

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7 *

ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI, * Accident No.: DCA18MM028

JULY 19, 2018 *

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Interview of: TOMLYN MCDONALD

Branson, Missouri

Monday,
July 23, 2018

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL KARR, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MARY PAT McKAY, M.D., Chief Medical Officer
National Transportation Safety Board

JAMES GILLETTE
U.S. Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:07 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. KARR: This is Mike Karr; it's 8:07. We're in Branson,
4 Missouri on July 23rd for the interview of Tomlyn McDonald. And
5 let's go around the room and introduce ourselves.

6 MR. GILLETTE: Hi, I'm Jim Gillette with the U.S. Coast
7 Guard.

8 DR. MCKAY: Hi. Mary Pat McKay with the NTSB.

9 MS. MCDONALD: Hello. I'm Tomlyn Rose McDonald, T-O-M-L-Y-N,
10 from Midland, Texas, here in Branson, Missouri.

11 MR. KARR: All right, thanks. And thanks for being with us
12 today. And we've gone over what we want to cover.

INTERVIEW OF TOMLYN MCDONALD

13
14 BY MR. KARR:

15 Q. So, if you would, tell me about everything you saw, observed,
16 witnessed. I'd like you to just go ahead and tell me. I'll let
17 you just speak and then when you're done speaking we'll -- I'll
18 ask some follow-up questions and we'll go around the room until we
19 exhaust, you know, the information that we have heard --

20 A. Oh, okay.

21 Q. -- that we might want to follow-up on.

22 A. So just start maybe just from the beginning or --

23 Q. Sure. Yes, please.

24 A. Okay. We had originally bought, got our Duck tickets as kind
25 of a combo pack. We had went to the Titanic Museum of all irony

1 and they were also -- it was like a Duck ride, Titanic Museum tour
2 combo. And we got -- so after the museum we went to go ahead and
3 get on the Duck boat.

4 And we weren't told that we needed to go to the ticket booth
5 to exchange that ticket we got at the museum for an actual ticket
6 ride. So that put us on the 6:30 instead of the 6:00 and that
7 same thing happened with the family ahead of us, the Colemans,
8 that lost nine.

9 So I remember, once I got that we just kind of sat around,
10 waited in line. And then I remember it was a little stalled
11 because they had heard there was a storm coming. And so, I guess,
12 at that point, they weren't real sure if they were going to go
13 ahead and even go out on the water.

14 I'm not sure who made the decision but to go ahead and board
15 but they did and I remember, you know, that they were -- you know,
16 watch your step, step up, step down, you know, and then we just
17 kind of went in as we were in line. So the people in front of --
18 as we filled in from the front, you know, to the back.

19 And that put me and my family kind of -- because the Colemans
20 had 11 so they filled up pretty much the whole front of it and
21 then, you know, our family pretty much toward the -- like, I would
22 say the middle back, and we were all together. So, you know,
23 front and then --

24 Q. To the front?

25 A. -- left and right, yeah. And I remember they were giving a

1 head count. They were -- you know, the men on the deck, you know,
2 that were on the boat. It was like, okay, I have 29, and that
3 wasn't including, of course, the two crew members so 31 total.

4 And then, you know, that's when they kind of explained, we're
5 going to do this backwards, which I didn't know. You could barely
6 hear the man. He was -- you know, he was cracking jokes and, you
7 know, it was fun and games and, you know, we were -- I would laugh
8 but I didn't really understand what he was -- because I couldn't
9 hear really.

10 But, anyway, I guess, so -- yeah. I guess there was the
11 decision. I finally realized that we were going on the tour
12 backwards when we were crossing like a bridge, there's like a dam
13 to my left. We were crossing a bridge to get to the water on our
14 way to the water.

15 Because, that's when a realized, oh, okay, he said something
16 about we're reroute -- we're doing the tour backwards. So I guess
17 he decided -- they decided to do the water part before the tour or
18 the town. I guess, they were trying to avoid the storm.

19 So, oh, I need to just take a breath.

20 Q. Uh-huh. Yeah, stop anytime.

21 A. Oh, okay. So and I actually have a video. So we get to the
22 water and they exchange seats. So the Black man, he sits down and
23 the captain he takes over. And, I guess it's part of the fun
24 experience of it, they got real fast, you know, into the water and
25 everybody's laughing and giggling and, you know, and it's real

1 smooth. Everything's fine, you know.

2 We get, we get out there and, you know, we're kind of to that
3 island, you know. But like in between, like so here's the island,
4 here's the edge of the -- you know, whatever, where the Showboat
5 is. We're toward kind of in the middle of it, you know, just
6 right in the middle.

7 And, and just all of a sudden it kind of starts getting -- it
8 starts, you know, raining. So he puts down the sides, you know,
9 to try to eliminate the rain from splashing us and hitting us.
10 And, oh, oh, I'm sorry, I forgot this part. Before we get in the
11 water he did demonstrate on how to put on the life vests. He did
12 demonstrate but then he cracked some kind of joke like, but don't
13 worry, you won't need them, nothing -- you know, nothing's in. I
14 think, at that point, everybody was just, okay, we're good, you
15 know.

