

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: JACOB STROUB

Showboat Branson Belle Facilities
Branson, Missouri

Saturday,
July 21, 2018

APPEARANCES:

MARCEL MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

SGT. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
LT. [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
Missouri State Highway Patrol (MSHP)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:59 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. MUISE: Okay. We're live. It's July 21st. We're in
4 Branson, Missouri, and this is Marcel Muise with the National
5 Transportation Safety Board. We're interviewing witnesses
6 involving the Stretch Duck 7 incident that happened on July 19th.

7 So for the record, can you tell us your name, and then spell
8 it, please?

9 MR. STROUB: My name is Jacob Stroub, J-a-c-o-b, S-t-r-o-u-b.

10 MR. MUISE: And can we go around the room, too?

11 SGT. [REDACTED] My name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED], [REDACTED] just like
12 the color, with the Missouri State Highway Patrol, Marine
13 Division.

14 LT. [REDACTED] And Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED], with the Highway Patrol, Water Patrol Division.

16 CWO [REDACTED] My name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED], [REDACTED] U.S.
17 Coast Guard, Marine Inspector.

INTERVIEW OF JACOB STROUB

18
19 BY MR. MUISE:

20 Q. Jake, can you -- it's Jake, right?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Can you just tell us a little bit about your background, too?

23 A. So I've been here with the Showboat *Branson Belle* for 10
24 years. I have had my U.S. Coast Guard's master's license since
25 2012. And I have been sailing as captain on this boat since 2014.

1 Q. Can you just tell us in your own words what happened, what
2 you saw, what --

3 A. So the day of the incident, we'd been tracking storms all day
4 long, coming into the area. James and I had been talking about
5 them, Captain James was captain on the showboat at the time. And
6 as the first system approached us during the day, it dissipated,
7 as most storms do.

8 We closely monitored the weather. At 5:30, 6:00, the
9 National Weather Service put out a severe thunderstorm warning
10 approaching us, and said that it had been producing 70 mile an
11 hour winds, and was on its way towards us.

12 As we were getting ready to board our 8 p.m. crews, we were
13 closely monitoring the weather. It looked like it was going to
14 hit our location shortly after boarding.

15 As I was on land side, I was responsible for -- we always
16 have two captains on duty. James was responsible for the
17 showboat. I was responsible for the tugboat. As we began
18 boarding for our 8 p.m. crew, so, we started boarding at 6:50 in
19 the evening. The weather was calm and sunny. As it approach
20 7:00, you could see the front line coming in. Just shortly after
21 7, 7:01, 7:02, we could see the front line coming in from across
22 the north. And in a matter of I would guesstimate 90 seconds, it
23 went from 5 to 6 mile an hour winds to 50 plus.

24 At about 7:03, I called our wheelhouse watch, and they
25 reported 58 mile an hour winds, gusting over 60.

1 Captain James as in the office talking to a weather spotter
2 and asked me to go to the vessel. So just in case something
3 happened there was a captain on the vessel. As I went down the
4 vessel, I saw two ducks off of our starboard side bow, between us
5 and the island. And it was apparent that they were both
6 struggling in the wind. But they were both making headway, and
7 seemed to be safe enough at the time.

8 As I got on our vessel, our passenger gangway was being
9 pinned against our hand railing on first deck port side, and was
10 in danger of being ripped off. Our stern lines were being
11 overstretched, as we were having 70 mile an hour winds from the
12 north pushing the boat forward.

13 I immediately called for propulsion from our engineer and
14 headed up to the wheelhouse. When I go to the wheelhouse, our
15 wheelhouse watch and our senior deckhand at the time had already
16 taken control of our propulsion.

17 I went on to the wing station and started -- I put the
18 paddlewheels in reverse to start fighting the wind and relieving
19 stress on our lines.

20 Shortly after, I don't know what time it was, everything was
21 happening so fast, they reported that one of the ducks was having
22 problems. We were -- Captain James said that there wasn't a whole
23 lot we could do for them at that time, as the weather conditions
24 were so severe.

