UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Interview of: TIA COLEMAN Passenger

Cox Medical Center Branson, Missouri

Friday, July 20, 2018

APPEARANCES:

SGT. Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP)

YELENA BRACKNEY (Sister of Tia Coleman)

ALISSA THOMAS (Niece of Tia Coleman)

BARBARA THOMAS (Mother of Tia Coleman)

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1		INTERVIEW		
2		(5:57 p.m.)		
3		SGT This is Sergeant with the		
4	Miss	ouri State Highway Patrol. It is 1757 hours on Friday,		
5	July	20, 2018.		
6		I am here with		
7		INTERVIEW OF TIA LINDSAY COLEMAN		
8		BY SGT		
9	Q.	Ma'am, could you tell me your name, please?		
10	Α.	Tia Lindsay Coleman.		
11	Q.	Okay. That's spelled T-i-a?		
12	Α.	Uh-huh.		
13	Q.	Q. Middle initial L, Lincoln?		
14	Α.	Uh-huh.		
15	Q.	Last name spelling C-o-l		
16	Α.	e		
17	Q.	e-m-a-n, correct?		
18	Α.	Um-hum.		
19	Q.	And what's your birthday, Tia?		
20	Α.			
21	Q.	Okay. And what's your address?		
22	Α.			
23	Q.	Is that ?		
24	Α.	Uh-huh.		
25	Q.	Okay. Okay,		

1	A
2	Q. Okay.
3	A.
4	Q. Okay. What I need from you, if you would, please, and I know
5	it's difficult, but if you could tell me what happened yesterday?
6	A. Want me to start from the very beginning?
7	Q. Yes, absolutely.
8	A. We got to the boat, the boats, the one on the strip.
9	Q. Okay.
10	A. And we got there. We're supposed to be there by 6. We got
11	there like 20 minutes till. Get in line, check in. They're like,
12	the party of 11, come and take your picture. So we go up to take
13	our picture. We get up there to take our picture. They look at
14	our tickets and say, these are the wrong tickets for the wrong
15	one. I didn't realize it was more than one ducks.
16	Q. Okay.
17	A. He said, no problem. Just go switch them with the lady and
18	get the 6:30 ticket. Switched them out. We got the 6:30 ticket.
19	So we get on the 6:30 boat.
20	Q. Okay.
21	A. As we're getting on, they're like, it's a storm coming, so
22	make sure you take them to the water first to beat the storm.
23	Said, okay. So the driver, which the driver's name was Bob. I
24	want to say the captain was Captain John, but I can't remember. I
25	know the driver's name was Bob. Bob drives us through. I don't

know if it was directly to the water or not, but he drove us.
 Because I don't know how long it takes to get to the water.

So when we get to the water, he switches off with Captain John. I think that was his name. I can't remember. When we get to the water he's, like, okay, we're getting on this water. There are emergency exits. Do I need to show you where they are? He's was like, all right, the windows, the emergency exit windows. Everybody was like, okay.

9 So we get in, and he's like, oh, it's -- we're going to get 10 rained on. He was like, I see the storm up ahead; we're going to 11 get rained on. He was like -- and everybody was like, what? And 12 he was like, we're just going to pull the windows down. So they 13 pulled the curtain down because they were open. They pulled the 14 curtain down. And he said -- as we were going, he let the kids 15 drive the boat. That was something that I'm pretty sure they do 16 all the time because it was -- he let all of them do it.

17 Q. Okay.

18 And it's only for like a minute or two, and they get their Α. 19 picture taken. They tell them what they want to be. So my 20 got to go up there, and then my little son, qot to 21 go up and drive the boat. There was also two kids from New Mexico 22 that got to drive. I think it was and [sic]. Ιt 23 was something like that; it was cute. 24 Ο. Okay.

