

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

JACQUELINE A. INCIDENT \*

Accident No.: DCA23FM044

ON AUGUST 9, 2023 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: RYAN DAME, Port Engineer  
Ward Towing Company, Inc.

via Microsoft Teams

Wednesday,  
August 16, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED], Senior Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED] Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

ANDREW EHLERS, Marine Accident Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

RYAN GILSENAN, Esq.  
Hines & Gilsenan, LLC  
Representing Ward Towing Company, Inc.

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Ryan Dame:	
By CWO [REDACTED]	5
By Mr. [REDACTED]	33
By CWO [REDACTED]	43
By LT [REDACTED]	45
By LT [REDACTED]	54

I N T E R V I E W

(1:03 p.m.)

1  
2  
3 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Good afternoon, my name is Chief Warrant  
4 Officer [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard, Detached Duty Office  
5 Myrtle Beach. Today's date is August 16th, 2023. The time is  
6 13:03 Eastern Standard Time. I'm conducting the interview from  
7 DDO Myrtle Beach Office and on Microsoft Teams.

8 I'm going to go around the room and let everyone introduce  
9 themselves, starting with Ms. [REDACTED].

10 LT [REDACTED]: This is Lieutenant [REDACTED], that's  
11 [REDACTED]. I'm the chief of investigations for Sector  
12 Charleston.

13 CWO [REDACTED]: Mr. Ehlers.

14 MR. EHLERS: This is Andrew Ehlers, I'm a marine accident  
15 investigator with the National Transportation Safety Board.

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Mr. [REDACTED].

17 LT [REDACTED]: This is Lieutenant [REDACTED]. I'm an  
18 investigating officer at Sector Charleston. My last name is  
19 spelled [REDACTED], first name is [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

20 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. Mr. Ryan.

21 MR. DAME: This is Ryan Dame --

22 (Crosstalk)

23 MR. GILSENAN: Go ahead, Ryan.

24 MR. DAME: Ryan Dame, I work on the Ward tugs. So-called  
25 port engineer.

1 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. And the attorney?

2 MR. GILSENAN: This is Ryan Gilsenan, G-i-l-s-e-n-a-n. I am  
3 counsel for the party-in-interest/vessel owner.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. So as I stated earlier, you know,  
5 the Coast Guard is conducting a fact-finding investigation to the  
6 sinking of the *Jacqueline A.* off the coast of Myrtle Beach and I'm  
7 going to start off with you, Mr. Ryan. Do you want me to call you  
8 Mr. Dame, Ryan, how would you like me to call you?

9 MR. DAME: Ryan's fine.

10 INTERVIEW OF RYAN DAME

11 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

12 Q. Okay. All right. And can you tell us how long have you been  
13 a port engineer?

14 A. I started -- for the Ward's or how long have I been working  
15 on vessels?

16 Q. In like total, like how long have you been doing the port  
17 engineer role?

18 A. Well, I owned a diesel business, I owned a Florida Marine  
19 diesel down in Florida for years, I owned a marine diesel service  
20 up here in Virginia. I had taken over an older man's parts store  
21 when I was in high school, I graduated a year early. He had a 46  
22 Grand Banks, I ran that to Florida with him and worked on that for  
23 him and then I started doing deliveries back in my early twenties  
24 and it ended up I was working on the boats more than I was  
25 delivering them and I pretty much started working on diesel

1 engines and have always, always done that, so pretty much -- I'm  
2 50 now, so 30, probably 31, 32 years.

3 Q. Okay. And during that 30-ish years, how many years would you  
4 say you've had as a port engineer, working on this type of vessel,  
5 like a tug?

6 A. November 2020 I started for them.

7 Q. Okay. So no prior experience, prior to working on -- for the  
8 -- Mr. Ward, you didn't have any prior experience with working on  
9 towing vessels, is that correct?

10 A. No, sir. No, sir. I was on super yachts and larger vessels.

11 Q. Okay. And --

12 A. And class vessels.

13 Q. Okay. When did you start working with Mr. Ward and working  
14 on the *Jacqueline*?

15 A. I started working for them pretty much full time in November  
16 of 2020. Around June of 2021 all the boats were running and that  
17 was the only boat at the dock, so I went on and started going  
18 through the systems and -- because I knew sooner or later it was  
19 going south and just making sure everything was working.

20 I started looking at the wiring and I found that there was a  
21 rat's nest under the dashes and under the dog house and such, and  
22 started cleaning all that up and stuff and that went on pretty  
23 much the rest of that year, on and off, as time permitted and --  
24 and then, you know, on and off, any day I had anything -- any  
25 spare time, I would jump on there and just, you know, service an

1 engine, check systems, such as that.

2 Q. Okay. And you were saying that the -- when you made the  
3 statement that the vessel was going south, what do you mean by  
4 that?

5 A. Well, we knew that the boat was going to go down to Louisiana  
6 to get repaired, to meet Class M, to get -- we had a lot of rust  
7 on the top sides and stuff, and we knew it had to go down there  
8 and get repaired, so I was just trying to get the alarm system,  
9 get ready for Subchapter M, we put the alarm systems on and -- on  
10 the engines and the bilge alarms and -- and all that stuff, same  
11 as we have on our other boats.

12 Q. Okay. Maintenance. Does the vessel or you have a method  
13 that you track maintenance or log maintenance once it's completed?

14 A. Oh, yeah. I've always done things in my memory, you know,  
15 I'll take a picture of something when I do it and if I have to  
16 ever go back, I can go back to a picture. You know, I changed the  
17 oil and everything in it and did all that back when I was working  
18 on it and just kind of, you know, went over the engines, changed  
19 fuel filters and such as that, and the boat hasn't really moved  
20 other than going down to the shipyard in Newport News.

21 So you know, it's really not needed any maintenance. I would  
22 go on it, you know, once -- at least once a week and just check  
23 bilges and, you know, all that stuff just to make sure there was  
24 no water in the boat and it never was.

25 Q. Okay. The shipyard in Newport News, what shipyard was that?

1 A. The new Fairlead's.

2 Q. Fairlead, okay. Did you attend the vessel while she was  
3 hulled up at Fairlead?

4 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. We had a corrosion analysis done on the  
5 hull just to see how we were, you know, what the shape of the hull  
6 was in and such as that.

7 Q. And do you recall any negative results from the UT gauging  
8 that was conducted?

9 A. It was actually pleasantly surprising, it was better than I  
10 expected, you know, the boat had been sitting for a while and it  
11 was a -- it was some corrosion issues, but they were in little,  
12 small spots, smaller than a dime, and I think the smallest one I  
13 can recall, just off the top of my head was like 210,000th out of  
14 a quarter of an inch material. And I may be wrong and I'm just  
15 thinking back in my head, but --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. And we had another boat there at the same time, we were  
18 getting -- I believe it was rudderposts, and I was waiting for  
19 parts and I went over one day and just had a chipping hammer and,  
20 you know, I wasn't doing a paid survey, it was more for self  
21 preservation because I was planning on being the one that went  
22 down with the boat, but I went around the boat as high as I could  
23 reach and tapped on it with a chipping hammer and I didn't find  
24 anything alarming.

25 Q. So when you went around the boat with a chipping hammer, did



1 you do it on the topside decks, as well?

2 A. No, sir. No, sir. I just did it -- I just did it around the  
3 hull, as high as I could reach, you know, the boat was out of the  
4 water, so the boat gets pretty high, but you know, I was pretty  
5 much focused around the worst areas of the corrosion and that was  
6 around the engine room and it was a -- it was little spots of  
7 corrosion and I did all around that and where the fuel coolers go  
8 in and, you know, I didn't find anything that was alarming. I did  
9 around the struts and all that area and nothing was -- nothing  
10 that drew my attention. I wouldn't have hesitated leaving the  
11 dock in it.

12 Q. Okay. Where does the fuel -- so does this vessel have  
13 external fuel coolers?

14 A. Yeah, it's got channel line fuel coolers for the main  
15 engines, for the coolant system for the generators and main  
16 engines, and that's a 6-inch wide and maybe 8-inch wide on this  
17 boat, I can't recall, but it's a piece of channel iron welded to  
18 the bottom of the boat.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. So it's pretty much integral. And then on the -- the after  
21 coolers on the main engines, they have them stuffed into the side  
22 behind gratings.

23 Q. Do the penetrations for those, do they enter through the  
24 engine room? Where do the fuel coolers go back into the engine,  
25 into the engine room at?

