

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: FRANK ENGLISH

Friday,
July 27, 2018

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:11 a.m.)

MR. VOLPE: We're going on record a 0811 on 27 July 2018.

INTERVIEW OF FRAN ENGLISH

BY MR. VOLPE:

Q. My name is John Volpe with the NTSB. Would you state your name please?

A. Frank English.

Q. And spell your name please.

A. F-R-A-N-K, E-N-G-L-I-S-H.

Q. And could you give me the title that you, you currently occupy at the company?

A. Manager, Fleet Operation, Safety.

Q. Okay. And how long have you been working with Ride the Ducks?

A. Twenty-two years.

Q. Okay, and that time, has it always inside Fleet Operations?

A. No.

Q. Could you give me a brief history of your positions with Ride the Ducks?

A. Sure. When I first started with the company I was hired on as a welder fabricator. Then I moved to a production manager position. And then I moved to Fleet Operations Manager and I believe at that time I may have merged into safety as well, but some, somewhere in and around that time safety was added as well.

1 Q. Okay, and that's the current position you hold?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Can you just briefly describe your, I guess your job
4 description is Fleet Operations Manager?

5 A. Today?

6 Q. Yes. As of your duties today.

7 A. I, I deal with all of the, not, not the day-to-day
8 operations, but I deal with regulatory, Coast Guard, if there's
9 any modification that's required, I would, I would submit, develop
10 all of the required information for that to get it approved. I
11 would do, with regard to safety, I would do facility inspections
12 for equipment. Make sure safety meetings were being held.
13 Basically monitor the safety, the safety of the company.

14 Q. Okay. And could you take me through a typical day when you
15 arrive in the morning till when you depart?

16 A. As of late, I've been working in the shop, upgrading ducks
17 that we've acquired from Philadelphia and modifying them with, you
18 know, safety features that they may not have yet, installing doors
19 that weren't installed on those, just so they can operate in the
20 Branson fleet.

21 Q. Okay. And how many ducks are in the Branson fleet?

22 A. Twenty-two total.

23 Q. And all those are operational?

24 A. No, sir. I believe there's, I believe there's 18 active. I
25 could be off one or two there.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. The two that are not active first, are the ones that I have
3 down in the shop and I'm bringing up two to the stands we need for
4 Branson.

5 Q. Okay. Of the 22 are some of those the Philly Ducks, or --

6 A. Uh-uh.

7 Q. --no, not at all?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. They are. Okay. That's why we're at 18 not -

10 A. (indiscernible)

11 Q. Okay, gotcha. In your own words, can you explain to me the
12 difference between Operations, and Fleet Operations? This is in
13 regards to some of the other gentlemen that were wishing
14 interview, they're in Operations, but you're in Fleet Operations.
15 Just how they designate the difference.

16 A. I guess how I can explain it is, Fleet Operations generally
17 maintains the equipment, and Operations manages the day-to-day
18 operations as far as carrying passengers, selling tickets, and
19 those kind of things.

20 Q. Okay. And have you heard the term MOD?

21 A. Manager on Duty, yes.

22 Q. Okay. And have you ever had the duties of an MOD?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. No, okay. Do you keep in contact with the MOD during the
25 day?

1 A. Not normally, no sir.

2 Q. Okay. Do you know if there's a way to track the boats once
3 they leave the, the facility and they're going on their tours?

4 A. The only way that I'm familiar with is by radio.

5 Q. By radio, okay. Do you ever, at any time, have a reason to
6 call one of the ducks once they leave the facility?

7 A. Myself, no.

8 Q. Okay. And, how about if a duck has a problem, would they
9 call, would they contact you? Would they contact MOD? How, how
10 does, what's the process if they have a breakdown or, for
11 instance, we talked to one of the Captains of 54, 26 was having an
12 issue with their propeller, they couldn't engage it. Who did
13 they, who would they contact, or can you describe the process?

14 A. I believe they would do it via radio. I know that just cause
15 I'm, I'm here in the shop, I can overhear pretty much everything
16 that's going on over the course of 22 years. The Captain or
17 driver would radio in. Maintenance would also hear that. They
18 could call, or Maintenance couldn't hear it, but it goes to the
19 MOD. The MOD communicates to, to the shop whether they need to,
20 you know, send a duck out, or if they need maintenance assistance,
21 that would be communicated.

22 Q. Okay. And do you carry a radio all the time?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. No. Okay. If they had to take, like when they brought Duck
25 54 out, would they, did they contact you to say; Okay, 26 has a

1 problem, which, which duck should we use? Or do you have standby
2 ducks prior to the start of the day to send out?

3 A. Okay. To answer your questions, no they would not contact me,
4 they would contact Brian Decker, or, well this via radio, it
5 would, it would be a shop thing, so I don't take care of the day-
6 to-day.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. I'm not the person that they would contact. And then, what
9 was the other questions? Sorry, there was a couple in there.

10 Q. The, I'm sorry, the second question is, if for instance that
11 day they sent out 54, do you have certain ducks standing by every
12 day if you have a breakdown? Or, how, how do they determine what
13 duck to send out for a replacement?

14 A. Yeah. I believe they, they maintain a standby duck, or it
15 could be another duck, but it would be inspected prior to going
16 out.

