

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: RONALD HOOT

Wednesday,  
July 25, 2018

## APPEARANCES:

JOHN VOLPE, Marine Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

■■■■ Investigator  
Investigation National Center of Expertise  
U.S. Coast Guard

■■■■ Investigator  
Sector St. Louis  
U.S. Coast Guard

JASON SMITH, Esq.  
Spencer Fane LLP

PAUL MOTZ, Esq.  
Patton & Ryan LLC

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:58 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 MR. VOLPE: It's 1558 on the 25th of July. I'm John Volpe  
4 from the NTSB and we are beginning our interview. Will you please  
5 state your name, sir?

6 MR. HOOT: Ronald Hoot.

7 MR. VOLPE: And could you spell that, please?

8 MR. HOOT: R-O-N-A-L-D, H-O-O-T.

9 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Thank you for coming in today, sir.

10 MR. HOOT: Yes, sir.

## INTERVIEW OF RONALD HOOT

11  
12 BY MR. VOLPE:

13 Q. Could you start by telling me your position with the company?

14 A. I'm a captain for Ride the Ducks.

15 Q. Okay. And how long have you worked for Ride the Ducks?

16 A. This is my 15th summer.

17 Q. Okay. And have you always been a captain with Ride the Ducks  
18 or --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- have you had previous?

21 A. No other job.

22 Q. No other jobs, okay. And what license do you hold?

23 A. 25 ton coast guard, is that what you're talking about?

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. Captain license.

1 Q. Okay. And is there any restrictions on it or --

2 A. Oh, I think it says specifically DUKW vehicles or --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- or I'm not sure they call them vehicles but vessels maybe.

5 Q. Okay. And --

6 A. Operating on the White River.

7 Q. Very good. And how did you, how did you get your license?

8 A. 15 years ago and at that time captain met me somewhere and  
9 said, "You need to be a Duck captain." And I said, "What is  
10 that?" And so they introduced me then to, as you know, Corn, Joe  
11 Purma was the manager at that time and he hired me, and then I  
12 found out what a Duck captain was.

13 Q. Now so you went through training in-house at --

14 A. At, yes. And then I went to St. Louis for the four hour test  
15 at that time. I'm not sure of when that was. Seemed like it was,  
16 seemed like it was May or June of that year, what -- 2003, I  
17 guess.

18 Q. And can you briefly describe what you studied in-house, the  
19 training that you took prior to taking the coast guard exam?

20 A. Different CFR's, what the different procedures and rules of  
21 the way that they operated Ride the Ducks. What a captain does.  
22 At the time that I started was before we had drivers, which we do  
23 now. And so for my first 12 years, I guess, you know, the, the  
24 captain drove, entertained, captained. He did it all.

25 Q. Excuse me; did you have a CDL license prior to joining?

1 A. I did, yes.

2 Q. You did. What was your --

3 A. That I recall that I did.

4 Q. Okay. I was going to say what was your employment prior to  
5 joining Ducks?

6 A. No, that, okay. This is in Missouri so I did not have a  
7 Missouri CDL at that time. We took our test up at the Springfield  
8 School District. That's who did our -- bus; we used buses to do  
9 our -- get our license. Previously when I lived in Texas I had  
10 CDL license all the way up until I came to Missouri, which was 18  
11 years ago, so, yeah.

12 Q. And then once you went up to Saint Louis to take your test,  
13 how long before you started driving by yourself as captain?

14 A. It seemed like our license came in and we got started about  
15 July the 4th of that year it seems like. Yeah. It seemed like we  
16 -- we wanted to be ready for the big holiday and we missed  
17 Memorial Day that I recall.

18 Q. And prior to you driving by yourself, did you drive with  
19 another captain in the vehicle with you as a training captain or  
20 how did that work, if you could recall?

21 A. All I can say is probably because, I mean, yeah. That, I  
22 don't recall that I did or didn't but I'm pretty sure that we  
23 would have.

24 Q. Okay. I'm assuming that you're considered a senior captain  
25 with the company?

1 A. I don't know. I don't really know. I'm like -- I'm about  
2 sixth from the top or something like that in seniority.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But nobody looks up to me, you know what I mean.

5 Q. And your name has come up as one of the trainers?

6 A. Yes. They, they had some previous CDL drivers that wanted to  
7 become captains and so they did classroom training and I  
8 volunteered to spend some of my time instead of doing tours to  
9 ride and drive with the new upcoming captains so that -- my extent  
10 was that I took them to the lake and down the highway and, you  
11 know, went through the drills of, okay, there's black smoke from  
12 under the hood, what are you going to do. It was that kind of  
13 thing.

14 But I'm not who would have taught them what to do. I'm the  
15 one saying, okay, what do you know, you know. Putting into  
16 practice what they learned in the classroom, I guess to say.

17 Q. Okay. And that was -- is that what you -- as a trainer,  
18 that's what you do now or is it --

19 A. No. That lasted for three months or something. I don't  
20 really recall. When we got finished with the new captains then we  
21 had new CDL drivers, so I watched them run into things while they  
22 were trying to learn how to drive on the back ramp and that sort  
23 of stuff, trying not to hit the building.

24 It was just something that I volunteered to do and, and we  
25 weren't in full swing with tourists -- with customers so that's

1 what I did. And I think it was Memorial Day Weekend is when I  
2 quit doing that and went to -- we needed people to drive.

3 Q. And was that this year that you were training?

4 A. Uh-huh. That's my first time.

5 Q. Have you trained -- first time training this year?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. So did you receive any type of training besides on-the-job  
8 training from --

9 A. Nope.

10 Q. Captain Jed and --

11 A. No, just what I, just what I knew and have the sheet of paper  
12 and we go down the checklist and --

13 Q. Okay. Okay. As you're experienced, I'm going to kind of  
14 talk about how the Ducks handle.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. At, since you're mostly driving as captain, how many days a  
17 week do you work?

18 A. My first 13 years I worked Saturday and Sunday.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I retired from AT&T and at the end of '16 and started working  
21 five days a week at the Ducks rather than retiring.

22 Q. So you're currently working five days a week?

23 A. Yes, yes, Saturday through Wednesday.

24 Q. Okay. And typically how many trips do you take a day?

25 A. On an average three to four. Busy summertime we've done



1 five, six.

2 Q. Okay. So getting back to the handling of the Ducks. Just  
3 explain to me how you feel they handle -- different Ducks?

4 A. There's a difference between Stretch Ducks. When I started  
5 it may have been the last year or the next to the last year that  
6 we drove any of the original DUKW's. Somewhere right in there it  
7 all became Stretch Ducks and then the Truck Ducks came along and  
8 they're bigger and set taller and they're, they're a little -- get  
9 used to driving because of the way they handle on the highway.

10 The big Ducks are bulkier big Ducks and they lean differently  
11 than -- because they've got shock absorbers on them where the  
12 others have leaf springs and so it's just two different kinds of  
13 driving.

14 Q. Now do you normally drive the same Duck?

15 A. Most of the time I drive Duck 19, it's a Stretch Duck.

16 Q. Okay. And compared to some of the other Stretch Ducks, how  
17 does she handle say in the water? Do you notice any difference?