1 A. The fuel coolers at the -- the channel line ones come through  
2 the bottom of the boat, but that's all capped off by a piece of  
3 channel iron.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. And the other ones are -- they come through the side of the  
6 boat and they have -- I can't recall the name of the fuel cooler  
7 now, but they're for the after cooler system on the main engines,  
8 which is supplied by a separate pump. And they come through the  
9 side of the boat, but that's in a recess behind a protective  
10 grating.

11 Q. Okay. But all those appendages, they come through the hull  
12 in the engine room space, is that correct?

13 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay. Okay, so going to the shipyard in Newport News, what  
15 was the scope of that dry dock, what was the intentions of taking  
16 the boat there?

17 A. To see how the bottom looks, to prepare to take it south to  
18 have it repaired.

19 Q. And while it was there, other than you going around and  
20 examining the exterior of the underbody with a chipping hammer,  
21 was any work or steel replaced on the vessel?

22 A. No, sir. No, sir. I know zincs were put on it and I wasn't  
23 really involved in that part of it, but I know zincs were put on  
24 the boat and I believe that was it, it set there for a pretty good  
25 time up on the hard and we -- you know, we got our audio gauge and

1 got the report back on that and -- and that was pretty much it.  
2 You know, the reason I didn't check any of the decks or anything,  
3 the boat never got water in it, you know, it never got rainwater  
4 in it, it was always -- it was always dry, I mean, you could go 6  
5 months and plug the back pump in and you might get a cup of water  
6 come out.

7 Q. Okay. And --

8 A. So I never had any reason.

9 Q. I got you. And while you were going around doing your survey  
10 with the chipping hammer, did you happen -- are you familiar with  
11 what a doubler plate is?

12 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Do you recall like seeing any like doubler plates or clad  
14 welding, any previous repairs that were done to the hull at  
15 previous dry docks?

16 A. I didn't see anything on the hull. The hull -- you know, I  
17 didn't crawl up into the inside of it, but I did go around on the  
18 outside and, you know, we had it pressurized real heavy, so it  
19 hadn't been sandblasted, but nothing that I was aware of.

20 Q. Okay. And at that dry dock, were the shafts or the rudders  
21 pulled?

22 A. No, sir. No, sir.

23 Q. Were the tires, this vessels has tires, right, a fendering  
24 system that includes like recycled automotive tires hanging off of  
25 it with chains, is that correct?

1 A. Yes, sir. It has tires and it has rubber bumpers.

2 Q. Were either of those removed for inspection during that dry  
3 dock?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Was any UT gauging conducted behind those tires?

6 A. No, sir. No, sir.

7 Q. And would those tires be hanging kind of below the waterline  
8 while the vessel is in the water?

9 A. The tire would be right at the -- the bottom of the tire  
10 would be right at the waterline, but it was all above the  
11 waterline.

12 Q. Okay. And you kind of stated a little bit earlier, so the  
13 condition of the hull, in your opinion, was in like what shape  
14 would you say, fair, poor?

15 A. It was -- you know, the boat's, what is it, 43 years old?  
16 For setting for as long as it did, the biggest problem I saw was a  
17 little -- little electrolysis spots from the outside, you know,  
18 looking at it, and that was our concern for having it, you know,  
19 hauled out and checked before we made the arrangements for the  
20 boat to go south, you know, we wanted to know what we were working  
21 with and it was nothing to be alarmed about, that I saw, and  
22 looking at the report. And, you know, granted, I'm not a  
23 professional surveyor, but you know, it's pretty easy to hear bad  
24 metal when you hear it with a chipping hammer.

25 Q. Right. So I used the term like "isolated" and "global," so

1 based off the pits that you witnessed on the boat, isolated would  
2 mean that there would be a pit maybe like every other foot or  
3 every foot or like 12-inch spacing. Global would be that there's  
4 pitting like in a -- a large sum of pitting concentrated in a  
5 small area. Did you see any global pitting where there was a  
6 large concentration of pits in a small area?

7 A. No, sir. No, sir. Nothing that I saw like that. It was  
8 more like you'd have four, five in one spot and then, you know,  
9 one spot over you'd have four or five and they were -- they were  
10 in a one square foot area, but -- and then, a lot of the hull, you  
11 know, looked like our other boats.

12 Q. Okay. And then --

13 A. I didn't really see --

14 Q. No, you go ahead.

15 A. I didn't really see anything that was alarming. You know, I  
16 wouldn't have had a problem leaving the dock in the boat.

17 Q. Okay. What work was discussed to be completed when the  
18 vessel got to New Orleans?

19 A. We were going to pretty much check all the sides. Mr. Ward  
20 is the one that does all that and generally, he gets carried away  
21 once we get started, but if we probably put an exorbitant amount  
22 of money spent on it, we would've had, you know, all new ways put  
23 on it, new decks, sandblast the whole boat, go through the engine  
24 room, you know, the compartments and everything like he did on his  
25 boat.

1 Q. Okay. And by Mr. Ward, the father, correct? That's --

2 A. Yes, yes, yes, sir. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. All right, while the boat was in dry dock, did you  
4 perform any work other than the survey that you did on the bottom?

5 A. No, sir. No, sir.

6 Q. Okay. What work did you recently do, like prior to the boat  
7 getting to the dry dock or prior to -- you know, like you can tell  
8 me like weeks, months, or whatever leading up to this incident,  
9 items replaced, items removed, items taken out of service?

10 A. We had a pretty busy last -- year last year, we had several  
11 engines and several generators and shafts and rudders and  
12 everything else we replaced on other boats, so I didn't do a whole  
13 lot on it from over time, but we -- we ended up doing -- I went  
14 around and checked all -- just before the boat left, I had to go  
15 to a funeral in Palm Beach, I left Thursday before the guys  
16 arrived, so I wasn't there, but just before we arrived -- just  
17 before I left, I changed the pressure switch on the starboard  
18 compressor.

19 Let me see here, port compressor. And I tested the alarms,  
20 just hit the bilge pumps, pretty much tested all the systems. I  
21 know Mr. -- both of the Wards, they changed the lights up top. I  
22 installed some lights in the cabin, some pressure lights, we put  
23 LEDs in that had been burnt out, just kind of went over the boat  
24 just to make sure everything was safe. We put a new life raft on  
25 it, which they had installed that, I just brought it down to the

1 boat with Mr. Ward. Checked all the radios and such, made sure  
2 AIS was working and all that stuff and pretty much, you know, just  
3 make sure the boat was good for a voyage, no water -- no water was  
4 in the boat. Put spare filters, oil, coolant and stuff like that  
5 on the boat for them and that was about it.

6 Q. Okay. Was there any vital equipment that was not  
7 operational, fire pumps, fuel pumps, radios, generators, any of  
8 those items not operational?

9 A. No, sir. The only thing that we had that I had heard when  
10 they left was the exhaust blower was having some issues and the  
11 engine room exhaust fan and trying to run it without it and the --  
12 that's -- I'm trying to think if there was anything. Oh, and they  
13 had a compressor problem and I told them what I thought it was and  
14 I never heard back from them, so I think they had solved that  
15 problem.

16 Q. When you say --

17 (Crosstalk)

18 MR. DAME: And that was the only two times. Yeah, they had a  
19 compressor that wouldn't shut off and it wouldn't build up to  
20 pressure where the pressure switch was set and it was a bolt back  
21 in the back that I had a problem with one time before, that it  
22 goes from the compressor head to the tank, and I told them to  
23 check that and to see if that had loosened, you may have to put a  
24 longer bolt in there if the threads are compromised, but I didn't  
25 think it was because it had been working for a while, I had a

1 problem with it back when I first started checking the boat over  
2 and we hadn't had any problem with it since, so -- but I didn't  
3 hear any more yet. He got back on line, well, I know he did  
4 because I talked to John, he's like yeah, everything's good, and  
5 that's the last time I talked to them, I didn't -- I kind of  
6 expected a phone call from them when they got there, you know, to  
7 get a heads-up on the boat, but I never heard anything from them.

8 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

9 Q. Okay. How many bilge pumps does the *Jacqueline* have?

10 A. It has one electric one in the engine room, three-phase  
11 electric, it has a bilge manifold that goes to the forward, the  
12 crash bulkhead, the forward bulkhead, I mean, the forward  
13 compartment, and the engine room and it has a plug-in one that  
14 goes to the back tank.

15 Q. So the back tank, what -- what is that, the lazarette?

16 A. Yes, sir, the back tank is the lazarette. The lazarette,  
17 yes, sir. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. So the engine room, does that have one or two electric  
19 bilge pumps?