17 Q. Okay. Now, I, you explained that your, your, you deal with,
18 well first let me go into, what are some of the things of training
19 that you've had through the company? Some examples.

20 A. I'd had various OSHA training over the years. I've,
21 certified welder, so I, I've gone through numerous welding certs
22 over the years. I've, I took an on-scene incident commander
23 course with the United States Coast Guard. You know, 22 years is
24 a long time. I've, I've, I've had quite a bit of training.

25 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any type of training plan? What the,

1 with the company?

2 A. Training plan for, for Captains?

3 Q. Just, not, just the training plan in general, saying that
4 Captains are, that you must, that, the training plan may, may say
5 Captain's must do certain drills every month; Everyone in the
6 Company has to do a safety meeting once a month.

7 A. Yes. Well, 444, some of that's driven just by the CFRs and
8 regulations, so, yes.

9 Q. Okay. And, are you familiar with the ducks central internal
10 website?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. Could you tell me, or explain to me how you would
13 access that?

14 A. I mean it's a little unique now, you know that Ripley's
15 bought the bought the company, but under the franchise, it's
16 really why it was established. So, it's a hub that provides
17 information to franchisees in order to get procedures, any kind of
18 training, vehicle manuals. My part of it would be on the, on the
19 backside of it, where we would supply information on there. It
20 would also have a tab in there for location specific so if you
21 wanted to, you weren't required to, but if you wanted to post all
22 of your information on that site, you can click on location
23 specific, click on Branson, or click on Philly, or whatever, and
24 there would be, you know, vessel information and all of their
25 information would be stored on there and that, that site cannot be

1 seen by anybody else, just the property itself. The rest of it
2 was open, and everything in Branson we left open, all of our
3 information was open and available to anybody.

4 Q. Okay. Who has access to that program? Do you need any
5 special password or can anyone in the company access that?

6 A. As of right now, I believe RTDI has shut that site down? I'm
7 not sure if they have yet for Mobile or Guam, because I think
8 they're still, I mean, they're operational, but I'm not sure what
9 RTDI did with those guys as far as giving them access or not. We
10 kept the site moving forward because it has, you know, all of our
11 plans, it has all our information, and after the purchase we would
12 be in the process of, you know, switching things over to be more
13 Branson specific.

14 Q. Now are you familiar with the Operations Manual?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. In the Operations Manual it talks about local
17 procedures. Do you, are you aware of any local procedures just
18 for Branson?

19 A. The procedures are all standard, across the board, for most
20 properties, based on, you know, forty years' experience. If
21 there's a location that needs something that unique based on their
22 environment, or something like that, we would work with that
23 company. They would contact us and say; Hey, you know, this, this
24 procedure because of our environment, maybe the ramp location, or
25 current water, whatever it is, we would work with that location to

1 help them establish procedures, you know, through Coast Guard and
2 any regulatory people that have to get involved, that would have
3 to approve that change as well because it may be part of your COI.
4 But, yeah, I'm aware of.

5 Q. Okay. Are you aware of any specific to the Branson --

6 A. No.

7 Q. No? Okay.

8 A. No, top of my head.

9 Q. Are you familiar with the duck hotline?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And could you explain what it's used for?

12 A. Again, it wouldn't be used now because it's, you know, not a
13 franchise, but it was set up for the franchisees to be able to
14 call that line any time they wanted to, to reach any one of us.
15 That's now the Fleet Operation. So me, myself, and Brian I
16 believe had access to that.

17 Q. Okay. So it wasn't for a Branson employee to contact you, it
18 was for --

19 A. Not necessarily, I mean, they could, but, I mean, we're here.

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. This is where we're stationed, so. We're readily available
22 all the time here.

23 Q. Okay. Are you, would you be able to tell me who the
24 training, who's in charge of training here in Branson?

25 A. I can't tell you the names of all the individuals that do

1 Captains training, seasoned Captains, there's a few, and I think
2 as far as who's in charge of all the training, it would go up,
3 probably the GM to make sure that the trainings taking place. I
4 would just, as, from a safety perspective, I would just make sure
5 that the training is being conducted.

6 Q. Okay. And, how, how would you determine if the training was
7 being conducted?

8 A. Well, I'm, I'm here, so --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- I know when the meetings take place and I would work with
11 the GM, just ask him, you know if it took place.

12 Q. Now, you mentioned safety meetings. Could you elaborate on
13 what safety meetings that you take part in?

14 A. Sure. The shop safety meetings. Captains have theirs,
15 that's, that's, that would be a safety meeting in conjunction with
16 their training, we would do a piece on that. Once a month, we
17 have a safety meeting in the shop with everybody that's,
18 everything shuts down. We also do a safety audit during that
19 time, which would be inspect, you know, fire extinguishers, trip
20 hazards. We have a check sheet that we would hand, the way I do
21 it is I make sure that everybody's involved in safety, so I'm not
22 going to do the safety inspection. I want it to be, you know,
23 everybody encompassed in this thing. We would have random people
24 take the check sheet and go around and if there is any corrections
25 that need to be made, they would make them, not just mark it

1 wrong.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. We would also take, you know, we review any injuries, which
4 we haven't had for a very, very long time, but, you know, for
5 example, a few weeks ago it was really hot, so I would pull up
6 something with regard to, you know, being hot, being safe in the
7 heat, literature on that. We would, we would go over that, and
8 then just keep it open as far as, you know, if anybody had any
9 safety concerns.

