

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

*

GROUNDING/STRANDING OF THE FISH *

TENDER BARGE SM-3 IN NUSHAGAK BAY * Accident No.: DCA20FM027

NEAR EKUK, ALASKA, ON AUGUST 30, 2020 *

*

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Interview of: ZACHARY KLEIN, Operations Manager/Shift Supervisor
SM-3, Northline Seafoods

Via telephone

Tuesday,
September 15, 2020

TABLE OF CORRECTIONS TO TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW FOR

Mr. Zackery R. Klein, Operations Manager, SM-3

TAKEN ON

September 15, 2020

PAGE NUMBER	LINE NUMBER	CURRENT WORDING	CORRECTED WORDING

If, to the best of your knowledge, no corrections are needed kindly circle the statement “no corrections needed” and initial in the space provided.

NO CORRECTIONS NEED. _____
Initials

Printed Name of Person providing the above information

Signature of Person providing the above information

Date

From: [Furukawa Robert](#)
To: [Zachary Klein](#)
Subject: Mr. Zackery R. Klein, Operations Manager, SM-3: Interview Transcript, Transcript Errata, and Non-Disclosure Agreement
Date: Friday, October 16, 2020 3:35:00 PM
Attachments: [DCA20FM027 Klein.pdf](#)
[TranscriptErrataNdaLtr4Email-SM-3-grounding-stranding-DCA20FM027.docx](#)
[Transcript Errata-SecondPage-SM-3-grounding-stranding-DCA20FM027.docx](#)

NTSB INVESTIGATIVE INFORMATION / 

National Transportation Safety Board
Office of Marine Safety

October 16, 2020


Dear **Mr. Zackery R. Klein**,

The enclosed transcript of your interview on **September 15, 2020** is provided for your review and comment to ensure its accuracy. It is not for public release. Please destroy the transcript after providing your comments.

The transcript is investigative information of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) created as part of the NTSB's investigation into the **Grounding/Stranding of the Fish Tender Barge SM-3 in Nushagak Bay near Ekuq, Alaska, on August 30, 2020 (DCA20FM027)**.

NTSB regulations prohibit the public release of investigative information prior to release by the NTSB without the permission of the NTSB Investigator in Charge (IIC). See 49 C.F.R. § 831.13(b). The IIC has not approved public release of this information at this time. Therefore, we request that you refrain from any further dissemination of this transcript.

Please provide your comments or corrections to the transcript by email:

 If you have any questions, you may contact me by email or phone:

Comments must be returned no later than **October 26, 2020**. Requests for an extension of this deadline must be in writing and received prior to the due date. If comments are not received by the due date, we will consider the transcript to be final without comment.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this matter.

R. Jon Furukawa
Senior Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board
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APPEARANCES:

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U.S. Coast Guard

R. JON FURUKAWA, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

(3:05 p.m.)

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2
3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The time is 1505, Eastern Daylight
4 Time, 1105, Alaska Daylight Time. It is Tuesday, the 15th of
5 September 2020. And we're doing a phone interview for the
6 operations manager of the barge fish tender *SM-3*. His name is
7 Zachary Robert Klein.

8 And if we could go around and state your name so it will make
9 it easier on the transcriber to figure out who we are. This is
10 Jon Furukawa with the NTSB.

11 CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard at Sector
12 Anchorage.

13 MR. KLEIN: And Zachary Klein with Northline Seafoods.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And take it away, [REDACTED]

15 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. Zack, thanks for dialing in for this.
16 Hopefully, it doesn't take up too much of your time. But because
17 *SM-3*, as you're aware, wound up on the beach and was declared a
18 total constructive loss I believe by the insurance underwriters,
19 and that becomes what the Coast Guard calls a major marine
20 casualty.

21 And that's how the NTSB is involved because, by statute, when
22 that occurs, both the Coast Guard and the NTSB have to conduct
23 dual investigations, although we write separate reports at the
24 end. So instead of him calling there and talking to you and then
25 me calling you a couple of days later, vice versa, we try to

1 coordinate it to do it all at one time. That way we're all on the
2 same page and we know exactly what was said and when it was said.