16 And then the water started getting really choppy and we
17 thought it was funny. This is the worst part. We were laughing
18 because it was fun -- you know, we were like, oh, my gosh, I'm
19 getting splashed, you know. And my mom was laughing because me
20 and my daughter were sitting near the window and she was like, let
21 me get a picture of you two, because our glasses were just, you
22 know, splattered and --

23 And then it got real bad because you could tell, the captain
24 he just went speechless, just went speechless -- just -- he was
25 trying to control that boat the best possible way he could. He, I

1 mean, I don't even know. But I knew something wasn't right
2 because the boat.

3 So I'm on -- so facing like the driver looking back toward
4 the people, I'm on this side. And my sister and her husband and
5 my, my son and my nephew and my niece are on this side and this
6 side. So we were tilting really bad, like bad, bad, bad to where
7 the waters coming in on this side.

8 And then I realized, okay, the back is sinking, the back is
9 sinking. That's when my, that's when my brother-in-law stands up
10 and he says, everybody, just calm down. He knew we were screwed,
11 he knew it, but he was so -- he was -- he was also speechless.

12 He didn't -- he -- and he has so much killed grief because he
13 didn't say, everybody grab a life jacket. And that's not -- he's
14 blaming himself for not telling everybody grab a life jacket.
15 Because he's military trained. You know, he feels like he should
16 have been able to in that situation take care of us or, you know.

17 Okay. So at that point, the minute that Shayne stood up or
18 the second that he stood up, the captain, he grabs this -- and
19 which I thought was like a latch to release a roof. So, okay. So
20 I'm thinking, okay, we're going to have to swim up.

21 I mean, I just -- I remember grabbing my purse. I didn't say
22 a word. I just knew. I was like, okay, was ready to dive in and
23 just start swimming and it happened like that. (Indicating.)
24 That boat was -- we were all under water within 30 seconds is how
25 it felt.

1 And then I felt like I would never get above water. I don't
2 know how far down I was. I don't remember even touching the boat,
3 any parts of the boat. I remember going through a really warm
4 section of water and then a really freezing cold section of water
5 and then before I reached the top I was already out of breath,
6 another warm section of water.

7 And, I mean, people were clawing at me trying to get above
8 me, pulling me down, and I wasn't going to have it. I, survival
9 mode, I was like get off of me. And some of those people I pushed
10 away probably could have been deceased but, I mean, I was saving
11 myself.

12 The minute I get above water I'm yelling for my children.
13 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] you know. We, none of -- nobody in the family knew
14 where any of us were. We all thought we were the only survivors.
15 We all thought we were -- everybody was dead.

16 Luckily my daughter had popped up not too far from me and
17 she, she heard me. And she's, Mommy. And she was, she was closer
18 to the paddles on the Showboat so she made it. She swam to the
19 Showboat and she had to encourage me. She's like, Mom, just grab
20 onto it, Mommy. And I was like -- I couldn't.

21 The waves were so strong. It was -- every time I got close
22 it pushed me back, pushed me back. I don't know to this day how I
23 got on those paddles. I, oh, it took every ounce of energy and
24 strength that I had.

25 And I just remember, I was on the inside of the paddle

1 just -- the little tiny bar, I was sitting on it just holding on
2 for dear life. The left side of me were two ladies floating.
3 The, there was another Hispanic or Black man holding onto the same
4 rail. We were face-to-face like this. (Indicating.) And my
5 daughter was down below at the other side of the same wheel. And
6 then the people came.

7 Oh, so, I don't even think that the rescue people knew that
8 there was people hanging onto the paddles because I, I just -- I
9 was looking up and I saw my brother-in-law's face and then he had
10 warned everybody, there's people down there, there's people down
11 there.

12 And, luckily because me and my daughter were part of the
13 people down there. And I just remember a man coming and telling
14 me, step over, because they were wanting me to step up those
15 paddles like they were like steps.

16 I was so weak. I don't know how I made one step after the
17 other step, one step after the other step. They finally -- I got
18 up high enough where they could pull me off to like an edge, a
19 ledge. Two men literally had to grab my -- pull me, pull me in.

20 At that point, I think my daughter thought I was dead because
21 I couldn't speak. I was breathing so heavy. I had to lay on my
22 back with my feet elevated for quite some time before they could
23 get me to my feet.

24 And, I mean, it was just -- it was total chaos once we got up
25 to the top, because families were separated. I mean, there was

1 just -- it was just a nightmare. I remember, finally when they
2 got me to my feet, they took us into the dining hall on the
3 Showboat where they were giving us water and, you know, napkins
4 for towels.

5 And that's when I, I saw my niece and my brother-in-law and
6 my sister. And she was just, Auntie. And, well, of course, there
7 was my daughter too. So there was the five of us at that point,
8 and I didn't still know where my son was. And they reassured me
9 that they saw [REDACTED] And I still hadn't reunited with him and I
10 was just beyond -- beside myself.

11 And I don't know, it's just such a blur now. But, at some
12 point they had us like -- they checked my daughter out because she
13 was having a really hard time, headache, nausea, vomiting. Not
14 vomiting but feeling like she was.

15 And then, at that point, okay. So once we got all eight of
16 us. My mother was still missing and we thought for sure we lost
17 her. And we were sitting kind of on the dock right there where my
18 daughter was getting checked out in a wheelchair.