10 Q. Okay. Do you have, is it, is there a sign-in sheet for those
11 type of meetings? Or --

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Yes, okay. And, since you said you monitor safety, do you
14 actually monitor that, the, the Captains meetings are done as
15 well? Or just mostly what the Operation --

16 A. Yeah, I - Sure,

17 Q. I mean what Fleet Operation i.e. Maintenance

18 A. Ask that one more time.

19 Q. I'm just saying, do you happen to, do you, do you know if, do
20 you keep track of if the Captains do their safety meeting, or
21 mostly your side, the maintenance side?

22 A. Yeah, you, you asked that already.

23 Q. Did I?

24 A. Yeah (indiscernible) --

25 Q. Okay. I apologize. It's a long week. It's even longer for

1 you.

2 A. Yes. I understand. Yeah, I monitor to make sure that those
3 meetings are taking place, and since I'm here, I can't remember
4 exactly what date it is, but it's generally scheduled the same
5 time, same day every month, early in the morning, and I'm here and
6 I, I can witness that taking. And I attend them once in a while,
7 but not, not generally. But, yeah, and then I can go to Curtis to
8 make sure.

9 Q. Okay. And do you have a maintenance program that you follow?

10 A. The maintenance program, I don't believe it's laid out in
11 like a specific manual, Duck's Central is kind of that program.
12 It's a site where you can go if you need a manual to, to address,
13 you know, to put together a transfer case or something like that,
14 It's on there. We also have authorized operators' program which
15 is a training program for new employee. If you hired, you would
16 be trained on whatever tools that you're going to be using. Get
17 signed off from those tools. So they, I guess to answer your
18 question, the training program itself is really kind of Duck
19 Central.

20 Q. Um-hum. All right, I'm, now I'm looking to changing, more on
21 the maintenance side. Is there a program that tracks the
22 maintenance that you guys complete on the ducks?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Could you just briefly explain that to me?

25 A. Well a little bit. I, again I don't do day-to-day, that

1 would be Brian's department, but Asset Works is the program they
2 use, where they do work orders, and track all of the maintenance
3 as well as, you know, post-trip inspection's sheets.

4 Q. Okay. And, you said you were also in charge of facility
5 safety. Could you just explain some of the duties that you might
6 have for facility safety?

7 A. Sure. Like I explained, we, we would, we would have monthly
8 safety meetings and safety check sheets, and then I'm, I'm there,
9 so we're always monitoring safety in the shop.

10 Q. Okay. Okay, Frank, I'm through with my questions at this
11 time. Do you need a break?

12 A. No. Do we need a break?

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

14 A. No.

15 BY MR. YOUNG:

16 Q. Okay. Good morning. My name's Brian Young, I'm with the
17 NTSB and I'd like to kind of talk on the engineering side and the
18 construction side of some, for you to reiterate some of the things
19 we had talked about through the week. So, in a nutshell, could
20 you please describe for us the difference structuralized of the
21 master jig, the stretch duck, and the truck duck? In very basis
22 terms.

23 A. Okay. We can start with the, with the strut, the stretch
24 duck. I think the best way to describe a stretch duck is to
25 compare it to the original fleet duck. The stretch duck when

1 compared to the original fleet duck, has been extended in the mid-
2 ship by 15 inches. The rear bilges have been dropped, I believe,
3 2 inches for more reserve buoyancy at the stern, and the pilot's
4 station housing, I would say deck, it was pushed forward 18
5 inches. There's no components on the stretch duck other than the
6 chassis, the hull itself, except for where it was stretched, and
7 another section put in there, maybe some, you know, hull
8 replacements, and a prop bearing. That's original duck.
9 Everything else is else has been upgraded.

10 Q. And what's the, a ballpark time when these vessels had begun
11 their stretch process.

12 A. I think the first stretch duck was done in the, in the '90s.
13 I'm horrible at dates. I don't remember if it was in the '90s, or
14 if it was Stretch Duck 1. I, again, with dates, I can't remember
15 when we transitioned into the master jig duck, but stretch ducks
16 would stem from Stretch Duck 1 all the way to around Stretch Duck
17 30? And so now we'll go into, you don't have any questions about
18 stretch duck?

19 Q. And what was the ultimate reason for modifying a fleet duck
20 into the stretch duck?

21 A. Sure. So when I, when I started, most of those changes were
22 already established when I came on board. There's, there's
23 various reason for, for why Mr. McDowell did this. One of them
24 was for trim. The original fleet duck, you know, sits pretty well
25 at the stern. I would imagine that's why he would put more

1 reserve buoyancy at the stern to trim the vessel. Extending the
2 cab forward would give the driver better visibility with a more,
3 you know, obviously if he's farther forward, he'll get better
4 visibility, on the road side and the water side, it would allow
5 seating to be more comfortable where you can spread the seats out,
6 add a row of seats, I'd imagine, -- things of that nature.