25 The first duck called me on channel 13 and said that they

1 were trying to exit the lake, and asked me what my intentions
2 were. I replied I wasn't getting underway. I was merely fighting
3 the wind.

4 Shortly after the second duck called me on 13 and asked the
5 same thing, what my intentions were. I told him I wasn't getting
6 underway, I was just fighting the wind. While he was on the radio
7 with me, the deck crew were able to get our passenger gangway up.
8 So I went from full throttle astern down to detent, which is our
9 lowest rating, our lowest gear on the paddles. They were turning
10 at neutral speed, not neutral speed, but at low gear, just to help
11 keep some strain off of our mooring lines.

12 Shortly after that, they were reported that the duck had went
13 down, and that there were bodies in the water, and I immediately
14 went all stop.

15 A few seconds later, I was watching our lines -- the duck was
16 not in my vision when it went down. It was off -- I was told it
17 was off our starboard side, and I was on our port wing station, so
18 I wasn't able to see it go down. A few seconds later some of our
19 staff came up onto the deck looking for PFDs. I told them it was
20 unsafe to use the lockers on our fourth deck, and sent them down
21 to our primary PFD locker on second deck bow, and they began
22 getting the PFDs out of there and taking them down to the barge.

23 They also informed me that there were survivors and bodies
24 floating down our starboard side, coming from our port side wing
25 station to our starboard side wing station. I noticed one

1 survivor and one body roughly 100 feet off of our starboard side
2 beam.

3 There were some personal boats in the area, personal
4 watercraft. I began blowing our whistle and trying to get their
5 attention to help pull bodies and people out of the water, when
6 all the personal boats in the area turned around and started going
7 with the wind instead of against it.

8 I went back into the wheelhouse, called Captain James on the
9 radio and told him that there were survivors and bodies off
10 starboard side. I heard him call on the radio to try and launch
11 the rescue boat. But, at that time, the winds were still in
12 excess of 50 miles an hour, and our rescue boat wasn't able to be
13 launched.

14 At that time, Southern Stone County Fire was trying to call
15 me on marine VHF radio channel 16. I tried to respond to them,
16 but they were unable to receive me, so I never got a response back
17 from them. After trying multiple times, I put an all call out on
18 channel 16 to all vessels on the water stating that there were
19 survivors and bodies floating around the Showboat *Branson Belle*,
20 and we required assistance.

21 I did not get any response on marine VHF channel 16 from
22 anybody.

23 I called local Stone County Southern Fire Department on my
24 cell phone. I had to call their non-emergency line, because if
25 you dial 911 here, you're put into Harrison. So I called their

1 non-emergency line, told them that they were trying to call me,
2 and I couldn't get a response back from them, and gave them my
3 personal cell phone number. I was in the wheelhouse for another
4 minute and a half, 2 minutes when James called me asking for a
5 weather update. By this time, the winds had dropped down to 27 to
6 32 mile an hour, and I stated so on our radio. And he asked me to
7 abandon the wheelhouse and come help with the rescue process.

8 By the time the Stone County Fire Department had called me
9 once, after the incident, I have several voicemails from Southern
10 Stone County Fire, I was unable to hear my cell phone and actually
11 talk to them.

12 When I came down out of the wheelhouse, I called James and
13 asked him where I was needed. He said he need to try and relaunch
14 the rescue boat. I made my way down to first deck bow. One of
15 our deckhand, Garris Bain (ph.) was on the end of the gangway on
16 our bow with a Stokes basket trying to recover people out of the
17 water. As the wind was coming from our stern, they were all being
18 blown too far away for him to get anybody.

19 So I called him over to the rescue boat so that we could try
20 and relaunch it. From the winds, the stern of our rescue boat had
21 sunk into the water. We started to lift it up to drain the water
22 out of it.

23 At that time, about another four or five members of my marine
24 crew showed up, and we determined that our engineer, who is
25 generally the coxswain of the rescue boat, was going to get

1 underway with the deckhand, and they were able to safely launch
2 the rescue boat into the water.