25 A. So we are out, and so when

gets out from driving, he

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I	
1	gets back on the boat, the captain, and he's like, you want to see
2	some action, here's some action. He was like, oh, yeah, and there
3	are the life vests. He showed us where they were. He said, but
4	you don't need them and you're not going to need to put them on,
5	so don't worry about them, but that's where they are.
6	Then he takes off, we riding and it starts getting kind of
7	bumpy, but I don't know, it didn't seem bumpier than other boats
8	I've been in, you know.
9	Q. Sure.
10	A. So but then some water splashes in, and we're like, woo, you
11	know, because it's he's like, yeah, this is you wanted to
12	see adventure; here's an adventure. He was like, the only thing
13	that what did he say? Let me get this right. We'll only leave
14	if it starts lightning or something like that, something about the
15	lightning. I'm sorry. I can't fully recall what he said about
16	the lightning.
17	Q. Okay.
18	A. So he gets there, and we're still riding along, and the other
19	boat, the big river boat that they have out there, I don't know if
20	it's a river boat or not, but it's huge. It's got the spins on
21	it.
22	Q. Yep.
23	A. It starts going. We're going. And we're like this big
24	compared to that boat. And then I see him turning. When he
25	starts turning the boat, this swell of water comes in. It comes

in like where everybody -- we're like, whoa. I have to pick the diaper bag up off, picked the diaper bag up. And I was, like, you know -- and he didn't say anything still. At this point, to me, it was getting a little scary. But we were still all okay because he never told us to grab the life jackets. And since he told us in the beginning, he said make sure -- they said this at the very beginning -- stay seated at all times. Everybody stayed seated.

So then this big, big swell of water comes into the boat, and 8 9 the last thing I hear was my sister-in-law saying, grab the baby. 10 And when that happened, the boat -- water came in so high that I 11 stood up, and I had my son when I stood up, but then I started floating and I lost him. My head hit the top of the ceiling of 12 13 the boat, and I don't know what happened, somebody pushed me 14 through or if the boat turned and I was able to get out a window, 15 but I was able to get out of the boat, but I was falling. And I 16 was going down so far, because at the beginning of the trip they 17 said the lake water stays at like 85 or something. It's warm. 18 Well, it was cold. It was really cold.

So I was like I know -- I'm assessing this while I'm drowning. I'm like, I know I'm down far, so just keep swimming up, you know, that's what I kept telling myself. And as I'm swimming up, it's like I'm getting pulled back down. That's how it feels, as I'm going I'm getting pulled back down, pulled back down. I'm like -- and then finally I just said, Lord, I need to -- I said, I need to make this for my babies. Please let me get

out of here so I can save my -- please let me help save my babies,
 please.

3	And at that time another swell of water pulled me back down,
4	and I just gave up. I just stopped trying. I just laid in the
5	water. And then I could feel my body going up, floating up, and
6	the water start turning warm. So I my head, I'm getting closer
7	to the top because it's warm. So when I get up to the top, I'm
8	like I can feel it, so I'm I got my hands going, I'mI
9	don't know what I did, but I got my hands going up swishing, and
10	then I finally get my head above the water. A big old wave smacks
11	me down. I felt like I was in it for like a hour. I don't think
12	I was in there that long. I was probably in there like 10
13	minutes. But then I would sink back down, swallow more water,
14	spit it out, and then this wave would hit me.
15	And I was trying my best. So I finally got to the river
16	boat, and when I got over there, they was throwing life jackets to
17	people to catch, but they didn't throw one to me. They couldn't.
18	From where I was, I don't even know if they could get it to me.
19	But they came down and was able to pull me, pull me up. They
20	pulled me up, and it was so hard, it was so hard for me, I was
21	just my legs were just like noodles.
22	Q. Yeah.
23	A And I I'm a very independent person when it comes to stuff

A. And I -- I'm a very independent person when it comes to stuff like that. So I'm like, just please give me a chance, I got to catch -- because at this time I got all this water -- catch my

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9

breath. And I want to say I was out for a minute when they pulled
 me up because things went fuzzy. So I blacked in and blacked out.

3 As I get up, I look over, and I see this dead lady. She's 4 dead, like, look like she was drowned. Her eyes were -- it was a bit, for me, a bit much, but I -- in my mind I had to keep going 5 6 to look for my babies, look for my people. So I got to the bench. 7 I didn't see anybody. I was -- they had me walk. They made me walk from there all the way up the boardwalk to the bench, and I 8 9 was so just tired. My legs were hurting so much. I don't know 10 how to explain it. I was so lethargic.

11 And I sat down, and I was in and out, and they kept checking 12 my vitals, asking my age, asked me about my people that was with 13 Then my nephew comes running, my nephew comes me. 14 running up to me. He's like, Aunt Tia, Aunt Tia, I tried to save 15 Reece. He says, I couldn't save him. He said I was too weak; I 16 couldn't save him. He said, I was just holding onto the flaps on 17 the boat. He was like, and I held on for so long. He said, and I 18 saw him in the water floating, but he's turned down. He was like 19 floating out, and I couldn't get him.