7 Q. And the next version, you said was the Master Jig?

8 A. Correct. So the Master Jig is a ground up, per se. All of
9 the hull and below water (indiscernible) and below is a modular
10 construction, side walls, the bottom shell, the stern components,
11 the bow, all of those, those components were build-in. And
12 fixtures, pre-welded, inspected and they would be installed on a
13 Master Jig, kind of like a puzzle or a modular home. There are,
14 the only thing original on the master jig duck to the, to the DUKW
15 duck is the chassis itself. All the hull material completely
16 changed. The other thing too is, it's, being it, that's ground
17 up, there is scantling plans and just everything you would have
18 for original, like if you build a boat today from the ground up.
19 Whereas, the stretch duck, the NVIC would play a big role, as far
20 as structures, a good history of the duck, that's how the
21 structures are approved. Based off what the NVIC says regarding
22 structures and any, anything after that would have been hull
23 modifications, or upgrades, or patents sea check, those kinds of
24 things. Those would have been additional things that we got
25 separate approval for and we'd applied for each one of those

1 boats.

2 Q. And what are the major differences between a Master Jig
3 compared to the stretch ducks?

4 A. The length overall is the same, but the beam is a little
5 wider, and the, it floats better. I mean it's got the combing, or
6 the free boards on a master jig duck are roughly, well I think
7 they're 30 inches. And on a stretch duck, I believe they're 24 --
8 and there's a lot, you know, well, as far as other things we have
9 is the original duck has hat channels for, for structures. And
10 the master jig duck is designed around protecting against
11 corrosion, so you can inspect much better, you know, I've hidden
12 areas, behind steel, lamination, it was basically, we call it
13 delaminated. We delaminate, delaminated the ducks so hull repairs
14 are much easier. Inspection of the vessel's much easier.

15 Q. And what is the hull thickness of these vessels?

16 A. So, the stretch duck again is the same hull as the DUKW.
17 Sidewalls are 14 gauge, I know the NVIC says 13, but I -- based on
18 the gauges I've used it's, you know, 14 gauge. So the side walls
19 are 14 gauge, the bottom shell's 12 gauge, and, I believe, the bow
20 itself is 10 gauge. On the master jig duck, the shell plate is 12
21 gauge, the bow is 10 gauge, and the side walls are 12 gauge.

22 Q. When the exemplar duck was brought to our initial on scene
23 area, I do recall you mention something about the vertical
24 stanches had been moved in some of the models. Can you just talk
25 about that a bit?

1 A. Correct. It goes back to the Miss Majestic, about egress.
2 We, we locate our vertical stanches to support the canopy at the
3 seat back so you're -- there's no restriction of getting out the
4 side windows. Whereas, the Miss Majestic had them located
5 adjacent to the passenger, you know, it would be an obstruction.

6 Q. And was that modification carried out through certain models,
7 or all of, all of the --

8 A. Every, every model we built.

9 Q. Would there any other modifications and changes based on Miss
10 Majestic that you were aware of, other than the stanches?

11 A. Yes, sir. We have a curtain release mechanism where the
12 driver, the Captain can eject the curtains. We designed and
13 patented the sea chest design, which really focused on the cause
14 of the Miss Majestic, where it isolated, they see it's a water
15 tight compartment, where the drive shafts penetrated that hull.
16 Should there be a failure in that section, it wouldn't compromise
17 the vessel. The stanches, on the canopy -- can't really think,
18 sitting here for too much more. Those are the major ones.

19 Q. Which, do, went right into my next area, was the sea chest,
20 and understand that certain of your-, certain vessels in your
21 fleet do have sea chest, as opposed to the Higgins pump. Can you
22 please describe the purpose of the sea chest?

23 A. Okay. The purpose of the sea chest is to mitigate the risk
24 associated with a drive shaft penetration failure. Without the
25 sea chest, it's basically a 6-inch hole that's open, that would

1 flood the vessel. With the sea chest, all of the, all of the
2 water would just be contained in one, one section, and not
3 distribute out to the rest of the boat.

4 Q. Okay, We took some measurements on the Seven, but what is an
5 approximate size of volume of the sea chest, so we can have an
6 understanding for the record?

7 A. I have, I have no idea of the volume. But I mean, well it's
8 just, roughly tell you, it's the width of the chassis, which is
9 forty, 34 inches, the length which is roughly 4-foot long, I mean,
10 they're located at the bulk heads where, where there's a bulk head
11 that, that's located right where the through hall panaches come
12 through. So it's roughly 4, 4-foot long longitudinally, 34 inches
13 wide transversely, and vertically, -- 2 feet I would suppose, 2
14 feet, something like that.

15 Q. And if water was to enter into this sea chest, how would the
16 operator be aware, made aware of this?

17 A. There's an alarm inside the sea chest.

18 Q. Do you know if it's, the installation of the sea chest has
19 anything to do with the design, whether it's in a stretch duck, or
20 master jig duck? How, how is it determined which vessels to get
21 the sea chest?

22 A. Well after we got the approval of the, to install the sea
23 chest, every vessel manufactured after that, had it as a standard,
24 and then we've gone back over the years, and like I stated
25 earlier, a lot of what I do in the shop is bring ducks in and

1 upgrade them. So I can't tell which one's have it, which one's
2 don't, but it's, you know, we've been gradually upgrading the
3 ducks that don't have it.