18 A. No, not Stretch Duck to Stretch Duck, not necessarily.

19 Q. Okay. Have you ever noticed any power difference while  
20 you're on the water, one going faster than the other?

21 A. No, we set them about 1,300 rpm and that's our cruising  
22 speed. More than that, you've got a lot of noise and so that way  
23 you can talk.

24 Q. Okay. And handling wise, how do you feel she handles the  
25 best when you have following seas, when you're going, going into

1 the seas? I shouldn't say seas, you're in a lake. But when the  
2 waves on the stern, on the bow, how does she seem to handle the  
3 best for you?

4 A. Well, calm obviously. And talk about handling different  
5 Ducks, some of the Ducks have one propeller and two rudders,  
6 others have one rudder, one propeller; 19 has one. Well, I guess,  
7 maybe it's the Truck Ducks that have double, double rudders.

8 The work -- I don't know, the least desirable direction is  
9 sideways waves. I mean, I prefer to go into them. I don't really  
10 like them coming up the backend but I handle what I have. The  
11 best driving is straight into the wave.

12 Q. Okay. Now when you're out and you're taking a tour and  
13 you're going around the island in one of these large -- you know,  
14 one of the big boats come by and they have the big wake, what's  
15 the best way to take the wake, head-on?

16 A. Straight on.

17 Q. Straight on?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. I do and I shut the fuel off, (indiscernible) the gas, as  
21 that first one's coming because I just -- I don't want to go  
22 through the second one and the fourth one and the sixth, you know.  
23 So I shut the gas and let the big waves go by and turn it up and  
24 let's go again. That's the only -- that's how I know to handle  
25 it.

1           There's some boats out there that seem like the reason  
2 they're there is to put out some big waves that they can, big  
3 wakes.

4 Q.    Uh-huh.  And how are you assigned the training sessions when,  
5 when the new captains came.  How did they decide when you were  
6 going to train like Captain King, Captain Candy -- you know, you  
7 did his, his checkup.

8 A.    His was return to work is what that one was.

9 Q.    But how --

10 A.    They tell me, I mean, you know.

11 Q.    Okay.  So you just -- you arrive to work like you normally  
12 would and they say, okay, you're going to train today?

13 A.    Yeah, we've got -- or they may tell me the day before Candy's  
14 coming in tomorrow, you know, yeah, we need his return trip and  
15 somebody else is coming but he's going to handle the other person.  
16 It was me and Gary Covert mainly along with Jed but he's kind of  
17 restricted to weekends.  So it was us doing most of the practice  
18 driving that everybody did.

19 Q.    Okay.  So is training in the company -- you're a trainer.  Is  
20 there any other -- I hate to keep saying training, but is there  
21 any other training that, that you've been provided by the company  
22 besides your checkout?

23           Like, who did your, your annual checkout this year, do you  
24 remember?

25 A.    I don't remember if it was Jed or not.  I can't remember,

1 that was back in February. I don't know. I don't know who did  
2 mine.

3 Q. Okay. And do you know who -- who's in charge of training in  
4 the office that you would report to besides Jed?

5 A. It wouldn't be Jed.

6 Q. And who he would report to like the --

7 A. To Matt or Curtis, however they -- you know, I don't know to  
8 say directly to which one.

9 Q. Okay. But you don't know if either one of them --

10 A. Curtis.

11 Q. -- either one of them is designated as the safety officer or  
12 the safety --

13 A. No, I don't, I don't think we have one called safety officer.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I'm pretty sure there's not.

16 Q. Or any person whose title would be in charge of safety?

17 A. No.

18 Q. No, okay. We, when we talked here the other captains, they  
19 talked about having a monthly meeting and certain, certain  
20 trainers give the safety portion of the meeting.

21 Could you tell me who determines who gives that safety speech  
22 or the topics?

23 A. I think, I think the first person they look at is Jed and  
24 then whatever topic that -- I don't know how Jed would decide what  
25 it is he's going to talk about. Different times, different topics

1 come up that maybe somebody suggested or something. I don't know.

2 I did one a few months ago that, that I came up with and it  
3 became part of it but it seems like he also had his own topic as  
4 well.

5 Q. What was that topic that you brought up?

6 A. The pin that holds -- what do you call it -- it would be like  
7 the spring pin that holds the pin that connects the cable to the  
8 rudder, wanting to be sure everybody knew to make the pin go from  
9 inside to outside so that the little spring pin didn't fall down  
10 in this cutout of the Duck and end up getting hung in it, because  
11 that had happened to me that somebody put it in the other  
12 direction, not realizing that that was going to create a problem.

13 Q. Did you find that when? How did you find that out?

14 A. When we hit the lake and couldn't steer the Duck.

15 Q. Okay. Interesting, okay.

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Have you ever received any kind of training on weather --  
18 weather -- severe training -- severe weather training?

19 A. I'd have to say, no. I mean, I don't know how you'd train  
20 for the unknown of the weather. We train on things that you --  
21 things that seem -- well, I guess, they seem likely, a hole in  
22 something, something caught fire, somebody fell overboard.

23 I don't know how you would do severe weather being unknown of  
24 what that weather's going to present you. You can assume but I  
25 don't know how accurate. I don't know, like in this particular

1 case I don't know how you would train for that.

2 Q. Okay. Now getting back to this sheet, I'm looking at the  
3 captain's deck hands water training log. When you take someone --  
4 how many checkouts do you have, just a rough number, did you do  
5 this year, do you remember?

6 A. Probably two or three but I don't know that.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Probably two or three.

9 Q. Two or three, okay.

10 A. The rest of the time was with the new captains.

11 Q. Okay. And when you were working with Captain King -- we'll  
12 just start with this document.

13 A. Sure.

14 Q. You said you would go out to the water portion, correct, and  
15 have them do -- whether it's a man overboard drill or abandon  
16 ship. Could you explain to me how you would assess what they were  
17 doing? Like say for --

18 A. Well, we'd do --

19 Q. -- a man overboard drill, how would you assess that Barry  
20 knows what he's doing?

21 A. We're just moving across the lake and I throw out a life  
22 jacket and say man overboard and see where he goes from there.

23 Q. Okay. Now do you, do you use any kind of reference material  
24 to say, okay, he, he's doing this or a checkoff sheet to say,  
25 okay, he, he put the rudder over, he threw out a life ring, he --

1 you know, he followed certain protocols, or how do you determine  
2 that he, he's proficient at like a man overboard?

3 A. The classroom learning -- well, on a return to work?

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. I mean, he went through that, I don't know how many years  
6 ago. But that's where he would have gotten the instruction of  
7 what to do. Man overboard, where at, somebody point at him. Turn  
8 to the left, keep it going this -- I mean, it's just the series of  
9 things that -- I guess, I would say things that I know that he  
10 would do, I see does he do them.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's my, that's my checkoff. It's not that it's on paper  
13 that he hollered man overboard that he turned to the port side  
14 that he sped up. I mean, there's not -- I don't know of a  
15 checklist like that.

16 Q. Okay. Are you familiar with the operations manual?

17 A. Not to the -- probably not to the degree of saying what's on  
18 this page in this paragraph. Yeah, I'm familiar with it, sure.