3 INTERVIEW OF ZACHARY KLEIN

4 BY CWO [REDACTED]

5 Q. So what I'd like to start with is, so the barge might have
6 been in service for a year or two -- well, let's start with what,
7 as the operations manager, is your responsibility for Northline
8 Seafood?

9 A. So this was my first year with Northline Seafood as sort of
10 the barge operations manager. I was responsible for sort of
11 coordinating supplies and logistics, as well as hiring on everyone
12 here, sort of coordinating how everything worked on the barge. As
13 it was my first summer and only time sort of overseeing an
14 operation like this, I did look to our CEO quite a bit on sort
15 general instruction.

16 I have worked with him in the past quite a bit in the fishing
17 industry, so we have a lot of (indiscernible) our interactions
18 together and understanding of what -- kind of how things are
19 operated as far as his business so it can get carried out
20 effectively. So that was my responsibility, and sort of making
21 sure our production was meeting -- his production was meeting its
22 goals.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And managing the human aspect of it.

25 Q. All right. I know you were on the barge the night of the

1 casualty, but were you on there throughout the summer or do you
2 manage -- once you put the crew on there and get them started, do
3 you manage from Sitka?

4 A. No, I was on the barge the whole summer. So I was on there
5 sort of working with one production crew while (indiscernible) is
6 working with the opposite shift. Yeah. I was there the whole
7 summer and including the night of the barge breaking loose.

8 Q. Okay. So were you involved at all with the purchase or the
9 modification to the barge to make it the processing factory that
10 it is?

11 A. I was a part of the construction process, but just as a
12 general laborer.

13 Q. Okay. Do you remember vaguely when that started? When they
14 bought the barge, do you recall when that was, or do you know?

15 A. Yeah. Yeah. I believe it happened early in 2017 and, you
16 know, as a part of a smaller build out to freeze -- to temp freeze
17 some fish here in southeast Alaska. And then the following
18 year -- oh, is that correct? Yeah, I believe it was in 2017, and
19 2018, we froze some fish. And then the following year with a
20 large build out to get where it was, so this was the second season
21 in Bristol Bay, with the first being the summer of 2019. So this
22 was my first season as a manager on the barge. And yeah.

23 Q. Okay. So it was in the summer or spring again -- so 2019?
24 That's when the barge was -- the modifications were completed, and
25 it was going to Bristol Bay?

1 A. Correct. Yeah. The major modifications were done in the
2 spring of 2019.

3 Q. Okay. And then the mooring location where the buoy was, has
4 it been there in the same location both seasons?

5 A. No. They were inside of Clarks Point the season prior I
6 believe, but I wasn't involved. The specific location is not
7 known to me, but I believe, you know, they moved the location to
8 have closer access with the fishing fleet.

9 Q. Okay. And do you know who was -- who made that decision?
10 Was that more of the CEO you mentioned earlier?

11 A. Yes. Correct. And likely our engineer, our mechanical
12 engineer.

13 Q. Okay. And then, I don't have his -- what's his name?

14 A. His name's Drew Cohen. And then Ben you talked to was also
15 part of that decision process likely. So it's between the three
16 of them. Primarily it's our CEO and president, you know,
17 communicating with each other on what needs to be done, with some
18 input our engineer.

19 Q. Right. And that's Pat Glaab; is that how you say it?

20 A. That is correct. And yes, that is Pat Glaab.

21 Q. Okay. I tried calling a couple of the numbers that they had
22 given me for him. Do you know, is he still out on the barge
23 location in a cell phone dead zone?

24 A. No. He is around Sitka. Let me see. Would you like me to
25 give you the number for him? Is that appropriate in this

1 conversation?

2 CWO [REDACTED] Sure. I'll write it down and we'll try
3 calling him after we're finished here.

4 MR. FURUKAWA: Hey, let me put it on pause for a sec so I
5 don't record this, so I don't --

6 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

7 MR. FURUKAWA: -- so I don't have to redact it.

8 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

9 (Off the record.)

