

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL
CHRISTOPHER'S JOY CAPSIZING AND
SINKING IN THE GULF OF MEXICO
NEAR SOUTHWEST PASS, LOUISIANA
ON SEPTEMBER 23, 2014

Docket No.: DCA-14-LM-020

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Telephonic Interview of: ROBERT BARLOW

Thursday,
October 9, 2014

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: LARRY D. BOWLING
Senior Marine Accident Investigator

APPEARANCES:

LARRY D. BOWLING, Senior Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO [REDACTED] Investigator
Marine Safety Unit (MSU) Morgan City, Louisiana
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED] Investigator
MSU Morgan City, Louisiana
U.S. Coast Guard

LTJG [REDACTED] Investigator
MSU Morgan City, Louisiana
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED]
IC Maritime

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:00 p.m. ET)

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3 MR. BOWLING: All right, good afternoon. This is Larry
4 Bowling with the NTSB, Office of Marine Safety. We are going to
5 be performing a telephonic interview from the NTSB Office in North
6 Florida. It's October the 9th, at 12:00 Eastern time, 11:00
7 Central time. We'll be interviewing Mr. Rob Barlow.

8 Participating in the interview from the offices in Galliano with
9 the U.S. Coast Guard -- Mr. -- Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]

10 CWO [REDACTED] Yes. Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] with the
11 Marine Safety Unit, Morgan City Investigation Office.

12 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Morgan City Investigations.

13 LTJG [REDACTED] Lieutenant Junior Grade [REDACTED]
14 Morgan City Investigations.

15 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with IC Maritime on behalf
16 of the underwriters for the *Christopher's Joy*.

17 MR. BOWLING: Okay, thank you.

18 And the witness, if you would, Mr. Barlow, for the
19 record, state your full name and spell your last name for me.

20 MR. BARLOW: (Indiscernible).

21 CWO [REDACTED] No, your full name.

22 MR. BARLOW: Oh. Robert Barlow. It's B-a-r-l-o-w.

23 MR. BOWLING: Okay, thank you, Mr. Barlow. If anytime,
24 particularly with me -- I'm calling you or participating
25 telephonically. I know it's going to be rough from a standpoint I

1 don't get to see your facial expressions or know when I'm talking
2 too fast, but if at any time you don't understand anything I say,
3 please let the team there know, and we'll regroup and ask the
4 question again.

5 But, Mr. Barlow, for the record, you are aware that
6 we're recording this interview digitally, and at some date in the
7 future we'll have a copy of it; if you care to take a look at it,
8 we can provide that to you. Do you understand that we are
9 recording?

10 MR. BARLOW: Yes, sir.

11 MR. BOWLING: Okay, thank you. With that said,
12 Mr. Barlow, we're going to turn the floor over to the Coast Guard
13 to begin the first round of direct questions.

14 Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]

15 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT BARLOW

16 BY CWO [REDACTED]

17 Q. Yes, this is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]
18 Mr. Barlow, so if you could, sir, just paint us a picture from the
19 time you knew about what was happening, all the way through that
20 day into the next day when the survivors came ashore.

21 A. Okay, what happened, we was we was en route to another
22 field, and my field, 57-B, gave us a call on the VHF and asked us
23 to turn around, and we'll make a pass about 77 feet and see what
24 seen out there. When we got close to it, you could tell there was
25 two men standing up on the bottom of the hull waving to us.

1 So as we approached them, they jumped in the water and
2 swam up to the side of the boat and worked their way to our safety
3 hatch. There's an opening on the side of the boat. And I lifted
4 one man up. After he got up, he helped me lift the other man up,
5 and the other man just layed there for a while for about -- they
6 was both in shock.

7 So we got them some water, got them calmed down a little
8 bit. We kept circling around the vessel to make sure we didn't
9 see anybody pop up, because they said they had a man that got
10 trapped in the engine room. And the other man that was hanging
11 off of the side of the boat with them, apparently the current had
12 took him and he drifted off in the sea. They never saw him before
13 -- after that. That's what the fellow said.

14 So after a while of circling around, circling around,
15 the fellows asked if they could take a shower because they were
16 swimming in diesel and all. So I gave both of them a set of
17 clothes to put on after they take a shower.

18 And we waited till it was dark until we couldn't see the
19 vessel anymore. And the Coast Guard said wait for a while when we
20 tie up in the field again off a platform. And they wanted to know
21 if it was okay if they, the men, could sleep on the boat that
22 night. So we checked with our field; they said it was all right,
23 because it got too choppy for them to get on a Coast Guard boat to
24 bring them in. And after that, I went to sleep. My shift was
25 over. I went to sleep.

1 I woke up, they had already got off and went in with the
2 field which had made crew change that morning. Now, when I pulled
3 them up on my boat, all they had on them was a couple of scratches
4 and stuff, and apparently nothing was really wrong with them, they
5 was just in shock.