19 And they finally pulled -- we finally see her come up on a
20 stretcher or on, you know, and I'm like, Mother. They wouldn't
21 let me near her and that made me so angry, so angry.

22 But, I mean, I know that she needed medical attention so --

23 MR. KARR: See if we can get some Kleenex from the bathroom.
24 Thanks, Jim.

25 MS. MCDONALD: I know they were just -- I know they didn't

1 need a bunch of people around because she needed medical attention
2 so I know I couldn't But somehow while I was making sure my
3 daughter was all right my sister was able to get on the ambulance
4 with my mom, thank God.

5 And the rest is just kind of, you know, how they handled the,
6 the aftermath, you know. They bused us all to city hall and, I
7 guess, it was for the people that survived and for the family
8 members that were looking for missed loved ones.

9 And I was just a little irritated with that also because, you
10 know, my, my whole family was accounted for. We had young -- we
11 were the only ones with one -- young children sitting at city hall
12 at midnight, you know, after what they'd been through.

13 They were -- it was time for them to lay their heads down and
14 go to bed if they could. Not saying that they could but just --
15 then, so I talked to one of the officers and he made sure that
16 happened. He got me and Shayne.

17 Because me and Shayne ended up stuck at city hall, you know,
18 with the kids. And, you know, we got back to the room and, I
19 don't know, I guess, you can ask any questions --

20 MR. KARR: All right.

21 MS. MCDONALD: -- that you might have that I might have
22 skipped over.

23 BY MR. KARR:

24 Q. Before we leave, I'd like you to make a sketch of where
25 everybody was sitting. Well, as a matter of fact, let's do that

1 right now.

2 A. Of just my family?

3 Q. Of your family.

4 A. Because that's all I can account maybe for.

5 Q. Correct, exactly.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. So, yeah.

8 A. I know there was a brother and sister behind us.

9 DR. MCKAY: Adult brother and sister or --

10 MS. MCDONALD: Yeah. They were so sweet; you could tell they
11 loved each other very much.

12 BY MR. KARR:

13 Q. What I'll do is I'll just start out with --

14 A. Okay. And I honestly couldn't tell you like how far back or,
15 I just know it was kind of middle back.

16 Q. All, all you need to do is, you know, put the --

17 A. Just write a name?

18 Q. They were like bus bench seats and, you know, so just put a
19 line across there and then put --

20 A. A name.

21 Q. The names. You can do just first names because I know
22 they're from your family and --

23 A. Okay. So --

24 Q. And don't worry about where you start.

25 A. So I'm going to say we were about -- I'm just going to guess.

1 Let's see, it was [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] And then me and mom were
2 behind her, them. Then across from us was Tiffany and Shayne.
3 And in front of them was -- I think [REDACTED] was on the outside.
4 And in front of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was Talyssa by herself.

5 Q. Was there anyone with her sitting in --

6 A. No, she had, she sat by herself.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Because they only sat two people and that was nine of us, so
9 it was kind of --

10 Q. I see.

11 A. She just sat by herself.

12 Q. And now, if you could, the best estimate just over here on
13 the side what, what, what they weighed? Just an estimate of their
14 weight?

15 A. Oh, okay. So --

16 DR. MCKAY: Anyone you know. If you have no idea.

17 (Phone ringing.)

18 MR. KARR: Yeah, go ahead and take that.

19 MS. MCDONALD: It's my sister because she -- I think she's,
20 she's going to come down and talk to you a little. I don't know,
21 let me see what she's saying. Where do I go? Oh, okay. So I
22 guess she's coming.

23 Let's see, Chloe's probably about -- I mean, she's my size.
24 She's only 11 and she's my size so I'm just going to say 100
25 pounds.

1 MR. KARR: All right.

2 MS. MCDONALD: Same for Gilli, maybe a little more, 110.
3 Maybe about 120. Mom, 138. Talyssa, oh, Talyssa's pretty thick,
4 I'm going to say 140. [REDACTED] I'm going to go with about 85.
5 Shayne, oh, that's just my best guess.

6 MR. KARR: Okay. And that's all we need. All right. Thank
7 you.

8 BY MR. KARR:

9 Q. The -- what -- I'm going to -- I want to make this an open-
10 ended question so you can describe as best you know. But as far
11 as escape routes on the boat, on board the boat, did they educate
12 you on how you would leave the boat in an emergency?

13 A. I don't remember hearing anything about an escape route. But
14 after hearing, talking to people -- and this is why you want my
15 version because it gets (indiscernible) from what other people
16 say, but I didn't hear anything.

17 But, like I said, I could barely hear the man to begin with
18 on the tour. And then when, you know, you're -- with water
19 splashing and everything you're not going to hear a whole lot. So
20 that was a major factor for me. I just -- I really didn't know
21 what was going on and like I was kind of like, what is happening,
22 you know. I knew -- I realized we're in trouble.

