

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK* \*

NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, \*

Accident No.: DCA22FM022

VIRGINIA ON JUNE 7, 2022 \*

\*

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Interview of: BRIAN BRACEY, First Mate  
City Cruises

Virginia Beach, Virginia

Friday,  
January 27, 2023

APPEARANCES:

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:45 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 CDR WADDINGTON: The time in 3:45. We're back on the record.  
4 At this time I call Mr. Brian Bracey, Senior Deckhand, *Spirit of*  
5 *Norfolk*. Lieutenant [REDACTED] will administer your oath and ask you  
6 some preliminary questions. Thank you.

7 LCDR [REDACTED] Mr. Bracey, please stand and raise your right  
8 hand. A false statement given to an Agency of the United States  
9 is punishable by fine and/or imprisonment under 18 U.S. Code 1001.  
10 Knowing this, do you solemnly swear that the testimony you are  
11 about to give will be truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the  
12 truth, so help you God?

13 MR. BRACEY: I do.

14 LCDR [REDACTED] Please be seated.

## INTERVIEW OF BRYAN BRACEY

15  
16 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

17 Q. Mr. Bracey, please state your full name and spell your last  
18 name.

19 A. Bryan Bracey, B-R-Y-A-N, B-R-A-C-E-Y.

20 Q. Please identify counsel or representative if present and have  
21 them state and spell their last name, as well as your firm or  
22 company relationship.

23 A. Eric Denley, D-E-N-L-E-Y, Deputy General Counsel, City  
24 Cruises, a Hornblower Group, party, and interest to the  
25 investigation.

1 Q. Please tell us what your current employment and position.

2 A. I'm employed with City Cruises. I'm a First Mate.

3 Q. What are your general responsibilities in that job.

4 A. As of now I am responsible for, if I'm assigned first mate  
5 duties on the cruise, I get the ship ready, start the ACs, warm  
6 the mains and the generators up, do a passenger headcount. And  
7 then, I do a review with the deckhands that are under me.

8 Q. Can you very briefly tell us your relevant work history?

9 A. Before this, I was a landscaper.

10 Q. What is your education related to your position?

11 A. High School, to my position, none.

12 Q. Do you hold any professional licenses or certificates related  
13 to your position?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Thank you, Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] will now have follow  
16 up questions for you.

17 LCDR [REDACTED] Good afternoon, Mr. Bracey, thank you for being  
18 here. And as I, we, we ask you questions and you need a break,  
19 just let us know. Do you mind just getting a little closer to  
20 the, or moving the microphone closer to you? Thank you.

21 All my questions today are related to the period up to  
22 June 7th. And if I specifically ask you about a later date, I  
23 will tell you. There's an exhibit binder available in front of  
24 you. And you've been provided an exhibit list in advance.

25 Chief Doyle will pull up any exhibits up on the monitors in

1 the room. And since we don't have a laser pointer if you, if I  
2 asked you to describe something or point to something, we'll just  
3 zoom in on the screen.

4 We're going to break your testimony up into three parts. One  
5 your experience as a senior deckhand. Second, the events of  
6 May 15, jack a water (ph.) leak. And then, the events of June 7th  
7 for the fire on board the *Spirit of Norfolk*. Can you please state  
8 your position again, that you held on June 7th, 2022?

9 A. I was senior deckhand that day.

10 Q. And how long have you been employed with City Cruises? And  
11 how long have you worked on board the *Spirit* in Norfolk?

12 A. I've been with City Cruises for four months, up until, in  
13 June.

14 Q. And have you worked on the *Spirit of Norfolk* the entire time?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And tell us, can you tell us when did you promote to senior  
17 deckhand on board the *Spirit* in Norfolk?

18 A. Maybe a month before the incident happened, sometime in May.

19 Q. So how long did it take you to promote from deckhand to  
20 senior deckhand?

21 A. Ninety days, give or take.

22 Q. And can you describe for us what you did to promote to senior  
23 deckhand? In other words, what is the promotion process for the  
24 deck crew?

25 A. I familiarized myself with all the safety equipment on the

1 boat. This was, I'd asked this from crew members who already held  
2 the position how they got it. So, part of that was to know where  
3 all the extinguishers were, fire stations, life vest. And that  
4 was basically it.

5 Q. You just mentioned that you asked other crew members how they  
6 got there. So, is there a company policy to promote or you just  
7 had to figure it out?