19 Q. Okay. I mean, how, how often of when was the last time you  
20 might have looked at that?

21 A. Back when I was doing the new drivers we would go through it  
22 looking at different things, subjects that are in there.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Having to do with parts, items of the Duck, where are they,  
25 where are the sump pumps, where's the sea chest. Just, and you

1 get specifications of stuff out of there and then you also get  
2 information from COI's as to what a Duck is inspected to do, you  
3 know, that has been inspected the COI is.

4 Q. Now your, your training, let's say, they call it like say  
5 driver training. Do you mostly do the driver training or the  
6 captains -- you said you worked with the new captains?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Did you do any of the driver training as well teaching the  
9 drivers how to maneuver the vessel?

10 A. Yes. When, as we finished with the few that we had for new  
11 captains then Scott needed help with more new drivers coming in,  
12 so I agreed to do some of the CDL only.

13 Q. Okay. And is it similar, is this the same sheet you would  
14 use for a driver or is it a different sheet?

15 A. There's one called land.

16 Q. Okay. And land training log. For the record, it's a  
17 document called Captain Driver's Land Training Log. Okay. This  
18 has the skills assessment for the land training. How about the  
19 water training for a driver?

20 A. A driver is not taught about what things to do on the water.  
21 He's, he an aid. He's taught some things. They know how to, they  
22 know how to change the cable on the rudder but they don't, they  
23 don't -- they're not trained to do all the things that the captain  
24 would do and it's more that they are also there to be the  
25 assistant or the helper for the captain.



1 Q. Do they train on any maneuvering the Duck in case the captain  
2 got hurt?

3 A. Yes. We, yeah, they, they were shown how to drive out of the  
4 lake.

5 Q. But it's not documented anywhere on -- in these forms that  
6 you know of? I mean, I don't see it on here so that's --

7 A. Probably not from that standpoint. It wasn't necessarily --  
8 I don't know if that's the right word to say that it was part of  
9 the job is what they were going to be used for -- to assist with.  
10 Yeah, see, I don't -- because there's not a water portion on this.

11 Q. Okay. Yeah. You know what --

12 A. That's the same one I've already got here.

13 Q. That's the same one as this, yeah, okay. It's just Page 2.  
14 So the captains actually train on both the water log --

15 A. On everything.

16 Q. -- and the land training?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. And the drivers they're only doing the land?

19 A. Land training.

20 Q. You're only signing off on land training?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. Okay. Understood.

23 A. And the reason to show them how to get out of the lake is if  
24 there is an emergency situation that they can assist with.

25 Q. I'm going to ask you a few questions on the office, you know,

1 questions that I'm still trying to figure out here. Could you  
2 tell me the difference between operations and fleet operations in  
3 regard -- and I'll just -- I'll help you out. The difference  
4 between Matt and Curtis and Ethan as opposed to Frank or Brian?  
5 Brian or fleet operations and --

6 A. See, yeah, I would put them at -- for example, Frank would be  
7 corporate. Matt and Curtis would be local. I don't know how to -  
8 - and our, our organization changed obviously when Ripley's bought  
9 us because one manager left. Curtis became -- what was his  
10 official title? Operations director or manager or something.

11 And then, at that point, with the reorganization, Frank is  
12 part of safety as well as what I would call corporate issues.  
13 Frank handles like depositions and stuff that I know come through  
14 that.

15 Curtis is the overall that's over all the people in the gift  
16 shop and the cashiers and the captains and the drivers. Matt  
17 Moore has whatever they've divided up for him to have, whether  
18 it's scheduling the captains and he's in charge of that.

19 I mean, that's their division of what I would call local or  
20 corporate level of jobs. That's what I'm thinking.

21 Q. Now does, does Frank or Dan -- Frank or Brian, do they do  
22 anything with maintenance on the Ducks -- in charge of any of the  
23 maintenance on the Ducks?

24 A. I can't tell you what their specific jobs are. I don't know.

25 Q. So you don't really -- you mostly deal with --

1 A. I don't get involved with them.

2 Q. Okay. You mostly deal with Curtis?

3 A. The local shop guys --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- when you go down to have something done on the Duck, yes.

6 Q. Okay. Have you ever heard of or could you tell me what the  
7 Duck Hotline is?

8 A. I have no idea.

9 Q. No idea, okay. How about the Duck Central Internal Website,  
10 ever heard of that?

11 A. The Duck Central Internal Website?

12 Q. Uh-huh.

13 A. I have no idea.

14 Q. Okay. Well, that's fine. Now since you do training with  
15 drivers and some of the captains, have you ever been told by one  
16 of the persons -- any of the people that you were training that  
17 they couldn't comply with something inside this Ops Manual?

18 A. No.

19 Q. No, okay. And, I guess, if they did tell you, I have a  
20 problem I can't do something, who would you report that issue to?

21 A. In today's world, since this year I would probably tell  
22 Curtis.

23 Q. Tell Curtis.

24 A. Because Curtis was who's setting up who was training,  
25 whatever. It wasn't Matt.

1 Q. Okay. And then when you -- we'll just touch on training one  
2 more time. To your knowledge, has there ever been any kind of  
3 training that we call a training scheme or a training matrix that  
4 says you're going to do breaking one day, you're going to do fire  
5 on land the next day?

6 A. Not that I know of.

7 Q. Okay. I'm going to jump around again. This is going back to  
8 your, your coast guard license. Do you know who renews your coast  
9 guard license for you?

10 A. You mean, a person at the Ducks?

11 Q. Yes. Like if --

12 A. It's been five years since. I mean, mine's due to be renewed  
13 this December. As far as I know, Curtis sent that stuff in.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Sends it in.

16 Q. So you'd have to remind him that, hey, my license is coming  
17 up?

18 A. Well, they've got a copy. They know when it's, they know  
19 when it's up. I would assume that they -- I mean, they keep up  
20 with when we need first aide training and other stuff.

21 Q. Now are you --

22 A. But I know.

23 Q. You know, okay. As long as you know that's --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Are you required to have a physical annually for -- to work

1 at Ride the Ducks?

2 A. They, yes. Well, I have -- in my case, I have a CDL  
3 physical, then I also have a coast guard physical, which is  
4 however often that that gets scheduled. So, yes, there are  
5 physicals. There's more than one for me. It has to do with blood  
6 pressure and there's reasons.

7 Q. Now does, does the office set that up for you?

8 A. Uh-huh.

9 Q. Okay, it does. And then the question on -- I'm going to go  
10 back to weather, since you're a captain and you go out and we've  
11 talked to the other captains on this. The office has a weather, a  
12 weather program inside the breakroom or inside, I guess you guys  
13 call it the breakroom?

14 A. Breakroom.

15 Q. Could you explain that in your own words what --

16 A. You're talking about the TV screen on the wall?

17 Q. The TV screen, yes.

18 A. And, I guess it's tied through the internet. It's on, it's  
19 online of Doppler Radar and if somebody's monitoring or seeing  
20 that there's a storm -- people look at it all the time just to see  
21 where storms are and what's going on and that's used to decide  
22 where a storm or where a problem cell may be located.

23 And you're getting ready to go out on a trip and you may be  
24 told go to the mountain first then go to the lake. Well, you  
25 wouldn't be told that. That's a normal trip. Go to the lake

1 first, go to the mountain second.