23 Q. Interesting when you say that you knew, you knew you were in
24 trouble.

25 A. Oops.

1 Q. So we're back on. We just had a quick pause.

2 A. And I'm not saying that they didn't, you know, describe safe
3 routes, I'm just saying I didn't hear it.

4 Q. And, and that's -- and I just want to know what you heard and
5 perceived.

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. So what -- we'll go back and we'll evaluate what led to --

8 A. I did -- what I did leave out was the fact that the life
9 jackets were, like, you know, strapped above us or like on the
10 roof. And, you know, the fact that he, you know, eliminated the
11 roof or the roof went away, eliminated the fact that we could grab
12 a life jacket.

13 It's like Catch 20/20, you know. It's like, do you want to
14 grab a life jacket or do you want to -- I don't know.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Swim for your life. Yeah, I left that out.

17 Q. Did you, as you talked there was -- tell me how -- describe
18 to me how water got into the boat?

19 A. Oh, okay. Well, because the way the windows come down it was
20 kind of like a plastic or something. There's, there's still kind
21 of a good gap between, you know, the side of the, the boat and
22 where the -- so it could -- it easily splashed in.

23 And I suppose that's how. I'm not sure how it started coming
24 in the back but I suppose that's how when it leaned so far that
25 way, of course, it was just gushing in. And I, I believe there's

1 a lot of weight in the back of the boat, because there was, there
2 was, you know, couples, heavier couples.

3 Q. Well, if you would just focus on what you saw, you know,
4 we'll look at the (indiscernible).

5 A. That's what I'm, that's what I'm explaining because I know
6 the water started gushing in and it's because there -- you know,
7 there's a gap.

8 Q. Was, and when you say gushing in, can you sort of give me a
9 description of it -- was it pour, pouring in like --
10 (indicating.)?

11 A. Like, yeah, like to the point where --

12 Q. Did it ever --

13 A. -- it was starting to --

14 Q. Did it ever stop? I mean, is it -- as you described, it went
15 over, did it ever come back up and stop or did it just keep --
16 water just keep going?

17 A. It did, it did a couple times until it finally -- it --

18 Q. Do you remember if -- did the water come in only -- did the
19 water come in on one side only or did it also come in on the left
20 side?

21 A. Well, it was, of course, splashing at us on this side coming
22 in but not -- I don't remember it pouring in, because I don't --
23 because it was so tilted over it was mainly started on this side.

24 Q. All right. And when the water poured in those different
25 times, did it stay in the boat or did it somehow dissipate?

1 A. When it first started getting real choppy, yeah, it seems
2 like it kind of went away and then -- but, it happened so fast.
3 When the water started coming in it was, it was over. It was
4 done, it was done for.

5 Q. All right.

6 A. It was just like that. (Snapped fingers.)

7 Q. Did, can you remember if before it started to rain, was the
8 wind bad or did they come at the same time? Did the wind come
9 first? Did the rain and wind come first or did the rain come
10 first and then the wind came?

11 DR. MCKAY: If you don't know, that's fine.

12 MS. MCDONALD: I feel like it was a little windy because, at
13 that time, we had the windows up. And the only, only time that he
14 did put them down was when it did start to rain. So I'm going to
15 say it was, it was windy and then the rain and then that's, that's
16 when he dropped the windows. And then the choppy, and then that's
17 when the chopping started on the waves. I mean, it was like
18 being in the middle of an ocean.

19 Q. Right. Did the -- all right. Did he, did he put down the
20 sides, the side window? Did he put down that plastic before the
21 waves came?

22 A. Yeah, he -- well, I mean, it was still getting kind of like
23 rickety but he, he put them down when the rain started.

24 Q. All right.

25 A. Yeah. Just the fact that they rerouted the tour to try to

1 avoid a storm knowing there's a storm coming. There should have
2 never been a boat on that water, period. I'm sorry, that's just
3 my opinion. And if, if they were going to take that risk then
4 they needed to say, put on your life jacket or we're not doing
5 this.

6 Q. When, can you -- when you went -- when you started to go
7 down, when the boat went down, when you went down, describe -- I'm
8 very interested in how you --

9 A. Survived?

10 Q. -- went down.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. What, you know, so what dragged you, what dragged you down,
13 what forced -- you know, describe the forces, describe, you know,
14 if you felt the boat. Did you see -- what was the last part of
15 the boat you saw?

16 A. You couldn't see anything, first of all. The water's so
17 murky you didn't know who was next to you. I just remember the
18 minute -- like I said, the minute my, my brother-in-law stood up
19 and said, everybody calm down, that's when I zipped my purse,
20 strapped it on my arm, and I just stood up and I just waited.

21 And I just remember taking that deep breath and just --
22 (indicating) starting to swim because I mean I didn't even --

23 Q. All right. Stay, stay right there and describe what, what --
24 how the water came up, what you remember about the boat?

25 A. It came up like this so that tells me that was already --

1 that was gone. It was going to sink because I -- and I knew
2 that's how it was coming up. I was like -- I just -- and before I
3 knew it I was below water.

4 And I don't -- like I said, I don't remember touching any
5 part of the boat. I don't remember hitting anything on the boat.
6 No, not feeling the roof, not feeling the window, nothing. I just
7 remember jumping into it.

8 Q. And when you went to the -- I'm wrapping up my questions so
9 I'll hand it off to Jim shortly. When you were on the
10 paddlewheel, I'm interested in how you actually got out of the
11 water.

12 So how did you get from the paddlewheel to where they took
13 you out of the water? Did they throw you a life ring and drag
14 you? Did you swim?