8 A. I don't know if there's a company policy. I just, when I got  
9 there, I asked the guy what he did to get to his slot.

10 Q. In your opinion, what is your primary duty onboard the *Spirit*  
11 *of Norfolk* and what does that entail?

12 A. My primary duties vary. They can go from client care, to  
13 launch and docking of the boat, to housekeeping. It just depends  
14 on what I'm assigned to do that day. The start of the day, I'll  
15 started housekeeping. I'll get the heads ready, some carpets  
16 cleaned, make sure, you know, we're clean and good to go.

17 Then we will get the deck ready, get the dock ready to take  
18 on board passengers. And when I get passengers on board, and  
19 we've launched, then my responsibilities is now is to maintain  
20 their safety.

21 Q. And when you're hired on as a deckhand can you talk about the  
22 training you received from City Cruises?

23 A. In terms of?

24 Q. Any training that you received prior? Once you got hired as  
25 the deckhand?

1 A. Okay. When I got hired as a deckhand, I shadowed two my  
2 employees for a week or two just to get the swing of things. And  
3 as a basic deckhand, you're, you know, initially there, once again  
4 it's for housekeeping. You'll learn some line handling. And  
5 then, interactions with our clients as far as their safety and  
6 keeping an eye on them throughout the cruise.

7 Q. Have you ever received training on what to do, or how to  
8 conduct passenger accountability during an evacuation, or how to  
9 manage passengers during an evacuation?

10 A. That came along the line, and my time with them, when we did  
11 roundtable discussions on training scenarios.

12 Q. Was it just roundtable discussions? Or was that part of  
13 drills?

14 A. No, they were part of drills.

15 Q. Have you ever received training on how to assist passengers  
16 with safety equipment during an emergency?

17 A. Safety equipment being, give me - -like, an EMT bag, or  
18 something like that? What do you mean by it?

19 Q. Such as life jackets?

20 A. Yes, I have.

21 Q. And can you explain that? How often you receive that? Was  
22 that in the form of drills, as well, or was that a tabletop as  
23 well?

24 A. They varied, each drill, and even tabletops. They are,  
25 they're different every time. One, one drill day, we may do man

1 overboard. One drill day, we may do fire drills. So, they entail  
2 two different sets of safety equipment until you have to tell a  
3 passenger to put on a personal life vest. So, it just all  
4 depends.

5 Q. Okay. Acting in the role of, as the deckhand or the senior  
6 deckhand, have you ever participated in or coordinated evacuation  
7 drills on board the *Spirit of Norfolk*?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Have you ever received firefighting training, or were trained  
10 on how to fight fires on board the *Spirit of Norfolk*?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Can you kind of describe that training?

13 A. Fire drills entailed, we would designate an area on the boat  
14 to hypothetically be on fire. And then, you would need to know  
15 what type of it fire was, whether it's a flammable liquid, or if  
16 it's just paper, so you, you knew where your fire extinguishers  
17 were and how to handle said situation.

18 Q. So, was that training only in the form of drills as you just  
19 described, or was there actual training involved?

20 A. When you say actual training, do you mean we light the boat  
21 on fire?

22 Q. No, training as in like you've trained with the captain, sat  
23 down, maybe manual, maybe a book, on how to find a fight?

24 A. Our captains are the ones who run these training drills. Be  
25 it Ryan, who was up here earlier if he's on the ship that day, or

1 some of our other captains. So, there's always a captain  
2 involved. Depending on how much time we have, sometimes that  
3 training drill is just a roundtable. If we've got enough time,  
4 then we will run a physical drill.

5 A. Were you present for the Coast Guard inspection that was on  
6 May 10th, 2022?

7 Q. Yes. In previous testimony, they had ran a fire drill that  
8 day, did you participate? Kind of take us through what that fire  
9 drill was like.

10 A. That'd be my first time experiencing a Coast Guard  
11 inspection. So, when the officer, she was for walking on board  
12 the boat and I stepped out of her way, just let her through. And  
13 she calmly said, the bathrooms on fire.

14 And then, at first, I'm like, huh (ph.). And then, my mind  
15 is like, this is this is her testing me. So, then I grabbed the  
16 nearest fire extinguisher to me, and I get one of my other  
17 co-workers behind me with another fire extinguisher.

18 Then we test the door for a heat signature. If it's, I  
19 called it not hot since it was my choice, and we opened the door.  
20 And then, determined it was a trashcan fire. And you simulate  
21 putting it out with a fire extinguisher.

