the senior deckhand, once

1 you got underway, you said that the senior deckhand does the  
2 safety announcement?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Do you recall who did that or if it was done or --

5 A. Yeah, I did it. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. And explain that process.

7 A. You know, as soon as you let passengers up, you know, you  
8 make sure the captain -- you know, give him all the signals, make  
9 sure, you know, it's okay, turn the boat around start heading out  
10 to the channel. As soon as you start heading out to the channel,  
11 senior mate goes up to the top deck in the wheelhouse, makes the  
12 safety announcement. Safety announcement pretty much just  
13 describes in detail, like, where all the lifejackets are, where  
14 all the, you know, life rings are and stuff like that. Where the  
15 life rafts, up in the top. It tells you, like, you know, you  
16 can't be smoking in the cabin, but you can smoke on the top deck,  
17 you know, if you want to, but --

18 Q. Are you reading off a cue card? Are you playing a CD or --

19 A. Yes, they have a -- no, no. So we have a microphone PA  
20 system. And they have a PA system throughout the vessel. They  
21 got megaphones on top deck and, you know, just your regular, you  
22 know, speakers, sound in the main cabin. And you have a  
23 microphone, then you have a cue card that you read off of. Pretty  
24 much, you know, accurately tells you where everything is on the  
25 boat. You know, use handrails whenever possible, you know. If

1 the waters get rough, you know.

2 Q. Okay. When you said that the captain was on the radio, do  
3 you know who he would be speaking to on the radio?

4 A. I believe, when we first encountered troubles, I believe he  
5 was getting in touch with the dock, letting them know that we're  
6 going to be returning the boat.

7 Q. Okay. And who -- so who would be on the other end of the  
8 dock radio?

9 A. I mean, whoever's at the dock. I mean, I'm not sure. I've  
10 never -- you know, I don't handle the radio. I don't talk to  
11 anybody on the radio.

12 Q. Okay. And do you know, is it on channel 16? Is there a  
13 special channel?

14 A. You know, I don't know.

15 Q. Okay. That's fine. When the captain sent you down to  
16 investigate, did he tell you what you were going down to  
17 investigate? Because from what I recall, was you said that you  
18 just slowed down; you slowed down, went up to the pilothouse and  
19 then the captain sent you down to investigate.

20 A. Yeah, he sent us down, obviously, with engine troubles, but  
21 we -- at that point we didn't know, you know, which engine it was  
22 or anything like that. So he pretty much sent us down there to,  
23 you know, look around, make sure nothing's out of place, nothing's  
24 being bumped around, you know, there's nothing just floating  
25 around down there, you know. But yeah, that was it. Then that's

1 when we checked the hatch and we saw, like, what looked like steam  
2 come out of the hatch there. And it was pretty transparent. So  
3 it was like first thing, you know, I think of was steam,  
4 overheating engine, you know.

5 Q. What was the smell? Could you describe the smell?

6 A. So at that point I couldn't smell anything. The closest  
7 deckhand to the hatch was Jon and, you know, I haven't even asked  
8 him if he smelled anything for that. So -- but when we actually  
9 did start smelling it, that's when -- we started smelling it when  
10 -- after the fact that we ordered all the passengers up to the top  
11 deck.

12 Q. And so describe that smell.

13 A. Fiery. Maybe like a little rubbery, you know, like  
14 melting --

15 Q. Did you smell fuel? Do you know what diesel smells like?

16 A. Yeah, I know what diesel smells like. I didn't smell  
17 anything like that, no.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because at this point we didn't even still think it was fire.  
20 We just still thought it was something either mechanical in the  
21 engine or, you know, something like that, like a transmission or  
22 something, you know. Something, you know, replaceable, easy to  
23 fix.

24 Q. And can you show me which hatch? Can you point out on there  
25 which hatch you used to investigate?



1 A. Okay. So that was it.

2 Q. Was there anything on top of the hatch when you went to  
3 investigate?

4 A. No. Absolutely not. No. We do not cover these hatches up  
5 with anything, no.

6 Q. Okay. And can you kind of just draw on there the location of  
7 both main engines?

8 A. Yeah, no problem. So this would be port, starboard.

9 Q. Okay. And do you know where the fuel shutoff is or were you  
10 ever -- did fuel shutoff ever come up or --

11 A. No. So, you know, I don't -- you know, I don't know.

12 Q. Where the fuel shutoff is?

13 A. Yeah. I don't know.

14 Q. Okay. And then -- the engine. So during this whole process,  
15 was it always running, idle -- maybe idle or above idle?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Or was it ever shut down, secured?

18 A. If you were -- if one --

19 Q. You know, if you can recall.

20 A. If anything, only the one was shut down. I believe maybe  
21 like port, maybe. But, I mean, it's so hard to hear that engine  
22 shut off and start up with that other engine running. So like  
23 it's hard to say if any of them went down. Yeah. No, I don't  
24 know.

25 Q. So -- okay.

1 A. I mean, it was constantly -- if anything, constantly on. It  
2 was constantly on. Yeah.

3 Q. Okay. Very good. And do you recall, when was the last time  
4 you did a fire drill on board or practice any sort of, you know,  
5 fire drill?

6 A. I mean, I was only hired on a week ago. But the last time I  
7 can remember we did -- that we went over all drills was last  
8 employment.

9 Q. So the -- your previous employment?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. I see. And so what did that consist of? Did you -- what  
12 kind of drill did you have? You know, what's a normal drill like?

13 A. Well, when you first get hired on, you know, they go through  
14 all of it with you. So they go over man overboard, fire drill,  
15 the signal, the horn signals, all that stuff. And then, you know,  
16 throughout employment they'll -- sometimes, you know, they'll --  
17 maybe the captain or the senior deckhand at the time, you know,  
18 he'll tell you like, hey, like how do you do this, or show me how  
19 to do this.

20 You know, sometimes a slow day, you know, we always go  
21 through everything, like man overboard stuff, you know. We get  
22 the pulleys out and everything, you know, make sure everything's  
23 there, nothing's tangled up or anything like that, you know. Easy  
24 accessible. But that was -- I mean, I would say not regularly,  
25 but, you know, often enough to where the point where it's

1 something you just, you know, naturally -- it just comes  
2 naturally, you know.

3 Q. Okay. And what about -- and when I said -- I might have said  
4 fire drill training, but did you have, like, man overboard or  
5 crowd control or --

6 A. Yes. Yeah.

7 Q. -- any sort of training other than your previous employment?

8 A. I don't think any of my other, like, employment had anything  
9 set up like that.

10 Q. No, I mean, the last time that you worked for Sun Cruise.

11 A. Oh, that's what I'm talking about. All that was the last  
12 time I worked for them.

13 Q. I see.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And did the captain or whoever was conducting the training,  
16 did they log it anywhere or --

17 A. You know, I'm not entirely sure. I mean, it's required, you  
18 know, to know that stuff. So just having somebody there showing  
19 you how to do it, you know, and I think that's, you know, pretty  
20 much how it was conducted at that point.

