

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

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 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: DANIEL ALDRIDGE

Sunday,  
July 22, 2018

APPEARANCES:

JOHN VOLPE, Marine Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

BEN ALLEN, Assistant General Counsel  
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I N T E R V I E W

(2:57 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. VOLPE: It's 1457 on July 22nd. My name is John Volpe.  
4 I'm a nautical inspector for the NTSB. We will be recording this  
5 interview.

6 MR. ALDRIDGE: I understand.

7 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Just to let you know that the NTSB is a  
8 federal agency charged with determining the probable causes of  
9 transportation accidents and promoting transportation safety.  
10 It's not part of the DOT or the U.S. Coast Guard. The NTSB has no  
11 regulatory or enforcement powers.

12 MR. ALDRIDGE: I understand.

13 MR. VOLPE: What I'd like to do is start by asking your name  
14 and your position and --

15 MR. ALDRIDGE: My name is Dan Aldridge and I am a CDL driver  
16 with Ride the Ducks Branson.

17 MR. VOLPE: Okay, thank you, and we'll go around the room.  
18 The different parties that will be interviewing you, what we  
19 normally do is I'll start with asking you questions and then we'll  
20 go through the different parties and they'll ask you questions.  
21 Normally one, one round or two rounds of questions and then you'll  
22 have a, the ability at the end if you have any, any questions or  
23 if you want to say something for the record.

24 MR. ALDRIDGE: All right. Thank you.

25 MR. VOLPE: Okay.

1 SGT. [REDACTED] I'm Sergeant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the  
2 Highway Patrol here in Missouri.

3 MR. SMITH: Jason Smith, Spencer Fane law firm.

4 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm with the U.S. Coast Guard out of  
5 St. Louis, Investigating Officer.

6 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, Investigation Center  
7 of Expertise.

8 MR. ALLEN: H. Ben Allen, NTSB.

9 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Missouri State Highway Patrol.

10 MR. GOOD: Terry Good, Lashly & Baer in St. Louis.

11 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Well, welcome and thank you for coming  
12 this afternoon.

13 MR. ALDRIDGE: You're welcome.

14 INTERVIEW OF DANIEL ALDRIDGE

15 BY MR. VOLPE:

16 Q. I'm just going to start by asking you some general questions.  
17 How long have you worked for Ride the Ducks Branson?

18 A. Since the first, first week of June -- this year.

19 Q. Was it this year?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Of this year? Okay. And have you worked as a CDL driver on  
22 any other boats or duck boats --

23 A. No, I haven't.

24 Q. -- previously?

25 A. No, not with any other company than this one.

1 Q. Not with any other company, okay. And, how long have you had  
2 your CDL license?

3 A. Would have been the spring of 2013.

4 Q. Okay. And, when you joined Ride the Ducks Branson, what,  
5 what type of training did you have to go through in order to  
6 become a driver for the duck?

7 A. With Ride the Ducks?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. It was about a week's worth of specific training on the ducks  
10 themselves.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I am a school bus driver, so I have the CDL and the driving  
13 training, so they were training specifically for the ducks.

14 Q. Okay. Do you, was there any, any time required, so many  
15 hours that you had to work under someone before that you were able  
16 to start driving?

17 A. I wasn't aware of any specific number of hours, only that I  
18 knew what I needed to know to be aboard a duck and assist the  
19 captain in what he does.

20 Q. Okay. Now, since it's relatively, you're relatively new, can  
21 you walk me through the process of, once you were hired, what type  
22 of training that you took part in, whether it was in the office,  
23 on the duck, just specific as possible? I'm just looking for  
24 examples of -- okay, you went in and you, you know, the first day  
25 you did just paperwork, or how, the type of training that you

1 received?

2 A. Right. We would go out daily in the duck, there was a  
3 trainer who was a qualified captain, and he would show us the  
4 proper ways to both pre-trip and post-trip the duck to fill out  
5 the required paperwork, where and how to file it in the office.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Pre-trip is filed in the office before we head out each day,  
8 before we go on our first tour. Post-trip, that's done at the end  
9 of the day, and there's a copy left aboard, aboard the vessel so  
10 that the next person who's driving, and the next captain, is  
11 informed as to any problems we had throughout the day. So, as far  
12 as paperwork, that, that was the main part of the paperwork there  
13 that we were trained to do.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And then, we would go out and there were three or four at  
16 various times each day that would go out, and what we'd take turns  
17 driving, both to show us the routes for the tour itself, and to  
18 show us operations on the water.

19 Q. Okay. Was there multiple routes that you would, that you  
20 would take? Was there a standard route for --

21 A. There are, there are two routes that are done here in  
22 Branson. One goes out from Branson Landing and goes out to  
23 College of the Ozarks and then puts out on Lake Taneycomo and then  
24 returns to The Landing.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. The other one is operated out our facility on 76 Country  
2 Boulevard, and it comes down here in this neck of the woods, it  
3 comes across the dam, goes up on Baird Mountain, then we come here  
4 to the Branson Villa, and we use the two ramps on either side of  
5 the dock. The south one we use to put in, and we come out the  
6 north ramp here.

7 Q. Okay. Now did you, did you train both, both trips, both  
8 routes?

9 A. Yes, we did.

10 Q. Yes, you did. Okay. Can you explain to me a little more of  
11 the DOT training, or of the checklist that you do --

12 A. The checklist --

13 Q. -- prior to getting underway in the morning when you push  
14 off?

15 A. Right, the first thing we do, the duck is parked overnight in  
16 its location, and I meet the captain there. And we go through  
17 things aboard the vessel, checking safety equipment, making sure  
18 certain of the, the fire safety equipment is all charged, pinned  
19 and tagged; the, the, the buckets and the safety ropes, the chocks  
20 that we will use throughout the day, that all that is fine. We  
21 also lift the floor boards and go through the equipment, making  
22 certain that all the required pins are in place, including all  
23 spares. There are certain elements of that checklist that the  
24 captain is responsible for, and me as the DOT driver is, is  
25 responsible for others on the checklist.