20 A. It has one.

21 Q. So is there -- is there not a pump on the port and starboard  
22 side?

23 A. No, sir, it pulls right from the center of the engine room.

24 Q. But are there -- are there not two electric motors, one on  
25 the port side and one on the starboard side?



1 A. I believe you can use the fire pump on that boat for the --  
2 for the bilge pump, as well.

3 Q. Okay, so one of the pumps in the engine room, which pump in  
4 the engine room on what side would the bilge pump be located?

5 A. The bilge pump is on the -- starboard side. Right about the  
6 front of the engine.

7 Q. Okay. And the pump that would be -- the electric motor on  
8 the opposite side would be the fire pump?

9 A. That's electric. No, it's all three-phase electric motor  
10 pumps, that is the one that's on the starboard side. And then  
11 it's a pump that's in the stern tank, the lazarette, that is a  
12 plug-in pump, a pump that you plug into the receptacle at the back  
13 door.

14 Q. Electrical submersible pump?

15 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay, because what I'm trying to understand is the crew  
17 stated that when they entered the engine room, that they energized  
18 a pump on the -- an electric motor on the port side and an  
19 electric motor on the starboard side, you know, not at the same  
20 time but within a few seconds of each other to attempt to start  
21 pumping water out of the vessel. So the two pumps --

22 A. Yes, sir. And that's -- I'm sure that's the -- yeah, that's  
23 the fire pump on the other side and then I -- I'm pretty sure it's  
24 the fire pump. I hadn't looked at that in some time. I pretty  
25 much made sure the bilge pump was working, but I'm not even sure

1 it was the fire pump that they had fired up. Every boat we got is  
2 a little different, they're the same, but they're a little  
3 different that I get them confused from time to time.

4 Q. So when you energized, you said you tested the bilge pump  
5 prior to the vessel's departure, is the only source to energize  
6 that pump in the engine room?

7 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

8 Q. When you energize it, is there any indication light or  
9 anything that tells you that the pump is running?

10 A. You can put your hand on it and feel it running.

11 Q. Okay, so -- okay. And there wouldn't -- there's no pressure  
12 gauge or no indication of -- that the pump is actually actively  
13 pumping water out of the vessel?

14 A. No, sir. No, sir.

15 Q. High water alarms in the engine room, are there high water  
16 alarms in that space?

17 A. Yes, sir, it's one where we have them on the rest of our  
18 boats, right in front of the -- at the lowest point of the engine  
19 room, forward of the engine room, right -- just to the port side  
20 of the keel, about 8 inches off the bottom.

21 Q. And did you test those prior to them leaving?

22 A. Yes, sir, I tested that Thursday before they left.

23 Q. I'm assuming that's a float switch, correct?

24 A. Yes, sir, it's just an open rule float switch and that goes  
25 into the alarm system which rings a bell at the top of the steps

1 right at the -- in the engine room, a loud, like a school bell or  
2 a fire alarm bell, it rings that and it rings the alarm panel in  
3 upper and lower wheelhouse.

4 Q. And all of that was operational when you tested it?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Is there a -- did you -- and you may have said, in the engine  
7 room, is there like a visual indicator, like a high water alarm,  
8 is there like an amber light or a red light that spins in the  
9 engine room when that's lifted?

10 A. A hundred and 10 decibel light, a bell goes -- it's probably  
11 more than that decibels, that bell, you can't -- you can't shut it  
12 off quick enough when that goes off.

13 Q. Okay. All right, what maintenance on -- let me back up  
14 before I do that question. Lazarette, does the lazarette have a  
15 high water alarm?

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. Four feet?

18 A. No, sir.

19 Q. So the only high water alarm is located in the engine --  
20 engine room space?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. All right, do you perform maintenance on like the  
23 hatches and doors on the *Jacqueline*?

24 A. Generally, that's left up to the crew, but you know, that  
25 boat hadn't had a crew for a long time, but I always look. If we

1 have water, rainwater getting in, we pay attention to it, you  
2 know, we change the seal, but you know, don't get rainwater in the  
3 boat, so -- and we've had a pretty rainy season.

4 Q. Yeah. When was the last time that the scuttles for the  
5 lazarette were visually inspected?

6 A. When they were at the shipyard, they were pulled off at the  
7 shipyard.

8 Q. By who?

9 A. I can't recall who opened them up. It was one of -- I know I  
10 had -- I think I opened one and I think Jay opened the other.

11 Q. Do you recall the condition of the hatches?

12 A. The hatches, yeah. Yes, sir, they were actually in pretty  
13 good shape. Yes. I mean, I didn't see anything wrong with them.

14 Q. And how are those hatches opened? Do you have to -- is the  
15 opening device integrated within the cover itself or is there  
16 another tool that you have to use to open them?

17 A. Yeah, it's a key way that -- it's a key handle key way that  
18 goes into a female bolt style hole and you turn, you turn that and  
19 that unlocks it. And then you have to turn it about five, five or  
20 ten degrees and it pops up off the dogs.

21 Q. And was that tool on board when it left, do you know?

22 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. It was two of them on board.

23 Q. Okay. And do you recall like any complications, when you go  
24 to put the hatches back in, like if you don't do it a certain way  
25 or if you don't turn it like a certain tightness and they don't

1 dog down completely, do you recall any abnormalities with the way  
2 the hatches would need to be closed?

3 A. Well, it's -- they're all the same, it's -- I guess it's a  
4 12- or 18-inch hatch and you can actually tighten them up and  
5 they're not dogged down, you have to -- you have to get it on  
6 there right for it to dog down, but pretty much anybody that has  
7 put one of those on before knows that because I'm sure it's  
8 happened to everyone where you think you got it locked up and then  
9 you can pick it right up.

10 Q. So there's a possibility --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

13 Q. There's a possibility that if someone has never operated a  
14 scuttle of that type, there's a chance that they could've  
15 potentially thought they had it dogged down, but it may not have  
16 been properly dogged down unless you lifted up on the scuttle to  
17 check it?

18 A. Yes, sir, it's very -- it's possible.

19 Q. Okay. And as far as the gaskets themselves, you don't recall  
20 when they were -- when they were last changed?

21 A. No, sir. And like I said, it didn't leak, so you know, it's  
22 kind of -- sometimes you're better off, you know, if you don't  
23 have a problem with it, sometimes you're better off not fixing it  
24 because a lot of this stuff you get now new, you have more  
25 problems when you try to fix it.

1 Q. Right. And you stated this, I'm asking again, the rudder, so  
2 when you last entered the lazarette of the *Jacqueline*, the rudders  
3 do not have a history of making water, so you don't recall water  
4 leaking past the rudderpost seal?

5 A. No, sir. And the rudder can be -- you can take both rudders  
6 out of the boat and the boat will stay in the water. It's a pipe  
7 welded right straight through the hull, from the bottom all the  
8 way to the top deck, and the seal's up top, so if the rudder seal  
9 was leaking, it can't get in the hull unless something's  
10 compromised.

11 Q. Is there any way possible that the rudders could've become  
12 disconnected, like the jam nuts at the top could've come loose and  
13 the rudder fall out the bottom of the boat?

14 A. No, sir, they're welded. They've got a strap welded across  
15 and it's got a shoe iron on it and even if the rudder did fall  
16 out, it's not going to sink the boat.

17 Q. And that's because of like if the rudder was to fall out,  
18 you're saying that the way that the rudderposts are constructed,  
19 that there's no way that water could come into the boat?

20 A. No, sir. No, sir. It's a pipe going right straight through  
21 the hull all the way to the top of the deck and there's a bushing  
22 at the top and there's a bushing at the bottom. Some boats will  
23 have a splash guard around the bottom where it's a flange with a  
24 piece of rubber and then that fits around the shaft and then up  
25 top, it's a plate with a piece of Teflon in it or such as that

1 and, you know, two pieces of Teflon, and that turns and that's  
2 where your seal is and even if you do get a little water in there,  
3 it just runs out of the scupper, it's not going to -- you know,  
4 it's above the waterline.

5 Q. I got you. So the penetration is not actually in -- the  
6 penetration opening is not actually in the lazarette, the  
7 penetration opening is on top on the deck, the aft deck or the  
8 (indiscernible).

9 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. Just like a spud weld.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. You know, it's -- you can take the spud out and the barge is  
12 still going to float.

13 Q. Okay. Are you aware of two penetrations on the aft bulkhead  
14 in the engine room where wires or hydraulic lines pass through  
15 from the engine room to the lazarette?

16 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Do you recall if those penetrations had any type of stuffing  
18 material in there to prevent -- to prevent water coming from the  
19 lazarette and being able to enter into the engine room?

20 A. I do not, I do not, and -- I don't recall. You know, the  
21 other boats we packed stuff in there, but I don't recall if  
22 anything was packed in there.