10 (On the record.)

11 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The time is 1513, Eastern Daylight
12 Time. We're back on.

13 BY CWO [REDACTED]

14 Q. Okay. So then you went out then this spring. Do you recall
15 approximately when you got out there?

16 A. We did a 2-week quarantine, I believe which started on the
17 15th, and we brought out a crew on the 29th of May. So the 15th
18 of May I believe was the start of the quarantine. And we flew out
19 on small charter flights out on the 29th, I believe, if I recall
20 right. I'd been out there since the 29th of May, if my memory
21 serves me correct.

22 Q. Okay. And I guess, and at your peak, how many people were
23 actually on the barge working total?

24 A Oh, you know, we ended up with a number closer in the 30,
25 mid-30s range as we probably started out with about 45 or

1 somewhere in that range. I'd have to look it back up as, you
2 know, we fluctuate at the end with people leaving for various
3 reasons, mostly family reasons.

4 But yeah, somewhere in that range, maybe even a little --
5 somewhere in the range of 30 to 35 that were all working. So by
6 the time the late silver season started, I think we were around 17
7 as we didn't need the (indiscernible) for, you know, the number of
8 the people on that production effort later. So we went down to
9 somewhere around half.

10 Q. Okay. And you said a small charter flight, so logistically
11 you fly from Sitka to Anchorage to Dillingham?

12 A. So we flew everyone into -- we had two grids. We flew in
13 commercial airlines to Anchorage and quarantined people at a boat
14 location on the peninsula, Kenai Peninsula. So one was in Copper
15 Landing and the other was at Ninilchik. So we flew out of Kenai
16 directly to Ekuk and jumped on a vessel to transport out to the
17 barge a couple of miles offshore.

18 Q. Okay. I wasn't sure if there was an airport in Ekuk, but
19 okay.

20 A. There's a -- yeah, there's a small aircraft landing strip, so
21 we were chartering a small plane. I guess with COVID, as a part
22 of our COVID plan, we wanted to sort of mitigate changes of
23 anything like that occurring as, you know, having an outbreak on a
24 vessel, you know, is widespread. So we were taking every effort
25 we could to mitigate that.

1 Q. And then your mitigation efforts were successful? I guess
2 since we didn't hear anything about a COVID breakout on any
3 processor. Well, the big floating processors in the Bering Sea,
4 there were a couple, but your operation in particular, we didn't
5 hear anything about it.

6 A. Yeah. We were completely successful on that, you know,
7 staying COVID free and, you know, that was an ongoing effort with
8 our fishermen to keep the masks up as well as keeping them
9 distanced and being serviced. So from (indiscernible) tickets to
10 fueling up to everything, we sort of maintained distance with our
11 employees and have some really strict guidelines for that.

12 Q. Okay. So as you're on the barge with your crew, were you
13 involved in training the crew, or are you more, like you said,
14 more logistics and management level? Or were you on the line with
15 the processors?

16 A. I was on the line with the processors. Having lost a crew,
17 we weren't able to chill in as quickly as a normal season and with
18 the quarantine effort and really not wanting to bring, you know,
19 any chance of COVID onboard. So I ended up working with our
20 production crew, my shift crew, quite a bit very personally. But
21 our process is pretty straightforward, essentially free to fish
22 whole (ph.), so there aren't really any skilled effort -- you
23 know, there wasn't a skill training process there. Some of our
24 most skilled people were like crane operators and forklift
25 operators. But otherwise, everything was a pretty straight --

1 hands-on, you know, moving fish effort, so the training process
2 was reasonably minimal.

3 But some of the training coming in, working with our
4 interfaces on working iPads and computer pads to get brown belts
5 (ph.) and other equipment. But that was more along the lines of
6 our IT manager, Jeremiah. He was sort of trained how to operator
7 those. So it was kind of an overall combined effort, you know.
8 And being in our second season, we were looking to sort of get it
9 a little more streamlined and hit higher production goals, daily
10 goals. So we run into a little bit of (audio distortion).