1 Q. Okay.

2 A. There are certain elements of those that he is checking, and  
3 I am checking. So before we move the vehicle, we do the first  
4 part of that list. Then we take it to an area that called the  
5 Pad, and we actually get out crawlers and crawl under the vehicle  
6 and, for DOT checks, we're checking brakes, we're checking to make  
7 sure all the lug nuts are in place, that, that all the plugs that  
8 are in the boat, and each boat has a different number of plugs.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So there are differences among each of the, each of the ducks  
11 that we drive. But the goal is to get to a place where both his  
12 checks and I, and my checks in discussion; We are agreed that the  
13 boat from DOT's perspective, and from a Coast Guard perspective,  
14 is ready for the tour. Now, if we find anything there, it's, it  
15 can be things that mechanics can address in short order, but  
16 sometimes there are things that are found which means the boat  
17 must be offline for an extended period of time. It's not  
18 something that can be repaired in short order, so they give us  
19 another boat, and we start that same process with the other boat  
20 then.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And that doesn't just happen in the morning, though it  
23 usually does happen in the pre-trip time. That can happen for any  
24 reason throughout the day, from tour to tour, or even during a  
25 tour.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. That the boat is deemed not worthy and they'll either bring  
3 us a, a, a boat out, or they'll, they'll send us back to the dock  
4 if here's not another duck available for us.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. In the case where there is another duck available for us,  
7 they'll bring the duck out and we'll transfer the, the customers  
8 from, from one duck to the other and then proceed on.

9 Q. Okay. What -- the duck that they, they would bring out to  
10 you, would they have a copy of that, that list that you do in the  
11 morning?

12 A. That would be, that would have been posted by the driver who  
13 pre-tripped it.

14 Q. Okay. Would they only bring --

15 A. -- And so it would already be posted in the office.

16 Q. Would they only bring a boat that, that's been driven that  
17 day? Or would they bring another boat offline?

18 A. If, I understand they can bring a boat offline, but if that's  
19 the case, we need to know whether it's been pre-tripped or not.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And so, when they bring that boat, that's one of the first  
22 things I ask, has it been pre-tripped. And usually the captain  
23 covers that when he requests the boat; Are they bringing me one  
24 that's been out today? Or are they bringing me a brand-new boat  
25 that has not been checked out today?

1 Q. Okay. Now I know that, in, on the day of the accident --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- on the 7th, you guys had a mechanical breakdown.

4 A. That's true, we did.

5 Q. Uh huh. And they brought 54 out to you. Do you happen --

6 A. They did.

7 Q. -- to know if she was running that day? Or --

8 A. She had run that day and they told us that she'd been out  
9 twice and there was evidence on the placard for the passenger  
10 count that she had been out twice.

11 Q. Okay. But if you wanted to know if they actually did the,  
12 the morning inspection, it would have been, you would have had to  
13 notify, or call, call, I don't know what the, the base, the,  
14 somebody in operations?

15 A. Yeah. I think in this situation, they would never have  
16 brought us a duck that had not been checked out and pre-tripped.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Because we had passengers there.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And we don't have the equipment, while we're out on the road,  
21 to do a proper pre-check.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So, so, I don't think they would have brought us one that  
24 hadn't been checked out.

25 Q. Now do you know if, this is since you're were, you were, you

1 departed about 5:30 according to Captain King.

2 A. That's correct.

3 Q. Is, is there a certain, is there a certain number of trips  
4 that we know that; Okay, 54 was done for the day, so they were  
5 already-, left it in the lot, that you, you were on 20-, 26  
6 correct?

7 A. Right.

8 Q. So, did they know that it was only going to be 26, 7, and  
9 whatever. There's only three more trips for the day, is that, is  
10 that why that boat was --

11 A. I don't think there's a limited amount of number of trips  
12 that a boat can go out. The only reason that would be limited is  
13 fuel.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. So there are some of the ducks that we can go four trips  
16 because of the fuel. There are -- and those are the stretch  
17 ducks. The truck ducks, they're allowed five trips.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. And that's on the longest of the tour, two tours, the one  
20 that comes out here to Baird Mountain and on Table Rock.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So that's only from the standpoint of the fuel available.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. As far as pre-trip or post-trip, I don't believe that there  
25 is a limit.

1 Q. Okay. Now do you, do you also fill out the post-trip forms?

2 A. We would fill out the post-trip form on the duck we finished  
3 the day on.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So, for instance, on that day, we started out with Truck 26.  
6 When we traded ducks, that mechanic who brought me 54, was taking  
7 26 back and post-tripped it. I post-tripped 54 when we were done  
8 with it for the day.

9 Q. Okay. Does the captain assist you on post-tripping that, or  
10 just you did that?

11 A. No, it's the driver.

12 Q. The driver. Okay, very good. Back to training --

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. -- Is there, was there any other training that was done  
15 besides on the, on the, basically on the job training where you  
16 went out on the road, or when you came out on the vessel?

17 A. There was specific training done on the water, as far as  
18 rescue.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Showing how to properly don the PFDs. What a rescue would  
21 look like. What would happen if somebody is overboard. To show  
22 us the availability of both the circular life savers, the  
23 donuts --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- both the one that has the rope up front and the one

1 without in the back, and how those would be used. How to maneuver  
2 the boat safely along side somebody who's in the water with or  
3 without a PFD, to, to let down the rear ramp, if you can't be  
4 brought safely in over the side. And then they just walk up the  
5 steps, because the, you can use that rear ramp even though the  
6 duck is in the water.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So all that kind of thing was covered. And they actually  
9 simulated that, that kind of rescue by using the life saver  
10 without the rope, as if it were a man overboard. And then we were  
11 given the task of going and getting them, so we maneuver the boat  
12 in the water. And it's one of the few times that a driver would  
13 maneuver the boat on the water. But we were shown how to maneuver  
14 the boat in the water. We were also shown on this ramp here and  
15 given the opportunity to remove the boat from the water in case  
16 the captain had an injury or for whatever reason was  
17 incapacitated, then the driver would be capable of removing the  
18 boat from the water.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. In my experience though, there are no drivers that have  
21 experience with putting a boat in the water. But it, they seen  
22 that it was absolutely necessary that we have the ability,  
23 capability, and confidence to pull the boat out of the water in an  
24 emergency. So, that was part of the training. Yes it was.

25 Q. Okay. How about, what other, what are some your duties as,

1 besides just driving do you take?

2 A. Besides driving, when we go on the water, the driver and the  
3 captain switch places, and while we're on the water, my duty is as  
4 a lookout.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And a best assistant for the captain should he require  
7 anything.

8 Q. Okay. Now, do you do any of the narration while you're --

9 A. No, I have not. I understand there are some drivers who  
10 their captains do allow the to do that. They've been doing it for  
11 a number of years, but I have not narrated a tour. No.