21 Q. Okay. Did you ever hear -- was there ever a discussion of a  
22 fixed fire system in the engine room, or do you know anything  
23 about that?

24 A. A fixed fire system?

25 Q. Yes.

1 A. No idea.

2 Q. Okay. And you said earlier the -- you saw a large amount of  
3 smoke coming from the stern or the back of the vessel.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And you couldn't tell if it was -- could you -- and I know I  
6 asked this, and you could have said, but could you tell was it  
7 coming from, you know, like the back of the vessel? Was it maybe  
8 coming from here and blowing across? Was it coming out of the --

9 A. Yeah. See, at that point it was -- it was pretty windy so  
10 pretty much anything -- if you were even to spit in that  
11 direction, it was just shooting to starboard --

12 Q. Starboard. Yeah.

13 A. -- side. So like, even if something came out here --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- immediately, within seconds, it was here. And at that  
16 point, you know, here at the point of, you know, exertion, it just  
17 expands from there. So from here, all you see is big; from here,  
18 small. But we didn't have a viewpoint on here. All we had was a  
19 viewpoint here. So it was hard to see -- it was hard to say where  
20 that big cloud was coming from.

21 Q. Okay. And describe -- so describe for us, like, when you  
22 were investigating, you opened the center hatch over the engine  
23 room. Now inside that compartment, the -- you know, basically the  
24 passenger compartment, what was the conditions like? Was it smoke  
25 filled? Were -- I don't know.

1 A. Okay. So the second time we opened the hatch, and we noticed  
2 that it was, you know, it was more than just steam. We had --  
3 obviously, we still needed to investigate, see what's going on, so  
4 we needed to clear out the smoke. I wouldn't say it was to the  
5 point where you couldn't see, but it was definitely a lot of smoke  
6 in there. Almost, you know, like -- I mean, I'm a smoker, so I'm,  
7 you know -- but we had opened up the portside departure door to  
8 air out some of the smoke to clear it out, and that's when we  
9 noticed the smoke just getting thicker and thicker and thicker and  
10 thicker and thicker, to the point where we couldn't see anything  
11 and we couldn't be in the cabin anymore. And that's when, you  
12 know, Captain ordered us to abandon ship.

13 Q. Was all the smoke coming from the hatch opening or was it  
14 coming from -- you know, where was --

15 A. Okay, so --

16 Q. -- it originating out of?

17 A. So when we saw the smoke exit the boat from the back, no  
18 hatches were open at that time. We've only opened the hatches a  
19 few times to, you know, investigate, check, you know, what's going  
20 on. Because we don't want to -- you know, if there's something  
21 coming out of there, we don't want it in the boat, you know what I  
22 mean? We just figured at that point, you know, if we can contain  
23 it, we can contain it. But -- you know.

24 Q. So did the smoke come from the hatch opening?

25 A. No.

1 Q. No.

2 A. So no, we had smoke come out of the hatch.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. But the big cloud of smoke that we noticed was coming from  
5 the back of the boat, somewhere -- either the side vents or the  
6 exhaust. I don't know.

7 Q. So in your opinion, if you walked into the main passenger  
8 compartment, with all the, you know, with the flush deck hatches  
9 closed, would there be smoke in there? Or --

10 A. So they are --

11 Q. -- you know, is there no smoke in there until you open the  
12 hatch?

13 A. Yeah, there's no smoke until you open the hatch.

14 Q. Okay, great. Yeah, that's what I was getting at. Okay.

15 Alarms? You know, could you tell me, did you see, physically  
16 see -- or, you know, did you visually see or hear any alarms  
17 sounding at any point?

18 A. I mean, most of the time that we spent investigating, you  
19 open those hatches up and you hear those engines running, if there  
20 were an alarm -- I mean, I'm already hard of hearing as it is. I  
21 wouldn't have -- I couldn't hear anything.

22 Q. What about in the pilothouse? Like when you went to go talk  
23 to the captain?

24 A. I mean, if there was like a distress signal or anything like  
25 that, I mean, I couldn't hear it. I couldn't hear it. I mean, I

1 did hear, you know, like him on the radio and -- I don't know if  
2 the beeping and stuff from that is what you're, you know, trying  
3 to talk about. But, I mean, other than that, that's it.

4 Q. Okay. No red flashing lights? No audible bing, bing, bing?  
5 You know, like an alarm or a continuous buzzing, ringing?

6 A. No. No.

7 Q. All right. And the console all looked --

8 A. I mean, I didn't go into the wheelhouse. I mean, they have  
9 doors, but I mean, I stand outside and, you know, and talk to the  
10 captain while he's in there.

11 Q. Okay. Okay.

12 BY MR. [REDACTED]

13 Q. So at some point -- you kind of left off. You said that we  
14 saw a big black cloud and then everyone got off the vessel. Okay.  
15 Can we talk a little bit about the process by which we started to  
16 get people off the vessel? When you saw that big black cloud --  
17 I'm going to, I'm going to -- I just want to paint the picture  
18 here --

19 A. Yeah, no problem.

20 Q. -- based on what you said. But if I can -- if we can pick up  
21 from there, it sounds like all the passengers were upside, outside  
22 on the top deck.

23 A. Top deck. Yes.

24 Q. Can you go from there and go through the decision matrix of  
25 where and who started to direct the passengers?

1 A. Okay, yeah, no problem. So once we notified Captain, Captain  
2 had -- you know, he told us, like, we need to get, you know, we  
3 need to get the people off the boat. And then at that point,  
4 Captain went out and told the passengers, like, we have to get off  
5 the boat. On top of that, we had, you know, myself and Deckhand  
6 Jon also telling people, you know, we have to get off the boat.  
7 And at that point everybody's too frantic to jump off the boat.  
8 So then, you know, I jumped off the boat. Kind of like follow the  
9 leader, you know. Told everybody, you know, mud, soft landing.  
10 You know, and that's when people started jumping off the boat.  
11 And then we started to help people to shore.

12 I believe Captain was one of the last ones off. You know, he  
13 made sure, you know, everybody was off the boat. You know, did  
14 his, you know, run through the top deck and then, you know, jumped  
15 down the ladder, went off the side.

16 Q. So when you say you jumped, what part of the boat did you  
17 jump from?

18 A. The bow.

19 Q. From the --

20 A. Port side bow. So --

21 Q. So from the side door, or from the little bowsprit up on the  
22 top?

23 A. The hand railing. We had removed the door on the one side  
24 for people to easily jump off. But, I mean -- but at that point,  
25 like, I jumped off here, just so I could see everybody, you know.



1 See both sides of the boat. But from here, we had people jump off  
2 here, and then we had people jumping off over the hand railing,  
3 even some instances of people sitting on the -- even on the  
4 anchor, even still afraid to jump down.