11 Q. And that was -- you said you were one of the shift managers.
12 What shift was a typical workday?

13 A. Oh, you know, initially we wanted to follow the tides. Our
14 shift changed an hour ahead every day, as it's approximately the
15 case with fishermen delivering at the end of tides. But we ended
16 up going to a true 12-hour shift starting at, when I operated, I
17 oversaw a night shift from 11 p.m. to 11 a.m.

18 And we had a day shift. So we kind of went more close to a
19 day and night shift as we sort of hit our stride and started doing
20 a lot of fish. And again, it ended up being a little easier for
21 everyone to work a 12-hour shift, with the option to work a few
22 more hours to help get the other shift going and up to speed.

23 Q. And the fishing vessels, they are generating fish to you?
24 Are they contracted with Northline or are they multiple -- have
25 multiple agencies generally you're working with or for?

1 A. You know, that would be a question for our fleet coordinator,
2 Ben Blakely (ph.), our president and fleet coordinator. And so I
3 think he was dealing with our fishermen, and that was sort of
4 under his responsibility.

5 Q. And so just that toward the end of silver season, when -- I
6 think Ben told me approximately 10 days before the 30th. So that
7 would have been about August 20th, was the last day that you were
8 processing fish?

9 A. Yeah. Right around that date, you know. It's not that long
10 ago, but with everything that sort of happened and there at the
11 end, it's -- you know, right around that date. Somewhere in
12 there, 20th to 22nd, I think were our last days of processing
13 silvers.

14 Q. Okay. So now let's cover that 10-day period between the end
15 of processing and the actual, the night of the accident. What
16 were you doing in those 10 days primarily?

17 A. We were -- you know, we had a holding barge as well with a
18 large freezer on it designed to keep cold, you know. It was an
19 insulated, large freezer that could hold fish. So much of the
20 effort was in sort of cleaning up everything, all of our
21 equipment, and getting things sort of put away for the winter and
22 disconnecting everything. So the two barges were online and a lot
23 of the effort was in preparing to do disconnect and reconnect to
24 our mooring buoy with, you know, with our processing barge or our
25 tender vessel, whatever we technically call our freezer vessel,

1 tender freezer vessel.

2 So a lot of the effort was in that and, you know, part of it
3 was, you know, in storm prep. We knew that a storm was coming.
4 And the anchoring system, from what I know, was going to be a bit
5 of process to get pulled and we -- you know, Pat really is sort of
6 in charge of overseeing the whole process. So we didn't have
7 enough time to get our anchors pulled and get out of there, so we
8 set up for storm prep and waited through.

9 Q. Do you recall about when that holding barge was taken ashore?

10 A. You know, I could say the 28th or 29th, because I was a part
11 -- I also drove -- I was also the operator of one of our landing
12 crafts, you know, our landing crafts, one of the operators for it.
13 So I was a part of helping bring that in with Pat being the lead
14 on that. So I think we had brought it in the 28th, I'd like to
15 say.

16 Q. And do you know when the processing barge was scheduled to
17 come ashore?

18 A. You know, we wanted to -- I know Pat would have liked to have
19 gotten it over to Naknek earlier, and I think that's where they
20 had planned on hauling it out. I'm not a part of that decision
21 process, making it to sort of -- was more or less, at that point
22 because there were only eight of us onboard, more or less sort of,
23 you know, a helping hand there with a lot of work experience with
24 Pat, so -- with a long history of work experience. So getting
25 everything done and sort of prepping to move the barge over to the

1 Naknek area for haul out. I don't know the dates for that -- for
2 the haul out specifically.

3 Q. And then, and those landing crafts that you would operate, do
4 you feel that they can adequately maneuver the barges safely?

5 A. Yeah. You know, its twin screws and -- sorry, I might have
6 said landing crafts. We have one landing craft. But the way it's
7 set up, you know, in good weather, it's -- it was clearly
8 maneuverable with winching, you know, winches set up to -- there
9 was tightening up or releasing up to sort of provide greater
10 maneuverability.