12 Q. Okay. Do you, are you ever used, for examples say to, when  
13 the captain's going over his security, or his safety brief prior  
14 to departing, where you board the passengers, or prior to getting  
15 in the water, do you, do you have to participate in that drill, or  
16 -?

17 A. No, I've never been asked to do that by any captain.

18 Q. Okay. Have you ever been asked to put on a PFD, a life  
19 preserver?

20 A. No, I haven't.

21 Q. Have you ever just --

22 A. Other than training, no.

23 Q. Not other than training, no. And they did the training here?

24 A. Yes, here on Table Rock.

25 Q. Okay. Any other training that you've taken with the company?

1 A. No.

2 Q. No. Do you, do you participate in, we've been told before  
3 that the company has safety meetings --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Once --

6 A. Once in --

7 Q. -- safety and operational meetings? What are some of the  
8 topics that are covered at those meetings?

9 A. Issues between the drivers and the captain. I understand  
10 there have been in the past, some of it exists. - Another item  
11 was the lengthening of the work day. We had been doing the last  
12 trip out at 6:00, and last week we started up doing 6:30 as the  
13 last, last time out for, for the, that's at that 76 facility.  
14 That changed did not effect the tours that go out from The  
15 Landing.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. They go out at, at, every two hours, starting at ten in the  
18 morning, and their last one is always at six.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So that did not change. And that was discussed at that, that  
21 last (indiscernible) meetings.

22 Q. Do they ever talk about safety items? Like, the fire  
23 extinguishers, or fire drills, or some-, damage that, you know,  
24 grounding, or accidents? Any, what other type of information, I  
25 guess, is --



1 A. I remember --

2 Q. -- besides they were saying between drivers and is there,  
3 was --

4 A. We had a --

5 Q. -- is it a safety meeting or is it an operations meeting, or  
6 it's kind of a combination of both?

7 A. I think its kind of a combination of both because there was,  
8 was a situation where a driver had popped tires on one of the, one  
9 of the guides at the front ramp at the duck location on 76  
10 Boulevard.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. And that was discussed at the meeting.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. That you should, should be wide enough not to do damage to  
15 the vehicle or the facility, either one. I think that falls under  
16 safety, yeah.

17 Q. Okay. But you don't remember any discussion on, like a man  
18 overboard, besides the training that you did.

19 A. No. No, I don't recall any, I don't recall that issue being  
20 discussed at either the two meetings I attended.

21 Q. Okay. When, when you go to, you know, when you show up for  
22 work and you've completed your pre-check, your DOT pre-check, and  
23 the captain's finished his check, and you guys sign your  
24 paperwork, do you bring that into the office, or do you hand it  
25 off to somebody?

1 A. It usually goes down like this, that I'll finish my portion,  
2 and there's a spot there for my name and my signature, and then  
3 I'll bring it to the captain who's usually in the, the captain.  
4 The crew break room.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Where he goes ahead and completes his, sometimes he will do  
7 that on the duck before he departs. And at other times, he's  
8 waiting for me to bring it around to the front ramp, so I just  
9 carry it in for him to complete the paperwork then after we're  
10 done those checks.

11 Q. Okay. And when you bring the, the crew, the break room, is,  
12 do they, they have a, we've discussed of weather, weather service  
13 at the company has --

14 A. Yes,

15 Q. -- some people refer to it as a lobby, does the break room  
16 have that, that weather monitor in it? Or is it somewhere else?

17 A. Yes, yes it's. No it's on the wall of that, that room.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. It's on one side of the door to the Ops office, and where we  
20 file our paperwork is right on the other side of that same door.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So it's right there.

23 Q. Do you ever look at the, the monitor?

24 A. Yes. Yes.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. There have been times when our tours have been on hold  
2 because of the weather. And so, yeah, the, there are a lot of  
3 times when we're looking at that, even as drivers.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But not because we were required to, or trained to, because  
6 it's there and the information's available.

7 Q. Got it, okay. When, when you're, you're driving, do you have  
8 anyway of contacting the office?

9 A. Over the radio.

10 Q. Over the radio.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Do you, does the office ever contact you saying that, you  
13 know, there's, there's a thunderstorm coming in, just a heads-up.  
14 Do you recall ever hearing that?

15 A. Yes, I do remember hearing that.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. There's going to be weather on the way.

18 Q. Okay. Did you, do you recall if you heard that the day of  
19 the accident?

20 A. That did not come down the day of the accident. No.

21 Q. Okay. And, when we talked to Captain King, he said that you  
22 had to wait about 45-minutes for, or the other boat to arrive.  
23 Did you guys have, were you aware of any weather in the area at  
24 that time?

25 A. No, it was a clear blue sky.

1 Q. Clear blue sky. Okay. What -- I mean, I know you've been  
2 here shortly, but every once on a while, have you had any  
3 emergency issues arise on any of the duck boats that you've been  
4 driver on? Whether on the land portion or the water portion?

5 A. No. I do remember passengers having difficulty removing  
6 themselves or coming aboard --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- but no, I don't remember any medical emergencies or  
9 otherwise occurring while I was aboard that.

10 Q. Okay. And, generally the operations department, do you, are  
11 you in contact with them? Do you, when you depart the facility,  
12 and you're actually driving, do you, who do you inform that; I'm,  
13 I'm leaving the --

14 A. There's a manager there that, that is directing when, how  
15 many ducks are boarded with passengers, and they inform the  
16 drivers and the captains of how many ducks are going out. And  
17 they usually go out every half an hour.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So usually about ten minutes before then, we're waiting for  
20 word of how many ducks are going out.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. Usually there's enough customers coming through where we  
23 don't have a backlog of empty ducks, but we're pulled right up and  
24 there's only two ducks on the facility. And they say; Well, only  
25 one, or maybe both of them are going to be loaded, and we know

1 that ten minutes before.

2 Q. Okay. So, you, at some point, you could go out with two  
3 ducks at the same time?

4 A. Oh, yes, and sometimes there's even four or five ducks that  
5 are designated to go out, but they're loaded two at a time.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Once they depart, then we move the line of empty ducks  
8 forward so that they can be loaded, and that's the way that goes  
9 down.