15 A. No. So they made me step up the paddlewheel.

16 Q. Oh, okay.

17 A. Step up, step up, step up until there was like a platform to
18 the right and then two men pulled me onto the platform.

19 Q. All right. Thank you. They had talked -- they had mentioned
20 that they brought someone up that way so --

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. -- you're that person. All right. Thank you.

23 MR. KARR: All right. Jim?

24 MR. GILLETTE: Yes.

25 BY MR. GILLETTE:

1 Q. Hi, Tomlyn.

2 A. Hi.

3 Q. I'm Jim Gillette. Just saying that for the recorder there.
4 I would like to start at the time where he ended there. When you
5 said that you were on the paddle or holding onto the paddle, you
6 had mentioned you'd seen a Black man next to you or close to you?

7 A. In a red shirt.

8 Q. In a red shirt?

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. Hold a paddle as you --

11 A. He was on the opposite side of it.

12 Q. On the opposite side?

13 A. So I was on the inside and he was on the outside somehow and
14 we were like face-to-face.

15 Q. You were face-to-face?

16 A. We weren't looking at each other at all. We didn't make eye
17 contact.

18 Q. Do you recognize him from the, from the trip?

19 A. Yeah, he was one of the Coleman family for sure.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I don't know if he was --

22 Q. Do you know age wise, your best guesstimate on age
23 (indiscernible)?

24 A. He wasn't an adult. I don't believe he was an adult.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. He must have been like a teenager maybe.
- 2 Q. Okay. He's a child or teenager?
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. Not child. I mean, he was a big boy.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. So kind of hard to estimate.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. But certainly not an adult.
- 10 Q. Okay. Did you watch that person get pulled up or did you see
11 that at all?
- 12 A. I believe he did the same exact thing I did.
- 13 Q. Okay.
- 14 A. He just made his way to the paddles and held on for dear
15 life.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. Okay. I want to go back to the water. I want to go back to
19 your picture, first, that you drew for us and stuff. When, when
20 you were talking, I just want to clear this up.
- 21 A. Okay.
- 22 Q. From this, this picture here, this being the front of the
23 ship, can you draw where the captain -- where the steering wheel
24 was on that?
- 25 A. Okay. So they were like here. There's a little seat here.

1 There was another seat here where -- okay. So, the time we were
2 in the water the captain would be here. (Indicating.)_

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And the driver would be here. (Indicating.)

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So they like changed seats so, you know, he was driving, he
7 was here.

8 Q. Okay. When, when I'm looking at the picture, when you first
9 explained, and this is where I just want to get clear, it sounded
10 like you were on the right side of the boat looking front, but
11 when I'm looking at the picture I see you on the left side.

12 A. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

13 Q. So do you remember is -- what, is that correct or --

14 A. Yeah, that's how I was sitting, yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So you were on the left side?

16 A. Yes, I was on this side, uh-huh.

17 Q. So the captain would be in front of you like --

18 A. Yeah, he would be directly in front, yeah.

19 Q. Okay. And so over here the driver would --

20 A. Would be on this.

21 Q. -- the driver was sitting down on the right side?

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. Okay. So going into the part where you were saying water was
24 coming over, I'd like to kind of walk through that a little
25 slower, and just to try to figure out time and stuff.

1 So you said that the curtains were down, is that correct?

2 A. Uh-huh.

3 Q. And just stop me if I say something incorrect, please. You
4 said water kind of came gushing over. Was it on your side that
5 the water came gushing over or was it on the other side?

6 A. It was on the opposite side of me.

7 Q. Okay. And how many times did it gush over? So let's start
8 with the first time the water gushed over.

9 A. As far as gushing over, I don't think it gushed over until we
10 were sinking but, I mean, it did splash.

11 Q. Okay, it splashed?

12 A. Splash, splash, splash, splash, yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And just -- I'm just going to, I'm just going to do this
15 because I have a video --

16 MR. KARR: Cool. May I have --

17 MS. MCDONALD: -- of when it was fun and games. Is that not
18 good or do you want to --

19 MR. KARR: Oh, no, no, no.

20 MR. GILLETTE: (Indiscernible).

21 MR. KARR: I was going to say I'd like -- I've got an address
22 if you could email, email that to our NTSB address.

23 MS. MCDONALD: Okay. Because what I was going to say was, by
24 the time I started this video and by the time I shut my phone off,
25 that's when we were in danger.

1 BY MR. GILLETTE:

2 Q. Okay. So you filmed, you filmed --

3 A. So the amount of the choppiness, this will give us a lot of
4 answers.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Just might help me too because it's been several days since,
7 okay.

8 Q. Okay. So we can watch it? Thank you.

9 A. Okay. So this kind of --

10 Q. And can you explain what we're actually watching?

11 A. Okay. So this is me and my mom.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And then, see, as I said, there's Shayne and Tiffany right
14 across from us.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And that was a short video, okay. This is the one where we
17 started laughing. We thought, oh, my gosh, this is crazy. Look
18 at the, look at the --

19 Q. And what side of that is -- when I'm looking at this, is that
20 on your side?

21 A. That's exactly what I'm sitting out the window.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. See, everybody's laughing.