23 Q. Okay. And based off of the previous interviews, it's my  
24 understanding that after the aft engine room bulkhead is the  
25 potable water tank, is that correct?

1 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

2 Q. And after that, the potable water tank, is the lazarette  
3 space, is that correct?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Are there any other voids that I'm missing after the engine  
6 room that I haven't described?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Okay. And is it possible that if water entered into the  
9 lazarette and filled to the level of the penetrations that enter  
10 into the engine room that water could've progressed from the  
11 lazarette into the engine room?

12 A. It's possible, but I don't know how three people with  
13 experience would not feel that happening, I mean, it would have to  
14 be -- the boat would have to be down 8 or 10 inches in the back  
15 for it to happen and I can't recall exactly where the pipes are,  
16 but on all the other boats they're right at the ceiling --

17 Q. Right.

18 A. -- and that deck is 8 or 10 inches higher. I mean, the boat  
19 would have to be foundering pretty bad for it to get to that  
20 point.

21 Q. Okay, so the only way, based off of your description of the  
22 way the rudderposts are designed, the only way that water could've  
23 possibly entered into the lazarette would either be through the --  
24 through an incorrectly dogged-down scuttle or a penetration in the  
25 side or the bottom of the vessel to allow water to come in.



1 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And I was -- I was made aware of this  
2 Friday. The owner that had the boat that the crew brought up from  
3 Mobile, he came by and he was talking to me Friday and he said  
4 that he had just talked to one of the guys on the boat and he's  
5 like yeah, as soon as he went out on the inlet he got a bad  
6 vibration and I wasn't aware of that, and Jay and John wasn't  
7 aware of that, but I'm not sure why they got that bad vibration.  
8 It was -- from what Jeff told me and like, say, this is third  
9 party, what Jeff told me was that they had to pull it back to 1100  
10 or 1150 RPMs and the other one was at 1650 to get the vibration to  
11 go away.

12 Q. That's correct. So the master, both the master and the  
13 relief master stated that at or around 1550 RPMs they observed a  
14 vibration, they couldn't tell if it was port or starboard side,  
15 they just know that there was a vibration and, you know, they were  
16 -- at that point, they decided just to operate the boat, you know,  
17 around 1100 RPM range. But you don't recall any reports prior to  
18 them leaving the dock that the boat had any vibration at any  
19 speeds?

20 A. We had some vibration going down to the shipyard but it was  
21 oysters on the wheels the size of your hands and we didn't have  
22 any vibration when we came back.

23 Q. What was the condition of the wheels when you all -- when you  
24 had the boat hauled out in Virginia?

25 A. The wheels were in good shape. They had the oysters and all

1 that stuff, but the wheels were in excellent shape.

2 Q. No cracks at the root of the propeller, cracks in the blades,  
3 bends in the blades?

4 A. No, sir. No, sir. No, sir, I don't recall any dings, there  
5 may have been one or two at the tip, but it was nothing to be  
6 alarmed at. I didn't see -- and we had just had a wheel, a blade  
7 come off a boat, so I was looking at the cracks, looking for  
8 cracks, but I didn't see anything.

9 Q. You said -- the vessel you're speaking about that you had a  
10 wheel come off, is that another one of the vessels in the fleet?

11 A. Not the wheel, but we had a blade had a crack in it and yeah,  
12 so we had that replaced.

13 Q. Is it possible -- so you had a blade come off of that boat,  
14 is the tolerances close enough between the wheel, and I guess  
15 right above that would be the lazarette space, so is it likely  
16 that if the boat slung a blade, that the blade could've made  
17 contact with the bottom of the hull?

18 A. Let me see here. I'm sorry, I've got pictures on video. The  
19 props would've came out of the water, let me tell you the  
20 direction because they'd probably slow it down.

21 (Pause.)

22 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

23 Q. I'm just trying to see if there's any interferences that  
24 would be above the propeller and in between the lazarette, so if  
25 it did sling a blade, is it even possible that it could have slung

1 it upwards into the bottom of the -- bottom of the hull?

2 A. It's probably going to sling it down and -- down and out.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. You know, looking at the rotation of the wheel, and you know,  
5 when a blade comes off a wheel, you're not going to get 1100 RPMs  
6 and not have a vibration, you wouldn't be able to keep it -- you'd  
7 barely be able to put it in gear.

8 Q. Before you'd start feeling it?

9 A. Oh, yeah, it would -- you'd have all the dishes out of the  
10 cabinets and everything else.

11 Q. Okay. All right, so --

12 A. It's only four-blade, it's only a four-blade wheel.

13 Q. So based off of all the questions I've asked you, your  
14 history working on this vessel, the visual inspection that you did  
15 on -- you know, while the *Jacqueline* was hauled out in Virginia,  
16 and then the reports from the master and the crew, you know, when  
17 they entered the -- I don't think I told you, but when they  
18 entered the engine room space, they witnessed that the water was  
19 progressively flooding the engine room space from those two  
20 openings, the two penetrations in the aft bulk in the engine room  
21 at the top. Is there anything that I'm missing that I haven't  
22 asked you as to the likelihood of where that water would've come  
23 from to enter the engine room?

24 A. No, sir. No, sir. And on the -- on those back hatches, you  
25 know, when that -- you know, the water comes in the scuppers when

1 it's rough and just kind of washes on deck and it runs right back  
2 off. But if you look when the boat's running, those hatches, it's  
3 not like they're under water, it's -- I mean, you'll have 80  
4 percent of the hatch dry and it will hit the bottom edge, you  
5 know, towards the front of the boat it will hit that edge, so you  
6 know, I'm not so sure that a loose hatch, if it was missing, it  
7 might be a different story, but you would have to have someone not  
8 doing the walk-around for hours, hours and hours, to get enough  
9 water to flood that aft compartment, to get the --

10 Q. So --

11 (Crosstalk)

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

13 Q. So the combing for that hatch is raised above the deck of the  
14 -- is raised above the aft deck, correct?

15 A. No, sir, it's level with the back deck, but the deck is  
16 higher at the stern and it's got a low belly in it just before it  
17 goes to the back wench in the back of the pilothouse and its  
18 scupper's right there, so I guess when they built the boat they  
19 made that a low spot so water would run off the decks.

20 And when you're sitting there, when you're running, I always  
21 look to see how much water was going over those hatches because it  
22 was a good time to see if we got leaks and it was, you know, you'd  
23 get a little bit on there, but it was a just a splash, it wasn't  
24 like you were under water all the time.

25 Q. Have you been under way on the *Jacqueline*, like in a sea

1 state at or around 4 feet?

2 A. Not 4 feet, no, sir. When we took the boat down, it was  
3 blowing about 20, 25, it was a bit choppy, and the boat ran good  
4 and when we brought the boat up, it was blowing -- I believe it  
5 was blowing west that day and it was blowing pretty good, it was  
6 blowing hard enough that we had another boat call us to see how it  
7 was off Thimble Shoals when we came out.

8 Q. And during that passage, were you taking, like, sea spray or  
9 whitewash onto the aft deck?

10 A. We were taking water all over the whole boat, yes, sir.

11 Q. Enough water that it would've covered like what you were  
12 describing earlier where, you know, that would've been enough  
13 water to have -- if the hatch was not properly secured, water  
14 would've entered the lazarette?

15 A. Yes, sir, it would've come over the -- well, it would take a  
16 long time for it to get to that point.

17 Q. Okay. So in your opinion, the amount -- if the hatch was not  
18 properly dogged, the amount of water that could've -- even if the  
19 hatch was placed in its proper position but not properly dogged  
20 down, the amount of water that it would've taken to overcome the  
21 lazarette would not have happened in the -- let's just say 4  
22 hours.

23 A. I can't see how it could, you know, you're -- now granted,  
24 once the boat starts going down in the stern, it's going to get  
25 worse and worse and worse, and it's going to speed up, but you

1 know, it would take -- I know when you fill a water tank up about  
2 the size of the *Jacqueline*, you put a hose in it at night and you  
3 come back the next morning and it's still filling, and that's from  
4 a garden hose, you know, so it's -- it takes a long time to fill  
5 those tanks up with a half gallon here, half gallon there, or a  
6 quarter of a gallon or whatever, you know, you're getting around a  
7 hatch.