22 Q. And what was their feedback from that fire drill?

23 A. I don't know.

24 Q. You weren't part of like a discussion afterwards about how  
25 that went?

1 A. No.

2 Q. And as the senior deckhand do you conduct or lead any  
3 training with your crew members?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Would it be a fair statement to say that as a senior deckhand  
6 you're responsible for the other deckhands on your crew?

7 A. No.

8 Q. Mr. Bracey were you the senior deckhand on more of the *Spirit*  
9 of *Norfolk* on May 15th, 2022, when the *Spirit of Norfolk*  
10 experienced a water pump failure?

11 A. I may have had the senior deckhand position.

12 Q. Were you a deckhand?

13 A. I was a deckhand, yes.

14 Q. Okay. In your own words, can you kind of describe for us  
15 what you saw, what did, your interactions on board the *Spirit of*  
16 *Norfolk* on May 15th, 2022, the day of the water pump failure. You  
17 can kind of start from the moment right before the discovery of  
18 smoke or steam as it was coming from the engine room.

19 A. I was on third deck. We were coming, we were in bound up the  
20 river, coming home. And I noticed we had a trail of smoke behind  
21 us that I'm not used to seeing. I made a call over the radio to  
22 the Captain and the Mate in the wheelhouse that we're blowing  
23 smoke down the river.

24 And the Mate relayed that message to the Captain. And then,  
25 I guess the Mate stuck his head out the window to see the same

1 thing I could see from third deck. I was on third deck the entire  
2 time.

3 Q. Okay. So after the incident, did you ever go down to the  
4 engine room?

5 A. No.

6 Q. And do you know who went down to the engine room? Was there  
7 anyone that went down to the engine room during that event?

8 A. I'm not aware.

9 Q. Were you aware that anyone extinguished fire extinguishers,  
10 discharged fire extinguishers on the port main engine?

11 A. Not the day of, I didn't know that day of.

12 Q. Okay. During the passenger cruise on May 15th, at the time  
13 of the suspected fire, did the Captain onboard the vessel make any  
14 announcements or sound any alarms informing passengers or crew of  
15 the incident?

16 A. I don't recall.

17 Q. Immediately following that event, either in the afternoon,  
18 the evening, or the next few days, did anyone speak with you about  
19 the incident? Specifically about the response of the crew such as  
20 the Captain, or anyone from City Cruises? Did anyone sit down  
21 with the crew that day and talk about the event?

22 A. No.

23 LCDR [REDACTED] I'm going to ask Chief Doyle to pull up Coast  
24 Guard Exhibit 033 and turn to page 6. You can use the binder in  
25 front of you if you need to if you can't see it up on the monitor.

1 And this is vessel logs from the *Spirit of Norfolk*. We're going  
2 to go, page 6 is a cruise for May 29th.

3 And I know it's redacted but you're assigned to a cruise with  
4 Captain Nadeau on May 29th, 2022. And at the bottom of that log  
5 book, it states a tabletop review of recent suspected fire  
6 emergency, discuss marine restaurant collaboration. Can you  
7 scroll down just a little bit?

8 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

9 Q. So, do you recall that tabletop discussion --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- that Captain Nadeau is referring to?

12 A. No.

13 Q. So, he didn't sit down with the crew and discuss the events  
14 of May 15th?

15 A. He may have. I don't remember.

16 Q. So, we're going to go ahead and go to June 7th 2022. In your  
17 own words, can you please describe what you did? Again, what you  
18 saw? What your interactions were on June 7th, 2022, the day of  
19 the fire? And you can start with when you went down for lunch and  
20 go through as much detail as you can until the part where you  
21 departed the *Victory Rover*.

22 A. Yeah, it was a, it was a normal cruise. I went down for  
23 lunch somewhere between 11:30 and 12 o'clock with one of my  
24 shipmates. And I got a call over the radio that, from my Captain,  
25 that he's getting a smoke alarm from the engine room. Can

1 somebody check it out?

2 I replied, sure, I got it because I was feet away from the  
3 engine room door. I put my lunch down. Grab the handle, opened  
4 the door for a brief moment. I saw smoke. I saw a quick flame.  
5 I shut the door.

6 Made the call back up to my Captain that I've seen a fire in  
7 the engine room. I yelled back to my shipmate to grab a fire  
8 extinguisher, and stand behind me. And I grabbed the closest fire  
9 extinguisher that was closest to me.