4 Q. And with the installation of the sea chest, can you please
5 talk about the change in the bilge pumping system?

6 A. So, if you do not have a sea chest, you're required to have a
7 Higgins pump. Once you put a sea chest in, it reduces the, the
8 flooding rate considerably. So you have to install an electric
9 bilge pump in place of the Higgins pump.

10 Q. Can you briefly describe the operation of a Higgins pump and
11 it's average, or ballpark capacity?

12 A. I believe the capacity is 250 a minute. And the -- how it
13 works is it's driven off a shaft, so the engine must be running.
14 The higher the RPMs run, the faster the pump runs. So to match
15 those calculations are based off, you know, full blast running
16 RPMs, full blast.

17 Q. And to be clear, it was 250 gallons per minute?

18 A. I believe so.

19 Q. And would it be driven off the engine shaft, or the propeller
20 shaft?

21 A. It would be off the back side transfer case, you would be
22 engaging, yeah, so it would be running when the propeller shaft is
23 engaged.

24 Q. And have you been made aware of any issues with the pump
25 continuously running, if it was running dry in the bilges were not

1 pumping out?

2 A. Yeah, I don't believe the pump requires to be primed or
3 anything, so there's not damage that would be caused, so Higgins
4 pump if it ran dry.

5 Q. Okay. With the installation of the sea chest and the
6 installation of electric bilge pump, can you discuss the capacity
7 of the new electric bilge pumps and their location?

8 A. I don't remember, shoot, I don't remember the exact capacity
9 of them. The location of the bilge pumps, there's two in the rear
10 bilge, two rear bilges. In the stern, there's one in the mid-
11 ship. There's three, three bilge pumps, two in the stern and one
12 in the mid-ship.

13 Q. And we did some testing on the bilge pumps on the Seven,
14 after it was recovered, and we understand there were several
15 different options, whether it was manual, or auto and there were
16 also alarm associated with it. Can you give a brief over view of
17 the bilge system?

18 A. So, yeah, sure. The, the operator can manually operate the
19 stern bilges, or they're, or they're automatic. And the mid-ship
20 is an automatic pump.

21 Q. And where do the pumps discharge to?

22 A. Over the side.

23 Q. In normal operation, would the three bilge pumps
24 automatically be set up so that if any water entered the spaces,
25 they would automatically pump out without the operator's manual

1 operation.

2 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

3 Q. When would the operator be manually required to use the
4 pumps?

5 A. If he felt the need to do so, if he felt there was water in
6 the rear bilge, or by, through an alarm.

7 Q. And how would the operator be made aware of any water in
8 those bilges?

9 A. By way of alarms.

10 Q. Okay. Can you discuss how the alarms are activated?

11 A. Sure.

12 A. And the operator's notified?

13 Q. Sure. Each, each, each compartment is provided with alarm
14 system, there's an alarm box that's up in the pilot's station, and
15 each alarm is, has a placard that identifies which section that
16 bilge pump is located, or bilge alarm is located.

17 Q. And are the alarms and pumps tested?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Are they tested by the maintenance crew, on a daily basis,
20 weekly, monthly, Coast Guard, how does the testing process work,
21 the bilge alarms and system?

22 A. Sure. So, if, if a operator was having any kind of issues
23 with alarm going off, or if there had been water in the hull, and
24 it didn't go off, it would be inspected and check then. We do a
25 pre-COI inspection. Basically, there's two COIs that take place.

1 We present the boat to Coast Guard ready. So, we run the full COI
2 inspection, just like they would prior to them coming. So, we
3 would, we would test everything first and Coast Guard would show
4 up and then basically verify that everything's working.

5 Q. Speaking of bilges, and sea chests, and boots, can you just
6 discuss the air compressor system that would pressurize boots, or
7 seals while the vessel is in the water? Please.

8 A. Sure, so there, there's a, there's a switch that once you
9 engage the prop, it turns on, it, the tanks always hold only like
10 20 PSI, I believe, and there's a pressure switch on the back side
11 that allows two PSI down to the axles, to keep negative pressure
12 in the axle system, to keep water out while there underway. Once
13 the, once the Captain turns off the prop, it disengages that
14 switch and stops the air from going down to the axles.

15 Q. And, is that air system into any other boots other than the
16 axles?

17 A. Just the axle system.

18 Q. Can you please provide a brief overview of the power plant on
19 the engine that provides both at sea propulsion and on road?

20 A. Na, probably can't get into the exact size of the
21 (indiscernible). I'm not a mechanic, but you have an engine. The
22 engine's, it goes to the transmission. The transmission goes to
23 the transfer case. Behind the transfer case is the prop engager.
24 Once you engage the prop, it's spins the propeller shaft, which
25 goes through a one to two gear box, increases it times two, and

1 then it goes out to the prop shaft.

2 Q. And the engine itself, would you say it's a truck engine, or
3 a marine diesel, or --

4 A. No, it's a truck engine.

5 Q. And, the fuel?

6 A. Gas.

7 Q. And would it be safe to say it's an eight-cylinder engine?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. In the engine compartment itself, is there a way to isolate
10 incoming air should there be a need to prevent air or water from
11 entering the space?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Can you please discuss it for Stretch Duck 7?