8 Q. Okay. So based off the questions that I've asked you and  
9 your understanding of the boat, what's your opinion as to, you  
10 know, as to what could've happened, if I've not asked the right --  
11 you know, asked the question that would've -- you have asked  
12 yourself as to why this happened, just --

13 A. I think that vibration was something that -- I'm not sure  
14 what it was. Did it crack something on the bottom, did it crack a  
15 strut, did it -- you know, I don't know. How bad was the  
16 vibration, you know, it's all the stuff -- I wasn't there, so I  
17 can't say, but I think something got cracked.

18 In order for it to have those pipes filled coming in the  
19 engine room, that's not a leaking hatch. Unless the hatch was  
20 off, but that would be easy to find when the -- you know, a diver  
21 should've saw that. But I think it was a penetration, I think  
22 something happened to the hull, I think it was a penetration in  
23 the hull.

24 Q. Okay. Have you experienced, like, a crack in your past  
25 experience, like a crack from vibration that would've caused the

1 -- you know, a penetration or a stress fracture to open up in the  
2 hull from the rudder?

3 A. No, sir. No, sir, it's -- I don't --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I'm just trying to think if it was anything -- I don't -- I  
6 don't -- I didn't see anything that was alarming on the bottom  
7 there.

8 Q. And there wasn't any --

9 A. I mean, it --

10 Q. Go ahead.

11 A. I'm sorry, I'm just trying to think. I didn't see anything  
12 that was alarming on that, that would cause concern for the boat  
13 to leave the dock, I mean, it was -- you know, the older you get,  
14 the more you get into self-preservation and I'm at that point now  
15 in my life, it's preservation of life and, you know, if I see  
16 something that I don't like, I'm going to -- the boat's not  
17 leaving, and I didn't see anything.

18 Q. Okay. And then after they pressure washed the hull, would  
19 the running gear, the rudders, the struts, all the -- you know,  
20 the equipment on the stern of the vessel on the underbody, was  
21 that cleaned to a level where you would've been able to make a  
22 determination, like to examine the welds around the struts and  
23 strut housing and stuff like that to see if there was a crack?

24 A. I can't recall. I mean, I didn't look for anything because  
25 we didn't have any water in the tank. You know, if we had had

1 water in the tank, I would've been looking for a crack, but that  
2 tank was dry, it was dry when we got down there, it was dry when  
3 we got back. I didn't, you know -- if we had a crack in the hull,  
4 we would've had water in the tank.

5 Q. Right. What I'm asking is like around where the rudder --  
6 where the -- not the rudderpost, but where the strut is welded to  
7 the hull of the boat where it's, you know, welded to underneath  
8 the lazarette, those welds --

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. -- were those welds, were they cleaned off well enough where  
11 if a crack would've been apparent, would you have been able to see  
12 it or was there still marine life like in the crevices where you  
13 wouldn't have been -- it would've been covered up, you wouldn't  
14 have known if it was there to begin with?

15 A. Let me look back through my pictures, I don't recall.

16 (Pause.)

17 CWO [REDACTED]: After the interview concludes, I'll get an  
18 e-mail address to you so you can -- any of those pictures that you  
19 have while it was out of the water, any maintenance pictures that  
20 you have, anything that would be relevant to the case, I'll give  
21 you an e-mail address so you can send those to me.

22 MR. DAME: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And I just saw it, I just  
23 saw some of the audio gauge, I told you a wrong number. I saw --  
24 on two and a quarter, I saw 2.16 and that's two spots smaller than  
25 a dime and -- but -- I don't recall anything because I don't



1 recall anything being fixed and like I said, we didn't have any  
2 water in the back tank. If we would've had a crack back there, we  
3 would've had water in the back tank and we would've had vibration.  
4 We didn't have any vibration when we came back.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

6 MR. DAME: You know, when we had the boat hauled up, I've got  
7 some pictures of the oysters and stuff on the side of it. It was  
8 -- they were pretty big.

9 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. With that, that's all the questions  
10 that I have for you.

11 Mr. Ehlers, do you have any follow-on questions?

12 BY MR. EHLERS:

13 Q. Yeah, this is Drew Ehlers. Good afternoon, Mr. Dame.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. I just have a few follow-up questions and I'm going to be  
16 kind of all over the place here because it was based on your  
17 responses to Warrant Officer [REDACTED]. You mentioned a lot of rust  
18 early on, a lot of rust topsides, does that include the main deck?

19 A. Yes, sir. Not as much on the deck as on the -- we call it  
20 the waist, the side of the boat.

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. And what they did over the years, they would box the sides  
23 in. Instead of just having, you know, a quarter-inch plate going  
24 up with a rounded cap and upright, they would box it in. It made  
25 it easier to clean and then needle gun and painting and stuff, but

1 then they found out over the years that it just caused rust to  
2 build up because after you welded all that together, you never  
3 could get paint on the insides. So you know, that was one of our  
4 things, is we were going to cut all that off and open them up like  
5 all the other boats, but you know, that doesn't cause a problem  
6 with the topsides. You know, with the -- at the deck there were  
7 no holes that I saw in the deck anywhere and there was some rust  
8 on it, there were some patches all over it where they'd been  
9 needle gunned and primer was put on and stuff, but -- then again,  
10 there was no water entering the boat.

11 We did have a leak one time and that was around the upper  
12 wheelhouse, and I sealed that up and that was from where the  
13 wheelhouse mounted to the top wheelhouse, granted, that's 30 feet  
14 in the air, they had put silicone around it and silicone works  
15 great for 6 months and then it releases, and I put it on with 5200  
16 and that was a fresh water rain leak, and that was all we had  
17 there and that's been sealed. That was sealed.

18 Q. Okay. Explain to me again the boxing in, I didn't quite  
19 understand that, sorry. You said the deck was boxed in or  
20 something like that?

21 A. Yeah, the waist -- yes, sir, the gunnels, I guess you call it  
22 the gunnel, we call it the waist in the tugboat, the sides of the  
23 boat from the deck up to the side, it comes up about waist high.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. You know, it's an outside part and then it goes to a round

1 cap and then you have an inside plate. Well, when they're open,  
2 you just have a gusset running down --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- and with a drain hole and everything, and water always  
5 sets behind those drain holes and, you know, the drain hole is at  
6 a point where it doesn't -- or you have a low spot in the deck and  
7 water sets there and when the boat's at a certain angle, so they  
8 boxed them in and it was a pretty common practice over the years,  
9 but the problem with boxing it in and what that is, is just  
10 putting a straight piece from that round cap where it comes over  
11 the top, right straight down to the deck --

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. -- and welding it. But what we found out, it was easier to  
14 clean, it was easier to needle gun and everything, but what would  
15 happen, you couldn't get any paint on the inside of that metal you  
16 welded on, the parts above the deck, so you would get rust in it  
17 from time to time, it would rust from the inside out, but you  
18 know, that was the disadvantage of that. It was better for a  
19 short period of time, but it became more of a headache afterwards  
20 and -- but then again, you know, that wasn't in -- it had a lot of  
21 rust spots on it, but it was nothing that would've sank the boat.

22 Q. Okay. So the boxing -- thanks for that explanation, it makes  
23 a lot of sense to me now. That boxing was still there on the  
24 *Jacqueline A?*

25 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. All right. And I think you mentioned kind of along the same  
4 lines that when you got down to New Orleans, Mr. Ward was going to  
5 have all new decks put on, like --

6 A. Well, not necessarily decks, but the waist and pretty much  
7 anything that -- pretty much redo the boat.

8 Q. Okay, okay. But there wasn't -- just to reiterate what you  
9 said, there wasn't anything on that main deck that you thought  
10 could be a source of a hole or a soft spot in the deck?

11 A. No, sir. No, sir.

12 Q. Okay, all right. Moving back to the lazarette, you said the  
13 lazarette was pumped out using an electric pump, is that correct?

14 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay. And how often did that pump have to be put down there  
16 to run?

17 A. It stayed down there and honestly, when I first got on the  
18 boat, I didn't know, I didn't know what it was, I thought it was  
19 an extension cord and I plugged it in and I went down to the  
20 engine room and my cord wasn't working, it was rolled up on the  
21 rail there and I heard something running and I'm like what in the  
22 world is running and it took me the longest time to figure out  
23 what it was. I unplugged the cord and then I realized it was a  
24 pump down there, but the bilge area was dry and -- you know, and  
25 that was one of my monthly, you know, I check all the boats when

1 they're at the dock and whenever I had a chance, I'd run down and  
2 just plug that in, throw an oil pad overboard if there's, you  
3 know, any silt or whatever, catch what I could, and nothing ever  
4 came out, I mean, a cup, if anything.

5 Q. Okay. How did the --

6 A. And --

7 Q. Oh, go ahead.

8 A. -- from what I saw, I know the pump was running. I knew the  
9 pump was working, you know.

10 Q. Okay. How did the -- you mentioned that extension cord, I  
11 think you said it plugged in at the back of the house, is that  
12 correct?