10 So, now I have her with one, and myself with one. I opened  
11 the door a second time and it was just too dark in there to do  
12 anything, to make any type of entry. And I shut the door and made  
13 way upstairs.

14 My other ship mate, Jeremiah, was shutting the fuel off. I  
15 was on the bow with Bob. We were in the process of connecting  
16 with another tug on the bow. When I caught the line, the first  
17 time, I put it over our railing and Bob brought it to my attention  
18 that I should run the line under the railing. That way, when the  
19 tension picked up, we don't bend the railing.

20 You figure at this time, we're not thinking we're going to  
21 lose the boat. We don't want to damage anything. So, the tug at  
22 that time hadn't tighten the line. There was no tension on the  
23 line. So, I still had a moment to take the line off the tee, run  
24 it under our railing, and, and then tackle and tie it back down.

25 Gave the tugboat Captain a thumbs up. He gave me a honk of

1 his horn. Put a slack on the line. Bob advised me that I should  
2 back up just in case the line snapped. That's when I proceeded  
3 inside of the boat.

4 I went to midship, grabbed a PFD, and the Rover at this point  
5 in time is pulling up. I've got guests in the stairwell. I go  
6 out to second deck from the stern to see all of our guests in a  
7 line with vests on making their way down the stairwell.

8 I go up to third deck from the stern to make sure we don't  
9 have any more guests up there. And we didn't. Go back to second  
10 deck. I go down the first deck. I go back to midship. Assist  
11 with one or two passengers going over on the Rover.

12 I go back up to second deck to do some more passenger checks.  
13 I make contact with a tug off of our starboard stern. I wasn't  
14 there too long. The smoke inhalation was strong, but I just  
15 pointed him to that, to the vent we have on that side, and they  
16 began to pour on water.

17 I go back to first deck. Most of our passengers are off at  
18 this point in time. And now our marine operations crew, we are  
19 now huddled at midship waiting for our next order. So, then we  
20 got the call from Captain Ryan to get off the boat.

21 Q. Okay, I'll have a few follow up questions for you. Did you  
22 step into the engine room at any point? Or were you standing  
23 outside the engine room the entire time?

24 A. Outside the engine room.

25 Q. When you opened the engine room door for the first time can

1 you please describe for us exactly what you witnessed? When you  
2 opened the door the first time? What you smelled and what you  
3 saw?

4 A. I couldn't tell you what I saw. I mean, I'm pretty sure it  
5 smelled smoke, but adrenaline's pumping. It's grey smoke and a  
6 flame. I shut the door, quick, fast and in a hurry.

7 Q. Can you describe the smoke and how much you saw?

8 A. It was ship metal gray smoke. Almost, yes, it was gray  
9 smoke. How much of it? I can't, I can't picture it in my head.  
10 I can't, I can't remember.

11 Q. And can you explain for us why you didn't attempt to enter in  
12 the engine room?

13 A. There was too much smoke. No, my gut instinct was to close  
14 the door and grab a fire extinguisher. I wouldn't have gone in  
15 there without one. That would have been, that would have been  
16 silly. So, you close the door. Get whatever I can to fight it.  
17 Then, then we'll make a move. That's why I didn't go in there the  
18 first time.

19 Q. And how far did you have to go to get the fire extinguisher?

20 A. Turn around.

21 Q. In your preliminary interview in June, which again is  
22 transcribed in Coast Guard Exhibit 71, you stated that you could  
23 see the flame in the engine room and that you stated that you  
24 could see the flame as clear as day, is that correct?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Mr. Bracey, how far is the port main diesel engine from the  
2 engine room doorway where you were standing, approximately?

3 A. Fifteen, 20 feet, maybe.

4 Q. And can you describe any obstacles or obstructions to your  
5 view to the port main engine when standing from the engine door?

6 A. Other than smoke, I didn't there, there wasn't, there was  
7 nothing physically in my way if that's what you mean, as far as,  
8 no, there was nothing there.

9 LCDR [REDACTED] Chief Doyle, could you pull up exhibit, Coast  
10 Guard Exhibit 79, TAC 1, which is a diagram of the Spirit in  
11 Norfolk Engine room? Just take a second to familiarize yourself  
12 with a diagram.

13 We kind of have a label on there where the engine room  
14 watertight door was, if that helps. And I, we usually have a  
15 laser pointer to kind of help point out where you were. But just  
16 kind of try to describe for us as best you can.