And I don't know if I even cried. I was so happy to see Donovan that I was hoping that my other kids was okay, and my husband was okay, and my mother, that everybody else was okay, and I was hoping that he maybe made that up. He's not that kind of kid, so -- I mean, I was just hoping he -- you know, when he saw him floating that they got him afterwards. And I had all this

1	hope	in	my	mind.

2 Q. Yeah.

3	A. And the paramedics came and brought me to the hospital. And		
4	today I found out nobody made it except me and Now he		
5	doesn't have a mom or a brother. I don't have a husband or any		
6	children, any children. I've been pregnant four times. I had a		
7	miscarriage. And those three that I went through everything with,		
8	that I was so protective of are gone. That's all I got.		
9	Q. Tia, I'm sorry. I'd like to clarify a couple things. Okay?		
10	A. Okay.		
11	Q. You said there were two people in the boat. There was a		
12	driver and a captain.		
13	A. Um-hum.		
14	Q. Okay. Once you got into the water, you said that this		
15	Captain John or whomever, can you kind of describe him to me?		
16	What did he look like?		
17	A. He was a older white man. He had his captain's hat on.		
18	Q. Okay.		
19	A. He had, I want to say, blondish-gray hair.		
20	Q. Okay.		
21	A. Sorry. I can't remember his name.		
22	Q. That's fine. That's fine.		
23	A. He basically, while Bob Bob was the driver. I remember		
24	Bob because he made a joke about Bob. And while Bob was driving,		
25	Mike, Captain Mike, Captain John I feel terrible, I can't		

- 1 remember that name.
- 2 Q. That's okay.
- 3 A. He was doing all the talking.
- 4 Q. Okay.

5 A. This is here. We're going to pass here. We're doing this.6 We're going up this way to get to the lake, to get to the water.

- 7 Q. Where were you guys seated in the boat?
- 8 A. In the front.
- 9 Q. You were in the front.
- 10 A. Um-hum.
- 11 Q. Right behind, right behind the captain and the driver?
- 12 A. Um-hum.
- 13 Q. Okay. How were they seated in the boat? When you got into 14 the water, where were they seated in that boat?
- 15 A. We got in the water. The captain was right in front of me.16 I was in the very first seat. When you get on the boat, I was in
- 17 the very first seat on the right. Captain was seated right there.
 18 Bob was in the driver's seat.
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. So me -- when I got in the boat it was me,
- 21 Q. Okay.
- 22 A. Because she was sleep.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24A. And thenmy oldest son, is autistic. So as he was25jumping up and down, jumping up and down, I tried to calm him

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1	down. I asked my husband right before we went in the water, I				
2	said because we stopped; we go through like a little forest				
3	before we get in the water. I said, hey, I'm going to switch me				
4	seats now, I said, and that way you can take care of and I				
5	will have and He was like, well, just give to me,				
6	and I said, okay. And then behind him was and which				
7	is his little brother.				
8	Q. Okay.				
9	A. Behind me was my mother-in-law and my sister-in-law.				
10	Q. Okay.				
11	A. Behind and was my father-in-law and my uncle-in-				
12	law.				
13	Q. Okay. So if you're when you're sitting facing forward,				
14	the person directly in front of you was the captain?				
15	A. Um-hum.				
16	Q. The older white gentleman?				
17	A. Um-hum.				
18	Q. And Bob was to the left?				
19	A. Um-hum.				
20	Q. Is that correct?				
21	A. Right. Bob was to the left in the driving chair.				
22	Q. Okay. In the driver's chair.				
23	A. That was on the street. When we				
24	Q. On the street.				
25	A got in the boat				