5 Q. Okay. So at this point when you were jumping, we had  
6 previously said the people were at the top of the boat. Did  
7 anybody start to shuttle people down to this area or --

8 A. Yes. So -- yeah, so we had -- we told everybody, we directed  
9 them to the bow. Because the back of the boat was no good. You  
10 couldn't see back there. Too much smoke. Nothing. And because  
11 of the way the wind was and the water, the water was coming -- I  
12 believe the water was either coming out or coming in and the wind  
13 was blowing in, which caused the boat to kind of -- after, you  
14 know, he drove it into land, even if it wasn't stuck or not, the  
15 wind and the current pretty much kept it at a standstill. So the  
16 boat wasn't moving like erratically or anything like that while  
17 people were jumping off or anything like that.

18 Q. And I know a lot's going on, but after you drove into the  
19 land, were you able to tell if the engines were still running?  
20 Were they clutched in? Were they turned off?

21 A. At that point, I believe -- oh, man. They were off. I  
22 believe they were off. I believe they were off at that point. I  
23 believe he idled them to the point where he couldn't idle anymore  
24 and I believe they were cut off.

25 Q. Okay. So you jump off. And then where are the other

1 passengers -- I'm sorry -- the other crew members at this point?

2 A. Other crew members are up top, most of them assisting other  
3 people.

4 Q. You said the captain was the last one off?

5 A. Yeah, he was one of the last ones off. So I'd say he -- if  
6 not the last one, like the last three, you know. Because I know  
7 there was still some people who were very hesitant to, you know,  
8 jump off, where some of them we had to grab; some of them we had  
9 to push, you know. But it was either, like, life or death at that  
10 point.

11 Q. Do you have a -- do you hold a Coast Guard Merchant Mariner  
12 Credential?

13 A. No, I do not.

14 Q. So at the time the boat was underway, you were the senior  
15 mate?

16 A. On the -- I was acting senior mate on the shuttle boat, yes.

17 Q. When you say acting senior mate, were you acting as or --

18 A. Yeah, acting as. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay. So you were the senior mate?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I was the mate. We can say that much.

23 Q. Okay.

24 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

25 Q. I'm sorry, I've got one. Did you ever hear a PA announcement

1 or, you know, over your PA system? Abandon ship or, you know, we  
2 have a fire; everyone come up to the upper deck? Was there ever  
3 -- was there instructions given?

4 A. Not that I remember. But I believe there was a horn. I  
5 believe there was a horn, if I remember correctly.

6 Q. What did that sound like?

7 A. Very fast. Like, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep, beep.  
8 You know what I mean?

9 Q. Um-hum. So rapid, short blasts?

10 A. Yeah. And then --

11 Q. The ship's whistle or the ship's horn?

12 A. I think so, yeah. I believe so.

13 Q. But no PA announcement saying, you know, passengers, we have  
14 a fire; come up to the upper deck? Anything like that?

15 A. I mean -- no PA, but at that point everybody's on the top  
16 deck, and it was -- we can -- I mean, you say anything, you yell  
17 anything, everybody's going to be able to hear you up there. So  
18 that's pretty much what we did, is we yelled and directed to all  
19 the passengers on the top deck.

20 Q. Okay. There may have been a deaf person. Did he just follow  
21 everyone?

22 A. Yeah. So we have -- was that Harold? We have like -- he has  
23 different motions for different things. And like, if you, like,  
24 direct him, like you say, this way, you know, put your hand out,  
25 go like this, it means, you know, come to -- like, for -- to him,

1 it means, you know, come to us, you know. So, you know, we helped  
2 him out with that.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So when you say Harold, you're  
4 referring to one of the passengers?

5 MR. DAWSON: Yes. A regular. You know, we helped him get  
6 off the boat. He made it to shore.

7 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

8 Q. How did the captain seem during this whole process?

9 A. I'd say pretty, I'd say -- like I wouldn't say like, you  
10 know, the calmest person in the world, but I would say he -- I  
11 mean, he was, you know, very professional about it, the way he  
12 went about it.

13 Q. Okay. And your other deckhands?

14 A. I'd say same as, same as well. I know there was a lot of  
15 shock and disbelief, you know, between a few of them. But, I  
16 mean, other than that, it was pretty much like a straightforward  
17 -- like your instincts kicked in at that point, you know what I  
18 mean?

19 Q. What does, what does shock and disbelief mean? You know, how  
20 does that --

21 A. Like something, you know, you only see in movies but you  
22 never thought would happen to you, you know what I mean?  
23 Something like that, like shock.

24 Q. So that's what they told you or --

25 A. No. That's pretty much like what you can see in their

1 expressions.

2 Q. I see.

3 A. Like, you know what I mean?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

6 Q. So I'd like to go back a little bit.

7 A. Yeah, no problem.

8 Q. When this whole thing first started going on, you said Jon  
9 went to the bridge and you said Jon was there for about a minute.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And Jon didn't return, so you went to the bridge.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And at some point Jon, the deckhand and Tyler -- I'm sorry --  
14 Jon, the deckhand, and you were in the bridge talking. And you  
15 inferred that there was a problem with the engine. Did the  
16 captain at that point say, I have an engine problem? Or what did  
17 the captain say to you during that discussion?

18 A. Okay. So we -- I went up there. And he was -- Jon and them  
19 were already in the bridge waiting for Captain to be done talking  
20 to the dock letting them know that they're going to be returning  
21 the vessel. At that point Jon opened up the door, and Captain  
22 said, you know, like, hey, you know, I have an engine problem.  
23 He's like, we need -- you guys need to go down there and  
24 investigate it. And at that point, that's when we went down and  
25 started investigating.

1 Q. So when the captain said you have an engine problem, did he  
2 delineate between which engine or give you any inclination or any  
3 thought as to what he perceived that problem was?

4 A. No.

5 Q. So he didn't say port, starboard, both engines?

6 A. No. He pretty much sent us down there to go check, I think  
7 to try to figure out, pinpoint exactly where the problem was  
8 coming from. Because he doesn't have eyes of the engine room in  
9 the wheelhouse.

10 Q. Do you know if there are any closed circuit televisions on  
11 that TV, or any closed circuit televisions in the engine room?

12 A. I believe so, yes.

13 Q. Okay. Did the captain say he saw anything in the engine  
14 room, or he just said he had -- he thinks he had a problem? I  
15 guess what I'm asking is, what did the captain base that problem  
16 with an engine on?

17 A. He was -- what's that?

18 Q. What did the captain base that he had a problem with the  
19 engine on? Was it --

20 A. Like overheating?

21 Q. Yeah. Did he say particularly what he thought the problem  
22 was, or I mean --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How'd he know he had a problem?

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How'd he know? Yeah.

25 MR. DAWSON: How'd he know he had a problem? Well, the boat

1 slowed down. And I don't think he slowed the boat down.

2 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

3 Q. So the first time you went to the engine room, I think you  
4 said you opened the hatch and you couldn't see anything. Does the  
5 engine room have lights?

6 A. Yeah, they have work lights on. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Are those work lights, do they stay on all the time  
8 or --

9 A. Yeah. They're on -- as soon as you, as soon as you cut shore  
10 power, they're on.

11 Q. So were the work lights on when you popped the hatch?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And I know it's steamy --

14 A. When I say I didn't see anything, I'm referring to like fire.  
15 I'm not referring to I can't see the engines.

16 Q. And I think that's what I'm going to -- where I'm trying to  
17 go. When you opened it, can you tell me what did you see? Did  
18 you -- were you able to make out and say --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- I see engines, I see an engine room?