14 A. Sure. So to, to mitigate fire, you would, you have a hood
15 closure, you, you basically shut off all the ventilation systems.
16 So you have a hood closure, the operator pulls a handle which will
17 drop the hood, and then there's individual handles for the side
18 vents that would seal off that area in the event of a fire.

19 Q. Is that a three lever process the same on all the ducks?

20 A. They're, they're similar, but we have different ventilation
21 closures on later model ducks. Some are a louvered type, and some
22 are just a flapper door type.

23 Q. Could the engine continue to run if the hood closure and the
24 side closures were secured? If you ever tested it, or if you were
25 ever aware of that situation.

1 A. Yeah, I mean, it's, obviously, it's not a great idea to
2 continue under normal condition to operate like that. You're just
3 going to eventually get convection just like you would on any
4 vehicle due to heat. It would run, for a while, but eventually
5 you're, you're going to start to experience some overheat,
6 probably.

7 Q. Is the engine compartment isolated by a firewall, are any of
8 the bulk heads to the cabin?

9 A. Yes. There's firewalls on the side, and there's firewalls
10 between the driver's station and the engine compartment, but
11 underneath it, it's, it's open boat. It's considered an open
12 boat, so, from the engine compartment to the stern it's an open
13 boat.

14 Q. Can you briefly describe the fire detection system for the
15 engine compartment.

16 A. Fire detection was a few things. You have a heat detector.
17 And then you also have a vapor sensor that will pick up any, any
18 fumes.

19 Q. And if activated, what would be the results of that system?

20 A. An alarm.

21 Q. An audible and visual, visual alarm?

22 A. Audible and visual, yes, sir.

23 Q. From fire detection to fire suppression, can you please give
24 us an overview of the fire safety suppression system?

25 A. Sure, it's a fixed pipe system, CO2. The switch, or the CO2

1 bottle is located, all, all of the safety devices are located in
2 the pilot's station, so it's within arm's reach. You would simply
3 just reach over and pull the pin, flip the lever and it would
4 disperse completely. You can't stop it once you do it, and it
5 would shoot CO2 in all of the, throughout the boat, underneath,
6 engine compartment, transfer case, field tank, any area that would
7 be potentially subject to fire.

8 Q. In the other operation you had discussed previous,
9 previously, the screens, the side screens you said could be re-,
10 remotely removed from the vessel in an emergency. Is that
11 correct?

12 A. The side curtains?

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay, and how would that be carried out?

16 A. Again, in the pilot's station, the operator would just simply
17 pull a safety pin and push the handle forward.

18 Q. In normal operation, how are the screen's lowered and raised?

19 A. On the dash, there's two switches, one for the port curtain,
20 and one for the starboard curtain.

21 Q. Would you please briefly describe he steering system for land
22 and sea?

23 A. The steering system on the land side is, you know,
24 traditional truck power steering system. There is a chain that's
25 linked to a helm station. The helm station has a cable that runs

1 to the stern and connects to a rudder. So when you turn the front
2 wheels, the rudders will also turn.

3 Q. And in the event of a steering failure from the steering
4 column back to the rudder, could you please describe any sort of
5 emergency steering gear that could assist in steering the vessel.

6 A. Sure. Emergency steering is set up. There's two different
7 types that we have. Later model ducks have a second helm station,
8 that the operator would go back, or his deck hand would go back,
9 pull the pin to the rudder and replace one cable for another
10 cable, and then he would drive the vessel from the pilot's
11 station. Duck 7 is set up with an emergency manual helm that was,
12 would be, would be attached directly to the rudder itself.

13 Q. With the set up of the engine, and the cooling system, we
14 understand that the engine could be cooled on land and at sea.
15 Can you just explain some of the differences in the cooling
16 system, please?

17 A. The cooling system itself is traditional truck, however, we
18 have a keel cooler, that's located on the bottom of the vessel
19 that provides additional fluids and well as supporting keeping the
20 engine cooling.

21 Q. And as part of the modification with the sea chest, were
22 there any modification done, penetration wise, or valve wise, that
23 may make some safer improvements to the vessel?

24 A. Sure. So, when we, when we initially designed the sea chest,
25 the through hull penetrations for the keel coolers were outside of

1 that space, which would require somebody to pull up the floor
2 board and shut those off, and we later recognized that, and moved
3 them to the inside of the sea chest.

4 Q. So now, if there was some sort of need to isolate the valves,
5 personnel would have to open up the sea chest and close the valves
6 in this contained space?

7 A. Yeah, you would think that's the way you would do it, but
8 based on our route, and close proximity to shore, should you have
9 a failure on the water, you're just getting off. And by the time
10 you attempt to even do that, you're already on shore.

11 Q. How about the exhaust system? What does the engine exhaust
12 relative to the, the boat? What's the location of the exhaust?

13 A. Forward of the engine. So the headers are running, you know,
14 traditional vehicles, they run to the back. On the duck it runs
15 to the forward and dumps out of the bow, dual exhaust.

16 Q. And how about the position of the output of the exhaust
17 relative to the water?

18 A. The tips of the exhaust pipes are roughly at the water line.

19 Q. Roughly at the water line. Have you ever experienced any
20 failures throughout your career, your history here with the water
21 backing up the exhaust system?