3 I proceeded toward the tugboat to, with the intentions of
4 taking it out, getting it on the water. When I went through the
5 main deck theater on my way towards the stern of the boat, and out
6 our aft doors. I saw the duck captain on the floor in the
7 theater. He appeared to be shaken, but otherwise okay. So I
8 continued on to the tugboat, like I said, with the intentions of
9 getting under way. When I got to the tug, it was littered with
10 survivors and bodies.

11 At that time, I noticed that Western Taney County Fire,
12 Southern Stone County Fire and several boats from the marina was
13 off of our stern trying to attempt rescue of any survivors and
14 recover any bodies.

15 It was crew on the fantail of the Showboat *Branson Belle*
16 started screaming out that there were survivors that had washed
17 into our paddlewheels. So I went to help with the recovery of
18 that as the paddlewheels are so tall it's difficult to maneuver
19 around them, and even maneuver them.

20 When I got onto the fantail, they had pulled a survivor out
21 of the water onto our fantail, and was taking her off of our stern
22 in a Stokes basket.

23 I assisted in the transfer from the fantail to our barge with
24 the one survivor from the paddlewheels. At that time, I noticed
25 there was a body floating face down in the port paddlewheel. We

1 got the attention of a rescue boat, and we manually turned the
2 port paddlewheel to push the body out so that the rescue boat
3 could -- they could take the body.

4 We checked the paddlewheels for any more bodies. I called
5 Captain James on the radio and told him that the fantail was clear
6 of any survivors and body, and that we were getting off of the
7 fantail.

8 When I came off of the fantail, local responders had begun to
9 evacuate anybody from the duck boat off of the Showboat *Branson*
10 *Belle*, anybody that could walk, they were taking them towards our
11 loading dock, and they had begun covering the bodies of the ones
12 that perished.

13 At that time, our -- we was told to evacuate all nonessential
14 personnel from the Showboat *Branson Belle*, so I set that in
15 motion, getting with some of the department heads. And then I
16 jumped around to wherever I was needed. That period of times
17 is -- it's hard to tell what happened in all that.

18 Shortly after, one of our heads of safety and security came
19 over and asked me to make sure that all of our personnel was
20 accounted for. And so, I got on the phone to department heads to
21 make sure that all of our personnel was. A few minutes later, I
22 was told that all of our personnel had been accounted for and was
23 safe.

24 And at that point, we began, as the only people left on the
25 boat were marine crew and bodies and emergency personnel, we began

1 to pick up all of our PFDs and remaining emergency equipment to
2 take stock of it.

3 Local responders came down and asked for assistance from us
4 to remove the bodies off of the boat and the tugboat, and we
5 assisted with them for the next little bit. And then we continued
6 taking stock of our emergency devices.

7 And then later we were informed that we were to be drug
8 tested, and we all wait around for a couple hours for that. And
9 then, after that, roughly 11:30, midnight, I got to go home.

10 Q. You mentioned something about a weather spotter. Who is
11 that?

12 A. I -- our company has a weather spotter. I'm not sure where
13 they're from. Anytime there's bad weather, they call Captain
14 James. He's our operations manager. And he puts out information
15 to us.

16 Q. So the weather spotter is local, or --

17 A. I don't --

18 Q. -- west of here?

19 A. I don't know. I couldn't tell you.

20 Q. Have you ever ridden on these duck boats?

21 A. I have. Yes.

22 Q. You have. Did you notice water coming -- so, the boats have
23 a bilge pump -- several bilge pumps with discharges on the side.
24 Did you see any water coming from those discharge points?

25 A. I did not. When I saw the -- the last time I saw the duck

1 boat, it was off of our starboard side, a couple hundred feet out
2 from the boat. So it was, I was on the landing, it was probably
3 5-, 600 feet away from me. And from that distance, and it was
4 merely a glance, I could just tell -- I saw the boat going
5 northbound, and hitting the waves, and just from watching the
6 ducks every day, it was apparent that they were having a difficult
7 time navigating the water. But they seemed to be, at that point,
8 they seemed to be okay.