2 It has to do with where the location of the thundercloud or  
3 the thunderstorm is and the manager's making the decision that if  
4 you do this this way then you'll avoid that, that weather  
5 condition.

6 Q. So the manager's making the decision to tell you where to go?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Now when you get to the lake, as the captain, you can decide  
10 this isn't looking good, I'm not going or, or don't say anything  
11 and go ahead and go like you went to straight with, you know.

12 Q. How about the -- were you ever -- did anyone ever train you  
13 or explain to you the weather that's on the TV, that program?

14 A. No, you just -- it's all color coded and, I mean, you see  
15 rain, lightning strikes and you choose from the menu what you're  
16 looking at.

17 Q. Okay. And how about if, if you were out on a Duck and there  
18 was lightning strikes on the lake, how would you know -- not  
19 seeing it on your way down that there was lightning, is there any  
20 way of notifying you that, hey, there's lightning on the lake?

21 A. Well, they could call me on the radio and say that they see a  
22 particular thing but I don't know how you would not see it if  
23 you're not there five miles from it or one mile from it or, you  
24 know.

25 Q. And how about, for instance, say you were on the lake and you

1 saw lightning, what's the protocol for you?

2 A. I'm leaving the lake. Nearest exit I'm out of here.

3 Q. And is there anything that you're required to do besides  
4 leave the lake?

5 A. Well, I'm going to call in and tell them I'm leaving the lake  
6 and that I have lightning. I've had that conversation -- probably  
7 all of us have at one point or another, probably multiple times to  
8 say I see this, I hear this, whatever.

9 And my last encounter with that, the week before last, was  
10 stopped in the parking lot at the Showboat and in about 10 minutes  
11 it was gone, so we went ahead and went on the lake and out.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It had just happened and then was gone just as fast.

14 Q. Were you working the day of the storm?

15 A. No.

16 Q. No, you weren't, okay. Now I'm just going to go back and you  
17 encountered -- if you encountered lightning on the water and you  
18 call the office. If there was another Duck in the area, do you  
19 guys talk to each other on the radio?

20 A. On the water, yes.

21 Q. On the water, yes. Okay. And have you in the last three  
22 months talked to somebody on the water while you were out there?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Besides, besides the -- yes, other Ducks?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And how would you do --

2 A. No, I've talked to other Ducks, is that what you said then --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- have I talked to others? Yes, and the Showboat.

5 Q. And the Showboat, okay. Okay. In regards to back to  
6 weather, is there any criteria that you're not supposed to go in  
7 the water with that you can explain to me?

8 A. Regarding weather?

9 Q. Regarding weather.

10 A. Yeah, lightning, thunder going on, lightning. I'm not going  
11 in if that's happening. Now if that -- like I say, if that  
12 happens while I'm there, I'm leaving the lake fast as I can. But  
13 if it's going on when I get there, I don't go in.

14 Q. Okay. Any other criteria, any other anomalies that you  
15 wouldn't go in the water -- that you know of?

16 A. I don't know what that would be.

17 MR. VOLPE: Okay, okay. I'm done for now with your  
18 questions. Thank you.

19 MR. HOOT: Okay.

20 BY MR. [REDACTED]

21 Q. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with U.S. Coast Guard, Cap.

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. You've been licensed for 15 years?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Prior to that any military service?



1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. Any maritime experience?

3 A. No, sir, no, sir.

4 Q. Any formal training as far as radar?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. Any formal training as far as weather?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. That was one whistle, wasn't it? Any incidents that you've  
9 encountered in your, in your 15 years, any type of incidents that  
10 would have received any type of citation or letter of warning or  
11 anything from the coast guard --

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. -- pertaining to license? No. Okay. When it comes to PFD's  
14 and safety on your vessel, have you ever had the occasion to  
15 request or direct your passengers to don PFD's?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. When would that have been? Excuse me, let me rephrase. For  
18 what purpose would that have been?

19 A. The last time was about three months ago due to seeing smoke  
20 on the Duck and I needed to find out what was smoking and I had  
21 people put life jackets on during that event and it turned out to  
22 be the emergency brake was not released.

23 Q. Okay. All right.

24 A. But it made smoke and until I got the floorboard up they had  
25 life jackets on and I had a fire extinguisher in my hand and

1 didn't use it.

2 Q. Great, very good.

3 A. But it was locked on, heated up, smoked. Threw it off and  
4 continued on as the smoke went away. We were still headed to the  
5 island. I instructed the driver to go to the island.

6 Q. Yes, sir. And that was approximately 90 days ago, three  
7 months ago, something like that, ballpark?

8 A. Yeah, it was one of the, it was one of the new captains was  
9 letting him drive and do his show.

10 Q. So about that long?

11 A. Probably three months ago.

12 Q. Okay. Anytime in your, in your career with the Ducks, in  
13 your 15 years, have you instructed passengers to put on their life  
14 preservers or PFD's for inclement weather?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. You have?

17 A. I have.

18 Q. Have you ever shortened your route from, from your standard  
19 route?

20 A. Yes, I have.

21 Q. Okay. Have you ever returned to the launching site because  
22 of bad weather, severe weather?

23 A. No, I went in one place and out the other. It wasn't  
24 returning to the same place.

25 Q. Maybe shortened your route but always continued your route,

1 your trip, right?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Gotcha. Have you ever had the company -- and when I say the  
4 company -- management who is monitoring the weather while you're  
5 out -- have you ever had the company change your itinerary before  
6 you departed, like tell you go to the water first before the road  
7 tour?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. Have you ever had the company cancel a tour completely  
10 due to weather?

11 A. While I was at work but not while I was out on a trip.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. You mean come back --

14 Q. Like when you left, prior to leaving --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- the staging area, tell you no go?

17 A. No, I've not had one cancelled that was already in progress.

18 Q. In progress, yes, sir. Have you yourself either cancelled an  
19 entire trip or a portion of a trip due to weather?

20 A. Not due to weather, no.

21 Q. Not due to weather?

22 A. Well, shorten a trip but I haven't -- I have not called off a  
23 trip.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. So you've never been in a situation where  
25 you've gotten to the water and the weather was bad and called in -

1 -

2 A. Oh.

3 Q. -- and said, I'm not going to do the water part because it's  
4 bad?

5 A. Okay. I didn't -- I'm not, I'm not taking your question as  
6 you intended.

7 Q. That's okay. No, no, that's fine.

8 A. Yes, I have. I mean, even at the moment, go to a place and  
9 say I'm not going to do that yet, I'm going to do this part here  
10 first.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. Call in and say, I'm skipping that and we'll try to pick it  
13 up in a half hour or whatever the --

14 Q. Yes, sir. And that's your call to make, right?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Absolutely.

17 A. And I have done so.

18 Q. Good deal. Have you ever had any occasion where in 15 years  
19 that a company official has evaluated your performance and  
20 critiqued you as far as you may be doing or not doing something  
21 right or praised you for doing something?

22 A. I really don't know how to answer that. My mind's -- I don't  
23 know if I've ever had -- and you said management, right?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Ride a tour with me. I don't -- I've had people ride tours

1 that I don't even know who they are until later.