6 And that's about all I got to say. That's what
7 happened.

8 Q. Did you offer any kind of medical treatment?

9 A. We actually -- they needed no medical treatment, and
10 also the platform made sure we asked them if they needed medical
11 treatment. They denied it several times, said they was all right,
12 they just had a couple scratches.

13 Q. Okay. All right. When you circled the vessel, did you
14 notice any debris, nets in the water?

15 A. We couldn't really see the nets with their rigging
16 because they was down under, or I guess they still under. Because
17 the captain that we did pull up on the side the boat said both of
18 their nets was in the water, but it wasn't visible.

19 Q. Okay. Did you see any other vessels around at this
20 time?

21 A. No, sir. No, sir.

22 Q. Had you witnessed this vessel shrimping in that area
23 prior to picking them from the water?

24 A. No, sir. No, sir.

25 Q. All right. What does -- Rob, this is [REDACTED] again.

1 Rob, what is your -- what's your experience in the marine
2 industry? What vessels?

3 A. Well, I've been working for this company for 4 years.

4 Q. Okay. Were you in the marine industry prior to this?

5 A. A long, long time ago. I was doing roofing and cutting
6 trees down before that.

7 Q. Okay. Have you ever had a merchant mariner credential?
8 Have you ever been licensed to operate vessels?

9 A. No, sir.

10 CWO ██████ Okay. All right. ██████ you got anything?

11 MR. ██████ Yeah.

12 BY MR. ██████

13 Q. Did you take any pictures? This is ██████ ██████ with the
14 Coast Guard. Did you take any pictures while you were out there?

15 A. No, I had a (indiscernible) phone that didn't do -- I
16 didn't take any pictures because they didn't come out
17 (indiscernible) --

18 Q. Did either of the survivors use your phone to call
19 anybody?

20 A. Yes. I allowed them to use to my phone to call his
21 wife, and I think he said he was calling the owner of the boat.
22 But I do not have that phone anymore. Last weekend it broke on me
23 and I bought another phone, I think, last weekend.

24 Q. Okay. Do you remember the number of that phone?

25 A. No, I don't -- oh, to my old phone? I still have the

1 same number.

2 Q. Do you mind if I get that number?

3 A. Sure, [REDACTED].

4 Q. [REDACTED].

5 A. [REDACTED].

6 Q. [REDACTED].

7 A. [REDACTED].

8 Q. [REDACTED].

9 A. [REDACTED].

10 Q. [REDACTED] What company is that with? AT&T, Verizon?

11 A. NET10, NET10.

12 Q. NET?

13 A. NET10, the number 10.

14 Q. Oh, okay, NET10?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I don't have any more questions.

17 BY LTJG [REDACTED]

18 Q. [REDACTED] with Morgan City. When you picked them
19 up, did they give you any description of what happened?

20 A. The captain said what happened is at the time -- I don't
21 know if they had the nets in the water or up out the water, I'm
22 not sure, but he said he tried to turn around. And when they
23 turned around, they had a safety chain I guess that holds the
24 rigging up or down and whatever it is, and it broke, and while
25 they was turning, it came over the topside over the boat, and

1 that's what made it flip.

2 Q. Okay. And the people you picked up, do you recall their
3 names?

4 A. The only one I recall his name might have been Jeff, the
5 captain.

6 Q. Okay. Can you give us a description of the two people?

7 A. When I pulled them on the boat, one of them had a pair
8 of shorts and that's it, no shirt, no shoes, no nothing. The
9 other one had a long pair of like the old style -- like I don't
10 know what kind of material, like parachute pants.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And wearing no shirt or shoes or no nothing on them.

13 Q. Any markings on their body?

14 A. One of them had a bunch of tattoos. I really don't know
15 what they were, but I know he had a bunch of tattoos.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And he was pretty well -- he was small, but he was
18 built.

19 LTJG: Okay, no further questions.

20 BY MR. [REDACTED]

21 Q. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with IC Maritime. Rob can I get
22 your home address, you're mailing address, please?

23 A. Okay, my home address is [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. My mailing address
25 is [REDACTED].

1 MR. [REDACTED] All right, that's all I have.

2 CWO [REDACTED] Mr. Bowling, if you have anything, I think
3 they're ready for you.

4 MR. BOWLING: Okay, thank you.

5 BY MR. BOWLING:

6 Q. Mr. Barlow, Larry Bowling with the NTSB. During the
7 Coast Guard's first series of questions, they asked you to
8 describe the recovery of the two survivors from the water. And
9 you basically indicated that you pulled one individual in and that
10 individual assisted you in pulling the other individual in. Can
11 you describe, or do you know who the first person was that you
12 pulled from the water, and then who the second person was?

13 A. I'm trying to say -- I'm not really sure if it was the
14 one with the tattoos or not. I really can't recall exactly which
15 one I pulled in first. I really can't.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I was just worried about getting them up. I really
18 wasn't, you know --

19 Q. No, I completely understand that. And before we go any
20 further with the interview, if you don't know an answer, it's okay
21 not to have an answer. Just do exactly like you did, you don't
22 know.