21 A. I can see, I can see engines. I can see all that. Yes.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Could you see where maybe, if I may --

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Please.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- where maybe where the steam was  
25 originating from, whatever vapor or smoke that you saw?

1 MR. DAWSON: No.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What piece of equipment?

3 MR. DAWSON: No.

4 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

5 Q. So, and staying with the first time you popped the hatch, you  
6 all looked in.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. I'm assuming, just for the sake of expediting this, there's a  
9 ladder going into the engine room?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay. Did you all climb down the ladder to go in, or you  
12 just kind of stick your head in and --

13 A. Oh. From what I believe, Deckhand Jon went down.

14 Q. So Deckhand Jon did go in?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And you did not?

17 A. I did not, no.

18 Q. Can I go back to the second time you went to the engine room?

19 A. Yeah, no problem.

20 Q. From the first time, you put the hatch back on?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. Second time you go there, you open it up, and you said  
23 that it was more than steam at this time.

24 A. Yeah, it started getting a little bit more gray, a little  
25 bit more opaque. And still, at that point we still didn't even



1 think it was, you know, a fire or anything. We still thought it  
2 was just an overheating engine, to the point where Deckhand Jon  
3 even went back down and I even, you know, poked my head in and  
4 looked around.

5 Q. So Jon went back into the engine room the second time?

6 A. Yeah, he -- yeah, he went in there again.

7 Q. When you opened the hatch the second time, were you still  
8 able to see the engines and make out the components of the engine  
9 room?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So at some point following when Jon -- what you had said  
12 earlier, you said the smoke got a little bit thicker. From the  
13 second time, did you -- was the hatch closed going into the engine  
14 room? When you all left the engine room from the second time, did  
15 you replace the hatch?

16 A. No, he -- Jon stood in the hatch, about halfway in the hatch,  
17 waiting for me to return to notify Captain that, you know, the  
18 smoke was getting worse. Because still at that point, you know,  
19 we still didn't even -- there was no flames or anything.

20 Q. So did you come back and -- so you -- did you go notify the  
21 captain then?

22 A. Yeah, I went and notified the captain.

23 Q. Okay. And did you ever come back to Jon?

24 A. Yes, I did.

25 Q. Okay. Was Jon still halfway in and out?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. What'd you tell Jon when you came back?

3 A. We need to go to the top deck.

4 Q. Okay. So do you know if Jon replaced that hatch when he went  
5 up, or did he just run up topside?

6 A. You know --

7 Q. "I don't know" is an acceptable answer.

8 A. -- I don't know. Yeah, I don't know.

9 Q. Okay. I'm not trying to pin you down. I'm just --

10 A. Yeah, right.

11 Q. So the safety announcement that you said you did when you got  
12 underway, there's a laminated card that you read from?

13 A. Yeah, there's a cue -- it's about one, two, three four, five  
14 -- I'd say it's about like five like two or three sentences, you  
15 know, paragraphs.

16 Q. Is the card affixed to the vessel?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Has a CD ever been used to do that --

19 A. No.

20 Q. -- or a DVD or an automatic announcement?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Can you -- do you -- can you describe, to the best of your  
23 knowledge, what you know that the boat is equipped with, with  
24 regards to fire protection or fire protection equipment, fire  
25 extinguishers, stuff like that?

1 A. Yeah. So we have -- I mean, it's been a little while since  
2 I've been on that boat, but from my knowledge, we have a fire  
3 extinguisher in the front, back -- in the front but the back wall  
4 leading down to where you fill up fuel. We have a fire  
5 extinguisher right there. We have a fire extinguisher -- there  
6 should be on the back, should be a box back here with a fire  
7 extinguisher.

8 Q. So when you're saying back here, you're saying outside on the  
9 starboard side?

10 A. Yeah. No, inside on the opposite side of the bar here. So  
11 right here. Should be a fire extinguisher there in a box. And  
12 then, going -- I know there's one in the bridge, in the  
13 wheelhouse. I'm trying to think of -- I know there's a fire  
14 extinguisher in the engine room. I think that's all I know about  
15 fire extinguishers.

16 Q. So when you and Deckhand Jon went to the engine room, you  
17 said you had a fire extinguisher.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Did you get that fire extinguisher or did Jon?

20 A. I had a -- I grabbed the fire extinguisher from the front bow  
21 behind the island and Captain Mike handed a fire extinguisher to  
22 Jon from the bridge. Just for precautionary, because it's one of  
23 those things, like, we didn't think we were actually going to use  
24 them, you know. We just had them just in case, you know.

25 Q. Okay. So fire extinguishers. What else does the boat have

1 for fire extinguishing capabilities?

2 A. You know, I don't know.

3 Q. Okay.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You mentioned something earlier about  
5 -- before these guys were here, about powder.

6 MR. DAWSON: Oh, we have a CO2 compression system.

7 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

8 Q. Can you explain that, please?

9 A. Yeah. It's in the engine room. When there is a fire, you  
10 pull it, and it sucks the oxygen out of the engine room and puts  
11 the powder on the engine to keep it from -- putting out the,  
12 pretty much putting out the flames.

13 Q. Do you know how that system operates or how it gets  
14 activated?

15 A. Yes. So we have a switch in the front of the boat right next  
16 to the fire extinguisher, up here inside the cabin.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Inside what cabin?

18 MR. DAWSON: The main cabin, the boat. So like where the  
19 -- okay, this is -- doesn't look -- yeah, right here. See, like  
20 right there, I believe, on that wall.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Um-hum. Okay. Good. Okay.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Do you know where the bottles are  
23 located or --

24 MR. DAWSON: No. Even if I -- I mean, if I were to pull  
25 that, we had the hatch open, so if it -- it might -- I mean, with

1 the hatches open, it might not even work. But if -- Jon was in  
2 the engine room, so if I pulled that, like, he would have been  
3 dead. So that was not, like, an option at the time, because it  
4 was so -- everything was so fast, you know.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is there a fire pump on the boat that  
6 you know of, or any other fire monitors that use water or  
7 anything?

8 MR. DAWSON: I mean, I know we have, I know we have holding  
9 tanks of water. We have a fire hose right here on that side, a  
10 compartment that opens up with a fire hose. I'm trying to think  
11 where else. Top deck, I think, maybe in the back of the, back of  
12 the top deck, I think, in the lockers. I'm not, so I'm not too  
13 familiar.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So ships are completely isolated from  
15 land; we all know that. And so if -- do you know how that fire  
16 hose gets charged, how water gets put into that fire hose?