13 A. Inside the engine room, yes, sir.

14 Q. Oh, inside the engine room. How did the extension cord  
15 run --

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. -- between the laz and the engine room, how did that  
18 extension cord get to the engine room?

19 A. It probably came through one of the wire chases in those --  
20 in those -- in the tanks.

21 Q. Okay, all right. A couple times --

22 A. And I'm just -- I'm guessing there, because I don't know, I  
23 didn't look, I wasn't -- until this point, I wasn't aware that  
24 these pipes that were in all the boats were an issue.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. You know, it's -- but you know, that's my guess, is it went  
2 down through there and it was probably wired right straight to the  
3 motor, not an extension cord, so you know, that's plugged in.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. It was probably wired right straight to the motor.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And I didn't put that in there, that was there when I got on  
8 the boat.

9 Q. Okay. What were the basic dimensions of the laz, lazarette?

10 A. Oh, doo-doo. I'm going to say probably --

11 Q. Estimate is fine, by the way.

12 A. I'm guessing -- yeah, I'm guessing the boat's probably 22  
13 feet wide, so -- and it's kind of tapered at the stern. I'm going  
14 to guess the laz is probably 12 -- 12, probably 10 or 12 feet by  
15 the beam of the boat.

16 Q. Okay. And how -- what's the length, front to -- fore to aft,  
17 would you say?

18 A. Probably 12 feet, something like that.

19 Q. Okay. And then what's the height of the space, I mean, can  
20 you stand up in that space or is it pretty low?

21 A. I've never gone in there, but it's probably -- no, it's  
22 probably -- you'd probably have to squat over, it's probably 4 and  
23 a half, 5 feet.

24 Q. Okay. You mentioned you walked around the boat the Thursday  
25 before it left to go down south, did you look into the --

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. -- lazarette that -- when you did your walk-around?

3 A. No, sir. Mr. Ward hit the -- plugged the pump in and we  
4 confirmed that it worked and it barely gurgled and so we knew that  
5 worked, and I tested the alarms and checked the engine systems,  
6 plugged my computer into the main engine, just looked if I had any  
7 codes, if everything was good on that, and that was -- checked the  
8 radios, such as that, and pretty much did a check-over. All the  
9 stuff I check just before I leave the dock on anything.

10 Q. Okay, all right. Hold on, let me look at my notes here for a  
11 second, I'm sorry. Just to confirm, before taking the boat down  
12 to the shipyard at Newport News, it didn't run, is that correct,  
13 like it didn't -- it never went out on -- get under way?

14 A. No, sir, the boat was -- it was not -- it was not under -- it  
15 couldn't work, it was just -- it was -- called it a dock ornament.

16 Q. Okay, all right. Did the engines not work or --

17 A. Oh, no, sir. No, sir. The boat ran, the boat ran fine. The  
18 boat ran absolutely fine. After I -- you know, we had some issues  
19 before I rewired a lot of the stuff and underneath the dash and I  
20 installed a battery charger for the backup radio and a separate  
21 battery and an alarm for the -- for the wheelhouse, for the -- and  
22 our inverter and all the stuff, all sorts of stuff, for the  
23 electronics and -- but after we did that, everything worked  
24 flawlessly on the boat.

25 Q. Okay. How long was the trip down to the shipyard from Weems?

1 A. I want to say probably 6 hours.

2 Q. Okay. And then how long was the boat out of the water while  
3 it was down at the shipyard?

4 A. Let me see here. I've got to go through 20,000 pictures, but  
5 I know about where it's at. The boat came out of the water  
6 March 9th at 1:43 p.m. And Mr. Ward and I left the shipyard  
7 May 1st at 1:07 p.m.

8 Q. Okay. All right. And before that time it had always been in  
9 the water, at least since you had worked on it?

10 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And we would -- you know, every once in  
11 a while we would -- if it was some captains around or something  
12 that, you know, they were waiting for a barge or whatever, I'd --  
13 you know, let's run it out of the creek and turn around and come  
14 back just to -- you know, just to exercise everything and, you  
15 know, get things moving and we'd do that from time to time, but  
16 that was more when things were slow, not -- not busy, so --

17 Q. Yeah. How often would you -- can you give me a sense of how  
18 often that was, like once a month, once every couple months?

19 A. Probably once every couple months, excluding last -- you  
20 know, well, I'd say once every couple months. So you know, I did  
21 a lot of electrical work on it in 2021. In 2022 we had a lot of  
22 engines and generators and everything, but I'm going to say  
23 probably -- in the nearly 3 years, I'm going to probably say 10  
24 times that you just ran out in the creek and moved around a little  
25 bit, just to -- just to move it.



1 Q. Okay. And then each of those times, like when you ran it out  
2 of the creek and back, how long would you be under way for that  
3 little jaunt?

4 A. No more than an hour, just to -- just to run around, just to  
5 get the engines up to temperature and such.

6 Q. Okay, all right. And during those small trips, short trips,  
7 no issues with water coming in or anything like that?

8 A. No, sir. No, sir. And like I said again, it's -- that boat  
9 was always dry. It was -- I mean, you know, for -- it was  
10 surprising that -- I worked on 50, 60 million dollar yachts that  
11 get rainwater in them. You know, it was -- it was always dry, it  
12 was unbelievable how dry the boat was. We never had bilge water  
13 in it.

14 And the only bilge water we did have was the port -- let me  
15 see, the port generator had a small coolant leak somewhere and  
16 that would leak over -- it would take about a week for it to leak  
17 out and the crew was aware of that but, you know, it's a level  
18 gauge and everything on that to alarm when it did go down and  
19 granted, all that would've been fixed down in the shipyard.

20 Q. Yeah, yeah. Okay, all right. When it was in the shipyard or  
21 when it was taken out of the water to look at the hull, you  
22 mentioned it was pressure washed. Was that able to get all of the  
23 sea life off? Was there any place on the hull still covered, have  
24 sea life on it after it had been pressure washed or after it had  
25 been treated?

1 A. No, sir. And I'll send the pictures, but you can see, you  
2 know, it's some -- you can see the hull good, it's not like a  
3 recently painted hull or, you know -- but we got them to -- they  
4 spent a half a day pressure washing it with one of the 5,000 psi  
5 guns and my biggest thing with doing that was I want to find any  
6 bad spots and, you know, we -- and then we had the dude with the  
7 audio gauge come around and check, look for the worst spot and  
8 check it, check, you know, and check it and, you know, so we -- we  
9 were looking for problems.

10 Q. Okay. The shaft struts, they attached to the hull underneath  
11 the lazarette, is that correct?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 MR. EHLERS: Okay, all right. All right, I think that's all  
14 I have. I will say, to reiterate what Warrant Officer [REDACTED]  
15 said, I think those pictures would be very helpful. If those  
16 include any topside main deck pictures, that would also be  
17 helpful, I think, to get us an idea of the hatches and stuff like  
18 that, we'd appreciate that.

19 MR. DAME: Yes, sir. I have one where we were running and  
20 it's probably a 2-foot sea running and it'll show you the amount  
21 of water coming over the hatch, it's a short video. The only  
22 pictures I have of the side decks where you can see where they'd  
23 been fixed, it was actually a groundhog on the boat one day, I  
24 guess he came off one of the other boats, off a bean barge, and it  
25 scared me to death and I got a picture of him because I wasn't

1 sure what I was looking at when I first saw it, but he's in the  
2 picture, as well.

3 MR. EHLERS: Okay, all right. Well, I think --

4 MR. DAME: But that shows you the -- and the side decks were  
5 pretty much the same all the way around.

6 MR. EHLERS: Okay. I think, yeah, that would be great,  
7 groundhog and all, and yeah, any other pictures that -- the video  
8 of the seas, I think would be really helpful, as well, so no, I  
9 appreciate that.

10 MR. DAME: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And I'll send you the  
11 pictures of the audio gauge and back around the struts, I have --  
12 not the -- doo-doo. Yeah, I think it was around the struts, that  
13 was, I think, four -- .477, something like that.

14 MR. EHLERS: Okay. Yeah, that would be helpful. Thank you  
15 very much.

16 MR. DAME: Yes, sir.

17 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Ryan, I got just a few more questions. You mentioned --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. -- talking to Mr. Ehlers about a backup radio and a backup  
21 power supply.

22 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

23 Q. So the *Jacqueline* had two VHF radios?

24 A. Yes, sir, it had an AIS and one on top and it had two down  
25 below with a backup power supply. I wired it, I wired the whole

1 dash and all the electronics with everything just like the boat  
2 was being inspected tomorrow.