11 So it was pretty well set up to move it. Definitely not in
12 any weather as it would be under powered, I would say for that.
13 So in good weather I think it was, you know, it worked pretty well
14 for moving barges around. But, you know, if there was any
15 weather, I would not take a chance at towing or pushing with it.
16 But that was my thought on that.

17 Q. So that makes sense. And last winter did both the barges get
18 put into Naknek for winter?

19 A. Yes. And so did the landing craft, so all three vessels were
20 there in Naknek.

21 Q. So then for the spring, you just had to drag them from Naknek
22 back down to Ekuk?

23 A. Let me correct that. The holding barge, as I wasn't part of
24 the crew last year, the holding barge may have gone in the
25 Dillingham area. So the freezer and the landing craft were in

1 Naknek. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. Okay. And do you know anything about the placement of
3 the buoys? Can you do that? Does Northline do that themselves or
4 do they contract somebody else?

5 A. I believe they did it themselves with the placement of the,
6 you know, the buoy system. But that would also be a question
7 likely for Pat, as I wasn't involved in that. So maybe it was or
8 was not. I actually can't answer that question.

9 Q. Okay. That's fair. Okay. So let's talk about -- well, you
10 mentioned storm preparation. Do you -- does Northline have
11 specific handy weather, is what the Coast Guard calls it,
12 instruction?

13 A. No. We did not have any specific -- you know, I would
14 definitely, with Pat having, you know, the most experience sort of
15 on the seas, he would be sort of our guidance onboard. Primarily
16 we were going, you know, and making sure everything was -- any
17 equipment that could move around was being secured all the way
18 around, anything that can roll or slide. For the most part that
19 was due to the storm prep.

20 Q. Okay. When was -- when did you become aware that there was a
21 storm coming? Do you recall?

22 A. Oh, you know, between the two of us and, you know, primarily
23 Pat, he's monitoring the weather, you know. So likely we do that
24 a week out maybe. That way, you know, with weather changing
25 constantly, we sort of track it, you know.

1 So somewhere in that range I would like to say, we kind of
2 knew it was coming. So trying to get up the last of our fish
3 through those and all the fish hauled off of our holding vessel
4 and sort of getting another support vessel to take the holding
5 barge to Dillingham was sort of all in that -- in the mix there in
6 the last week.

7 And I'd like to say, thinking back on our harvest, probably
8 it's the 23rd and 24th were the last days of freezing fish and
9 moving fish. Then we probably had about a week I think to, you
10 know, sort of start to get things squared away and all of the
11 equipment secure, so -- and get the holding barge prepped to move.

12 Q. Okay. So now we're up to the night of the storm. Do you --
13 what do you remember about that day in particular? As the wind
14 started to get stronger, it's still, you know, evening time and
15 the (indiscernible) will go around to ride out the storm on the
16 buoy for the barge?

17 A. Correct. You know, as we didn't have enough time to pull --
18 haul the -- our large anchoring system, you know, that's what's
19 made to secure everything and ride out the storm. You know, and
20 it happened to be during the early evening it picked up, so we
21 were kind of standing by just so -- more or less relaxing without
22 any -- too much concern about, you know, our anchoring system
23 failing, you know. Of course, we later found out that the buoy
24 failed. But I think there was no concern about the anchor system
25 moving or budging. I think they had figured out they had well

1 more than adequate anchoring and chain, two anchor -- a series of
2 two anchors down there with a lot of chain holding it.

3 So really those biggest -- those technical questions, I'd
4 have to point to someone else. But there wasn't really a whole
5 lot of concern about weathering the storm. So the focus was sort
6 of more on standby and make sure we got our food prepped and eaten
7 and everything sort of battened down inside the house.