23 A. Right, right, for sure.

24 Q. Now, I want to explore the conversations that you may
25 have had with the individuals one on one or together. Did you

1 ever, or do you recall maybe, you know, 4 or 5 hours into this,
2 once they got showered and got a little bit calmed down, ever
3 talking to them about how they attempted to render assistance to
4 either of the individuals that lost their life?

5 A. The only thing I can recall is they said that the one
6 fellow that was hanging off the side of that boat, which was a
7 kind of heavy set fellow, he couldn't hold on any longer, and like
8 I said, the current took him. And at the time I think the current
9 was going about, I want to say, to the west a good 3 knots. And
10 so the current took him, and as far as the other one, they kept
11 tapping on the bottom of the boat and talking to him. They said
12 about -- they were talking to him until about 30 minutes before we
13 picked them up out of the water, and after that, he wasn't
14 answering anymore. They kept trying to explain to him how to get
15 out of the engine room, but he never did apparently.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And that's about all they said.

18 Q. All right. Now, with the -- from the casualty
19 description from the -- walk me through piece by piece, and if you
20 have to stop and kind of go back and recall, you know, what
21 happened on the day of the event, please take the time to do that.
22 But I want what you recall, I want to hear from you the way they
23 described the scenario playing from the point where, say, the
24 fishing vessel was making a turn. Can you walk me through what
25 you recall and then who was telling you this?

1 A. The captain was explaining it to me exactly what
2 happened.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. He explained that when they made the turn that the
5 safety chain popped and the rigging chain, I guess the iron bars
6 or whatever that holds the net together, it came over the top of
7 the boat and that's what made the boat flip.

8 Q. Okay. And where were you at when this conversation was
9 going on?

10 A. I guess I was standing on top of the -- I was in the dog
11 house in the front of the boat, the wheelhouse.

12 Q. Okay. And do you recall anybody else being present
13 besides yourself and the master?

14 A. Well, everybody was running around. I mean, we had the
15 whole crew up there, so everybody was present. I don't know if
16 they heard any conversation, but everybody was back and forth. We
17 kept running on the back deck watching the other boat to make sure
18 we didn't see nobody pop up.

19 Q. Okay. Were you around at all or do you recall the
20 master or the deckhand contacting the owner of the boat, and if
21 so, an individual by the name of Mr. Sam or Mr. Christopher?

22 A. Okay, the only thing is he told me he was trying to get
23 in touch with the owner of the boat.

24 Q. Okay, so do you know if he did or not?

25 A. No, I don't know if he succeeded or not. I really don't

1 know. I just gave him my phone and told them to make calls what
2 they want, whatever -- whoever they needed to call.

3 Q. Okay. And the same kind of question related to the
4 master and his wife or significant other. Do you recall an
5 interactions there that you may have overheard?

6 A. No, he just went off to the side by himself to talk.

7 Q. Okay, all right.

8 A. I didn't hear any of his conversation.

9 Q. All right. And had you ever interacted or seen these
10 individuals prior to this -- prior to recovery of them from the
11 sea that day?

12 A. Prior? No, sir.

13 MR. BOWLING: Okay. Coast Guard, I have nothing further
14 from my perspective for Mr. Barlow.

15 MR. BARLOW: Okay, thank you, sir.

16 BY MR. [REDACTED]

17 Q. [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard again. Did the captain
18 discuss why the outriggers were positioned as they were? Did he
19 mention anything --

20 A. He said something about they had just come off a dry
21 dock or whatever, got a lot of work done to the boat.

22 Q. Yep.

23 A. And the riggers, he said they had them too high and he
24 complained to the owner about it, that they were set up too high.
25 I don't know, I don't know much about a shrimp boat.

1 Q. Yeah. Your opinion is that he complained to the owner
2 before they went out?

3 A. Yeah, before they went out, right after he come off the
4 dry dock or whatever to get the repairs they left -- or they had
5 to get.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, thank you. I don't have anything
7 else.

8 CWO [REDACTED] I have nothing.

9 Mr. [REDACTED] do you have anything?

10 MR. [REDACTED] No, I'm good.

11 CWO [REDACTED] Okay, I think we're good on this end.

12 MR. BOWLING: Okay.

13 BY MR. BOWLING:

14 Q. Mr. Barlow, Larry Bowling with the NTSB. Before we
15 close the interview out, have we -- is there anything you'd like
16 to add, something to the record that may help us find a cause or
17 causes in this accident? Have we failed to ask you any questions?

18 A. The only I can see is if you all ever find that boat,
19 pull it up and make sure -- see if that chain popped or not.
20 That's all I got to say about it.

21 Q. Okay, and that's good feedback. I appreciate that.

22 MR. BOWLING: Coast Guard and Mr. Barlow, at this time,
23 and Mr. [REDACTED] we'll go ahead and secure the interview. Bear
24 with me one second.

25 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: COMMERCIAL FISHING VESSEL
CHRISTOPHER'S JOY CAPSIZING AND
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PLACE:

DATE: October 9, 2014

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.

Keith J. Maurer
Transcriber