3 Q. Okay. So I'm trying to understand, so based off the master's  
4 statement, so when the vessel was going down, during his mayday  
5 call, he lost communications with Sector Charleston through the  
6 VHF radio. Is the radio -- the radio that's mounted in the --  
7 this boat has a crow's nest, right, an upper pilothouse and a  
8 lower pilothouse, is that correct?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. The radio that the master was on in the lower pilothouse, is  
11 that radio on backup power?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And the backup power --

14 A. One is, one -- I believe one is and one is not.

15 Q. Okay. So you don't recall if the lower pilothouse radio was  
16 a backup power supply?

17 A. It should've been one, I can't remember, it's been so long  
18 since I did that, but we always have one radio on backup power  
19 supply and the other one not. And the one on backup power supply  
20 has the NMEA data going in it.

21 Q. And what provides the power for the backup power supply?

22 A. Its own battery and charger mounted under the dash.

23 Q. Do you recall where that battery and battery charger -- is it  
24 in the crow's nest pilothouse or the lower pilothouse?

25 A. Lower pilothouse.

1 Q. So based off -- I mean, I know you said you don't recall, but  
2 I mean, would it be feasible that the lower pilothouse radio would  
3 be the one that was on backup power?

4 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: All right, that's all the questions that I have.  
6 Lieutenant [REDACTED], did you have any follow-on question?

7 LT [REDACTED]: Yes, this is Lieutenant [REDACTED]. Yes, I think I  
8 do. Give me just a second to look over my notes.

9 BY LT [REDACTED]:

10 Q. Mr. Dame, can you describe the -- like the location of the  
11 scuppers and/or freeing ports around the main deck of the boat?

12 A. Yes, ma'am. They're -- ooh. Then again, let me go back to  
13 my pictures, we got -- they are probably -- it's two at the back,  
14 the back, each corner, it's a rounded -- it's kind of a rounded  
15 stern boat. The back of each corner, probably 10 by 5 or 6 and  
16 we've got one right, just before the back wench between the  
17 rudders and the back of the wheelhouse, there's one there, then I  
18 believe there's another one up, about where the engine room door  
19 is and then there's another one ahead of that and that's probably  
20 10 feet apart.

21 Q. Okay. To your knowledge, was there anything blocking them or  
22 any reason to believe that they wouldn't have been functioning  
23 properly?

24 A. No, ma'am. No, ma'am.

25 Q. Okay. And when you had been under way on the vessel, just in

1 Chesapeake Bay, do you recall what speeds you were running the  
2 engine at? Was it like intentionally run at various speeds to  
3 kind of test it out or --

4 A. Yes, ma'am, we ran it up to full RPM just to see what kind of  
5 load and what kind of RPM I could get and it was a little -- it  
6 was a little shy of a full load, I believe we were right around  
7 2,000, that was going down, but we figured the wheels were dirty  
8 and the bottom was dirty and everything.

9 So that was all I wanted to see, I just wanted to see, you  
10 know, if it would -- if it would do it because it hadn't been run  
11 over -- you know, pretty much idle for so long and turbos and  
12 everything were working fine and -- but then we pulled it back to  
13 about 16, 1650, that's about what we run all of our boats.

14 Q. Okay. About how long would you say the engine was -- the  
15 engines were run at 2,000 or around that 2,000 full load mark?

16 A. Thirty seconds, just to see the -- long enough for me to push  
17 the button on the digital display and see what my boost was on  
18 each engine and look at my load and all my details, that was all I  
19 needed.

20 Q. Okay. And then you ran them at around 1600 RPMs for the rest  
21 of the trip?

22 A. Yeah, 1650 is generally what we run them at, yes, ma'am.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I'm on a boat and I'm walking around, I'm walking around the  
25 whole time, I pop up in the wheelhouse and just look at the gauges

1 and that's generally where we run them and I know they were  
2 running them about that.

3 Q. Okay. And you were visually, you know, going around the  
4 engine room and looking at the engines while they were running,  
5 too?

6 A. Yes, ma'am, I'm walking the whole time the boat's under way.

7 Q. Okay. And what date was that, do you recall?

8 A. That would've been the day we got hauled out. Let's see  
9 here. I think it was March. Don't recall. March 9th.

10 Q. March 9th of this year?

11 A. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. And we ran, I think we left -- we  
12 left there about -- it was still dark when we left and they had  
13 the boat out at 1:43, so I think we got there probably around  
14 lunchtime, so we probably left at 5:30 and got away, got there  
15 around 12:00.

16 Q. Okay. And I believe you said you were last on the vessel the  
17 Thursday before they got under way, is that right?

18 A. Yes, ma'am.

19 Q. And then you had to leave town? Okay.

20 A. Yes, ma'am.

21 Q. And do you recall if it was that day -- was it that day or  
22 another day where you had opened up the lazarette and checked it?

23 A. I hadn't opened it since the shipyard, I always just plug the  
24 pump in to see if we get anything. If I can hear the pump  
25 gurgling, I know it's water down there. Well, you know, it's not

1 pumping, so -- and that was a pretty common thing, but we never  
2 had water down there.

3 Q. Okay, so when did you plug in the lazarette pump?

4 A. We did that -- Mr. Ward and I did that Thursday.

5 Q. Okay. And do you recall approximately what day it was that  
6 you had opened up the lazarette and done like a visual inspection?

7 A. I'm going to say it was probably around March or -- yeah,  
8 around March 10th or 11th, something like that, when -- right  
9 after we got hauled up.

10 Q. Okay. And when you all had tested the bilge pumps and the  
11 high-level alarms, did you verify, like, the indicators up at the  
12 wheelhouse, like that it was alarming on the wheelhouse?

13 A. Yes. Yes, ma'am, because once it goes off it'll keep on  
14 ringing up there until you silence them.

15 Q. Okay, so you heard it ringing up on the wheelhouse?

16 A. Yes, ma'am, I set the alarm off and I can silence it in -- I  
17 wired it so you can silence it in the engine room, but then when  
18 you go up, the light will still be flashing and then you have to  
19 clear it on the panel itself.

20 Q. Okay. And that's for the high-level alarm or the bilge  
21 alarm?

22 A. Yes, ma'am.

23 Q. Bilge pump.

24 A. For the high-level alarm.

25 Q. Okay. And is there an indicator on the bridge for when the



1 pump is running, the bilge pump?

2 A. No, ma'am.

3 Q. Okay. A few minutes ago you were mentioning the condition of  
4 the main deck and you -- I think you said there were multiple,  
5 like, patches, like prior repairs on the deck, could you clarify  
6 what you mean by those?

7 A. Yes, ma'am, it was rust and it was needle gunned and primer  
8 was put on it, we used some kind of Interlux primer, it's almost  
9 like a tar, was put on the spots and you'll be able to see them in  
10 the pictures. And that was pretty much the condition of the deck  
11 around the house. Mr. Ward and I had, you know, went over the  
12 handles on the doors and everything Thursday morning and, you  
13 know, lubed those up and greased everything and got them working  
14 and we did the two engine room, the three engine room doors and  
15 the two wheelhouse doors.

16 Q. Okay. And that was all -- you mean that was all done in this  
17 most recent haul-out?

18 A. No, ma'am, that was done Thursday before I went out of town.

19 Q. Okay. Can you clarify if there's any other pipes or  
20 penetrations between the lazarette and the engine room aside from  
21 those two that we had already noted that are like higher up above  
22 the engines? Are there any others, like lower or anywhere else  
23 between the lazarette and the engine room?

24 A. No open penetrations, no, ma'am. It's a pipe that goes to  
25 the water tank, which we had plumbed up with a piece of hose to

1 the bilge pump manifold so we could pump the fresh water off.

2 Q. Okay. And that goes between the engine room --

3 A. We did that when -- we -- yes, ma'am.

4 Q. Go ahead.

5 A. That's right at the bilge manifold, it's a valve that comes  
6 out of the fresh water tank that you can open or close and it's  
7 right on the tank and we had put a piece of like 2-inch hose on it  
8 and ran it over to a spare manifold on the bilge, on the bilge,  
9 because when we got to the shipyard we wanted to go in the water  
10 tank and it was a fair amount of water in there and we were in the  
11 containment area, so we -- we pumped it out. And just used the  
12 bilge pump to pump it.

13 Q. Okay. Can you describe --

14 A. And then we put the --

15 Q. Sorry, go ahead.

16 A. Then when we took the hatches off, we still had a fair amount  
17 of water in there and we let the rest go in the bilge and used the  
18 bilge pump to pump the bilge out.