24 Q. I see (indiscernible) over there.

25 A. Um-hum. Everybody's laughing like, oh, my gosh. And, as you

1 can see, you know, there's water -- see the crack that I'm talking
2 about?

3 Q. I do see it.

4 MR. KARR: Yes, yes.

5 DR. MCKAY: Uh-huh.

6 MS. MCDONALD: Yes.

7 BY MR. GILLETTE:

8 Q. Okay. And --

9 A. And see the life jackets above us?

10 Q. Okay. And now I'm looking at the Southern Belle on the right
11 side?

12 A. That's, see there's, there's my niece and my daughter right
13 in front.

14 Q. Okay, okay.

15 A. My boy.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. My sister and Shayne.

18 Q. Okay. And so now in the video I'm looking at Shayne --

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. -- and over on the right side I see the Branson Belle?

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. On the port side I see --

23 A. And, see, are you seeing how it's --

24 Q. An island?

25 A. Yeah, and that's all I got.

1 DR. McKAY: Yeah.

2 BY MR. GILLETTE:

3 Q. And your daughter?

4 A. And then that lasted -- that video was -- how long was that
5 video? I don't even know how to tell that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Oh, it was a minute long. So if you imagine, you know, I
8 shut that off.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Maybe another five, 10 seconds, hell broke loose.

11 Q. Okay.

12 MR. KARR: Okay.

13 BY MR. GILLETTE:

14 Q. Okay. I want to, I want to start with what I'm looking at
15 there to when hell broke loose. I'd like to get an understanding
16 on time of what, what exactly are you -- when you say hell broke
17 loose, please describe what hell broke loose was and then in a
18 time -- the time amount.

19 So what is hell broke loose from that, from that, from that
20 video where we see splashing, when was it?

21 A. To, to --

22 Q. To hell broke loose?

23 A. -- the point where the captain is standing not sitting with
24 the steering wheel.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Speechless, he can't not say a word, trying to control the
2 boat.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. The boat tilting, as I said. This --

5 Q. And which way did the boat tilt?

6 A. This way, as I said --

7 Q. What's that?

8 A. -- where my sister and Shayne were sitting.

9 Q. Okay.

10 DR. MCKAY: Sounds (indiscernible).

11 MS. MCDONALD: And my boys, the boys.

12 BY MR. GILLETTE:

13 Q. Okay. To the right of you?

14 A. Uh-huh, yeah.

15 Q. Okay, okay.

16 A. Right. And, and then my -- I mean, this all happened
17 (clapping hands) after that video. The captain trying to, trying
18 to grip the wheel, the boat tilting, tilting, tilting. We're
19 getting scared. He's trying to control the boat.

20 My brother -- I feel the boat in the back sinking, sinking.
21 This all happened instant like (snapping fingers.) My brother-in-
22 law standing up, everybody calm down, and then me zipping my
23 purse, reaching for life (snapping fingers) like that.

24 Q. When your brother-in-law was, when your brother-in-law was
25 standing up -- I want to go back to when you were looking back and

1 you said you felt that you were sinking. Did you look back -- did
2 you notice water on the deck?

3 A. Yes, yes.

4 Q. Okay. How high was the water on the deck?

5 A. (Indicating.)

6 Q. Okay. Was that water on the deck, that was behind you --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- was it also touching you as well?

9 A. It was -- oh, I believe my feet were covered, yeah.

10 Q. Okay. How high on your body, at that time, to your ankle?

11 A. Well, yeah, considering where I was on the boat, yeah, at
12 that point, it was about -- yeah, right here. (Indicating.)

13 Q. Okay. About -- so you're showing me your lower calf. And
14 how tall are you?

15 A. 5'5".

16 Q. Okay. So from that moment, when you saw the water in the
17 back and you had water on your calf, can you please describe from
18 that moment on, then what was the timed event to the next amount
19 of water that you saw?

20 When it raised above your calf, can you kind of tell me how
21 long it took before it raised above your calf?

22 A. A split second.

23 Q. A split second.

24 A. It was, we were done, it was over.

25 Q. Okay. Did it go straight from your calf to you being under

1 water?

2 A. My entire body, yeah.

3 Q. Okay, okay.

4 A. It just happened so fast.

5 Q. All right.

6 A. The second that I realized the back was sinking it was over.

7 Q. All right. I'd like to go -- this is just timeline now. So
8 going back to when it was up to your calf, did you see the
9 captain? You had mentioned earlier you seen the captain lift
10 something?

11 A. He didn't do that until my brother-in-law stood up and said,
12 Everybody calm down.

13 Q. Okay. And when did your brother-in-law --

14 A. He didn't even have the sense enough to turn around and say,
15 calm down. Take a life jacket.

16 Q. Okay. Okay.

17 A. I'm sorry.

18 Q. No, no, no, no, you're fine. You're doing great. Did you --
19 you saw the captain push something or open something?

20 A. Yeah, it looked like he was releasing some kind of latch.

21 Q. Did you see something?

22 A. And he, he took off.

23 Q. Did you see how he left the boat?

24 A. Uh-huh.

25 Q. How did he leave -- did he leave out of a window or out of --

1 what did -- do you know what he left out of?