10 Q. Now do they change your route or do you, do you follow like  
11 a, like a, a rail car? I mean, do, do both ducks do the same land  
12 portion or --

13 A. No, there are some ducks that do take different land routes  
14 to get over here, and that has more to do with traffic on 76  
15 Boulevard than anything else.

16 Q. Okay. But is, as far as two leaving at the same time,  
17 will --

18 A. They're not considered the convoy --

19 Q. They're not considered convoy.

20 A. -- that you're aware of those captains are free to designate  
21 the routes as they desire.

22 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any local procedures, just for the  
23 Branson ducks? I mean, something that wouldn't, I, have you, I  
24 guess I should first ask, have you ever seen the operations  
25 manual?

1 A. No, I haven't.

2 Q. No, you haven't. Okay. Have you ever heard of the Hot Line  
3 that you could call if you have any questions?

4 A. Hmm, other than the one provided, there is a bulletin board,  
5 and I've seen a number on there. But it has to do with Federal  
6 Minimum Wage and stuff like that, but not for the company.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. There is another one that I saw in the breakroom that had to  
9 do with reporting incidents, and I don't remember the specifics of  
10 that, but I do remember another number hanging up there in the  
11 office.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. I mean, it's on the wall opposite where the, where the  
14 weather screen was at.

15 Q. Um-hum. You said that there was a, some drivers and captains  
16 had issues. Have you ever, do you get along with your captains  
17 most of the time?

18 A. For the most part. There have been some terse moments, but  
19 as adults we were able to work through those and press on.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. There was never a situation that was so bad that we couldn't  
22 work together.

23 Q. Okay. Now, is, did, does the driver ever have a say of; Okay  
24 you come down to the dock and you don't like the way something  
25 looks, that you could say; you know what, I don't think we should

1 go?

2 A. I've also felt open up with, opening up with a captain that I  
3 would be able to say that, but I don't remember a situation coming  
4 up where it came down to I think it shouldn't be that way, and we  
5 shouldn't go because of it.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I don't think that's happened. No.

8 Q. Okay. So, getting back to the day of the accident on the  
9 seventh --

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. -- And you guys were, could you just walk me through, aft-,  
12 you left, you departed and just kind of --

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Explain to me about your day, about that, that particular  
15 trip, not the day.

16 A. Do you mean along the water? Or do you mean?

17 Q. Just from the, the start. In your own words; Okay, we loaded  
18 passengers and--

19 A. Right. We loaded passengers and we went the, the route that  
20 that captain prefers, and it was the same for every, everyone we  
21 went out on.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. We went out and did the tour. Went up on the mountain. When  
24 we came down here to the lot, he went through a safety talk just  
25 like he always does. Everything was normal. And, of course, this

1 is, this is trip five for the--. No, it wasn't a trip five. But  
2 every trip, it went the same way, up to the point where he could  
3 not engage the propeller. It was the same as all of them had  
4 then.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. But we were down the ramp, getting ready to go into the  
7 water, and he gets to a point, there's a walking trail there and  
8 he stops right there before doing his, his last go into the water,  
9 and when he pulled up he, he's got the mechanical problem. He  
10 can't engage the prop.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. And that had not come up before. So he had me get in the  
13 driver's seat. We went to the back to spot for me and I was given  
14 the duty to back the duck off the ramp. There were already  
15 several other ducks waiting there to go in, so we were blocking  
16 progress there.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. We backed up to the Dulles lot and went back to the same spot  
19 we had been in when he was given his safety talk. And that's  
20 where we waited until we transferred to 54.

21 Q. Okay. So you transferred to 54 and now --

22 A. And now we go onto the water. Like I said, the weather was  
23 good. The water was calm. It was even glassy. I remember  
24 looking back after we put in and you could actually see the  
25 reflection of the trees in the water. I had never seen this lake



1 that calm before. On that, this is pretty awesome day. So the  
2 captain, as is usual, had several kids come up and drive the duck  
3 and photo ops for parents and grandparent and what have you. And  
4 after about the third, maybe the fourth one, I noticed up here by  
5 Indian Point, there was a white squall-line coming across.

6 When we had put in the water, the captain had noticed the  
7 clouds that were extremely off to the west, and he had made a  
8 comment; Well, folks, it looks like we're going to get rain  
9 tonight, but it's a good hour, maybe two away, but you'll probably  
10 have rain this evening, and went ahead with letting the kids  
11 drive. Like I said, the water was perfectly calm.

12 On our normal water path, we go out in the, and around  
13 Gilligan's Island, is what they call it. I don't know the  
14 official name of the island is. And then we come back to this  
15 ramp here and put out. But on this particular time, we were only  
16 about halfway out there when I noticed that squall-line and I got  
17 the captain's attention, and yells; well something's coming out.  
18 And it didn't take, maybe from that point, for maybe about three  
19 minutes before the captain had the kids get out of the seat, took  
20 command of the boat, and had already turned back here toward the  
21 Belle when, when literally all hell broke loose.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And that did not get better. It continued to get worse, even  
24 coming up along the side of the Branson Belle here.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. We came up and around the Belle, (indiscernible) the Belle  
2 we're turning. He had radio contact with the, the captain of the  
3 Belle, and he asked; Are you powering back? And the captain of  
4 the Belle assured our captain that the only reason they're turning  
5 is to counter the effects of the wind.

6 Q. Um-hum

7 A. And with that, and gaining enough clearance, he made his turn  
8 before, turn towards the ramp. Before he turned them, he said;  
9 There's another duck out here and I need to know where, he is at?

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. Well, I couldn't see it from where I was standing. I had  
12 been standing right next to him. And I, so I walked down the  
13 aisle, well of course we got dome lights on and it's providing a  
14 reflection on the curtains that are down. And I can't see the  
15 other duck, but I knew he was there. I'd just seen him earlier.  
16 So I walked and the passengers saying, well, he's right there. As  
17 I walked down the path, I was able to see it too. He was about 50  
18 feet behind us, and about a hundred and fifty feet off to our  
19 left, and I went back to the captain and let him know that.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. And with that, he went ahead and made his final turn towards  
22 the ramp.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. As we were pulling up the ramp there, I remember looking back  
25 and I had lost sight of the other boat because of the paddle

1 wheels. And I never saw that other boat again.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Walking down the aisle, that, when I had seen it, that was  
4 the last I had ever seen the boat. And I did not know at that  
5 point, that it was number seven that was the other boat there. I  
6 didn't sort that out until later.