8 Q. All right. Was there any discussion of taking all the
9 persons off the barge, just let the barge sit by itself?

10 A. You know, I don't believe so, because we were, you know, sort
11 of just using all hands to sort of get everything secured and sort
12 of squared away as there were only a handful of us at the time, I
13 think eight or so. So we did take -- we did send a couple. There
14 were six technically there on the night of the storm with two
15 taking our landing craft in. But yeah, we didn't have -- you
16 know, there wasn't a large concern that, you know, our anchoring
17 system was going to fail. And it appeared to be riding it out
18 relatively well even though it was blowing pretty hard.

19 Q. So your only accommodation there then is riding out the
20 storm. When did you realize that the barge had broke loose?

21 A. You know, with the changing of the tides, we sort of turned
22 sideways and get in the rocking, you know, back and forth in the
23 trough. So we had that happen once. And the second time around
24 it became pretty pronounced. At that point I think I couple of us
25 went to look forward and kind of try to figure out what was going

1 on, but it was within a few minutes that Pat came out, you know,
2 and (indiscernible) that we were moving and that we had broken
3 loose and immediately sort of -- and, you know, moving into the
4 next step, calling upon myself and Jeremiah to assist in getting
5 our stream anchors down.

6 You know, with the wind blowing so hard and only being a
7 couple of miles offshore, it wasn't -- didn't take long, you know,
8 to move quite a bit a distance before even getting set up to get
9 our anchor down, our backup anchor, and as well as try to -- you
10 know, as well as maneuvering the other anchor too, you know, being
11 out -- get on there as well. And we really have a couple of -- we
12 actually had a couple of our other crew members standing by and
13 assisting as well, you know. So we donned our lifejackets and
14 started focusing on that effort.

15 Q. Okay. So how many anchors total were you trying to drop once
16 you realized you broke loose?

17 A. You know, we had one 5,000-pound -- and you'd have to ask Pat
18 on it, but I believe we had one 5,000-pound anchor ready to drop,
19 and another one to get in line with that, you know, as likely as
20 we could, you know.

21 Q. And so did you get both of those in?

22 A. We did. The second one we were nearly onshore when we got it
23 deployed though. So it was, you know, a bit of an effort using
24 our cranes to get it across to our cable on the other one. So we
25 did manage to get them both deployed, but they were not enough.

1 They -- you know, we drug away from the shore with those deployed.

2 Q. Okay. And so were you out on deck during the whole entire
3 storm or was it -- at some point did you seek shelter somewhere on
4 the barge?

5 A. You know, we were out on deck up until the point of nosing it
6 -- or yeah, technically would be nosing into shore, I guess with
7 our anchors, our stream anchors out as what we sort of recognized
8 as our stern. So at that point, you know, we went upstairs to
9 sort of gather up everyone and stand by here in our radio room
10 with, you know, not too much concern, but sort of getting everyone
11 together to make sure everyone was accounted for, you know, to
12 (indiscernible).

13 And we initially had planned on waiting it out nearby the
14 exit to the deck until we turned sideways to the beach. And I
15 think, you know, Pat being sort of, you know, our main person in
16 charge there, you know, sort of observing our super structure
17 moving quite a bit with, you know, with some of the larger waves,
18 he made the decision to move us below deck, you know, as at the
19 time jumping off didn't see like a good, viable, you know, thing
20 to do unless we felt like we were in, you know, enough danger to
21 try to do so.

22 Q. Right. Okay. What -- I don't have the barge layout here,
23 but what space was it that you went into when you went below deck?

24 A. We stayed in -- so if you were to lay it out, we kind of got
25 our bow compartment. There were four compartments in the barge

1 that you can seal off with, you know, steel doors you can seal
2 off, and escape hatches. In the middle two is a fish house. We
3 were in between the -- so starting from forward to stern, our
4 forward compartment has sort of our engine equipment and our
5 refrigeration compressors in it. That door got sealed off. And
6 after our engines were shut down, that door got sealed off. And
7 we sealed off the second compartment as well and remained in the
8 third and fourth compartment.

9 Q. Okay. And does it already have ventilation? Is it natural
10 vents or forced? Did you have power on the barge at all then?