22 A. Never.

23 Q. Inside the cabin, the PFDs are stored above the passenger
24 compartment, can you please describe how passengers would access
25 and remove the life jackets from the overhead storage units?

1 A. There's two life jackets stacked on top of each other, and
2 there's a strap with a yellow tab, they would simply pull the
3 yellow tab and then the life jackets would, would drop down.

4 Q. And the yellow tab would that be for each individual package
5 of life jackets?

6 A. Yes. Yes. Every time you pull a yellow tab two would, two
7 would fall down.

8 Q. In your role with Ops --, I'm sorry was it Ops manager? Is
9 that right?

10 A. Fleet Operations Manager.

11 Q. Fleet Operations Manager? Has anyone ever discussed with you
12 that certain vessels are either more sluggish than the others, or
13 some known to be more sluggish than others in operation and
14 handling?

15 A. No. That'd be a maintenance, or a day-to-day maintenance
16 thing.

17 Q. And, in your mind, we're trying to figure out the difference
18 between 54 and 7. Why 54 may have made it in as opposed to 7,
19 based on the construction of the vessels. Is there anything that
20 you're thinking of that may assist us in understanding the
21 difference in the two vessels, other than what you talked about
22 with the difference with a stretch duck and the master jig?

23 A. I would say, based on this incident, it would be the
24 additional free-boards. The additional free-boards that 54 has
25 relative to 7.

1 Q. Thank you very much for your time today here, plus all the
2 time throughout the week and explaining so much to us. Thank you.

3 BY MR. [REDACTED]

4 Q. Good morning, Mr. English. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast
5 Guard, INCOE. Just a couple of questions. You may have answered
6 this one already. Prior to joining, or being employed by RTDI,
7 did you serve any military time? Or have any maritime background?

8 A. I did not serve any military time, but I grew up in the, in
9 the marine industry, pretty much all my life.

10 Q. I gotcha. What capacity did you serve in the maritime
11 industry?

12 A. I sailed. I did not, I did not serve in any position as for
13 a job. I sail boats.

14 Q. Oh, okay. So it was nothing, it wasn't industry related.

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. Okay. Okay. Has it, has it ever, do you recall ever
17 receiving through Coast Guard inspections, an 835 issued for any
18 type of conditions or problems with any of the ducks?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Do you recall any time that the 835s had been written with
21 duck 7?

22 A. I'd have to look back. We have a lot of ducks now. I don't,
23 I don't --

24 Q. (indiscernible) recent? 835's would that be shared with the,
25 with the Captains?

1 A. Not necessarily, not, not directly. If is it was an 835 that
2 was a no sale 835, obviously they wouldn't be operating the vessel
3 and they may ask why.

4 Q. Gotcha. What about once corrections were made, would that
5 information be shared with the Captains?

6 A. It may, it could be, yeah, if they wanted to know why the
7 vessel's back in service and it wasn't.

8 Q. Okay. I don't have anything else. Thank you.

9 A. Okay.

10 BY MR. [REDACTED]

11 Q. Morning, Frank.

12 A. Good morning.

13 Q. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard in St. Louis, Investigation's
14 office. Just a few questions. I'll kind of have to categorize it
15 the best that I can here, so. The first one, who, who's
16 responsible for the maintenance on the ramp, down at the Branson
17 Landing?

18 A. The maintenance itself?

19 Q. Yeah, like regrading it, and making it available for duck
20 use?

21 A. I guess we have Dennis that could do it. I believe Matt has
22 done it before. Actually I have done it before. Anybody that
23 understands what to do, yeah, and know how to do it.

24 Q. So, Ride the Ducks maintains the, maintains the grading of
25 the ramp.

1 A. Yeah, as far as maintenance. When you're saying maintenance,
2 that would only cover, you know, if the Showboat would put gravel
3 up on it or something, we would get the gravel off.

4 Q. Do you know, happen to know the last time that you guys did
5 make repairs or regrading or conduct maintenance on it?

6 A. I don't know the last time they, they cleaned the ramp off,
7 but as far as, you know, anything major, would have been quite a
8 few years ago, we, we took a section of it out and replaced,
9 replaced a section of it.

10 Q. And then there, currently the ducks are using the south ramp
11 to enter and the north ramp to exit, exit. Do you know when the
12 last time they were able to launch from the north ramp?

13 A. I, I don't know. I'm not in the day-to-day. I know, I, what
14 you're saying is true. I don't really remember when that started
15 and when it stopped.

16 Q. I that something that the Operations Division would make a
17 determination on?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Is that due to, is that passenger comfort really, when they
20 launch, because--

21 A. Yeah, typically it would be the, at the Captain's discretion,
22 if he felt that, you know, it's a little bumpy, maybe it we'd come
23 together and agree that it'd be best to use the other one and come
24 out, come out one or the other.

25 Q. Thank you. So, how was the relationship between the

1 Maintenance Department and in Operations, do you feel like there's
2 good communication between the two departments? Communications
3 flowing back and forth?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Is it, is there any tension between the two departments in
6 terms of working together? Is it, butting heads?