2 Q. Right, gotcha.

3 A. So, yeah. But like my local manager, I don't know, you know,  
4 in all that time.

5 Q. Do you receive a bonus?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And is that bonus --

8 A. It's based on --

9 Q. -- is it -- it's based on performance?

10 A. Performance, safety, accident, whatever.

11 Q. Yes, sir.

12 A. I don't think I've had below a 96 rating on my overall.

13 Q. Okay, good.

14 A. And that would be for having missed a meeting.

15 Q. Gotcha. Captain Scott McKee, do you know him?

16 A. Yes, yes, I do.

17 Q. Related to him?

18 A. No.

19 Q. In your professional opinion, can you tell us what you think  
20 of Captain McKee as a professional mariner?

21 A. Probably -- not probably -- he would be the best, most  
22 experienced guy that we have. If there's somebody else, I don't  
23 know who it would be. This is what Scott's done for his life over  
24 20 years.

25 He's a very technical guy. That's part of why they have him,

1 I guess, training CDL drivers. Know how to take this Duck, how to  
2 -- don't push the gas pedal that way or whatever. I mean, he used  
3 to, he used to build Ducks, worked in the shop, I understand some  
4 years ago. A very, very knowledgeable guy.

5 Q. Captain Barry King, do you know him?

6 A. Uh-huh.

7 Q. Related to him?

8 A. Nope.

9 Q. What is your opinion of him as a professional mariner?

10 A. I don't know that I can answer that. I would know him from  
11 having done his return trip, but I don't know that I've ever  
12 ridden a tour with him other than just knowing him in the -- at  
13 the Ducks, you know.

14 Q. Yes, sir.

15 A. I don't recall that I've ever ridden with him or he with me  
16 to see what he does -- you know, how professional is his trip. I  
17 don't, I don't think I can say because I'm not exposed.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Fair enough. No more questions at this  
19 time. Thank you.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Doing okay, Captain? Need a break?

21 MR. HOOT: No, I'm fine.

22 BY MR. [REDACTED]

23 Q. Dan [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard, St. Louis  
24 Administration Office.

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. Thanks again for coming in.

2 A. You bet.

3 Q. We appreciate it. I missed earlier and I apologize if you  
4 stated it, how long were -- how long have you been acting in a  
5 capacity as a trainer?

6 A. Part of -- I think it was part of February, March, April,  
7 part of May.

8 Q. Of this year?

9 A. Uh-huh.

10 Q. Oh, okay. And I think John asked you earlier too -- no  
11 formalized training, no --

12 A. Nope.

13 Q. Did you have to sit down with any of the trainers at all?

14 A. Nope. Oh, well, with Jed. I'm talking about, yeah, Jed and  
15 Corn and they organized the -- you know, what we were going to do  
16 and who we were going to have.

17 Q. Who else, who else was present for that training session, was  
18 it just the three of you or --

19 A. No, I don't know that I can call it a training session. I  
20 mean, some of this is just a conversation standing out --

21 Q. Just a conversation?

22 A. -- in the hallway and here's a book or -- yeah, no, not like  
23 a formal day of training.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I don't think so.

- 1 Q. Did anybody from management; you know, Matt or Curtis --
- 2 A. No.
- 3 Q. -- or nobody --
- 4 A. No, sir.
- 5 Q. -- talk to you? Did, did they indicate how you were selected
- 6 for that role?
- 7 A. I volunteered.
- 8 Q. You volunteered. How did you know that an opportunity like
- 9 that existed?
- 10 A. It seemed like there was a sheet that went around. It may
- 11 have been before the end of last season asking if anybody was
- 12 interested and I said, sure. Because I remember it being some
- 13 months later from when saying I'll do it, it was some months
- 14 later, maybe in even the next season, this season before anybody
- 15 said anything about actually doing it.
- 16 Q. So there was a solicitation the fall of last year?
- 17 A. I think it was the end of last year.
- 18 Q. Did they interview anybody for those positions or did they --
- 19 A. Just that you --
- 20 Q. -- you just submit your application and --
- 21 A. -- they say, do you want to start training next week.
- 22 Q. Huh.
- 23 A. Got three guys -- I mean, yeah, it's not like it was a
- 24 position or a --
- 25 Q. Selection process?



1 A. See, part of -- yeah, no. Well, and I don't know who might  
2 have volunteered that they chose not to talk to about it. I mean,  
3 I don't have -- there may have been --

4 Q. No, no.

5 A. -- a selection going on within, within their circle with the  
6 management. I don't know of it if there is -- if there was.

7 Q. Did you -- do you know if any other captains volunteered for  
8 that position? I mean --

9 A. Yeah, Gary Covert stopped.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. He and I were -- both volunteered to do this. There was  
12 Captain Blue David had done or started to or something and then  
13 said, nay, I don't think I want to do that. Because, see, for us,  
14 part of it is juggling, do I want to make whatever the pay is per  
15 hour to do this or would I rather do trips and get paid in tips.

16 And so while, while we were training people or riding around  
17 town, other captains are up there going out on regular trips. So  
18 that's -- some of us came to -- went to them at the end of May and  
19 said, starting next week we want to be back on trips and that  
20 stopped the training right there.

21 Q. Okay. So you're -- you've concluded the, the training  
22 portion for the season and now you're back on trips?

23 A. Yeah, back in May.

24 Q. Okay. I wanted to clarify. So you worked five days a week,  
25 you said?

1 A. I have, I have this year, yes.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I mean, I had a full-time job.

4 Q. But that's not a regular schedule?

5 A. Well, I'm off on Thursdays and Fridays.

6 Q. Thursdays and Fridays, okay.

7 A. Uh-huh, that's why I wasn't --

8 Q. Yes, sir. I missed that.

9 A. -- working on this event because it's Thursdays -- I'm off  
10 Thursday and Friday.

11 Q. Okay. So you work Sunday through Wednesday?

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. Okay. I had it backwards.

14 A. No, Saturday through.

15 Q. Oh, Saturday through, Saturday through Wednesday?

16 A. Uh-huh.

17 Q. Thank you.

18 A. Uh-huh.

19 Q. I had it backwards. You mentioned the training drills that  
20 you guys do monthly. Have you ever done it in conjunction with  
21 the drill, like an on water drill or a practical exercise or  
22 something like that with the other captains?

23 A. Haven't done what, a safety meeting?

24 Q. Yes, your -- the safety meeting that you've done on the --  
25 was it the 13th of the month?

1 A. Yeah, the 13th is safety, safety meeting.

2 Q. The safety meeting.

3 A. Has it ever been out somewhere?

4 Q. Yes, sir, in conjunction with the drill?

5 A. I don't think that it -- I don't recall that we've ever met  
6 and done it other than in the breakroom.

7 Q. Okay. Particularly the last -- you said you had the last  
8 safety meeting you brought up something about a pin with the  
9 rudder?

10 A. That was several months ago.

11 Q. Several months ago. Did you -- was there like an onsite  
12 visits to one of the Ducks to go over that hands-on?

13 A. I had, I had a picture of it.

14 Q. A picture.

15 A. Of the close-up of the, of the rudder inside the Duck from  
16 the rudder. And not all Ducks -- they're all identical only  
17 different.