9 Q. So they're northbound, and the wind is coming out of the
10 north.

11 A. Out of the north.

12 Q. They're heeding straight into the wind.

13 A. They were heading straight into the wind. Yes.

14 Q. How much freeboard would you say they had when you saw it?
15 That's the distance from the gunnel to the --

16 A. Yeah. Yeah, I know. It didn't appear to be abnormal at that
17 time. But, like I said, it was merely a glance. It didn't appear
18 to be in any danger when I saw it. It just looked like it was
19 struggling in the wind.

20 Q. And the waves were how high would you estimate?

21 A. I would estimate, they were going over its bow, and I know
22 from riding those ducks, they have roughly a freeboard of about a
23 foot and a half, 2 feet to their handrail. I would rough
24 guesstimate it at about 3 feet.

25 Q. Was she listing at all?

1 A. I couldn't tell from where I was at.

2 Q. How about trim? Was she down by the stern, or down by the
3 bow, or --

4 A. It appeared that the bow was going under the wake. I
5 couldn't tell, because the waves were so high, whether she was,
6 how her trip was. But, if anything, it would be on the bow.

7 Q. Did you see anybody go over the side from the boat?

8 A. No. When I saw -- the last time I saw the boat, like I said,
9 it was northbound, they had the plastic sheeting down over the
10 windows to try and keep everybody on it dry.

11 Q. How about life jackets, were any of the victims or survivors
12 in life jackets?

13 A. We did not, to my knowledge, we didn't pull anybody out of
14 the water that was wearing a life jacket.

15 Q. On your vessel, what do you have for, you talk about life
16 jackets, rescue boat, is there a man overboard ladder as well?

17 A. We have a man overboard ladder off of our starboard side that
18 we use to access our rescue boat, it's, we use it over the side
19 off of a davit, and forward from main deck down to the water. So
20 we use that to access the man overboard, our, we use that to
21 access our rescue boats. But that is the only way off the ship or
22 down to the water aside from our gangway off the bow.

23 Q. Is there a way for survivors to climb up that ladder if
24 you --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. -- deployed it?

2 A. Yeah. If somebody were to get close enough to it, you could
3 climb up that latter.

4 Q. Did anybody use that?

5 A. No.

6 Q. How about life rafts? You have life rafts or --

7 A. No.

8 Q. -- life floats?

9 A. We have life rings and PFDs.

10 Q. Did anybody toss those?

11 A. Yeah. I believe four of our life rings were thrown out. But
12 with the wind conditions at the time, almost everything that was
13 thrown out was blown right back into us. However, that didn't
14 stop us from throwing as much as we could into the water as people
15 were floating away, just in hopes that they could get to them.

16 I know we, after our final count, we were about 20 to 30 life
17 jackets shy. And Southern Taney County Fire brought several of
18 those back to us. I don't know how many life jackets we threw
19 out, but it was at least several dozen.

20 Q. Communications, you mentioned calling out on channel 16, and
21 nobody answered you. Is that --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. I heard that right.

24 Does -- the Coast Guard, can you hear them from here, or can
25 they hear you from here?

1 A. On a very, very clear day we may get report out of Little
2 Rock. But it's maybe once or twice a year that we actually get
3 anything from the Coast Guard. There is Coast Guard Auxiliary in
4 the area that goes around and checks safety equipment and stuff
5 like that. They often monitor those frequencies. All of the
6 local marinas monitor channel 16. And then Ride the Ducks and any
7 commercial vessels on the lake also monitor channel 16.

8 Q. From here, though, you can't normally hear a Coast Guard --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- or emergency marine information broadcast --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- from here.

13 Medical training, for your -- you say you have a master's
14 license. What kind of medical training have you had for --

15 A. Just first aid, CPR aid.

16 Q. Have you had any triage training at all?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Was anybody doing triage on the vessel?