7 Q. Okay. Once you got out of the water, then the captain got  
8 out of the chair, and then you resumed driving?

9 A. Well, the captain was still in the chair and he called on the  
10 marine frequency about the other boat, and there was no response.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. And after a pause, we finally decided; Well, go ahead and  
13 trade out. So I got behind the seat and he called on, he switched  
14 the radio to repeater, which is the land frequency --

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. -- and called. and usually ops is monitoring that and called  
17 again; There's still another duck out there. Have we gotten, you  
18 know, we're, not, and there was no response other than to go ahead  
19 and bring our duck back.

20 Q. Okay. You did get a response from Operations though.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. And who was operations, on Operations at that time?

23 A. I, I do, I don't know whose voice it was that I heard say  
24 that.

25 Q. Okay. And, at what point did you, you hear that Seven was,

1 was in trouble? Did you hear it, I mean, besides the captain  
2 saying; She's still out there, did you know about the accident  
3 and --

4 A. When we, when we returned to the, to the facility and were  
5 off loading passengers, about half the passengers were off, and  
6 somebody at the facility came out and said that Seven went down  
7 and there were already five of determined dead.

8 Q. Wow.

9 A. That was the first we heard it. I thought that was kind of  
10 what I'm thinking because when passengers heard that.

11 Q. Um-hum. Okay. And then, following departure of the  
12 passengers, then you had to do your trip --

13 A. Right, I took, I went ahead and took 54 out to where we norm-  
14 , it's a procedure called Turning the ducks Out. Usually as we're  
15 headed back, we're getting close to Green-, the intersection of  
16 Green Mountain and 165, while we're on 165. And we called-in to  
17 let the facility know that we are homebound and we're coming back  
18 fairly shortly. Which we did.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. When we got back, first we offloaded. Usually in that radio  
21 communication, they'll say; Well, bring it on home. Or in this  
22 case, at the end of the day, they'll tell us; Go ahead and turn it  
23 south. That tells us that absolutely this is going to be our last  
24 of the day.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. And we did get the to turning, turn it south.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. They still mentioned nothing at that point though about the  
4 other duck, but they did acknowledge my transmission and tell me  
5 to turn it south. So, that means once we offload the passengers,  
6 I know I'm headed to the area where we normally turn the duck  
7 south. Basically you're, you're situating it on a hill to where  
8 it isn't going to move at all. You're situating the duck to where  
9 it's going to be parked with nobody aboard it, and it's going to  
10 stay there until a mechanic comes and services it for the evening  
11 to prepare it for the next day. That's what this Turning South  
12 procedure is.

13 Q. Okay. And who, who does the, the maintenance on the boat  
14 after --

15 A. The mechanics.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. There are several of them. Some of them I know. I haven't  
18 met all of them. I don't know the names of all of them.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. The one who brought me 54, I have met him and talked with  
21 him, and I know his name.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. But the others, I don't know.

24 Q. Okay. Well, I, I'm going to pass you on to -

25 BY SGT. [REDACTED]

1 Q. Sorry, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Highway Patrol.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Thanks [REDACTED] for talking with us.

4 A. You're welcome.

5 Q. I, I just want to clarify a couple things that I, I may have  
6 missed what you said, but --

7 A. Yes,

8 Q. -- you, were you, you were operating the radio once you were  
9 out of the water, conversing with the Operations?

10 A. When I'm sitting in the driver's seat, the captain is close  
11 enough to where either one of us can use the radio.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. In that situation the captain here on the lot did use the  
14 radio and as we were headed back to the facility, at the normal  
15 designated location, approaching Green Mountain, I let them know  
16 that we were coming back.

17 Q. And, and did, did you say anything about the other duck that  
18 was out there behind you? Did you notify--

19 A. I did not over the radio.

20 Q. Okay. And, and nor did they reply with any instructions  
21 about the, the other duck, whether or not you didn't hear anything  
22 about the other duck from another source?

23 A. No. And as there were two requests for information, and we'd  
24 gotten mum on both of those, the captain and I, by glances, pretty  
25 much knew what that meant. That something (indiscernible) awkward

1 is going on. Of course we had no idea that, that, that the other  
2 duck was lost at that point. But whether he was still out there  
3 still struggling we didn't know, but we certainly knew it meant he  
4 was still on the water.

5 Q. Norm, under normal conditions, did you always have, or have  
6 you ever experienced any difficulties with your Operations Center?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay. Also, you mentioned that there were several ducks  
9 waiting in line when you noticed that you lost propulsion system  
10 and had to back up the ramp.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. How many ducks do you think were in line there?

13 A. There was at least one and I believe there was a second one  
14 that, whether he was coming through the lot at that point, I don't  
15 know, but once I had 26 backed-up to that prior location, the duck  
16 that I had seen went ahead and on down the ramp, and straight away  
17 there was another one there as well.

18 Q. How many ducks were running that day?

19 A. How many ducks?

20 Q. Fifteen? Thirty?

21 A. I'd have to consult my, consult my device. I don't have that  
22 with me at the moment.

23 Q. Okay. How many normally would run during the day?

24 A. It varies according to the load of passengers that are  
25 expected. I'm going to guess maybe 14, 15, 16, somewhere in

1 there, for the day. But I don't know that offhand.

2 Q. Do any of the managers in that facility ever operate ducks?

3 A. Not as a CDL driver, and not as a captain that I know of.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I haven't seen that. I do know, well that, that's for the  
6 people who are ordinarily telling us how many ducks are going out  
7 every half-an-hour, like that. I do know that Curtis has served  
8 as the driver.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But I think that's probably from the standpoint of the lack  
11 of drivers than anything else.

12 Q. Who are some of the other managers out there? Do you know  
13 their names?

14 A. I know Charles is a manager. I know Matt, Ethan, off the top  
15 of my head.

16 Q. Okay. And, and do you ever see any of those gentlemen as a  
17 captain or a driver?

18 A. No, Curtis only.

19 Q. Okay. Have you ever worked with any other captains, other  
20 than Captain King?

21 A. Absolutely, it's usually a different captain every day.  
22 There are some of them I've been out with on multiple days, but  
23 usually when they paired drivers and captains up, they try to  
24 spread us around so that we have an opportunity to work with  
25 multiple captains while we're here this summer.



1 Q. Do all the captains follow the same procedures that you  
2 described today that you had followed that day with Captain King?