18 Q. Yes, sir.

19 A. You know what I mean?

20 Q. I know.

21 A. And, for all I know, there's -- that Duck is the only one  
22 that's built that way. There may have been 10 of them. It wasn't  
23 a point of identifying which ones they were, it was more of when  
24 you do your inspection pre-trip be sure that thing's headed in the  
25 right direction.

1 Q. So, as a trainer in that capacity, are there -- obviously  
2 you're familiar that there's different steering arrangements on  
3 these, on these Ducks, right?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Are you familiar with all the various steering arrangements  
6 on there?

7 A. Yeah, familiar that there are different ones. That you have  
8 some that have one steering cable, one have two steering cables,  
9 some have a spare cable so that up at the front of the Duck  
10 there's a place to put the tiller. And then most know the  
11 tiller's done from the back.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. And so that's --

15 A. I mean, there's different ones -- bunch of them.

16 Q. Different arrangements in every Duck, right?

17 A. They're identical only different.

18 Q. Yeah. So when you're training these trainees --

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. -- or for these existing captains that are coming back from -  
21 -

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- do, do you witness -- for example, we'll use the steering  
24 scenario that you, that you mentioned. Do you witness them do the  
25 emergency steering on their Ducks --

1 A. Yes. Well, you say their Ducks. Whatever Duck I've got --  
2 been able to get for that day.

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. And so the next thing is the Duck's sitting next to the one  
5 that we got may not have the same steering as the one we got and  
6 we went out on it. Yes, they -- the captains change the cable,  
7 see it work, put it back.

8 Q. But their Duck could be different? The Duck that they  
9 predominantly operate?

10 A. The Duck that they get anytime could be different.

11 Q. Yeah, different.

12 A. We don't have assigned Ducks. Some of us have been there  
13 enough I can say I want that one when it's fixed --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- and that's what I do, then I get Duck 19. And there's  
16 several of us like that but most of the people just whatever comes  
17 up that's the one you get.

18 Q. So, in your orientation, do you cover all the various  
19 variations that could be encountered for a specific system on your  
20 check sheet or is it only limited to what is on the Duck that  
21 you're on?

22 A. The only one that we practice it is with the one that we went  
23 on that day.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Everybody knows there's different ones, different cable

1 setups and that sort of stuff.

2 Q. Okay. But --

3 A. We don't go get all of them.

4 Q. Understand. But do you at least talk about it or address it  
5 with them on the boat while --

6 A. Oh, in particular the one with the pin that I was talking  
7 about. If I was -- I don't know -- I don't even -- probably  
8 didn't even put a Duck number down for like with Barry. I tell  
9 him about what I saw happen on this particular Duck, it was 19.

10 I don't know if any other Duck looks just like that. I'm not  
11 going through all the Ducks pulling up floorboards to see. But  
12 everybody knows that they're identical only different so it  
13 depends on what you get in the morning.

14 Q. Yes, sir, understand.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. Thank you.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. Have you ever had somebody -- and I know you've been only  
19 doing this since February. Have you, have you ever not had to  
20 recommend somebody for something or --

21 A. No.

22 Q. Nothing?

23 A. No.

24 Q. If a captain misses a meeting, those monthly safety meetings  
25 that you talk about, is there -- do you know if there's a process

1 in place for them to makeup that training?

2 A. I do not.

3 Q. The operations manual that we keep referring to, this 2012  
4 Ops Manual, is this the -- do you think this is the most current?

5 A. As far as I know it is.

6 Q. Okay. When was the last time that you had a chance to review  
7 that operations manual?

8 A. Parts of it back when I was doing this with the returning  
9 captains or the new captains.

10 Q. So sporadically is your -- in this --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. When's the last time you actually had a chance to like review  
13 it -- at least skim through it cover to cover?

14 A. Back in May.

15 Q. I'm sorry, you said back in May?

16 A. Back in May.

17 Q. So two months ago?

18 A. I mean, we look at different things in there. We have  
19 questions about different things about it because we try -- see we  
20 also -- I mean, and part of that manual you have pictures of sump  
21 pumps and switches and relays. And normally we'll catch a Duck in  
22 the shop that's got all the floorboards and seats out of it.

23 Q. Uh-huh.

24 A. So we can actually see all the pipe and then the wire and  
25 then that sort of stuff. That would be one of the examples of one

1 we would compare it to what we see in the book, because the book's  
2 not got a picture of all of those that are identical only  
3 different.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, sir. I believe that that's all the  
5 questions I have for right now. Thank you.

6 MR. HOOT: Okay.

7 MR. VOLPE: Are you okay to continue, sir?

8 MR. HOOT: I think so.

9 MR. VOLPE: Okay, perfect.

10 BY MR. VOLPE:

11 Q. Could you explain to me the duties of the manager on duty?

12 A. I don't know all of his duties.

13 Q. Well, in, in --

14 A. Because I know recently they started counting money.

15 Q. They started counting money?

16 A. I don't know all the deals that they do.

17 Q. No, I'm saying that you deal with them. What are some of the  
18 things that you've --

19 A. Okay. One is that they would arrange who is going out and  
20 who's not. Matt, I think, only schedules who's working. That's  
21 all up on the board. You can get it online, you can see it on the  
22 breakroom -- other, on the other TV.

23 So they take care of guest issues. They take care of all of  
24 the cash drawers for all the people working in the ticket office.  
25 They have to now count them in, count them out.



1 Q. I'm saying more, what kind of relationship do you have with  
2 the MOD? What, what interaction do you have with the MOD?

3 A. In part it would be -- it would depend on who you're talking  
4 about.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. The best manager up there is named Charles. Charles is very  
7 detailed. Who's up next, he wants you to know, you'll probably go  
8 out in 10 minutes or you -- okay. It's not like that necessary  
9 when Charles isn't there so you end up, when do I go out, am I up  
10 next. And you look out, is my Duck up on -- it becomes more of a  
11 you need to go find out what you're doing next. That sounds maybe  
12 bad but --

13 Q. No, I'm looking for -- I guess, what I might not be asking  
14 you right, one of the duties that we were told of the MOD was he's  
15 in charge of the radio.

16 A. In charge of the radio?

17 Q. Yeah, that they each get -- they're on duty during the day.  
18 So if you had an issue you would actually -- you wouldn't call  
19 Charles necessarily you would call who's ever on duty. Is that --

20 A. I don't know about that.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. They, they wear radios.

23 Q. All of them do?

24 A. The managers that I know.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I mean, I see them. Matt wears. I don't know if Curtis  
2 does. Matt wears one, Charles wears one, Ethan wears one, because  
3 they're talking to people all over the property.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. They --

6 Q. So you as a captain don't know that Matt's on duty or Charles  
7 is on duty or Curtis is on duty when you go in, you just --

8 A. I see who's on duty when I go but they also work half days,  
9 halfway through the day one may leave and another comes in. The  
10 one that's going to close. One may go home and leave the one  
11 that's going to close at some hour in the day 3:00 or whenever.

12 There's not any kind of a letter or a schedule or a mention  
13 of here's who your managers are on duty. We don't have a schedule  
14 of them.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. You'd have to ask or see who's up there.