2 A. I'm not sure. He just went. So I'm here. He just went
3 (indicating) that way.

4 Q. Did he leave in front of his steering wheel?

5 A. Uh-huh, somewhere around his steering wheel to the right, to
6 the right left corner.

7 Q. The right left corner of the -- by the steering wheel, okay.

8 A. From what I remember, yeah.

9 MR. GILLETTE: Okay. Thank you, Tomlyn.

10 MS. MCDONALD: You're welcome.

11 MR. GILLETTE: I appreciate it.

12 MS. MCDONALD: I'm sorry, and, I mean, it -- this happened
13 several days ago --

14 MR. GILLETTE: Yes.

15 MS. MCDONALD: -- and it's really blurry and it's --

16 MR. GILLETTE: Sure.

17 DR. MCKAY: You're doing great.

18 MR. GILLETTE: You're doing great.

19 DR. MCKAY: You're absolutely doing great.

20 MS. MCDONALD: Okay.

21 DR. MCKAY: It's Mary Pat McKay from the NTSB. And you're
22 all done, right?

23 MR. GILLETTE: Yes, I am. Thank you very much.

24 (Phone trilling.)

25 MS. MCDONALD: Reporters.

1 DR. McKAY: Okay.

2 MS. MCDONALD: I don't know how they get my number. How do
3 they get your number?

4 DR. McKAY: I have no idea. Yeah.

5 BY DR. McKAY:

6 Q. A couple questions.

7 A. Uh-huh.

8 Q. Who put the curtains down, was that the captain or the
9 driver, do you know?

10 A. I don't know.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I'm assuming the captain because he had the controls. He was
13 in --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- control of the boat at the time.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I don't really know. I didn't -- I just saw him come down, I
18 didn't -- I wasn't looking at the front of the boat.

19 Q. Okay. And the -- did the driver do anything during all of
20 this? Did you see him or notice him do anything?

21 A. Un-huh, no.

22 Q. Okay. And you said that you -- kind of jumping around
23 timeline because I don't need to repeat what these guys already
24 asked.

25 A. Right, uh-huh.

1 Q. You said that you and [REDACTED] were hanging onto the paddlewheel
2 and you described how you got up the paddlewheel.

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. How did [REDACTED] get up?

5 A. The same way. She stepped up but she had to go the whole way
6 because she was on the far side. There's no platform off to the
7 side. She literally had to step up, step up, step up to get onto
8 the boat --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- the whole time, the whole way up.

11 Q. And did you actually see the young Black man get off?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. You were busy.

14 A. A little bit.

15 Q. So you said that you got scratched up by people --

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. -- trying to grab at you as you were exiting the boat?

18 A. No, as I was exiting the water.

19 Q. Oh.

20 A. They were, they were drowning try to pull me down.

21 Q. As you were, as you were between the boat and the water?

22 A. Uh-huh, yeah.

23 Q. Yeah, okay. And, and so obviously you got scratched up
24 during that. Did you get injured at all as you were climbing up
25 the paddlewheel or getting on the, on the Showboat?

- 1 A. Nothing other than bruises and bumps and --
- 2 Q. Right.
- 3 A. -- heavy breathing, no, no, no.
- 4 Q. Okay. And how about your kids, are they injured?
- 5 A. No. He's, he got an ugly --
- 6 Q. Bruise?
- 7 A. Yeah. Other than bumps and scrapes and bruises we, we made
- 8 it out like --
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. -- miraculously.
- 11 Q. Good. I mean, we're happy for you, believe me.
- 12 A. Yeah. My mother, not so much.
- 13 Q. How would you rate your swimming skills?
- 14 A. Excellent.
- 15 Q. Okay. So (indiscernible) good swimmer?
- 16 A. Oh, yeah.
- 17 Q. And the same thing for your children?
- 18 A. Oh, yes, they grew up swimming and that's the only reason
- 19 we're alive because we know how to swim.
- 20 Q. Right.
- 21 A. The whole family. Mom has a swimming pool, sister has a
- 22 swimming pool. We go to the ocean. We go to the lakes. I mean,
- 23 I grew up in Carlsbad, New Mexico on the Pecos River tubing, you
- 24 know, the only reason we're alive.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. If we didn't have swimming seals post.

2 Q. Did you notice that there was anybody on the boat who had
3 specific mobility issues?

4 A. Yes, ma'am, there was -- well, of course, there was a one
5 year old.

6 Q. Right. Obviously we --

7 A. Who knows if she can swim? But there was the elderly woman
8 that was with a walker and a cane --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- up in the front of the boat.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. She probably didn't have a chance.

13 Q. And was there anybody else that you noticed that --

14 A. Just a -- there were several overweight, overweight people.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I don't know if that's a hindrance or --

17 Q. Okay. And the -- during the rescue it sounds like you
18 couldn't find your mom for quite some time.

19 A. Right.

20 Q. Do you know if she was -- if she ended up on some other part
21 of the boat? I actually haven't heard (indiscernible)?

22 A. This is, this is the weirdest thing. As you know, she was
23 sitting right next to me. I don't understand how I ended up -- so
24 if you're looking at, so if you're looking at the back of the
25 Showboat, why me and my daughter ended up here. She's with -- my

1 daughter was right in front of me, so that makes sense.