3 A. Yes, pretty much.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Like I was saying that the courses for actually getting down  
6 over here, coming through town, is different. And captains have  
7 different preferences. There are certain parts of the tour where  
8 they prefer talking about certain things that customers are  
9 passing and seeing, and they have special things that they want to  
10 say, so they have special, special paths that they want to take,  
11 but --

12 Q. Specifically, in like the instructions, the safety  
13 instructions and things given before the water (indiscernible)?

14 A. They're for the most part verbatim the same.

15 Q. Whenever --

16 A. Of course there's differences of personality that enter into  
17 that, but --

18 Q. Sure. Are passengers allowed to, to don a life vest if they  
19 feel the need to don a life vest? In other words, are passengers  
20 free to just do that on their own?

21 A. Most captains tell them; When it's time, I'll tell you.  
22 Other captains will ad a phrase such as: And here's another big  
23 clue; if you see Daniel and I scrambling for ours, that's a pretty  
24 a clue that you need to get yours on.

25 Q. Certainly.

1 A. So the captain, there are captains that make it clear that  
2 it's your life preserver and you have the ability to determine  
3 when it's right for you. But certainly if we're scrambling for  
4 ours, it's pretty important.

5 Q. Absolutely, I would agree. Now have you ever worked for  
6 Captain Scott McKee?

7 A. I haven't.

8 Q. Okay. And what, in light of what you just described to me,  
9 which kind of captain was he?

10 A. Which kind of captain?

11 Q. The PFD, the question about the PFDs.

12 A. I'll let you know when it's time.

13 Q. Okay. In, in any of, in any of, so you, how many times do  
14 you think you went on a trip with Captain McKee?

15 A. Once I discovered I was gone, I went back at my calendar and  
16 I keep that information. I've only been with him the one time.

17 Q. Just one time, okay. Do you recall his safety briefing?  
18 When was that by the way?

19 A. I'm going to say three weeks ago.

20 Q. Okay. Do you happened to recall his safety briefing?

21 A. His? There's been so many safety briefings.

22 Q. Sure.

23 A. Every trip --

24 Q. Anything that stood out?

25 A. Five, six and seven.

1 Q. Anything that stood out to you in his safety briefing that  
2 nobody else does?

3 A. Very professional. Very stern, but I'm the one with the  
4 call.

5 Q. Okay. Can you describe to me, how you communicated with  
6 passengers when you were underway on the water?

7 A. Sometimes while we're underway on the water, the captain is  
8 in continuous conversation with the families of the child that  
9 happens to be up there. And sometimes I'm seated, seated close  
10 enough to a passenger where they'll tap me on the shoulder and  
11 have a question. Well, I go ahead and answer that question. So  
12 there is interaction between me as the driver and the passengers  
13 while we're on the water. That does occur, yes.

14 Q. And so there's a, the, act, there's a PA system that, that  
15 you (indiscernible).

16 A. I'm not talking on the PA, I'm just talking to them. The  
17 captain's the only one that has the PA.

18 Q. Okay. And that's where the narration comes from during the  
19 trip.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. If you ever want to communicate with anybody in back of the  
22 boat, let's say or at the stern of the boat, whenever it's  
23 underway on the water, can you, from your seated position, I  
24 assume up front, that's where you normally stay? Just kind of up  
25 front around the captain, or --

1 A. Well, it depends on the load of passengers. If there's, some  
2 captains prefer that the driver be at the back while we're on the  
3 water --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- to, as a look out, to help keep--, most of the captains  
6 I've been with don't object to me being in that first seat behind  
7 the driver's seat.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Passengers don't sit there anywhere. Anyway, that's where  
10 they keep the life jacket that they're doing their, their safety  
11 talks with. That seat is open. It's kind of bad to have a  
12 passenger there because the driver's seat is there, and they can't  
13 see anything.

14 Q. I see.

15 A. So, for most captains, I'm sitting in that seat and we're  
16 pretty much facing each other. I'm keeping an eye on his back --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- to tell him, to keep him informed on things that he might  
19 not have seen.

20 Q. I see.

21 A. I've only been with one captain who asked me to get up and go  
22 to the back, even though there was not real room back there. On  
23 this particular day, I freely went up and went back there because  
24 no body, none of those five seats were occupied back there.

25 Q. Okay. From the front of that boat under normal conditions,

1 can you communicate with somebody in the back? Could you? Could  
2 you talk with someone?

3 A. I could stand up and holler at them.

4 Q. You'd have to, you'd have to holler?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. So, I mean --

7 A. Understand the engines are, the engine's running, you have  
8 the gurgling of the water, the sound of the prop washing  
9 everything in the water, and that's, I'm guessing, pretty much why  
10 the, the captain stays on the PA, so that everybody can, can hear  
11 what's being said.

12 Q. I see. Have you ever been on a boat when PFDs were utilized?

13 A. Negative, never.

14 Q. Or, or asked for, I guess --

15 A. Except for training, no.

16 Q. Okay. So that's never happened.

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. Can you describe for me procedures for what, under  
19 what circumstances PFDs would be utilized?

20 A. When the captain deems it necessary.

21 Q. Okay. Can you describe the procedures in dropping the  
22 curtains?

23 A. Yes, there's two switches off to the left side of the dash  
24 board. Those two top switches control the side curtains.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. They are powered and usually we put them down when there's  
2 inclement weather, if there's active rain, sometimes wind.

3 Q. Sure.

4 A. In addition to that, the actual cockpit has a wind shield in  
5 the front and we have two zippered side curtains that are either  
6 side of the front of the vessel. So we use those as well, but  
7 there not powered, there just manual zippers.

8 Q. Okay. And I wanted to clarify too. Did you say that you  
9 have never see, that you've never read this document?

10 A. Though I've requested one, I've never gotten a copy of it.

11 Q. Okay. And so, are you familiar with the emergency procedures  
12 of cutting those curtains loose, or dropping, to actually dropping  
13 the curtains?

14 A. Yes, that's covered in training. As a matter of fact, I  
15 remember the day I specifically asked how it's done and I was  
16 shown.

17 Q. Okay. So can you describe for us here how that's done?

18 A. Yes. There is a pin there at the front of each of the side  
19 curtains that would be at the driver's shoulder or at the  
20 captain's back as he's sitting. If you go up there, there is a  
21 ring that you, that you pull out and it dislodges that front and  
22 the entire curtain is said to fall away into the water.