19 A. Our EMT, I imagine was. But I'm not sure after talking with
20 him afterwards. I know that he was going around as busy as
21 possible. He said that he was triaging people. Our EMT at the
22 time, after the incident, I was discussing the incident with him,
23 and he stated that there were several people that, that he knew
24 had passed, and he had moved on to other survivors. So I would
25 assume he would have triaged, but I'm not sure.

1 Q. The fire department response, they have their own boats?

2 A. Yes. Southern Stone County and Western Taney County both
3 have fire boats.

4 Q. Do you have any pictures or videos that you can share with
5 us?

6 A. I don't. No.

7 Q. You do not.

8 A. No, everything was (indiscernible) --

9 Q. That's fine. I'm sure.

10 MR. MUISE: I'll let the Coast Guard.

11 CWO [REDACTED] All right.

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]

13 Q. So you operate as a master here at the *Branson Belle*,
14 correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. What is the normal route for the ducks, and what is the
17 normal operation for a duck when you're on board?

18 A. Generally the ducks will launch out of the south duck ramp
19 off of our property. They will go westbound around the island off
20 of our starboard side. Then they'll turn north and exit
21 (indiscernible) off of our stern on what we call the north duck.

22 Q. And when you noticed, when you first noticed the two ducks,
23 did it seem like they were both on a normal route?

24 A. The one duck did seem like he was on a normal route. He had
25 went around the island and was heading north. The duck that I

1 noticed that was struggling the most did not go a normal route.
2 He did not go around the island. He just got in between the
3 island and just trying to -- I assumed he was trying to get out of
4 the water.

5 Q. Do you know which ducks were --

6 A. I don't. No.

7 Q. Are you fairly certain that one duck did make it around the
8 island?

9 A. Yes. From my perspective, I never saw him go around the
10 island, but from my perspective it looked like he had been coming
11 from the island. He was quite a ways out from the other duck.

12 Q. But you're not certain if he made it around the island?

13 A. I'm, no, I'm not certain.

14 Q. Normal radio communications with the ducks, how does that
15 work?

16 A. Generally when the ducks launch, they launch off the south
17 ramp. Because they go in to the water, they'll make a radio call
18 on channel 13 stating their intentions of launching on the south
19 duck ramp, asking for any concerned traffic.

20 Q. And was that done? Did --

21 A. I don't know. I wasn't in the wheelhouse at the time.

22 Q. Who was in the wheelhouse at that time?

23 A. Our deckhand, Corbin Hudson.

24 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise again. Can you just -- I
25 didn't catch that name.

1 MR. STROUB: Corbin Hudson. He's one of our deck crew.

2 MR. MUISE: Sorry. Go ahead.

3 BY CWO [REDACTED]

4 Q. But at some point you did receive radio communications, you
5 were in the wheelhouse at some point, and --

6 A. I was on our port side wing station, we have a radio link out
7 there to our wheelhouse, and I did get a call from -- I'm not
8 entirely sure if it was from both ducks, I got two radio calls
9 asking my intentions. I assumed it was from both ducks. As it
10 was, I was in the elements of the wind, it was difficult to hear.
11 But they asked what my intentions were, and I stated that I wasn't
12 making dock, I was merely fighting the wind.

13 Q. And at that point you were on the port wing station, correct?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So you didn't have visual contact with the ducks?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Would you, would it, what would your assumption or guess be
18 to their location in terms of the *Belle* when that radio com came
19 in?

20 A. Generally they don't ask, us our intentions unless they are
21 getting ready to cross our stern.

22 Q. So they were generally in the area of the stern --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- when that radio -- and did they make any --

25 A. Distress calls?

1 Q. -- distress calls or did they --

2 A. I didn't hear any distress calls.

3 Q. So it was a normal communication?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And then you said you were basically in detent at some point
6 when they came --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- around the stern, right?