17 Q. So they would -- if you were called while you were out on the  
18 Duck it could be any of them, it wouldn't --

19 A. Whoever's at work, yeah.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah, it could be any of them.

22 Q. I'm going to ask this question and I should have asked it  
23 last time. We know that Duck 7 was called the Duke Duck --

24 A. Yep.

25 Q. Why was it called the Duke Duck?

1 A. There was a show called The Sands of Iwo Jima and Duck 7 was  
2 used -- I'm thinking it was in Florida -- it was used to run John  
3 Wayne around on the set. I don't think that the Duck was in the  
4 movie although you see some and you go, yeah, that was it.

5 But I understand that was -- that he had like a guy drove it  
6 and wherever he wanted to go they went. And somehow John  
7 Fullerton can tell you how -- John is the encyclopedia of the  
8 Duck. He knows what days John Wayne sat on that Duck and where  
9 they went, you know.

10 And so, yeah, it was used in the movie. And somehow Ducks  
11 ended up with it and back in the olden days it said The Duke on  
12 the side of it and somebody somewhere in recent years decided to  
13 take the name off of the side of it.

14 But there's some people been coming to the Ducks for years  
15 that say, what happened to the John Wayne Duck, because none of  
16 them were marked anymore. Well, it's Number 7, that's him, it's  
17 still the same.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah, used in a movie.

20 Q. Okay. Yeah. Someone referred to it today and I had it  
21 written down and --

22 A. The Duke?

23 Q. The Duke, yeah.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Why is it referred to as The Duke Duck.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. You talked about the meeting and you had a, you had a 96  
3 percent for your -- yeah. You never got less than a 96?

4 A. My appraisal rating.

5 Q. Your appraisal rating is --

6 A. I guess, I'd call it.

7 Q. -- 96 percent?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Would you -- we heard that the -- your bonus is also based on  
10 you showing up for that meeting?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Are you allowed to miss one or --

13 A. Not allowed, that's my 96.

14 Q. That's why you got a 96?

15 A. I missed one.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. (Laughter.) That's right.

18 Q. Okay, okay. Have you ever watched any of the video feeds  
19 from the Ducks, you know, that they're videotaping your tour?

20 A. Oh, no. I know about them. I've never sat and watched one.

21 Q. Never sat and watched one, okay. And, I guess, the last  
22 question I have is going to go back to training. When you train,  
23 when you train, I guess, when you do driver training, is there any  
24 training on what is, what is to be said? How do you -- how does,  
25 how does a driver or captain know what narrative they're supposed

1 to use?

2 A. Concerning what?

3 Q. The, prior to going in the water you have the safety  
4 briefing?

5 A. Oh, we taught safety, yeah, safety briefing.

6 Q. Okay. But --

7 A. Yeah. The information everybody gets, the presentation is up  
8 to you.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. How you present that.

11 Q. And how -- where is that information -- the information for  
12 the presentation come from?

13 A. That's all part of the, the book training that you're  
14 learning and then you go out and practice it.

15 Q. Okay. But you're -- does anybody ever check that -- you  
16 know, I know you have -- everyone has information that they're,  
17 they're supposed to share but is there any check that says that  
18 they might not or you might not be aware?

19 Any check that says, you know, Captain Hoot did this, you  
20 know, but he -- you know, he started -- he says the same -- you  
21 say the same thing almost every time that you go out?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. That, okay, he's missed this part of the safety briefing. Is  
24 there any, is there any check to making sure that besides looking  
25 at that video that the captains or the company would know that you

1 missed something on your safety briefing?

2 A. As far as I know, no. They would have to look at every video  
3 of everybody to come up with a percentage of times you didn't say  
4 this thing or that thing.

5 Q. Okay. I'm not talking about like, you know, this is the  
6 Ripley's Believe It Or Not Museum.

7 A. No, I know.

8 Q. I'm just talking about, yeah, safety.

9 A. But, but my opinion, people put together -- the captain puts  
10 together his things he's going to do and you do it over and over.  
11 And if you miss something your mind says you just missed. I mean,  
12 you didn't say that, you know, and you've said it 4,000 times  
13 already.

14 So, but other than a self-check of what you said, I don't  
15 know of any check.

16 Q. Okay. We did have one captain, he was, he was just reciting  
17 it as he, you know, talking so -- like he does it in his sleep.

18 A. It's an amazing job, I'll tell you.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. Yeah, you do do it in your sleep.

21 Q. Okay. And I might have asked this question. I apologize,  
22 it's getting a little later in the day.

23 A. It's all right.

24 Q. Had you ever been -- and, you know, I think I did ask the  
25 question about a captain's training manual inside the operations

1 office.

2 A. What about it?

3 Q. Have you ever seen one -- a binder, a captain's binder,  
4 captain's safety binder inside the breakroom?

5 A. Don't know.

6 MR. VOLPE: Okay. No further questions. Thank you very  
7 much.

8 MR. HOOT: Thank you.

9 MR. VOLPE: [REDACTED]

10 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard. CAP, this won't  
11 take long, another hour or so and we'll be done.

12 MR. HOOT: Okay.

13 MR. [REDACTED] I actually don't have any more questions for you  
14 right now though.

15 MR. VOLPE: Very good. It's back to you.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Yeah, back to me. Last one. I actually do have  
17 some questions.

18 MR. HOOT: Okay.

19 BY MR. [REDACTED]

20 Q. So this is Dan [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard in St. Louis  
21 Investigations. I wanted to follow-up with something earlier that  
22 you were talking about when you had a loss of steering incident  
23 when that pin fell out.

24 Can you tell me, tell me the procedures you followed onboard  
25 when that happened?

1 A. Okay. I'm going to set you the scenario of where we were.

2 Q. Perfect.

3 A. Taneycomo Lake right down the road here. We have one ramp.  
4 It's a very steep ramp. I have measured it -- 20 feet to the side  
5 of the ramp is a restaurant, a floating restaurant. They have a  
6 riverboat.

7 I had -- I can't remember now if there was two or three  
8 people on with me, new captains. We splashed into the lake.  
9 Actually somebody else was driving but we splashed into the lake  
10 and we hit it hard, not slow, so we're moving when we hit the  
11 water and level out.

12 We need to get around the end of this dock, be looking up and  
13 down Taneycomo Lake. As the captain gave it gas to go forward  
14 we're moving, we're headed toward the restaurant. I said, "Get  
15 off of it." Steering wheel couldn't move it. And the way the  
16 rudder was it had us at a slight left turn. I said, "Put it in  
17 reverse and give it gas," and I'm trying to not hit that dock.

18 Probably three feet before I got to the dock we had that dude  
19 backing up and the way it was cocked and the current coming down  
20 had turned us, so our backing was actually out into the lake.

21 It moved us around and we got, got reversed to quit going.  
22 We missed the dock. We backed out into the middle of the lake and  
23 Cecil went to the back, pulled up the board and saw where this --  
24 there's a cutout square where the rudder goes -- come up and then  
25 you have an arm with a cable connected and there's a pin.



1 Well, the cutout for that box is very close to that arm. The  
2 last person and it was me doing a return trip on a guy the day  
3 before on that Duck. The last person had put the pin in facing  
4 the hole and when he put the cotter pin in it the cotter pin's  
5 free inside this square right here.