23 Q. So, are you saying that you just pull the pin and that's, and  
24 that's all you have to do?

25 A. I believe that's the case.

1 Q. Okay. So, if you're underway on the water, under what  
2 circumstances would those curtains be dropped in that manner?

3 A. You mean to get rid of them off the vessel, or to lower them?

4 Q. Yes, yes. I, working, in an emergency situation, what type  
5 of situation would have the curtains --

6 A. Well, they will just push out, but if for whatever reason,  
7 you need to remove them from the vehicle, you would pull that pin,  
8 and they should just fall away.

9 Q. So as the driver, you would be let's say around the captain?  
10 Or you would be seated somewhere on that boat, whether in the  
11 rear, or in the front?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. And, and so, if the captain deemed it necessary to cause  
14 those curtains to be broke free in emergency situation, how would  
15 he do that specifically?

16 A. He would have to, he would have to pull that pin in order to  
17 get the to let loose. You can push them out manually with your  
18 hands at the bottom. They're not tied down so tight. As a matter  
19 of fact, we do have problems where the wind comes and blows them  
20 out.

21 Q. How would he reach the one on the passenger side, if he's  
22 seated right, cause he's, he's operating the boat, and he can  
23 reach this one correct?

24 A. Yes. He would have to stand up and take a step over there in  
25 order to reach it. You can't reach it from the driver's seat, no.

1 Q. Okay. Very good. Thank you. I believe that's all I have to  
2 say.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED]

4 Q. Thank you again sir, for coming in. I appreciate this Mr.  
5 Aldridge. My name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Again I'm with the U.S. Coast  
6 Guard in St. Louis.

7 Not a lot of questions, just curious to see if, initially you  
8 mentioned your pre-trip checklist --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- you say you do that in concert with the captain?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Did you do that on, for, Stretch Duck 26?

13 A. Yes, we did that in the morning for 26.

14 Q. Morning. Are you, you indicated you're the CDL driver. Are  
15 you familiar with the marine systems that are on board? Not just,  
16 besides the DOD --

17 A. Some of them, because we were shown them in training, but  
18 it's not something I sign-off on, on that pre-trip.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. That's the captain's duty to sign-off on those. Coast Guard  
21 items is what we call them.

22 Q. Coast Guard items. Okay. So those were the luring system.  
23 So on that day, Mr. King, Mr. King signed off on those, on those  
24 particular items on the checklist?

25 A. I did not see the sheet where he had. When I handed it to



1 him, all of my things were initialed.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. When I handed it to him, I never saw that sheet again.

4 Q. Okay. So it, so you did your part first, and his was second.

5 A. What --, Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Fair enough. So on this particular day, you were, you  
7 were CDL on Stretch Duck 50, 26. Do you --

8 A. To start the day, yes.

9 Q. Yes, sir, and then obviously after a mechanical failure, you  
10 were on Stretch Duck 54. Do you have a regular duck that you  
11 operate as a CDL? Or --

12 A. No.

13 Q. No?

14 A. And to my understanding, the captains don't either. There  
15 are certain ducks that they prefer, and ops provided the vehicles  
16 available, try to match the captain up with the vehicle they  
17 prefer, but it doesn't always happen that way.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So there is no said duck or a particular captain or a driver,  
20 either one.

21 Q. Are there differences between ducks from the DOT perspective,  
22 from the DEL perspective that are, are different from duck to  
23 duck? Or are they all fairly similar?

24 A. They are all fairly similar. I would, I would say that's  
25 affair estimation, yes.

1 Q. With regards to training, so does Ride the Ducks conduct  
2 separate land DOT training and separate Coast Guard training for  
3 on water, or are they, or is it just one, one training evolution?

4 A. I think it --

5 Q. When we talk about training topics.

6 A. They don't have it split up into blocks of instruction for  
7 DOT and the Coast Guard stuff. It, it's kind of lumped together.

8 Q. Okay. So if, if Ride the Ducks was conducting, in this case  
9 let's just say, emergency training, so, it would, they would  
10 sometimes cover road hazards, and sometimes cover water hazards,  
11 or, or, or, is that what it would look like?

12 A. From the trainer's perspective, I don't know what records  
13 he's keeping of what he is training on.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I would be willing to bet that there is a system wide that,  
16 but I don't remember ever seeing him marking on a sheet while we  
17 were training. So I don't know about that.

18 Q. Okay. So the, the topics that were discussing, you don't  
19 recall what those might have been?

20 A. Take it, take it as it, as it comes.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. He wasn't working from a rip sheet and signing off each  
23 individual one in that fashion, no.

24 Q. Okay. Have you attended printing sessions that they've know  
25 before, for emergency training? Have you--

1 A. No.

2 Q. No, or you have not?

3 A. Not a train, not a session specifically for water safety, no.

4 Q. Just anything in general, any, anything?

5 A. Other than what I'd, had mentioned earlier was involved with  
6 the training that we did do, no.

7 Q. Okay. Are you familiar with procedures for on-water  
8 procedures? Like if there was on-water emergency procedures. So  
9 if there was a --

10 A. Other than what we train on, as I had mentioned we did  
11 certain water rescue of man overboard scenarios and things like  
12 that.

13 Q. Okay. And nothing --

14 A. But it was, I wouldn't say that it was extensive training.  
15 It certainly didn't go into days.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. There was several hours set aside for that.

18 Q. Understand. And I apologize, I know you only had seven weeks  
19 of, with, or plus with the company, so, I'll try to keep it in  
20 mind when I ask these questions, so.

21 When underway, again, on the water and obviously you're  
22 acting as kind of a lookout, an assistant to the captain, do you,  
23 do you have any responsibilities in the event of emergencies  
24 specifically for you? Or do you, what is it that you --

25 A. To do what the captain asked me to do.

1 Q. Do what the captain tells you.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. Do you have any authorities as kind of an assistant  
4 captain, if you will, assistant to the captains, excuse me --

5 A. I have no authorities on the water.

6 Q. No authority. So if, in the event that you thought that you,  
7 in your own judgment felt like they should add, people should put  
8 on their life jackets, you couldn't direct them to do that?

9 A. Direct him? No.

10 Q. No, direct the passengers to put on life jackets.

11 A. That's a different call. They way it would go down, is I  
12 would bring whatever information I had to the captain so that he  
13 could make the decision on it.