1				
1	Q. Now, what happened when you got in the boat, when you got in			
2	the water?			
3	A. The water, Bob was right behind the captain.			
4	Q. Okay. And the captain moved from right in front of you, he			
5	moved into the driver's seat then?			
6	A. Yeah.			
7	Q. Okay. And then Bob was sitting behind the captain? Was he			
8	seated or standing or			
9	A. He was sitting there.			
10	Q. Okay. And which way was he facing? Was he facing you guys,			
11	talking to you, or was he			
12	A. He was facing us kind of like, yeah, kind of			
13	Q. Okay.			
14	A how the captain was. And then he stopped talking after a			
15	while, but he didn't grab a life jacket either, which nobody,			
16	nobody we were really laughing up until like that last wave,			
17	because how the water was it was coming in, it was so hot. I			
18	said, oh, it feels so good, all this water. I was, like, yes,			
19	ooh, we're getting wet, we're getting splashed. And my baby loves			
20	it. With his sensory he was like loving that water. And then he			
21	got a big splash, and he was like, ah. I was like, yeah. So			
22	Q. Who said to you before you left, who said to you something			
23	about beating the storm? You said that somebody had said that			
24	we're going to beat the storm or there's a storm coming and			
25	A. I heard it from a couple of people. It was a old white man			

- 1 on the dock.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. Sorry again, I don't know his name. And the captain said it.4 Q. Okay. The captain said it?
- 5 A. Um-hum. And Bob said it too.
- 6 Q. Okay. How did they communicate with you guys? Could you 7 hear? Could you hear the captain talking to you while you guys 8 are driving around?
- 9 A. Uh-huh.
- 10 Q. Okay.
- 11 A. He had a little microphone.
- 12 Q. Like a -- was it like a headset or something or what?
 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. And what, it was like a speaker system or something on the 15 boat?
- 16 A. Um-hum.
- 17 Q. Okay. Was that operating the whole time?
- 18 A. I believe so.
- 19 Q. Okay. And did Bob have the same kind of thing? Did he have 20 a microphone too?
- 20 a microphone too?
- 21 A. I don't know. I want to say yes, but I don't know.
- Q. Okay. Did anybody -- was anybody talking whenever the waves
 started coming in? Was anybody --
- A. Somebody was. That I -- you're right. Somebody was. They
 said put your electronics up.

	1	
1	Q.	They told you guys, the captain did? Or who told you that?
2	Α.	It was the captain or either Bob.
3	Q.	They told you to put your electronics
4	Α.	I'm pretty sure it was the captain because he was out
5	stee	ring the boat, and he was the one that had the kids come up.
6	So I	think he had the headset the whole time.
7	Q.	Okay.
8	A.	Bob was just talking to us. When I say us, just me and my
9	husba	and. My husband more than anything because he was right there
10	in f	cont of him.
11	Q.	Do you remember anything that he was saying?
12	A.	Uh-uh. It didn't seem it was like small talk. It didn't
13	seem	
14	Q.	Okay. What about the windows on the boat? Do you remember
15	anytł	ning about do you remember which windows you went out or
16	anytł	ning like that? Do you have any idea?
17	Α.	I don't even know how I got out.
18	Q.	Anybody else, did you see anybody else get out?
19	Α.	Once that big swell of water hit, I didn't see anything.
20	Q.	Okay.
21	Α.	I didn't even see my son that was next to me.
22	Q.	Okay. Okay. is your nephew, you say?
23	Α.	Um-hum.
24	Q.	Have you talked to him at all? Have you guys talked to him?
25	Α.	Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. Does he have a parent or a guardian here at all? 2 No. Us. Α. 3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He has us. 4 SGT Okay. I would like to speak with him. He's 5 14, right? 6 MS. COLEMAN: He's 13. 7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 13. Would it be okay if I talked to him and ask 8 SGT 9 him to tell me what happened? Does -- do you -- does he remember? 10 Have you talked to him already? 11 MS. COLEMAN: Yeah. I talked to him. 12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He shows a lot -- is it okay to talk? 13 SGT Yeah, yeah, you're fine. 14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He shows a lot of remorse in not being 15 able to save the other grandchildren. Since he was the eldest, he 16 feels that he should have been able --17 SGT Right. 18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- to save the other grandchildren. 19 SGT Right. 20 BY SGT 21 Ο. You mentioned the boat turning. 22 Um-hum. Α. 23 When you went in, when you went into the water, was that big Ο. paddle boat, that big boat you're talking about when you first 24 25 went in the water, was it on your left or was it on your right?