9 A. Yeah. When the first radio call came across asking my
10 intentions, I said I was fighting the wind. At that point, I was
11 nearly full throttle astern on the paddlewheels. As I was talking
12 on the radio, I looked down over the side. The deck crew had
13 gotten the passenger boarding ramp up, and I began slowing the
14 paddlewheels down. I didn't want to shock all of our lines, even
15 though I didn't get hardly anything out of them. But I began
16 slowing down. And I was in the process of slowing down when I got
17 the second radio communication. And then shortly after the second
18 radio communication came across our house radio that it went down,
19 and that there were people in the water, and I immediate went all
20 stop.

21 CWO [REDACTED] All right. That's all I've got.

22 MR. MUISE: State.

23 LT. [REDACTED] Okay.

24 BY LT. [REDACTED]

25 Q. Did you talk to the captain when you saw him in the theater?

1 A. No. I was in a hurry to get to the tugboat with the
2 intentions of getting it underway. It was, as I was walking
3 through the theater, I looked down and saw him, and continued on.

4 Q. But he appeared be healthy and fine, just wet?

5 A. He was setting up, and wet, he was covered in napkins. But
6 he was setting up. I didn't see any blood or injuries from him.
7 And he wasn't talking to anybody. He just looked dazed and
8 confused almost.

9 BY SGT. [REDACTED]

10 Q. When you talk about your rescue boat, that when you first
11 initially said that it was a little bit swamped --

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. -- and then you guys cleared it out what kind of boat is
14 that?

15 A. We have, I'd say it's a relatively, about a 12-foot, it's
16 kind of like a Zodiac, it's a small 4-person Zodiac with a 15-
17 horse outboard on the back of it. And we lower it over the side
18 with a davit. So when we first put it into the water, the waves
19 were such that on the davit, the waves grabbed the stern and
20 tilted it up, and it just completely swamped the rear end of the
21 boat.

22 Q. So when you initially lowered it, at what point in time was
23 that?

24 A. It was after the duck had went down, and there were survivors
25 in the water. I would say it was probably about 11 minutes after

1 7. It was roughly about the time the time the Stone County Fire
2 started calling me.

3 Q. So when you initially lowered it, that's when it got
4 swamped --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- because of the waves coming in. Okay. I see.

7 A. Yeah. Because when we re-attempted to launch it, we had to
8 lift it out of the water to drain all the water out of it before
9 we could --

10 Q. Right.

11 A. -- relaunch it.

12 Q. And when you were talking about the wind speeds that you were
13 getting --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- from, I believe you said you called the helm to get wind
16 speeds?

17 A. Yes. I called -- when I was landside before the duck went
18 down, I called out pilothouse watch, which at that time was Corbin
19 Hudson. We have an anemometer in the wheelhouse that gives us
20 real-time wind speeds. He reported 58 gusting over 60. And when
21 I got to the wheelhouse myself, I saw it in excess of 60 miles an
22 hour.

23 Q. And that's what I was going to ask you is if the
24 *Branson Belle* has its own wind speed monitor there. And what was
25 the maximum wind speed that you ever saw if you remember?

1 A. Our unit records the maximum wind speed every day. Later on,
2 we checked it, and we had a maximum wind speed at 73 miles an
3 hour. And our unit runs 3 minutes fast. And so that wind speed
4 was clocked at 7:10, but would have been off my cell phone time
5 it's clocked at 7:07, but that unit runs about 3 minutes fast.

6 Q. So at 19:10, or 7 p.m., 7:10, it clocked a 73 mile an hour
7 gust?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. But that's 3 minutes fast?

10 A. The unit runs 3 minutes fast. The time on it was 7:07. So
11 it would have been about 7:10.

12 Q. So 7:10's the accurate version?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. At 73 miles an hour?

15 A. At 73 miles an hour.

16 Q. And did it give you any other readings right there close to
17 that time frame?

18 A. It only picks up the high.

19 Q. The max.

20 A. It just remembers the max wind.

21 Q. Yeah. All right.

22 A. And the NTSB a short -- just a few minutes ago, went up and
23 got pictures of that unit.

24 Q. And was the captain the only one that -- you say the captain,
25 he was actually inside the *Branson Belle* when you saw him? He