17 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

18 Q. Can you kind of describe? Is this the engine room, and what,  
19 kind of looking at the components in there?

20 A. What are you? Can you elaborate a little bit more?

21 Q. So, in there I believe there's a title called CAT, right  
22 there where it says -- is that the generator? Is that where the  
23 generators sit?

24 A. Yes, those are the generators.

25 Q. All right. And then, on the outside, the darker objects are

1 the engines?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. And is that approximately where you were standing  
4 where that blue arrow is?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. And can you kind of describe on here, I know it's hard  
7 without a pointer, but kind of just describe where you saw the  
8 smoke in that space right there?

9 A. It was up above my head. It was on the ceiling. I mean, I'm  
10 on, yes, it was it was above my head. My attention, I guess,  
11 because of the angle in which I opened the door was facing port.  
12 So, I couldn't see, I didn't see anything starboard side. But  
13 everything in front of me on the port side, it was, it was smoke.

14 Q. Okay. And where did you see? Where did you see the flame  
15 that you described? Which engine was that in the diagram?

16 A. It was on the port main, which is on the top of your screen,  
17 and it was on the outboard side.

18 Q. Okay. So, the side toward that square x?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Okay. And can you kind of describe for us since we don't  
21 have really like a height how high that generator is in the  
22 diagram approximately

23 A. I don't remember to be honest with you.

24 Q. And you know how about how high the engine was?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Can you kind of take us through your thought process on why  
2 you decided to open engine room door for a second time?

3 A. It was to begin any sort of fire defense or prevent actions  
4 that's what it, that's what it was. I was prepared to try and put  
5 this thing out if I could.

6 Q. How much time had passed when you first opened the engine  
7 room door to the second time you open the engine room door?

8 A. Maybe 60 seconds.

9 Q. And did you personally shut the engine room door for the  
10 second time?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And how do you know that you shut it and it was completely  
13 secure? Like, how can you tell on the door to the engine room?

14 A. That it was secure?

15 Q. Yes.

16 A. Because the dogs (ph.) on the outside, they lock in front of  
17 the doorframe.

18 Q. Did at any point in time, and we're kind of moving now,  
19 shifting toward kind of your duties as the senior deckhand. Did  
20 at any point in time, you conduct engineering maintenance on board  
21 the *Spirit in Norfolk*?

22 A. No. No, sorry.

23 Q. No? Okay. Did you receive, as part of your senior deckhand,  
24 are you working toward that, conducting any maintenance? Working  
25 with Mr. Enloe? Or is that kind of outside your --

1 A. No. It's, it's, at that point in time, it was in, it was in  
2 the foreseeable future to work towards that.

3 Q. And how long have you been conducting rounds onboard the  
4 *Spirit of Norfolk* in the engine room?

5 A. At that time, none.

6 Q. Okay. So, I know we heard in the previous testimony that I  
7 believe Mr. Perry was the only one that was conducting rounds that  
8 day?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. He switched that up? Like, were you going to conduct a round  
11 during that day with him?

12 A. Was I going to conduct a round? I don't believe, so, no.

13 Q. Okay. He was just taking the trainees?

14 A. Yes.

15 LCDR ██████████ Okay. That's all the questions I have for you.

16 CDR WADDINGTON: Lieutenant ██████████

17 LCDR ██████████ Thank you.

18 BY LCDR ██████████

19 Q. When you went to the engine round for the first time, on the  
20 seventh of June, did you, were the, did you -- were the engines  
21 running when you went in there? Do you recall?

22 A. When I went down there for lunch, they were running. We were  
23 still moving, yes.

24 Q. Okay. How did you know they were running?

25 A. Because we were still moving. I mean, it was up until I got

1 the radio call, it was a regular day. I was up on first deck.  
2 We're cruising along. You know, hey, go down for lunch. We're  
3 still cruising along. Two seconds later, hey, I'm getting an  
4 alarm in the engine room. Can you check it out?

5 Q. And when he went in to check out that alarm, were the engine  
6 still running?

7 A. I couldn't tell you. I didn't, I didn't go in that far.

8 Q. Did you put on hearing protection prior to opening the door?

9 A. I did.

10 Q. Okay. And normally with that hearing protection, it's pretty  
11 good hearing protection. You really can't hear much if you were  
12 to go in the engine room with it, with the engines running. Could  
13 you hear them pretty well?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So, you're now you you're the First Mate, correct?