1 A. It was on my right.

2	Q. It was on your right. And then once you started, did you		
3	when you say you turned, do you mean you turned		
4	A. We turned close in front of that paddle boat.		
5	Q. Okay. Is that when the big wave came in?		
6	A. So I feel like, to me, when I thought about that at the		
7	time I didn't know. I was like, why is he turning this close to		
8	this paddle boat? We're going to get smacked. And, I mean, then		
9	we went under. So I'm thinking he probably knew the storm was not		
10	something he could handle. Because he did tell us that the boat		
11	could take on 20-foot swells. He was like this boat is made		
12	you know, he told us all about the boat and, the duck, how it was		
13	made for the military and it was made to take on 20-foot, up to		
14	20-foot swells of waves, which is great. But I'm a civilian, I		
15	don't know anything about		
16	Q. Sure.		
17	A I don't know what a 20-foot swell is.		
18	Q. When you first turned, that's the when you turned, when		
19	you first made that right turn, was that when the first wave kind		
20	of started coming in or is that I want to make sure I've got		
21	that right.		
22	A. I feel like that was probably the last wave. I'm sorry. I'm		
23	not really clear on that.		
24	Q. Okay.		
25	A. Because we were straight and then we started veering. We		

1	didn'	t	just	turn.
---	-------	---	------	-------

2 Q. Okay.

1

3 A. We were veering. And then it -- so I want to say the first
4 wave came when we started veering.

5 Q. Okay.

A. And it was another duck boat up there that was a little bit ahead of us, and I think they got to shore right before. I think he was probably trying to follow suit, and when that happened. Q. Okay. Did he make any -- could you hear him? Could you hear the captain or Bob say anything once the, once it started getting rougher?

- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. Were they trying to say anything to you guys?

14 A. I heard the captain say something, but I don't know what he

15 said. I don't know what he said. He started, get the -- and then

- 16 the boat went under.
- 17 Q. So it was pretty quick, is that --
- 18 A. It was, yeah.
- 19 Q. All right.
- 20 A. Did the captain make it?
- 21 Q. Um-hum. He's in the hospital.
- 22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did Bob make it?

23 MS. COLEMAN: Nope. They showed us a picture of Bob and his 24 wife.

25 BY SGT

Do you remember anything else being said during or before by 1 Ο. 2 either the captain or Bob, either one, that you haven't discussed 3 with me so far? 4 Α. There's nothing else I remember. 5 Okay. Ο. I heard a lot, but I'm pretty sure I 6 I was in the front. Α. 7 didn't hear everything. Okay. All right. Well, is there anything else that 8 Sure. Ο. 9 we haven't discussed that's on your mind that you'd like to let me 10 know about? 11 I just don't understand at what point why we weren't ever Α. 12 told to grab our jackets, at least for the babies. 13 When he did, when he did describe the life jackets, when he Ο. 14 was talking about the life jackets and using the life jackets, at 15 what point was that in the trip? 16 We were in the water. Α. 17 How long had you been in the water? Ο. 18 We hadn't been in very long. Α. 19 Ο. Okay. Because he was, like, you're not going to need them. 20 Α. They're 21 here for this size, here for this size, and back in the back for 22 the infants. You can see them stacked up. They were right --23 literally I could have reached up and grabbed one, and put them on 24 me and my son right then and there. 25 Was he seated in the driver's seat when he was telling Q. Okay.

1	you this or was he standing up telling you, or how was that? Do
2	you remember how he was where he was at on the boat when that
3	happened?
4	A. No.
5	Q. Okay.
6	A. He might have been having one of the kids drive.
7	Q. Okay. And when the kids drive he's standing up or he's off
8	to the right?
9	A. He's there close enough to them.
10	Q. Okay.
11	A. But he's sitting. Like he's facing the kid
12	Q. Okay.
13	A telling them what to do.
14	Q. Okay. And, again, what exactly did he say about those life
15	jackets?
16	A. He said here are the life jackets. You don't really need to
17	know where they are because you're not going to use them. You're
18	not going to need them.
19	Q. Okay. And the only other instruction you remember from him
20	or Bob was putting your electronics up once the water started
21	coming in?
22	A. Um-hum. And it was somebody on the bus that yelled out, this
23	about to be like the <i>Titanic</i> .
24	Q. One of the passengers said that?
25	A. Yeah. In the back.

Q. Did anybody -- did either one of those guys reply to that?
 A. Nobody replied. It was like, man, be quiet. Because it
 hadn't even gotten rocky yet.