17 MR. DAWSON: So there's a pump you need to turn on. That's  
18 located in the fuse box in the back of the boat behind the bar,  
19 the water pump. And then there is a wrench to open the hose up.  
20 And from that point, you know, you pull the hose out, stretch it  
21 out and let the water flow through, you know, make sure there's no  
22 kinks or anything like that. But the process of that would be --  
23 it wouldn't -- we wouldn't have had enough time to do that. It  
24 was -- everything was really fast.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So you described that. Who would make

1 those calls or who would be in charge of, let's say, using the  
2 system in the engine room --

3 MR. DAWSON: Okay. So if --

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- or energizing the fire pump?

5 MR. DAWSON: If we know we have a fire, we have to notify  
6 Captain. Captain gives that order. We have to let him know where  
7 the fire is, so that way, you know, we can decide at which point  
8 where -- what part of the boat would be better accessible to  
9 contain it. So --

10 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

11 Q. So you said that, you know, we had a CO2 system, and you were  
12 able to talk about where the device is to operate that system.  
13 You talked about where the fire extinguishers are. You talked  
14 about where the fire hoses are located and how to turn the pump on  
15 to get water to charge those hoses. Did you receive training on  
16 this from the company? Have you all conducted any drills?

17 A. Oh, yeah. I mean, I've been through drills before. Not  
18 necessarily with Coast Guard, but with just, you know, training.  
19 Just normal day training with, you know, the senior mate deckhands  
20 that were on board.

21 Q. How many times do you think you've been through that?

22 A. I'd say the year that I worked for them, maybe like more than  
23 a dozen times, I would say.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And you're talking the year prior to  
25 your current employment?

1 MR. DAWSON: Yes.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

3 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

4 Q. Your communication with the other crew members, do you guys  
5 have walkie-talkies or is it -- I know it's a small boat. I'm  
6 just trying to see.

7 A. Right.

8 Q. Did you have walkie-talkies or it's just line of sight, hey,  
9 Tyler, I'm talking to you; yeah, I can hear you?

10 A. Okay. So we do have radios, but on board I did not have my  
11 radio. But it's such a small boat that I can -- it takes me 10  
12 seconds to run to the top and run back down to the bottom, you  
13 know. I know one had his radio.

14 Q. Who had his radio?

15 A. Deckhand Jon.

16 Q. So you did not have your radio?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Was there an expectation that the crew was to talk with  
19 radio? Again, I know it's a small boat and you're a small crew,  
20 but as a matter of protocol, do you all normally use the radios or  
21 are they primary, secondary or just nice to have?

22 A. I don't know.

23 Q. Do you know if the captain had a radio?

24 A. He has a radio.

25 Q. Any of the two trainees?

1 A. Trainees?

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Pre-hire. One was --

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The pre-hires. Pardon me.

4 MR. DAWSON: Oh, pre-hire. No. I believe the radios are  
5 mostly used for the *Breeze*, the bigger boat. Because it's such a  
6 big vessel, that's usually what we use the radios mainly for.

7 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

8 Q. Did you happen to take any pictures, any videos or anything  
9 when you were on board the boat?

10 A. No, my -- no. My phone was out of battery on board.

11 Q. So fuel shutoffs. Do you know where they're located on the  
12 boat? If you don't know, that's okay.

13 A. I don't want to, I don't want to make a guess, but like I  
14 don't want to, you know --

15 Q. And if you don't know, that's okay.

16 A. I don't want to, I don't want to say I don't know because I  
17 know I've been, I know I've been, you know, told before where they  
18 are at. I'm just trying to think. I would say fuel shutoffs are  
19 in the fuel room. And yeah, there's pipes that go up, and then  
20 they actually have like levers, I believe. Don't -- I don't know.

21 Q. So when we go back to your company training with regards to  
22 fire safety or fire extinguishing abilities of the vessel, did you  
23 have any -- do you recall any of the discussions or training that  
24 you received with regards to the CO2 system and how it operates?  
25 I think you've made inference that, if we used it when Jon was



1 inside the engine room, we would have killed him.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Can you tell me a little bit about what you know of that  
4 system, how it's operated, what you were trained on?

5 A. CO2 system, we were just told, you know, in case of this, do  
6 this. But that's all I know.

7 Q. When you say "in case of this, do this," when you do this,  
8 what is --

9 A. It's the -- to activate it here.

10 Q. Was there any discussions about how to -- other than pulling  
11 the handle --

12 A. Right. No.

13 Q. -- was there any other discussions ancillary to what you have  
14 to do on that?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Do you do anything with the maintenance of the engines  
17 at all?

18 A. Just check oil, fill the water, clean the sea strainers and  
19 fill the generators up with water.

20 Q. When is -- is there a prescribed schedule that that is done?

21 A. Yeah, every run. So before every run.

22 Q. Okay. Is that the deckhands' responsibility, the senior  
23 deckhand's responsibility?

24 A. Yeah, it's senior deckhand's responsibility.

25 Q. Okay. I would assume you did that before you got on board?

1 A. Oh, yeah.

2 Q. Anything found in the strainer?

3 A. No. I mean, we -- I mean, you know, seaweed and stuff, you  
4 know, the usual. But you know, we clean them out.

5 Q. Nothing out of line? No --

6 A. No.

7 Q. Didn't have to add oil to any engines?

8 A. Yeah, I don't believe so, no.

9 Q. Okay. No shortage of cooling water or anything to the  
10 generators? You said you checked cooling water for the  
11 generators.

12 A. Yeah, cooling water. We had to add water, yeah. Those  
13 things eat up water like nothing.

14 Q. So with regard to the main engines, other than checking the  
15 sea strainers --

16 A. Yeah, nothing -- everything was --

17 Q. -- you were good to go?

18 A. Yeah, everything was in tiptop shape down there.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You mentioned you do these things  
20 before every run. Is there anything else you do before every run?

21 MR. DAWSON: What's that?

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is there anything else you do before  
23 every run other than those things?

24 MR. DAWSON: I mean, we clean. You know, we set up the bar.  
25 We clean the bathrooms. Trash. Yeah, pretty much, you know, just

1 cleaning and that -- and then, you know, the rope tyings and stuff  
2 like that. You know, from the departing dock, the dock, you know.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I know you're not responsible for any  
4 of the maintenance of the engines, but has there been any  
5 maintenance issues with the engines recently or any other problems  
6 that you're aware of?

7 MR. DAWSON: Not that I'm aware of, no. I mean, when I came  
8 back from my year, that -- I mean, it was like almost looking at a  
9 mirror. Like everything still looked, you know, good, the same as  
10 it was. You know, because I was able to get right back into it,  
11 you know.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Here's a calendar. So the marine  
13 casualty happened on the 14th, the Sunday.

14 MR. DAWSON: Okay.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right there. And you said you started  
16 approximately 8 days later? Or earlier. Sorry.

17 MR. DAWSON: Earlier. Yeah.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So do you know when you started  
19 exactly?

20 MR. DAWSON: You know, I'm terrible with dates. So, I mean,  
21 I'm sure, you know, I'm sure they got it on record or something.  
22 But --

23 FEMALE SPEAKER: What was the question? I'm sorry.

24 MR. DAWSON: The day I started. When I came back, the day I  
25 came back.

1 FEMALE SPEAKER: I can go check his file if you would like me  
2 to.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, that's one of the things you  
4 asked for, so we'll have that.