2 But my mother ended up way on the other side --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- of the Showboat.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. How does that -- how did she, she must have swam up.

7 Q. Either she was (indiscernible) --

8 A. She must have swam a lot or the waves like (indicating) just
9 chopped her over that way. I don't know.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And Talyssa, she's saying that her head was the first one
12 above water. She looked around, she was the only head above
13 water, and then she saw the captain's head, was like wow.

14 DR. MCKAY: Okay. I think that's all I have.

15 MS. MCDONALD: Did you all want to talk to Talyssa too?

16 MR. KARR: Well, let me quickly do some follow-up.

17 MS. MCDONALD: Do we -- okay.

18 MR. KARR: Well --

19 MS. MCDONALD: Go ahead.

20 BY MR. KARR:

21 Q. When you said you saw the captain exiting the board, where
22 was -- describe -- can you tell me how the boat was, the boat was
23 like this when the captain exited?

24 A. Literally like the Titanic. No, I mean, because it's at my
25 chest at this point, I just knew that that's swim up.

1 Q. And when you saw the captain, so you were looking up, you
2 were almost looking straight up into the air to see the captain?

3 And can you tell me which --

4 A. That's how I feel. I mean --

5 Q. No, that's -- I'm just -- that's the first time I visualized
6 it like that.

7 A. Oh, okay.

8 Q. It took me a while to --

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. -- grasp that it sank like that.

11 A. Okay. Say, if you can imagine, so you're, you're -- so it's
12 going -- you know, it's just -- and then you realize, okay. You
13 know, and then that's -- I mean, of course, he's at the top of the
14 boat so he's -- I can still see him. I don't know. It's hard to
15 explain.

16 Q. Was, when you, when you saw him was, was he covered by any
17 water?

18 A. He must have been because it feels like was -- well, no, I
19 don't see how he could have been because -- no, he -- there wasn't
20 water up there yet.

21 Q. Okay. And when you made the turn -- you were going
22 towards -- the ship was going -- the boat was going towards the
23 island and then you turned?

24 A. Did we? I --

25 Q. Okay. You know what --

1 DR. McKAY: Yeah.

2 BY MR. KARR:

3 Q. I was asking if there was any time before if water came
4 onboard the boat at any other time, like a minute or two? Oh, let
5 me ask you this, before that video you shot, had any appreciable
6 amount of water gotten (indiscernible)?

7 A. No, no. That was, just like I said when it started getting
8 kind of (indicating) splashy.

9 Q. Okay. Thanks.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And did you actually see the -- did you actually -- did you
12 see any of the windows drop or disappear or fall away?

13 A. No. They were, they were down the entire time. Never put,
14 never put back up. They were down the entire time.

15 Q. All right.

16 A. Basically trapping us.

17 Q. They never, they never disappeared --

18 A. No, no.

19 Q. -- when you got up to the, the whole time you're leaving?

20 A. No.

21 Q. All right. What was your -- when, when you were -- what was
22 your thought about where you were going to get out of the boat
23 when you were going down?

24 A. Straight up.

25 Q. What was straight up ahead of you? How would you have gotten

1 out? What did you envision that you could get through to get out?

2 A. Well, and like I said, I thought he had released the roof so
3 I thought --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- that's my escape route.

6 Q. All right.

7 A. And that's where I'm going to get above water.

8 MR. KARR: All right. Any, any other questions?

9 MR. GILLETTE: No further questions.

10 MS. MCDONALD: Okay.

11 MR. KARR: Mary Pat, anymore?

12 DR. MCKAY: No, I'm good. Thank you.

13 MS. MCDONALD: Okay.

14 MR. KARR: All right. Tomlyn, thank you. Tomlyn, thanks,
15 you gave a lot of information we had not had before.

16 MS. MCDONALD: Oh, okay.

17 MR. KARR: I will ask for the --

18 MS. MCDONALD: Video.

19 MR. KARR: -- video because we can do a lot with that. I saw
20 the Showboat. We've got GPS coordinates. So we can take -- this
21 is what -- why we investigate. We can take your video and match
22 that up with other information today.

23 MS. MCDONALD: Oh, okay. Give me that email and I'll just
24 tear a little piece of paper.

25 MR. KARR: All right. Now you suggested --

1 MS. MCDONALD: Well, I have your business card here.

2 DR. MCKAY: You can send it to me, Mike or send it to my --

3 MR. KARR: Well, no, I'll give you my -- go --

4 MS. MCDONALD: Oh, okay.

5 MR. KARR: Send it to me and I'll --

6 MS. MCDONALD: To, okay. Here, you can write it on the back.

7 MR. KARR: No, I'll give you my card. That will be fine.

8 MS. MCDONALD: Oh, okay.

9 DR. MCKAY: I don't know, is the recorder on?

10 MR. KARR: Is there what?

11 DR. MCKAY: Mike, is the recorder on?

12 MR. KARR: Oh, let me end the recorder at 0852.

13 (Whereupon, at 8:52 a.m., 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: CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7
 ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI,
 JULY 19, 2018
 Interview of Tomlyn McDonald

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA18MM028

PLACE: Branson, Missouri

DATE: July 23, 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.



Cheryl Farner Donovan
Transcriber