Q. Sure. I know it's probably hard to determine time, the passage of time, but how quickly do you think it took for the serious waves to start coming in to the time that you were struggling and swimming out?

8 A. I'm sorry. Say that again.

9 Q. Are we talking seconds? Are we talking seconds from the time 10 that the waves really started coming in until you were struggling 11 to get out, the boat was going down kind of thing? I mean, what 12 kind of -- are we talking minutes? Are we talking seconds?

13 A. Maybe a minute.

14 Q. Okay.

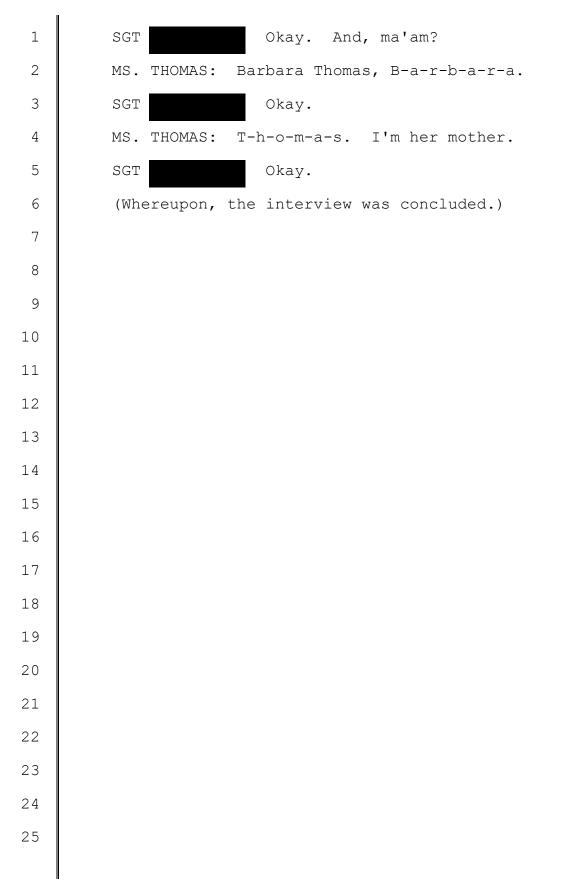
A. It was like (makes sound), then we go a little farther, and --- oh, pick yourself up off the floor, you know. And then it was just looked like the water was there. And then it was like -they said -- I didn't know this. They said a big chunk of the water came in through the back of the boat.

20 Q. Okay.

A. And I heard them say -- and then -- I'm sorry. I didn't hear the big chunk came into the water until today. But then when that one came in, we were like, get your stuff up. Then he, the captain was turning at that point. I was like, why is he turning in front of this? And I remember, I remember them saying, yeah,

that boat's made to take this type of storm, the big one. He's
 like, it's made to take a storm.

3	And then all of a sudden whoosh, and I was like, oh, and the
4	water just started swelling up. So I stood up. I hope I even had
5	my son's hand. I don't know if I even had it. I stood up. And
6	then once I stood up, it just was like, whoa. That took soon
7	as that water, when I well, I didn't at first. When the water
8	float, when it pushed me up, that's when I hit my head. I got a
9	little mark up there. But once it, the big wave came into the
10	boat, I want to say it took about 5 seconds for it to start
11	sinking.
12	SGT Okay. All right. If there's nothing if
13	you have nothing else right now, I'm going to go ahead and stop
14	the recording. Before I do though I'd like to mention that there
15	are some other people in the room with me, okay.
16	And would you say your name for me, please?
17	MS. BRACKNEY: Yelena Brackney.
18	SGT Can you spell that for me, please?
19	MS. BRACKNEY: Y-e-l-e-n-a. Last name B-r-a-c-k-n-e-y.
20	SGT And you're the sister to Tia, correct?
21	MS. BRACKNEY: I'm Tia's older sister.
22	SGT Okay. Very good. Ma'am, and you are your
23	name is?
24	MS. THOMAS: Alissa Thomas, A-l-i-s-s-a, T-h-o-m-a-s, a
25	niece.



CERTIFICATE This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7 IN THE MATTER OF: ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI, JULY 19, 2018 Interview of Tia Lindsay Coleman DCA18MM028 ACCIDENT NO.: PLACE: Branson, Missouri DATE: July 20, 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.

Katherine Motley Transcriber