5 FEMALE SPEAKER: Do you have that on your computer?

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

7 MR. DAWSON: Yeah.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We'll get that -- we have that list of  
9 things we need.

10 FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just, when was the last day --

12 FEMALE SPEAKER: Don't say it out loud.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- from your previous employment? Do  
14 you remember the last day? In other words, when was your last day  
15 of working here (indiscernible)?

16 MR. DAWSON: Oh, man. No, I think it was either like  
17 September or October, one of those months, I believe. You know,  
18 I'm not sure.

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Of 2017?

20 MR. DAWSON: 2016. Yeah.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So a little break then?

22 MR. DAWSON: Yeah, a year. Yeah. About a year.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I got you. I went through a few  
24 questions (indiscernible).

25 MR. DAWSON: I'm terrible with dates.

1 FEMALE SPEAKER: It's okay. It's okay, Tyler.

2 MR. DAWSON: I am terrible with dates.

3 FEMALE SPEAKER: The attorneys will direct you.

4 BY MR. YOUNG:

5 Q. Tyler, this is -- just for the recording, this is Brian Young  
6 with the NTSB. Just following up from some of the other questions  
7 that were asked. What kind of a workday schedule do you work? Do  
8 you report to work at a certain time every day before departure?

9 A. Yes, I believe that day we got there -- well, we had, we had  
10 cancelled the 11:00 because, you know, we didn't have enough  
11 customers to go out. So they wanted me back at the dock, I  
12 believe, at 2:00. And from then, we got the boat ready and  
13 everything like that to take over to the dock around, like, 2:30,  
14 2:45. And that's when, you know, we start doing the whole, you  
15 know, stock, get the -- whatever the other boat needs and ice and  
16 all that kind of stuff. Like for the bar, like the beer and stuff  
17 like that, so --

18 Q. So is there a different dock that you move to, to --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- collect all these items?

21 A. Yes. Yeah, we move to the main dock, the boarding dock.

22 Q. Boarding dock.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. How about the rest of the week prior to that? Was there more  
25 of a scheduled start time for yourself every day?

1 A. Yeah. Mornings, I believe, you show up at -- oh, man -- like  
2 9, 10:00. And from that point, you know -- that's for the casino  
3 boat itself. Because we take the casino boat out in the morning,  
4 and then from then we have two taxi runs throughout the day. So  
5 one at 3:30 and then one at 7.

6 Q. And on a normal day, do you typically work both those runs?

7 A. If I'm on -- it depends if I'm on the casino boat or if I'm  
8 on the shuttle. I swap, I swap between the two. So it really  
9 depends.

10 Q. For the most part in your most recent employment were you on  
11 the shuttle or the casino boat?

12 A. I was mostly on the casino boat.

13 Q. Okay. And prior to working here or during your time working  
14 here, whether it was the previous employment or this one, have you  
15 ever gone to any sort of firefighting training outside of the  
16 company?

17 A. No, I haven't.

18 Q. Like a classroom or --

19 A. No. No, I have not.

20 Q. Was there any reason why you left after the -- for the 1-year  
21 break, was there some reason for that departure?

22 A. Oh, yeah. I just had -- I mean, my -- one of my good friends  
23 had his own company. He hired me on for, you know, pretty good  
24 pay. And that was one of the biggest factors of leaving.

25 Q. When we were talking about the two times during the event of

1 opening the hatch, looking in and seeing the smoke and then a  
2 little bit heavier the next time, is there any way you might have  
3 been able to notice one side or the other that was heavier? Was  
4 it possibly port side heavier than starboard?

5 A. I believe it might have been -- if it was anything, it would  
6 be port side. I remember when I would look down, I was on  
7 starboard side looking into port. And from looking down there, I  
8 noticed it was, I believe, more coming from port side.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. That's where I was -- that was where my direction was focused  
11 on mostly, was port side.

12 Q. Okay. And you obviously have driven a car before, and  
13 there's a very distinct smell when antifreeze overheats. I  
14 believe these are saltwater coolants so they may have a different  
15 smell, but have you ever experienced any of these engines  
16 overheating that you would have noticed a certain type of smell or  
17 steam?

18 A. Absolutely not, no.

19 Q. No. So you've never seen these engines overheat?

20 A. No.

21 Q. And I know they asked before about the smell. Just coming  
22 wafting up from that hatch opened, there's nothing that maybe  
23 would -- you know how a campfire smells? You smell any kind of a  
24 wood-burning smell? Or electrical has a distinct plasticky smell.

25 A. It wasn't plasticky. It was more like a more musky -- kind

1 of like a mix between like wood and rubber, I would say. I mean,  
2 I don't know what the smell of like diesel fuel smells at burning.  
3 I don't know what that would smell like, or anything like that.  
4 The only thing I know is it definitely smelled, you know, kind of  
5 campfire-ish. Yeah.

6 Q. And then they had previously asked if you heard any alarms.  
7 Before the event, even when you had worked there a year before,  
8 during your drills or training, did you ever hear what the fire  
9 alarm would have sounded like if there had been an event? Did you  
10 ever train and hear, this is a test of the fire alarm system?

11 A. Not on the shuttle, but on the *Breeze*. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay. So not on the shuttle. How about an engine alarm? If  
13 there was a high-temperature alarm or something going on with the  
14 engine, there may be an alarm on the bridge. Do you know what  
15 that might have sounded like?

16 A. Yeah, that's a beeping -- it's like a -- when you start the  
17 engines up, too, it's kind of like a similar sound. Like a ber,  
18 ber, ber. You know what I mean? Or beep, or however -- whatever  
19 pitch it is. But yeah.

20 Q. Do you recall hearing that at all on the bridge, or -- I'm  
21 sure there was a lot of alarms and stuff going on.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Yeah. Again talking about the event, opening the hatch,  
24 closing it, coming back down the second time. At what point did  
25 the port door get opened to help ventilate some of the smoke?



1 A. The second time.

2 Q. The second time. And did it remain open throughout the rest  
3 of the time?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. Do you think that helped clear the smoke out of the  
6 passenger compartment?

7 A. For a little bit. I would say, like, maybe like a minute.  
8 And then that's when it started getting worse, smoke started  
9 getting worse. Yeah.

10 Q. And after the second time when you and Jon were told to leave  
11 and get out of there, do you think he may or may not have closed  
12 that hatch?

13 A. I don't know.

14 Q. Okay. And to close the hatch, does it just set right down or  
15 does it lock, by any chance?

16 A. No, it just sits flush with the ground.

17 Q. And is there a hinge on it that would open up or --

18 A. No, it's free. It's free -- it's a, just a free -- it's  
19 free. There's no hinge or nothing keeping it -- yeah. It stays  
20 flush with the ground.

21 Q. And then there may be two recessed handles or one recessed  
22 handle that you could lift up?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. And can one person lift it?

25 A. Oh, yeah. It's not, it's not that heavy. It's not a heavy

1 door at all.