1 was --

2 A. The captain?

3 Q. Of the duck.

4 A. Yes. He was inside, on port side of our theater, on roughly
5 row N.

6 Q. So in the, where the customers actually sit in the theater,
7 he was --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. -- in there. Was there anybody, was there anybody else from
10 the duck that --

11 A. Oh, yeah.

12 Q. -- ended up in there?

13 A. We had pulled -- anybody who could walk, we pulled out of the
14 elements, our crew pulled out of the elements and brought inside
15 of the showboat, and were doing everything they could to assist
16 them. After I came out of the wheelhouse, after I got off the
17 fantail, emergency personnel evacuated all of the duck personnel
18 that could walk off of the showboat to our loading dock area to be
19 seen by ambulances.

20 Q. And so it -- to your knowledge, you may not know this, but
21 was the captain of the duck the first one in there?

22 A. I don't know that he was the first one in there. My crew had
23 told me he was among the first ones out of the water. But I don't
24 know that he was the first one onto the boat.

25 Q. Do we know how he got out of the water?

1 A. I'm assuming one of my crew. When, because of the weather
2 conditions, when the duck went down, they were blown into our dock
3 and our tugboats. Our tugboat only sets about a foot and a half
4 out of the water. And so, most of the survivors were pulled up
5 onto our tugboat. And from there, they were taken onto the dock,
6 and then to the showboat.

7 Q. And when you mentioned that the -- they had communication
8 with you asking what your intentions were --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- do they usually do that?

11 A. Anytime that we're leaving dock and they're trying to exit
12 the lake, anytime when you're using propulsion, if they're trying,
13 you, because some, depending on the current weather conditions,
14 sometimes we back out into the water. And so, any time they are
15 trying to exit the lake off our stern, they generally ask our
16 intentions to make sure that we're not going to back up into them.

17 Q. So probably, when they were coming around, heading for that
18 ramp, they saw that you were in reverse.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. And do you think that's why they were probably --

21 A. Yes. That's what I assumed, that they were -- it wasn't time
22 for us to leave dock. But they were trying to exit the lake, and
23 they saw that I was using a lot of propulsion, and they had asked
24 me what my intentions were, and I didn't know if they thought I
25 was getting underway or not, but I let them know I'm not going

1 anywhere. I'm just fighting the wind.

2 Q. Right. And at that time you hadn't secured the showboat with
3 extra ropes?

4 A. No. No. We had, I believe we had a stern line, and our caps
5 end, bow and breast line. Generally we don't put weather lines on
6 unless we know the weather's going to get severe. The weather was
7 coming in. Generally our three milling lines will hold us in just
8 about anything. And I believe when they came 4 o'clock cruise
9 they did add an extra line, just in case. But I'm not entirely
10 sure about that.

11 SGT. [REDACTED] That's all that I have.

12 BY MR. MUISE:

13 Q. Follow-up question. What's your license?

14 A. I have 100 ton master's western rivers.

15 Q. Western river.

16 Is there anything that went well that you can share with us,
17 like a procedure, or piece of equipment, or in the response?

18 A. I mean, once we got the rescue boat underway, they were doing
19 everything they could to help. But, I mean, with the training
20 that we do in man overboard procedures, and first aid and CPR, we
21 have an older audience, so, first aid for us happens on a regular
22 basis. I mean, I believe my crew responded very well to the
23 incident.

24 MR. MUISE: Any other follow-ups?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes, I've got a follow-up question.

1 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

2 Q. So you mentioned you saw the captain of the duck inside the
3 theater.

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. How do you know that that was the captain? How as that --

6 A. He was wearing their, the captain's uniform.

7 Q. Okay. So he was wearing Ride the Ducks?

8 A. Yes. Now, uh-uh. Duck personnel, generally the drivers wear
9 a brightly-colored polo, and the captains where shorts, blue
10 shirt, and epaulets. And I distinctly remember as I walked
11 through, I saw the captain in a blue shirt and his epaulets.
12 That's how I identified him as the captain.