19 Q. Okay. Can you describe the procedures that the crew would  
20 need to take in order to energize both the main bilge pump and  
21 that fire pump to use as a bilge pump? Like, are there valves  
22 that you would have to have open, close?

23 A. Yeah, the valves back in the manifold, Mr. Ward went over  
24 that with them Saturday when they got in and had the pump, it's a  
25 start and stop button at each pump and the breakers are always on.

1 Q. Okay. So they basically have to push the start button after  
2 opening that one valve at the manifold?

3 A. Yeah, whatever tank they want to pull from, yes, ma'am.

4 Q. Okay. But the pump in the lazarette, do I understand it  
5 correctly that the only way that runs is when you -- you have to  
6 plug it in separately? Is that not connected to the manifold?

7 A. Yeah, yeah. No, ma'am, that's just a 120 submersible pump.

8 Q. Okay. And the pump in the --

9 A. There was no --

10 Q. Go ahead.

11 A. When the boat was built, there was -- when the boat was  
12 built, there was no pipe going to the water tank into the  
13 lazarette for the bilge pump, so I guess over the years they put  
14 that back there just so they would have a pump back there.

15 Q. Okay. And there is a pump already that goes through the  
16 manifold to the -- up forward, right to the forepeak?

17 A. Yes, ma'am, it's one that goes to the crash bulkhead and one  
18 that goes to the forepeak.

19 Q. Okay. Do you have any explanation for why those penetrations  
20 were not made to be watertight between the lazarette and the  
21 engine room?

22 A. No, ma'am. You know, the boat was built 43 years ago and  
23 they never had a problem with it. We've got them on all our other  
24 boats. Granted, we've shoved rags and stuff in there, primarily  
25 for fire, but it's -- it was never brought to our attention that

1 there was a problem and I never would've thought that the boat  
2 would get that low in the water that somebody wouldn't notice  
3 something was going on way before that happened.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. Unless something happened so quickly they didn't have time,  
6 but that's why I don't think it was a hatch because if it happened  
7 slowly over a period of time, you're talking about 8 or 10 inches  
8 the boat's going down in the stern, that -- you're going to feel  
9 that, you're going to feel it in the floor, you're going to feel  
10 it in your seat, you know, you're --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That's a drastic -- you know, in a walk-around, you would've  
13 seen it on deck. That's what I --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. That's what I don't understand.

16 Q. So in your opinion, what possible, I guess, form of water  
17 intrusion would cause a rate of flooding that fast?

18 A. I would say something had to crack, so we had to have a --  
19 get a crack or something, something -- I would think something  
20 penetrated the hull and like I say, I might be wrong, I'm just --  
21 it's a semi-educated guess. In order for -- if it was a small  
22 leak, you're not going to fill -- and I'm not sure of the size of  
23 that pipe, most of them are 3 inches, something to that area, and  
24 they have hoses and stuff running through it, but the amount of  
25 volume that can come out of that pipe and from what I was told,

1 that it was on the port side and was shooting like a jet, that's  
2 not going to come from a leak behind a tire or a leak behind a rub  
3 rail or, you know, something like that. It's just too much water  
4 under pressure.

5 LT [REDACTED]: Um-hum. Okay, I think that's all the questions  
6 I have. I --

7 MR. DAME: And --

8 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah, go ahead.

9 MR. DAME: Oh, I'm sorry, but before -- from this point on,  
10 I'm in the process now of we're blocking every hole that comes in  
11 the engine room and we're putting bilge switches in every  
12 compartment and bilge pumps in every compartment with an emergency  
13 button that runs the high-capacity pumps in every compartment,  
14 it's -- it's not required, but we're going to do it before it is  
15 required.

16 BY LT [REDACTED]:

17 Q. Which vessels are you referring to that you're going to do  
18 that on?

19 A. Our other four.

20 Q. Oh, okay, Mr. Ward's other vessels?

21 A. Yes. Yes, ma'am. Yes, ma'am. And it -- yeah, so we're  
22 going to -- we're going to get ahead of the game and do it before  
23 it's required.

24 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Well, I think that's all the questions I  
25 had. I do appreciate your time. We'll see if Mr. Gilsenan or

1 either of the other investigators have any questions.

2 MR. GILSENAN: I don't have any questions. This is  
3 Ryan Gilsenan. Thank you.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

5 LT [REDACTED]: This is [REDACTED], IO, Sector Charleston.  
6 I have a few questions, if you don't mind.

7 MR. DAME: Yes, sir.

8 LT [REDACTED]: Can you hear me all right? Because I'm on my  
9 cell phone.

10 MR. DAME: Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

11 BY LT [REDACTED]:

12 Q. Okay. Real quick, the vessel -- I apologize if this was a  
13 repeat question, the phone was kind of breaking up and  
14 (indiscernible), but my understanding is the vessel was in the  
15 process of getting the COI, is that correct?

16 A. It was going to get -- getting -- it was going to get a new  
17 waist and pretty much redo the vessel. The engines were fairly  
18 new, you know, the boat -- we had gone through the wiring and  
19 everything and we were going to put it in service after we had --  
20 had the -- all the metal work and stuff done on it.

21 Q. Do any other vessels have COIs?

22 A. Yes, sir, the other five.

23 Q. Are they a similar type vessel?

24 A. No, sir, we have one, two, three, four push boats and one  
25 model bow.

1 Q. What are the (indiscernible) conditions on the vessel? Or  
2 the raft (ph.), rather.

3 A. We just passed a whole survey on three with no issues, we --

4 Q. Like lake based and sounds, coast-wise, coastal? Do you  
5 know?

6 A. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, you're breaking up a little bit.

7 Q. I'm just curious, the routes and conditions being on the  
8 COIs, if they already have them, just, are they lake based and  
9 sounds, coast-wise, limited coast-wise?

10 A. Yeah, I would say it's just Chesapeake Bay, Chesapeake Bay  
11 and North Carolina Sound, all coast-wise. Near coast.

12 Q. Coast-wise --

13 (Audio malfunction.)

14 BY LT [REDACTED]:

15 Q. I could look that up on our end. I'm just curious.

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. So the vessel -- and is the vessel, your vessels, are they  
18 Coast Guard option or business option?

19 A. I'm not sure what that -- that's a new one on me.

20 Q. Is the Coast Guard doing your annual inspections or do you  
21 have a third party?

22 A. Yes. Yeah, the Coast Guard's doing our annual inspections.

23 Q. Okay, so you have your Coast Guard option. Was the Coast  
24 Guard in attendance on those dry docks, when it was in dry dock?

25 A. Well, not on the *Jacqueline*, but --

1 Q. On the *Jacqueline*?

2 A. No, sir. No, sir.

3 Q. Okay. And then the -- I understand you got (indiscernible)  
4 done on the hull. Can you tell me what percentage of wastage was  
5 found, like what was the worst case in some spots?

6 A. Ryan, do you have the --

7 MR. GILSENAN: We submitted the report. I just have to refer  
8 you to the report that we submitted with --

9 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah, like I said, I was --

10 MR. GILSENAN: -- John Ward's statement.

11 LT [REDACTED]: I can take a look, all right.

12 BY LT [REDACTED]:

13 Q. I guess the reason -- again, I'm just curious, what was the  
14 reasoning behind them going outside the ICW?

15 A. I'm not sure why they did that. Probably to keep from  
16 sitting on bottom in Georgia at low tide.

17 Q. Okay. And you know, I understand like the -- there's tires  
18 around the hull. Do you know the last time they were actually  
19 removed and the hull was inspected?

20 A. No, sir, that was before I started.

21 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. I think that was pretty much it, I think  
22 the rest of the questions were covered by the other investigators.  
23 I appreciate your time.

24 MR. DAME: Yes, sir. Thank you.

25 CWO [REDACTED]: All right, this is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED].



1 I think we went around the room so it's my understanding there's  
2 no more follow-on questions, is that correct?

3 (No response.)

4 CWO [REDACTED]: All right, I'm not hearing any. It is currently  
5 14:35, August 16th, 2023. This will conclude the interview with  
6 Ryan Dame, the port engineer for the *Jacqueline*.

7 (Whereupon, at 2:35 p.m., the interview concluded.)

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:            *JACQUELINE A* INCIDENT  
   ON AUGUST 8, 2023  
   Interview of Ryan Dame

ACCIDENT NO.:                DCA23FM044

PLACE:                         via Microsoft Teams

DATE:                          August 16, 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.



\_\_\_\_\_  
Karen D. Martini  
Transcriber