2 Q. And how many hatches are there into the engine room?

3 A. There is -- I want to say there's two to the engine room, one  
4 to the fuel room, and one to like the water -- like the water  
5 tanks and stuff like that. Yeah.

6 Q. So to access the engines, then --

7 A. Two.

8 Q. There are two.

9 A. Yes. Actually, for -- the closest one to the engines is the  
10 middle one. Closest one to the generators is the one in the back.

11 Q. Are they the same size?

12 A. Same size.

13 Q. How many of the generators were running; do you know?

14 A. Both generators.

15 Q. Is that standard?

16 A. That's standard, yes.

17 Q. Have you ever been involved with fueling the vessel, taking  
18 on fuel?

19 A. No. No.

20 Q. Do you know how much fuel was aboard at the time?

21 A. No.

22 Q. Do you know if they take on fuel every day, every week or --

23 A. At night they take count of how much fuel is on the boat, and  
24 if it is needed, they have a fuel note where they give to the  
25 dockmaster, and the dockmaster gives it to engineer, whoever does

1 the fueling. But they check it every night, and so if they need  
2 fuel for the morning, for the next morning run, they get fuel.  
3 I'm guessing it's probably like very regular that they get -- you  
4 know, they refuel up.

5 Q. Okay. I know you said your battery was dead on the day of  
6 the incident, but do you have any -- from the first week you were  
7 there, any pictures on your phone of the vessel throughout your  
8 first week of employment?

9 A. No. So we usually don't -- we usually prohibit the use of  
10 phones on the boats on work hours, so --

11 Q. And do you know if there were any ventilation fans in or out  
12 of the engine room, supply or exhaust, that are typically running  
13 when you're at sea?

14 A. Oh. No. I don't know.

15 Q. During this 8-day hitch, if you will, have you ever seen any  
16 service reps come out to do any work on the boat?

17 A. I don't think so. Like service reps as in like an engineer  
18 or --

19 Q. Engineer or somebody to come out and fix something that --

20 A. No. I don't think so, no. I don't know. I don't recall --  
21 I mean, I'm only there for work hours. And when I'm working,  
22 there's -- it's just deckhands and the captain, so --

23 Q. Was this the same captain you worked with during this hitch  
24 as you did a year ago?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. And is he the only captain for this boat?

2 A. For shuttle runs, I believe he is -- in the past, when -- no.  
3 When we -- when I worked for them a year ago, he was the only  
4 captain they had for shuttle, I believe. But this past, you know,  
5 week that I've been working there, I've had -- he's been there  
6 majority of the time, but then occasionally we had another captain  
7 on board as well.

8 Q. On the shuttle?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. When you and Jon were investigating the incident, did you  
11 hear any changes in pitch in the engine? Sometimes if the engine  
12 goes under a heavy load, you'll hear the turbocharges whine, ramp  
13 up, ramp down. Any change in pitch of the engines?

14 A. No. And you got to think, there's two engines and two  
15 generators down there. It's very hard --

16 Q. And everything's running -- all four were running?

17 A. Yeah. Yeah, as soon as you open up those hatches, it's like  
18 you just opened up a sound barrier. You know what I mean?

19 Q. Um-hum. And just -- we have to ask. Do you typically sleep  
20 for a certain amount of time each night? Are you typically well-  
21 rested before a run?

22 A. Oh, yeah, absolutely. Oh, yeah.

23 Q. What time do you go to bed usually at night?

24 A. When I -- soon as I get off, I'm usually in bed within an  
25 hour as soon as I get home. And then I wake up, you know -- I

1 usually get about like 7, 8 hours of sleep; 6, 7, 8, usually  
2 around that, average.

3 Q. And what time do you typically get off at nights?

4 A. I usually get off around -- well, this past week I've been  
5 getting off pretty early. So like, I'd be mostly on shuttles, so  
6 I get home around like 9:30. Well, we get to the dock at like  
7 9:30, so I get home around, maybe like around like 10, 10:30. And  
8 then by that time I'm already, you know, relaxing and getting some  
9 rest after that.

10 Q. And are you on any prescription medications?

11 A. Absolutely not. No.

12 Q. And what makes you the mate or the acting senior mate? How  
13 do you become that position?

14 A. Okay. So we had -- obviously we had three deckhands on  
15 board. Jon is senior mate, but he was jumping off to the casino  
16 boat. So with me -- with my experience with the bow, running the  
17 front of the boat, the more like complex ropes and tyings and  
18 stuff like that, that determines if you're, you know -- I guess  
19 you would say like above somebody else, the other deckhands.

20 So I was running -- I was staying on the shuttle that day. I  
21 was supposed to do the shuttle through the rest of the night. Jon  
22 was supposed to switch off to the *Breeze*, and the other deckhand,  
23 Shawn, was tending bar. So that would require me to be the front  
24 of the -- front house, or front of the boat. So --

25 Q. And is there any documentation or pamphlet that you as an

1 employee or a mate or a deckhand need to read prior to employment?

2 A. Absolutely. We have -- believe it or not, I believe we have  
3 two separate handbooks for -- one for boat and one for -- like, I  
4 believe it's like a manual of some sort. I have both of those,  
5 yeah.

6 Q. And what is it? Some sort of a familiarization booklet or --

7 A. Yeah, it goes through every -- yeah, it goes through  
8 everything, like emergencies to the layout of the boat to what our  
9 duties are, what they expect, you know, stuff like that.

10 Q. And if you feel that you had some sort of a safety concern,  
11 who would you bring it to?

12 A. If I had a safety concern, I'd either bring it to the dock,  
13 whoever's dockmaster, to relay the message to whoever's in charge  
14 of that department, whether it be, you know, Stacy, Beth or  
15 whoever. That's who -- I would take it to a dockmaster.

16 Q. Okay. And what -- how would you describe your relationship  
17 with the captain? Do you guys get along? Are you --

18 A. Oh, yeah. Absolutely.

19 Q. -- able to communicate freely?

20 A. Oh, yeah. Oh, yes.

21 MR. YOUNG: That's all I had for my questions. Thank you  
22 very much.

23 MR. DAWSON: No problem.

24 MR. YOUNG: Very good recount of the event.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In your week or your 8 days, how many

1 trips had you made?

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: The next one, they've only got about 10  
3 minutes with him before he's got to leave (indiscernible).

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. (Indiscernible).

5 FEMALE SPEAKER: Okay.

6 MR. DAWSON: I mean, I don't have an exact number, but it was  
7 pretty many trips at that point. Because it was for shuttles, two  
8 runs a day, and for the *Breeze*, you're on there all day. So you  
9 take it out in the morning and bring it back at night, so that's  
10 two. So I'd say at least two trips a day. Well, the experience  
11 of having two trips a day for 8 days. I mean, I think I've only  
12 had about 2 days off, I think, 2 days that -- for those 8 days, I  
13 don't think I was working. But for the other 6 days, I was  
14 working. So about two trips a day for 6 days.

15 MR. YOUNG: And how long is a trip out and back, about?

16 MR. DAWSON: For the casino boat, takes about an hour and a  
17 half. For the shuttle boat, it takes about half an hour to 45  
18 minutes.