7 A. Not that I've recognized, no.

8 Q. From your perspective in the Maintenance Division, in the
9 Maintenance Division, looking, as an outsider looking in, do you,
10 do you perceive to be any tensions along the managers in the
11 Operations Department?

12 A. Nothing out of the ordinary.

13 Q. With regards to training between the Maintenance Department
14 and the Captain's CDL drivers, --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- do conduct joint training together regarding systems on
17 the ducks, you know, the unique variations from duck to duck?
18 Does that happen on an annual basis? Or, --

19 A. I believe it happens on an annual basis. If they're doing
20 re-training, they would bring Captains down and go through systems
21 on a duck, down in the shop. Other than that, they would probably
22 do joint training with regard to towing, things of that nature.

23 Q. The, in the off season occasionally maintenance shop does
24 modifications to ducks in the winter months. Is that information
25 communicated to Operations to let the Captains know that; Hey, we

1 changed, you know, Hey, we removed the Higgins pump on this one
2 duck and installed a sea chest. Is that communicated, or is that,
3 how is that accomplished?

4 A. Yeah, sure. So, if we're going to pull a duck out of service
5 for a significant amount of time for something like that, they
6 would know the duck is being pulled out, and yeah, they're
7 notified as to why it's being pulled out.

8 Q. And that notification goes to the managers? Or is that, is
9 it like an email that's sent to the company?

10 A. That I don't know. That's not something I would distribute.
11 That would be General Manager, or Operations themselves.

12 Q. So, with regards to safety, I know we kind of touched on it a
13 little bit in some of the, John's line of questioning, what, does
14 Ride the Ducks, as you being the, the person for safety, is there
15 a kind of a safety committee, like a rep from Maintenance, and a
16 rep from Ops, that kind of report to you with regards to safety?

17 A. Well, the way it was set under, under a franchise agreement,
18 each location would have a safety rep. Those reps would
19 communicate to me, and I would go out to those locations and make
20 sure that they're monitoring safety, making safety meeting are
21 being done, and those sorts of things. Locally, I am here, and as
22 far as the shop goes, like I said, I try to engrain safety by
23 having those guys do the inspections.

24 Q. And obviously the safety trickles over into the operations
25 section (indiscernible). We've heard through some of the

1 interviews that the Captains select various safety topics for
2 training. Is that vetted through you? Or is that vetted through
3 someone else.

4 A. That's vetted through Operations.

5 Q. Do you have any visibility of, of that process?

6 A. Like I said, I attend those meetings, not, not consistently,
7 but I just ensure that they are conducting those meetings and
8 doing just like you said, they're taking various, you know, they
9 may, maybe if here was an incident that took place, they would
10 discuss that as part of their safety topic.

11 Q. One last question I just wanted to, regarding the engineering
12 in the bilge pumps. Understanding that there's the forward drive
13 shaft tunnel, which provides, I think Brian indicated, at most 12
14 inches of lift. Is there any, was there ever any consideration of
15 installing a bilge pump in the engine compartment? Any discussion
16 to evacuate water that's accumulated during normal operations?

17 A. No, and the considerations there would be, you know, get oil
18 in the bilge, and those sorts of things. You'd be dumping that
19 over the side, but, you know, it's, the boat is considered an open
20 boat. The rate, the rate of water is based on -, the bilge pumps
21 are established based on the amount of pinnages you have in the
22 hull. We've done, we've conducted flooding studies to ensure that
23 we meet the regulations with regard to the amount of pumps that
24 are in the boat.

25 Q. Okay. That's all the questions I have. Thank you.

1 BY MR. VOLPE:

2 Q. Are you okay?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay. I just want to follow-up on one question. This is
5 John Volpe from the NTSB, that Brian Young asked. We kind of,
6 could you just also, you described the fleet duck and the stretch
7 duck and the master jig duck, could you tell, explain in your own
8 words what a truck duck is?

9 A. A truck duck, again, is it's similar to the construction of a
10 master jig duck, the hull itself essentially is the same except in
11 the front, there's a little more reserve buoyancy because it has a
12 diesel engine, it's a heavier engine, so we had to create, the
13 front wheel well is a little tighter on the front, which creates
14 more reserve buoyancy, and floats better on the front. Like I
15 said, the engine's diesel. The chassis is an M35 chassis and
16 there's not a single component on the truck duck that is original
17 DUKW.

18 Q. And out of the 22 ducks that are here in Branson, are any
19 them fleet ducks? I mean truck ducks, I'm sorry.

20 A. I believe we have two in service.

21 Q. Okay. I have no further questions.

22 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Is there anything that you'd like to add
23 that might aid us in our investigation?

24 MR. ENGLISH: Not at this time.

25 MR. VOLPE: Not at this time, Okay. We want to thank you for

1 coming in. If we need to contact you again, is it okay to contact
2 you through your lawyers to ask you additional questions?

3 MR. ENGLISH: Yes, sir.

4 MR. VOLPE: Okay. Thank you. Going off record. It's 0905.

5 (Whereupon, at 9:05 a.m., the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: CAPSIZE AND SINKING OF STRETCH DUCK 7
 ON TABLE ROCK LAKE, BRANSON, MISSOURI,
 JULY 19, 2018
 Interview of Frank English

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA18MM028

PLACE:

DATE: July 27, 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