13 Q. And what was the *Branson Belle's* plans for that day, cruise
14 around that time? Were you guys planning on getting underway for
15 a dinner cruise?

16 A. Generally we always plan on getting underway. We don't make
17 a call on not cruising until about 10 minutes before our prior
18 departure, before our departure. So we were closely monitoring
19 the weather, hoping that it would come through, blow through, and
20 that we could get underway after the weather had blown through.
21 But we had not made the call on whether or not to sale, as we
22 didn't know what the weather was going to do.

23 Q. I'm sorry. What was your departure time that day?

24 A. We had a 12, 4 and 8. At the time of the incident, we would
25 have departed at 8 p.m.

1 Q. At 8 p.m.?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. So you had passengers on board? What time, or --

4 A. We started boarding at 6:50. We started boarding our
5 priority passengers. I'm not sure the exact number. I would
6 guesstimate it at 20 to 30 people. We had just, literally just
7 started general boarding, so only 5 or 6 people had gone down.
8 When I saw the front line coming, I made an announcement on our PA
9 system on our dock, on our, at our passenger area, passenger
10 boarding area, stating that there was severe weather coming in,
11 that they had just clocked 60 mile an hour, and we was going to
12 suspend boarding of the showboat and asked people to go inside.

13 Q. Inside the showboat?

14 A. No. Inside of our shops.

15 Q. Inside, shore side?

16 A. Yeah. We stopped boarding the showboat.

17 Q. And then what's your guys' policy for determining a dinner
18 cruise, you know, based on weather?

19 A. We will not sail on anything sustained over 20 miles an hour
20 or gusting over 25.

21 Q. But around this time, this 19:00, 7 o'clock p.m. time, no
22 decision had been made?

23 A. No. No. We don't make a decision on whether or not we sail
24 until about 15 to -- 10 to 15 minutes prior to departure.

25 Q. So you were -- at one point, you were full astern --

1 Q. Yes, sir.

2 Q. -- fighting the wind, right? Do you know what shaft RPM, or
3 what kind of paddle wheel RPM?

4 A. I don't know. We go off of the amperage. That's what -- our
5 paddlewheels are electric. So out on the wing station, I just
6 have a meter telling me how much amperage I'm pulling. I know at
7 the time I was pulling roughly 1400 amps on our main generator.

8 Q. And what's your guys' max speed astern?

9 A. Astern? Like, if we were underway max speed? It's generally
10 about 2 miles an hour.

11 Q. 2 miles an hour. All right. And what's your detent
12 amperage?

13 A. Stern, about 270 amps.

14 Q. About 270 amps. And what's your normal operating -- okay.
15 So this is the stern. So sailing ahead, what's your max load? Is
16 there a difference between astern amperage and ahead amperages?

17 A. When we -- it depends on our movement at the time. If we're
18 cruising ahead and then we suddenly put it in reverse, there's
19 going to be a slack in amperage, because the paddlewheels are
20 having to fight the water. But, other than that, our paddlewheels
21 go in a slower rates backing than they do going forward. The boat
22 can't back as fast as it can go, propel itself forward. So it may
23 be (indiscernible) sign of the boat.

24 Q. Okay. So what's your normal, if you were just to basically,
25 you know, be under way and decide to go astern, what would that

1 normal amperage draw be astern? If you had to give --

2 A. I couldn't tell you. Generally we don't operate -- we don't
3 back the boat up.

4 Q. What's your normal amperage ahead?

5 A. Generally we'd cruise at 6 miles an hour, and we'd pull about
6 600 amps.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's all I have.

8 MR. MUISE: Any other follow-up questions?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, sir.

10 MR. MUISE: Okay. Do you have anything else you want to
11 share with us?

12 MR. STROUB: I don't believe so.

13 MR. MUISE: Okay. We'll wrap it up. It's 10:34, and we are
14 off the record.

15 (Whereupon, at 10:34 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 Jacob Stroub

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA18MM028

PLACE: Branson, Missouri

DATE: July 21, 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.



Karen Coen Brooks
Transcriber