11 A. No, we did not have power. Our power went down. Our
12 ventilation came through our door. We decided to keep the door
13 open on our door to the deck. So we had that -- you know, a large
14 door open throughout and did not shut it. You know, it's got a
15 large steel box to get below deck and, you know, it was -- we
16 decided to keep that open so that we had somewhere else to go, and
17 third bay has an escape hatch in it as well. But we kept that
18 shut for the time being.

19 Q. Okay. And then you just stayed down there until you felt the
20 barge moving or did somebody probably had volunteered to go up top
21 and see if it was safe to come out?

22 A. Yeah. Periodically, Pat was going and observed out the door
23 to see, you know, if it was safe to go out. And, you know, I
24 think if I recall the tide was going out in the middle of the
25 night. So we knew that we would get our break with the tides

1 going out. And as I recall, I don't even know if he, you know,
2 had a specific time, but probably sometime early in the morning,
3 the tide was out enough to do that sort of -- you know, we were
4 able to get out and sort of see everything that had occurred there
5 overnight or early morning.

6 Q. Okay. That was early morning, the barge stopped moving and
7 you realized it's safe to come out. Then what happened?

8 A. Well, we immediately sort of looked around and, you know, got
9 off the vessel as, you know, we were just on the beach. And we
10 had company coming to check in on us from Ekuk. I did have it in
11 reach, so somebody did come and check with us. I had a way to
12 communicate to let people know we were okay. And but, you know, a
13 gentleman from Ekuk drove down the beach and picked a couple of us
14 to go and relay that everyone was safe.

15 Q. So was he part of Northline or just one of the locals?

16 A. One of the locals.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But he was made aware of it by then in Dillingham because we
19 were able to let them know that we were sort of on our way to the
20 beach and deploying our anchorings, that kind of stuff.

21 Q. Okay. And immediately --

22 A. And we had let --

23 Q. Go ahead.

24 A. So we let people know, and again, I think Jeremiah was kind
25 of -- well, I guess he knew all about our situation that we were

1 going to ride it out there.

2 Q. Okay. Was Ben already in Dillingham or did he fly out there
3 when he heard the barge had broke loose?

4 A. No, he was in Dillingham the whole summer sort of assisting
5 in fleet management and sort of items coming in, sort of with
6 logistics for our barge, so managing our fleet and, you know,
7 seeing to their needs, as well as ours from shore.

8 Q. Okay. So I have the email addresses for the six of you that
9 were onboard. The two, I guess there was three, the three
10 deckhands are using a Northline Seafood email address. Do you
11 know if they're still local or if they went back to their home
12 addresses?

13 A. You know, I believe two of them went to their home addresses.
14 Peter did and Victoria Kee did. And I believe Tessa was hanging
15 out with some family (indiscernible), so she didn't head back home
16 to Wisconsin.

17 Q. Okay. All right. So we'll try to catch up to them sometime
18 this week. All right. So then you came ashore and the local from
19 Ekuk came down to render assistance. And then how did things wrap
20 up?

21 A. You know, we ended up wrapping up by getting in -- getting
22 everyone into Ekuk and sort of making sure that, you know, we
23 didn't -- I think Pat wanted to make some rounds there to make
24 sure that, you know, as far as, we did pump some water out of the
25 engine room, to make sure, you know, our diesel and other, you

1 know, other fuel tanks and stuff had any sort of -- been
2 compromised. So I think he stuck around for the morning. And
3 then once he sort of got -- you know, make sure everything was
4 secure, sort of ready there, we all went into Ekuk and proceeded
5 from there. But, you know, from there, our season was over for
6 the most part for everyone.

7 Q. So did anyone have to go to the hospital to seek any kind of
8 medical attention?

9 A. No. No one needed any. No one was hurt and, you know, no
10 one even had any bumps from the whole incident. So we were able
11 to just sit it out, you know, (indiscernible). And, you know,
12 literally sitting in the dark. We was waiting for the tide to go
13 out.