14 Q. Okay. That's all I (indiscernible). Thank you.

15 A. You're welcome.

16 BY MR. [REDACTED]

17 Q. How are you doing sir? [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with U.S. Coast Guard.  
18 Couple of quick questions. Do you live in the area?

19 A. No, I'm normally from the St. Louis area.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I'm down here for the summer working.

22 Q. Down here for the summer only.

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. Since the, since the incident took place, have you spoken to  
25 anyone regarding the severity of the storms that day?

1 A. I didn't quite catch that, can I get you to repeat that?

2 Have I discussed that --

3 Q. Yeah, have you --

4 A. You mean since the storm hit?

5 Q. -- have you had any discussions with anyone like, other  
6 employees about; Good Lord man, that was, you know, that storm  
7 that day was really bad --

8 A. Well, of course I have.

9 Q. -- or if it's common, or what'd --

10 A. Yes. There were captains that said they'd never seen  
11 anything like it out here on Table Rock.

12 Q. Nothing like it before. Okay.

13 A. There are captains who have been doing this for decades and  
14 they said they've never, they've never seen it themselves, and  
15 never heard of weather being that bad -- and certainly, not coming  
16 in as fast as this one did.

17 Q. Prior to entering the water that day, did, did Captain King  
18 mention anything to you about maybe altering his course? Or  
19 changing his route?

20 A. We had no indication that the weather was coming. He  
21 wouldn't of altered the route based on no knowledge about a storm  
22 he didn't know existed at that point.

23 Q. When, when did you happen to realize that he was going to  
24 change course? Just when he did it? Or did he mention anything  
25 to you after, after you went on water?

1 A. When we were in the water and he saw that the waves were  
2 breaking around with, he immediately sat in the seat and turned  
3 towards the Belle.

4 Q. Okay. I guess maybe I should ask you this. What's your, do  
5 you know what the normal route is when you, when you do hit the  
6 water, which way do you guys go?

7 A. Yes. We, we normally make for around the island and then we  
8 turn to this other ramp.

9 Q. Okay. At this time --

10 A. I mean, it's usually a crisscross pattern, because he's  
11 trying to make time for all the families who want photo  
12 opportunities to do that.

13 Q. Sure.

14 A. So, if you're asking is there a set path that he varied from,  
15 there is no set specific path, only the general idea that we'll  
16 put in at one ramp, go around the island, and come out by the  
17 water on the other end.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. Other than that, there's not a specific path.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Certainly not as aircraft would have from city to city.

22 Q. All right. I have no further questions. Thank you.

23 UNKNOWN SPEAKER: All right. Are you okay to keep, to  
24 continue to go, or you need a --

25 MR. ALDRIDGE: No, I'm good.

1 BY MR. VOLPE:

2 Q. I just have a couple of follow-up questions.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. John Volpe from the NTSB. You mentioned about a tracking  
5 program. You said you, you'd have to check your program. Is  
6 there any --

7 A. Like tracking?

8 Q. -- is there a GPS tracking device on the duck so that the  
9 office--

10 A. I believe they do have the ability to, to track GPS on the  
11 individual ducks. I haven't seen that myself, but I believe they  
12 have that.

13 Q. Okay. I just want to verify, when, when you were out there,  
14 do you remember seeing Stretch 7? At, at, at what point did you  
15 remember see, did you see them come off the ramp? Did you, only  
16 when we were here, and he told you to look for them? Where are  
17 they at?

18 A. When we entered the water, there was a boat that entered the  
19 water behind us. I understood at some later point that that was  
20 number 7.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I also remember that's same duck as we were approaching the  
23 front corner of the Branson Belle, and then turned to the left to  
24 go up along side the Belle, that there was another duck back there  
25 --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. -- and he, and we had parallel courses coming up the, up the  
3 side of the Belle.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I understand now from the videos and the fact that Seven had,  
6 is the one that was lost, that that other duck that had paralleled  
7 our course, was the one that was lost, and that it was Seven.

8 Q. Okay. Did you happen to notice --

9 A. But I didn't know that at the time.

10 Q. Okay. On your duck itself, did you notice any engine  
11 changes, speed changes, with the weather?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Our engine did falter several times because of water in the  
15 engine compartment.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And I remember the captain saying; Crap, don't fail on me  
18 now. It didn't, it went ahead and kept running.

19 Q. Okay. And did you happen, I mean, do you recall was there  
20 any issue with se, what, well you didn't know which, you know now  
21 was Seven off your port side, it, that they were having any  
22 problem with their engine?

23 A. No. I, well I wouldn't have been able to hear the engine.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And when I saw the, when I walk, had walked down the isle



1 that time and saw them, they were setting steady in the water.  
2 They looked normal in the water.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Of course they were struggling against waves and you could  
5 see waves being blown over their bow, but no, she was still  
6 underway.

7 Q. Okay. Do you happen to remember if the paddlewheel was  
8 turning when you guys --

9 A. It absolutely was turning.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. It was turning faster than I've ever seen it turn before in  
12 my life.

13 MR. VOLPE: Okay. That's it. I'm through with questions  
14 sir. Any more questions?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, thank you, sir.

16 MR. VOLPE: [REDACTED]

17 MR. [REDACTED] I'm all, I'm all set.

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm good. Thank you.

19 MR. VOLPE: Okay. I just wanted to thank you for your time.

20 MR. ALDRIDGE: You're quite welcome.

21 MR. VOLPE: Do you have any other, anything that you'd like  
22 to add that you haven't said before?

23 MR. ALDRIDGE: Well, I know that the NTSB has an awesome  
24 responsibility of making determinations, and the recommendations.  
25 I hope that my input here can be used as a, an emphasis for a

1 positive change. There is risk in this industry. In any  
2 industry, but it's our responsibility both as people operating in  
3 that industry and certainly yours' in the NTSB, to keep in mind  
4 that people taking a tour like this deserve to be at the  
5 minimalist level of risk possible.

6 MR. VOLPE: Okay. If I have any further questions, is it  
7 okay to contact you through your attorney?

8 MR. ALDRIDGE: Yes.

9 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Well, thank you very much sir.

10 MR. ALDRIDGE: You're welcome.

11 MR. VOLPE: You have a good day. We'll close the record,  
12 1554. Thank you very much.

13 (Whereupon, at 3:54 p.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 Daniel Aldridge

ACCIDENT NO.:               DCA18MM028

PLACE:

DATE:                        July 22, 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.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Deborah Dowling Sweigart  
Transcriber