19 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

20 Q. And then to go back to where the vessel turned around --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- you turned around. You said that there was a reduction in  
23 rpms. Did the vessel continue at an idle speed --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- or at a slow speed?

1 A. Idle. It was definitely idle speed back to the -- well, we  
2 were heading to the dock at that point. And then when we realized  
3 it got -- it was worse, that's when he put it up to shore.

4 Q. Did he -- so did he put it up to shore at idle or did he put  
5 it up to shore at a speed greater than idle?

6 A. It was at idle. I mean, I think he was trying to push the  
7 engine like as much as he could without, you know, trying to do  
8 like any bad harm or -- as much as that he possibly could think or  
9 possibly could do without, you know, doing anything like  
10 devastating. I'm pretty sure that's what he did.

11 So either idle or maybe just, maybe slightly more idle. I  
12 don't know. I mean, at this point I don't know like how fast idle  
13 is or like at that -- like looking at water or looking at my  
14 surroundings, I couldn't tell you if we were at idle or if we were  
15 at slow, you know.

16 Q. Could you hear it, though? I mean, especially if you open  
17 the hatch --

18 A. Oh, yeah. If he was going more than idle, then those engines  
19 would be roaring. But I didn't hear, I didn't hear anything like  
20 that, so I'd say we were at idle.

21 Q. Okay. Do you recall what make, what type of engines were on  
22 board?

23 A. The only thing I know is I believe they had, they have -- I  
24 mean, I don't even think it pertains to the engines. I would say  
25 that they have -- I believe they had Caterpillar, like a light --



1 oh, what is it called? What is it called? Like an identification  
2 type thing. Like if the engines are on, the light's on. I mean,  
3 like that's the only thing that I can -- that I know like what had  
4 like a stamp on it. I don't -- I didn't pay too much detail to  
5 what kind of brand engine they had or what kind of make engine  
6 they had.

7 Q. I see. And you also said that there was another captain that  
8 you had worked with during these 8 days? Who was that?

9 A. That'd be Captain Willy.

10 Q. Captain Willy?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay.

13 BY MR. YOUNG:

14 Q. Can I just finish up? Two more questions. I'm sorry. Over  
15 the week, every day when you went down to the engine room to check  
16 the engines, do you find that you had to add any oil to the main  
17 engines?

18 A. On the shuttle?

19 Q. Yes, on the shuttle.

20 A. As far as I know, we checked the dipsticks and we were, you  
21 know, we were pretty much good.

22 Q. So you didn't have to add any oil?

23 A. I don't believe so, no.

24 Q. How about -- you said, too, that the engines eat up water.  
25 Was it the generators or the engines?

1 A. The engines. We always have to fill them up every time we  
2 check the engines. So, you know, sometimes they're full;  
3 sometimes they're not, you know. Sometimes they take two pitchers  
4 of water; sometimes they only take half a pitcher of water. You  
5 know, it all depends.

6 Q. And that's into the cylindrical box for adding at the top of  
7 the cap?

8 A. Yeah. So you have the, so you have the engine. You got your  
9 -- you got where you fill up oil here. You got your dipstick to  
10 check oil here. That's on the side. Then you got your, you got  
11 your cap up top here, closest to the bow. You know, you open that  
12 up, fill it up with water. And then, you know, once it's full,  
13 you close it back up and you're good to go.

14 Q And do you ever check the condition of the level in the  
15 bilges? Do you ever have to pump bilges?

16 A. Oh, absolutely. They've never gotten, like, to the point  
17 where they're like extremely bad. But, I mean, like you -- I  
18 mean, it's a wooden boat, so of course you're going to expect, you  
19 know, a little bit of water and stuff like that. But of course,  
20 you know, you always want to make sure, you know, it's dry. It's  
21 a wood boat, so if there's any water in there, it needs to come  
22 out. I mean, we have Bucket Heads for that kind of situation down  
23 there. So that's regularly, that's regularly --

24 Q. What's a Bucket Head? Sorry.

25 A. Oh, a Bucket Head is a -- it's like a Shop-Vac, but instead

1 of an actual Shop-Vac unit, it's a little Shop-Vac lid that just  
2 goes onto like a regular, you know, like 8-gallon bucket or 20-  
3 gallon bucket or whatever. And you suck the water out, it fills  
4 up, dump it out.

5 Q. And is there ever any fuel in the bilge? Do you ever smell  
6 or see any fuel floating around or dripping off the engines?

7 A. No. Usually no, like, no fuel, no oil, nothing like that. I  
8 mean, there are instances where like you might see like on the  
9 engines there might be like sometimes -- I believe it was -- was  
10 it coolant? I don't know what it is. Might have just been water  
11 or something. I don't know.

12 Oh, I think it's -- oh, what is it there? There's something  
13 in there that they check quite -- you know, they check often. I  
14 think it might be like power steering or something like that. But  
15 that's not in the engine room. But there's also bilges down there  
16 that you have to suck up as well, like down where the CO2 is,  
17 where we keep the like boxes of soda and stuff like that. But  
18 yeah, there's no -- usually no fuel or anything like that, no.  
19 It's usually just water down in the bilges. Yeah. If there is  
20 anything else, you know, I don't know. Yeah, just water.

21 Q. Okay. And when you add water to the cooling system of the  
22 generator, you use freshwater, right?

23 A. Yeah, freshwater. Clean water. Yes.

24 Q. Just straight water, no additives or anything?

25 A. No, no additives, no nothing. No.

1 Q. Great. Thanks.

2 A. No problem.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. All set.

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thanks for your time.

5 MR. DAWSON: Yeah, no problem.

6 FEMALE SPEAKER: All right. Can I say anything? I don't  
7 mean -- it's irrelevant to what he says.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, no.

9 FEMALE SPEAKER: But the things that they check, is on a  
10 checklist, is the power steering. Just checks the line every day,  
11 and they check it off.

12 MR. DAWSON: Yeah.

13 FEMALE SPEAKER: Just to make sure, every day it's down a  
14 checklist. You never know if anything ever was to happen, but if  
15 nothing's ever happened.

16 MR. DAWSON: Right. Yeah.

17 FEMALE SPEAKER: So that's what he was talking about.

18 MR. DAWSON: Yeah, we just check it, you know. Make sure  
19 it's, you know, level.

20 FEMALE SPEAKER: Right. So --

21 MR. DAWSON: Nothing, you know, crazy. And that's even --  
22 it's not even connected to the -- it's separate from the engine  
23 room, so --

24 FEMALE SPEAKER: And that boat was immaculate. The floors  
25 were polished, everything --

1 MR. DAWSON: Oh, yeah.

2 FEMALE SPEAKER: -- was immaculate. The engines --

3 MR. DAWSON: Beautiful boat.

4 FEMALE SPEAKER: Everything.

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. All right.

7 MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Thank you, Tyler.

8 MR. DAWSON: No problem.

9 (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 Tyler Dawson

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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Eileen  
Transcriber