16 A. Currently now, yes, I am.

17 Q. Okay. So, before, prior to June 7th --

18 A. Yes?

19 Q. -- did the First Mate or anyone else send a full headcount  
20 ashore with regards to the the cruise for that day? Or was that  
21 an operating procedure for the *Spirit of Norfolk* for somebody to  
22 send a headcount to shoreside?

23 A. From what I know now, I don't know. I don't know what they  
24 did that, what the First Mate did that day. I can't make  
25 assumptions as, for his actions.

1 Q. As a senior deckhand Have you ever done that?

2 A. No.

3 Q. As a deckhand have you ever done that?

4 A. No.

5 Q. As the First Mate do you do it now?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. At what point in your, in the excursion do you do that?

8 A. Within 15 minutes of departure, ten, 15 minutes of departure,  
9 you give us enough time to back out of the auto berth (ph.) and I  
10 get with the restaurant manager, I get her account, she gets my  
11 account. And that's when I get our, you know, our total figures.

12 Q. Do you do engineering rounds now?

13 A. Yes, I do.

14 Q. And who taught you how to do those engineer rounds?

15 A. Bob Enloe.

16 Q. Okay. And is that when -- and what vessel is that on?

17 A. It's *Spirit of Mount Vernon*.

18 Q. Does that a similar setup to the *Spirit of Norfolk*?

19 MR. DENLEY: Could you maybe, could you maybe rephrase the  
20 question? I don't know that he knows what you mean by setup, and  
21 I don't know that I know what you mean by setup.

22 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

23 Q. Mr. Bracey have you been in the engine room aboard the *Spirit*  
24 *of Norfolk* before?

25 A. Once or twice.

1 Q. So, if you're -- so, now you conduct rounds on the *Spirit*  
2 of -- what wasn't the name it? I'm sorry?

3 A. *Mount Vernon*.

4 Q. Now on the *Spirit of Mount Vernon*, was the engine room, is  
5 the engine room on the *Spirit of Mount Vernon* have a similar  
6 configuration as did the *Spirit of Norfolk*?

7 A. I don't know. I didn't have enough time in *Norfolk's* engine  
8 room to familiarize myself with it that well, to accurately  
9 remember it to this day.

10 Q. Okay. On the 7th of June when you opened and you saw the  
11 flames, you said they were above the port engine on the ceiling?

12 A. No, I didn't.

13 Q. You did not?

14 A. No, I didn't say that.

15 Q. Can you tell me then again where the --

16 A. I saw one quick flash of a flame on the outboard side. I  
17 didn't see any flame on the ceiling.

18 Q. You stated that they were above you.

19 A. No, I didn't.

20 Q. So, the flame was on the outboard side of the engine?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And you could see the outboard side of the engine from where  
23 you're standing, through the grey smoke?

24 A. What I could see from that door was smoke on the ceiling and  
25 a flame on the outboard side of the port main.

1 Q. Okay, thank you.

2 CDR WADDINGTON: NTSB, do you have any questions of this  
3 witness?

4 BY MR. KARR:

5 Q. Thank you, Commander I do. Mr. Bracey, two quick questions  
6 on the, about the 7th. When you looked into the engine room, were  
7 the lights on in the engine room?

8 A. I don't recall.

9 Q. Under normal conditions were the lights always on in the  
10 engine room?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. All right, thanks. And when you looked, and you just told us  
13 you saw the smoke above the engine, and you saw the flame on the  
14 outboard side. Were you able to recognize the port engine? Did  
15 you actually see any part of that?

16 A. Any physical part of the engine?

17 Q. Right.

18 A. I don't, I don't remember.

19 Q. Yes, you know, I wanted, you know, when you -- I'm trying to  
20 judge where that flame was.

21 A. I understand.

22 Q. You know, you saw the flame. All right, good. So, you did  
23 not see it? You did not see the engine?

24 A. I can't remember if I saw, physically saw the engine itself.

25 Q. All right, thanks.

1 A. Like, part of it, I can't.

2 Q. Part? What was that last part?

3 A. I said, like a part of it. I can't tell you if I saw a part,  
4 a physical part of the engine.

5 Q. All right, thanks.

6 MR. KARR: No more.

7 CDR WADDINGTON: Bay Diesel, do you have any questions of  
8 this witness?

9 MR. ABELL: I do, Commander. Good afternoon, Mr. Bracey. My  
10 name is Chris Abell. I represent Bay Diesel. I've got a couple  
11 of questions for you, sir.