6 And so going down the road we have wadded up that little pin  
7 to a point where when we hit the lake it was in the corner and  
8 that kept us from moving the steering.

9 And Cecil got the pin out of there. We put a new pin in it  
10 but he flipped the main pin. I'm calling it a a pin -- a clip.  
11 We flipped the pin over, put another clip in it. Now that clip is  
12 outside the square. All it does is rub on the bottom, it can't  
13 fall off in the hole. That's the whole thing of what happened.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. And I took the captain from the day before -- I didn't see  
16 him for almost two months. He's part-time too. And the day I saw  
17 him I said, "Come onto Duck 19, I want to show you what you did  
18 because this bothers me."

19 Q. So from the time that you launched to the time that you  
20 corrected the steering issue, about how much time was that?

21 A. Oh, three minutes maybe.

22 Q. Okay. Did you, did you have the passengers do anything?

23 A. No, it was just me and two trainees on there.

24 Q. Oh, just two trainees, there's no passengers onboard?

25 A. Un-huh.

1 Q Okay.

2 A. No, sir.

3 Q. So I picked up on something you said a little bit earlier  
4 about Charles being the best manager on duty. Can you --

5 A. Very involved.

6 Q. Very involved.

7 A. He's keeping up with telling everybody who's next, do this.  
8 It's a lot of coordination around the property when you've got all  
9 the -- you've got Ducks coming in, Ducks leaving, Ducks that are  
10 parked. It's a lot of coordination and Charles is excellent at  
11 it.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And in a way, sad thing, Charles is supposed to be leaving in  
14 a week.

15 Q. Really?

16 A. He had a heart attack. Yes. He had a heart attack and  
17 decided it's time to really retire and move to Kansas City. And  
18 this happened two weeks before he's finished.

19 Q. Very unfortunate.

20 A. And the reason I say that is he was on duty that's why.

21 Q. How would you describe a shift that's run by Matt Sullinger?

22 A. How would I describe what?

23 Q. A shift or when he was MOD a shift run by Matt? Have you  
24 ever worked as -- where he was your MOD?

25 A. Oh, yeah.

1 Q. How would you describe --

2 A. He would be what I, what I think we'd consider  
3 (indiscernible) as maybe supervisor.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Matt's very negative right now. This is my opinion.

6 Q. Can you elaborate on what you mean by being very negative?

7 A. This is my opinion.

8 Q. Yes, sir, understand.

9 A. It has to do with management style of his manager, that's  
10 what I see.

11 Q. Am I -- is my assumption correct that his manager is Curtis?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. What kind of relationship did the two of them have?

14 A. Stressed. My experience and what I see, Curtis wants to make  
15 all decisions about everything and Ripley's put him in the  
16 position to be able to do that. That's the top guy.

17 But they don't know. You figure they will over time see what  
18 kind of relationship but --

19 Q. Yes, sir.

20 A. I think I'm elaborating too much.

21 MR. VOLPE: No.

22 MR. [REDACTED] No.

23 MR. HOOT: I mean, it just feels weird me saying.

24 MR. [REDACTED] We have to look at --

25 MR. HOOT: But that's how it is.

1 MR. [REDACTED] -- with the investigation we have to look at  
2 that.

3 MR. HOOT: I understand. That's how it is and there's --

4 MR. [REDACTED] The big picture.

5 BY MR. [REDACTED]

6 Q. Do you think that relationship trickles down into how the  
7 operations are run?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Do you have any --

10 A. Yeah, it goes -- I mean, because all the captains see it and  
11 that's our boss, you know.

12 Q. Yes, sir. I apologize, I'm just thinking here.

13 A. I was going to say, go ahead and say it. Whatever it is go  
14 ahead and say it.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Well, I'm -- that's all. That's all the  
16 questions I have right now.

17 MR. VOLPE: Okay. I just have, I guess, one, since you  
18 brought this up. You said -- what was Matt -- I guess, were Matt  
19 and Curtis, were they both in operations prior to Ripley's taking  
20 over?

21 MR. HOOT: Yes.

22 MR. VOLPE: Okay. And who, who was actually general manager  
23 prior to Curtis taking -- Latham taking the job?

24 MR. HOOT: Yes, I'm not exactly sure how that, how that went.  
25 There was Robby Holtz, was the manager that -- and he may have

1 been called director or district or some -- I don't know what his  
2 -- his job was done away with when Ripley's took it and that made  
3 Curtis the top guy.

4 MR. VOLPE: Got it. Okay. I have no further questions.

5 MR. [REDACTED] No further questions.

6 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Is there anything that you'd like to add  
7 that might help us with this investigation, assist us with this  
8 investigation?

9 MR. HOOT: I've been trying to think of is there something?  
10 Like I said before, I think Scott would be one of the best and the  
11 manager on duty at the time was Charles. He's the best there is  
12 over there keeping up with things.

13 I don't, I don't know. I don't know what else to -- you know  
14 that I would say about it.

15 MR. VOLPE: Okay.

16 MR. [REDACTED] I do have one follow-up question, if you don't  
17 mind?

18 MR. HOOT: Sure.

19 MR. [REDACTED] With that being said --

20 MR. VOLPE: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

21 MR. [REDACTED] I'm sorry, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, INCOE.  
22 Thank you.

23 MR. [REDACTED] No one can distinguish his voice.

24 MR. VOLPE: You'd be surprised.

25 (Laughter.)

1 MR. [REDACTED] One final question.

2 MR. HOOT: Okay.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED]

4 Q. With that being said, that you think very highly of Captain  
5 McKee --

6 A. Yep.

7 Q. -- and the MOD --

8 A. Yep.

9 Q. -- in your professional opinion and experience, what is, what  
10 is your thoughts on what possibly happened that day, Captain?

11 A. It's a what if.

12 Q. Yep.

13 A. And a speculation. The real thing is if you're not out there  
14 in Scott's shoes with the situations --

15 Q. Yep.

16 A. -- that he used to decide, I don't know how you'd know.  
17 Things I see not knowing his deal.

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. I have watched the video many times and a problem that I saw  
20 he had was choppy, unorganized waves coming in from the north and  
21 he's trying to go from west to east. I think he would have had --  
22 just watch it.

23 I would have, from sitting in my couch, I would have been  
24 headed south instead of the ramp that I think I want to go to that  
25 he got this far from. My opinion is if had he seen the -- if he

1 could see the whole, big picture, he would have been headed south  
2 and pick another place to go out. I think that would have bought  
3 him time for one thing.

4 But I don't know that he could, that he could see the world  
5 around him. I don't know that he wasn't focused.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

7 MR. HOOT: Uh-huh.

8 MR. VOLPE: John Volpe with the NTSB. Just want to thank you  
9 for coming in today.

10 MR. HOOT: You're welcome.

11 MR. VOLPE: If we have any additional questions, is it okay  
12 to contact your attorney to --

13 MR. HOOT: Yes, it is.

14 MR. VOLPE: -- to get ahold of you? Okay. Well, thank you  
15 very much and we'll go off record at 1711.

16 (Whereupon, at 5:11 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 Ronald Hoot

ACCIDENT NO.:               DCA18MM028

PLACE:

DATE:                        July 25, 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 Farnier Donovan  
Transcriber