12 BY MR. ABELL:

13 Q. So, at the time of the fire, you've been aboard the ship  
14 about four months, right?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. And I thought I heard you say a moment ago that prior to the  
17 day of the fire, you'd only been in the engine room once or twice.  
18 Does that sound right?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Okay. And you were asked about the main engines, whether  
21 they're running or not when you were looking in the engine room at  
22 the time of the fire. On that day, do you know whether the port  
23 or starboard generator, or both were running during that trip?

24 A. I don't know which generator we were running off of that day.

25 Q. Okay. If you were to go back into the engine room today,

1 assuming there wasn't a fire and everything was the way it was  
2 before, where would the generator be located? Or, generators, you  
3 tell me.

4 A. I don't remember.

5 Q. Okay. The watertight door from the galley to the engine  
6 room, that opens out, correct?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Into the galley?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. All right. So, when you were opening that watertight door,  
11 were you opening it with your right hand or your left hand?

12 A. My right hand.

13 Q. Right hand, okay. So, undog (ph.) it by spinning the wheel?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And then, use that to pull it open?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You look in the engine room, and you see smoke? You said,  
18 grayish smoke, right?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And some flame?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Do you immediately close the door at that point?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. All right. So, we're talking, and again, you tell me if I  
25 got this wrong. This isn't a case of you opening the door and

1 looking around, and up, and down, or whatever. It's, oh, no, I  
2 put it right back?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay. So, kind of a flash of I look, I close it, right?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. When you say you saw the flame, as you think back, is  
7 it you just see the glow? Or did you see the kind of the orange  
8 of the flame? Or could you see flames, you know, individual  
9 tongues of flame, or something like that? I'm just trying to get  
10 a word picture of what you saw in that instant when you opened the  
11 door.

12 A. This wasn't flames. This wasn't like the reflection of a  
13 flame off of something. This was just a flame through the smoke.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't know else how to describe it.

16 Q. All right. And you say the outboard side of the main engine?  
17 Is that where the shelves were? Or the boxes and all?  
18 You've been here all day, right?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. So, you've seen the pictures that we've shown around? And  
21 you know what the shelving is with the boxes? Was it in that  
22 general area that you're saying you saw it, or, or you just know  
23 it was somewhere over in that direction?

24 A. It was somewhere in that direction.

25 Q. All right. So, would it be more accurate to say, in that

1 instant, when you opened the door, that second when you're looking  
2 in, a lot of smoke, and somewhere to the right, because you're  
3 facing aft, which would be on the port side, there's a flame in  
4 there, right?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And then you close it right away?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Would you be able to judge with any kind of accuracy whether  
9 that flame that you saw on the right side was five feet from the  
10 forward bulkhead, ten feet from the forward bulkhead, 15 feet from  
11 the forward bulkhead, or was it just somewhere on the right side?

12 A. I couldn't judge it.

13 Q. Somewhere on the right side?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. And then, you grab a fire extinguisher?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. You get to shipmate, and were going to go back in?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You open it the second time. Now a lot more smoke, right?

20 A. Yes, and it's darker now.

21 Q. And it's like black, oily smoke at that point?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. And that's when you closed it?

24 A. I closed it up, pulled the firehose up.

25 Q. Yes, sir.

1 MR. ABELL: I don't have any further questions, sir. Thank  
2 you for your time.

3 MR. BRACEY: You're welcome.

4 CDR WADDINGTON: City Cruises?

5 MR. DENLEY: I do just have a couple of questions,  
6 Mr. Bracey.

7 BY MR. DENLEY:

8 Q. So, when you got the call from Captain Nadeau --

9 A. Yes?

10 Q. -- that there was a something going on in the engine room and  
11 you responded to it. You were in the galley, is that correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. So, you were immediately adjacent, immediately next to where  
14 the engine room was?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Did you have any, did you have hearing protection on at that  
17 point in time?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Did you hear any change in pitch? Any change in any sounds  
20 coming from the engine room?

21 A. No.

22 Q. The Coast Guard asked you to look at CG 007, TAC 1, Coast  
23 Guard exhibit.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is there any way that you can tell if that is drawn to scale?

1 Meaning like, like, can you tell how many feet is between which  
2 piece of equipment, or is that generally, just kind of a  
3 representation of where the equipment was in the engine room?

4 A. I think it's just a representation.

5 Q. And you didn't create that document?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay. Just, just then when you were answering questions from  
8 Mr. Abell, I think you talked about getting the fire hose out?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Can you tell me about when you did that and what you did in  
11 kind of the sequence of events?

12 A. I pulled the fire hose out after I closed the door, the  
13 second time, just to get it ready for whatever the next step was  
14 going to be as far as trying to maintain, or, or stop  
15 this, whatever was going on inside the engine room.

16 Q. So, you secured the watertight door?

17 A. Yes, it's, it's shut.

18 Q. And you faked out (ph.) the fire hose to create a fire  
19 boundary?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Now, you were one of the, you actually did get off the *Spirit*  
22 *of Norfolk* onto the *Victory Rover*, is that correct?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. As you went through that process, did, you also  
25 mentioned that you helped some guests with life vests? Can you

1 maybe describe kind of what you did and maybe elaborate on that a  
2 little bit more?

3 A. Is this on the *Rover*?

4 Q. No. I'm sorry. This would be on, the on --

5 A. On the *Norfolk*?

6 Q. -- *Spirit of Norfolk*, yes.

7 A. I just assisted with -- from the *Norfolk* over to the *Rover*.

8 Q. Okay. My other shipmates and the galley staff, they pretty  
9 much had that handled to the best of their capabilities.

10 A. And when you say had that handled, you mean they were  
11 escorting the guests to the the port side door?

12 Q. Yes. They had by the time I got within sight of any of our  
13 clients that day, they will already in vests. You would think  
14 what a boat full of kids, and a situation like that, it would be  
15 chaotic, and it wasn't.

16 Q. Can you can you describe it?

17 A. It was, it was, it was organized chaos. I mean, when I think  
18 about that day, I like I said, when I got to second deck, I  
19 expected to see people scattered around the deck and in different  
20 different sections of the deck, on second deck putting on vests,  
21 and whatnot.

22           And that wasn't the case. People were lined up against  
23 the bulkhead to go down the stairwell orderly. There wasn't too,  
24 there wasn't screaming. There, there were no kids crying. And  
25 there were no parents overreacting, and save my child. There was

1 there was none of that. It was there was organized egress off  
2 that ship that day.

3 Q. And then, you rode with your guests and back with, on the  
4 *Victory Rover*?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Okay. Are you aware of, of, you know, as difficult as this  
7 day was, and as difficult as this situation was, were you aware?  
8 Well, was anybody hurt or injured?

9 A. No.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I know that for a fact.

12 Q. Okay. And can you describe the, sort of the demeanor onboard  
13 the *Victory Rover* as the guests went there?

14 A. On our way home, I couldn't stay still. I couldn't. The  
15 Marine Operations crew they were sitting forward on the *Rover*, I  
16 believe. And I couldn't for the life of me just sit still. So, I  
17 paced the two decks on the *Rover*, just looking at our guests.

18 I would always look at parents and kids. I just wanted to  
19 see faces, just to make sure nobody was hurt, nobody was crying.  
20 I don't know, I felt like my care for our clients didn't stop  
21 until I got them back on dry land.

22 So, even though we were on somebody else's boat, they were  
23 still my responsibility, I guess? I assisted, I think I grabbed a  
24 life vests from one or two kids who may still have theirs on, and  
25 and went and stack them with, where the rest of them were. But

1 until we got back to Town Point Park, I mean, I kept an eye on all  
2 90 of our guests.

3 MR. DENLEY: Thank you. I don't have any more questions.

4 CDR WADDINGTON: Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] do you have any  
5 follow up questions? Okay. Mr. Bracey, you are now released as a  
6 witness at this formal hearing. Thank you for your testimony and  
7 cooperation. If I later determine that this team needs additional  
8 information from you, I will contact you through your counsel.

9 If you have any questions about this investigation, you  
10 may contact the Investigation Recorder, Lieutenant [REDACTED]  
11 The time is 4:30. We will reconvene convene at 4:40 or in other  
12 words, a ten minute recess. And we're getting kind of late in the  
13 day. So, let's please be prompt. Thank you

14 (Whereupon, at 4:30 p.m., the interview was concluded.)  
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the  
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK*  
NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, VIRGINIA  
ON JUNE 7, 2022  
Interview of Bryan Bracey

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM022

PLACE: Virginia Beach, Virginia

DATE: January 27, 2023

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.

~~Margaret C Boardman~~

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Margaret C. Boardman  
Transcriber