14 Q. Okay. Well, I'm glad it ended the way it did. Sorry you
15 lost your barge, but it certainly could have been a lot worse, but
16 it wasn't. So all of you made it ashore safely.

17 A. Yeah. Yeah. Undoubtedly, we were feeling pretty good to get
18 home safe and no one got hurt or, you know, over everything else.
19 So it kind of became the primary concern, right, when we hit the
20 beach. But we just sort of switched gears and made sure that
21 everyone was going to be standing by and ready to act if, you
22 know, the need arose.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So --

25 Q. And you're back to work now in Sitka?

1 A. Yeah. I've had a little bit of time off as sort of, you
2 know, our owner's trying to figure out what the next steps are.
3 So I'm a little bit on standby for a little while here. And we'll
4 work as needed.

5 CWO ██████████ Okay. All right. Well, I think that pretty
6 much sums up anything I wanted to ask you.

7 Do you have some follow-up things you want to cover, Jon?

8 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes, please.

9 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

10 Q. So, Zack, let's see, you said this was your first season with
11 Northline Seafoods?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. So this was the first year that you worked for the company?

14 A. Just as a manager and in the barge operations. So like I
15 said, I was sort of a general laborer in the buildout stuff.

16 Q. Okay. How long have you worked for Northline Seafoods?

17 A. Oh, I think on and off for about -- you know, I was help -- I
18 helped in the first small buildout of the small freezer system. I
19 would say probably 3 or 4 years on and off. But there was -- I
20 helped increase the shore actually delivering fish. I've been
21 fishing, you know, primarily as my primary means of work. But I
22 do have a business degree, and so I'm sort (indiscernible) for
23 managing stuff.

24 Q. Okay. And so you operated your own fishing boat?

25 A. No. Actually I'm sort of diddling in it with Pat there, and

1 sort of have helped out with his (indiscernible) vessel. That's
2 how we sort of got the background of working on the water quite a
3 bit.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. As well as, you know, a couple of others there like Jeremiah.
6 We've all worked on the water for the past 7 years to some degree.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So, you know, we've got some experience on the water
9 together.

10 Q. Okay. So you've been working for the company for about 3 or
11 4 years. And how many years of --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- maritime or fishing experience do you have, so total?

14 A. So, you know, I grew up in the bay, in Bristol. So total, I
15 would say, you know, I'm 32 now. I started fishing when I was 16,
16 so then I grew up on the Bering Sea going out hunting even from a
17 very young age in the native community of Gambell. So I've kind
18 of got a -- I've kind of spent a lifetime being on the water and
19 sort of --

20 Q. About 16 years? You said you started when you were 16?

21 A. Sixteen years.

22 Q. So about 16 years. Half your life is the fishing experience,
23 I guess; is that correct?

24 A. Yeah, that's correct. I had some time off some of the
25 summers but, you know, ultimately, I ended up fishing a little

1 bit, so I've been on the water every summer since then.

2 Q. Okay. And --

3 A. Even if it was sort of limited in a couple of those.

4 Q. Okay. So you're on the water only during the summertime?

5 A. No. Recreationally during the winter. I work with
6 (indiscernible) as well in the winter.

7 Q. Okay. Let's see. And you work the entire summer. So you
8 said that you got on the barge the 29th of May?

9 A. Yeah. I believe so and, you know, definitely by June 1st.
10 It's -- you know, I'd have to look at the dates for our ticket
11 purchase, but I believe it was the 29th or something.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But it very well could be early June as well, June 1st.

14 Q. Okay. And you guys, first you guys started off your shift
15 were tide to tide but then ended up being 11 o'clock p.m. to 11
16 o'clock a.m.? That was your shift?

17 A. Yes. That was my shift. Correct.

18 Q. Okay. Let's see. Oh, you know, the modification of the
19 barge, where was that done?

20 A. That was all done in Sitka here, where I am currently. Where
21 I reside.

22 Q. Okay. And then what was the name of the -- was there a name
23 of -- was that at a shipyard?

24 A. You know, we -- the Northline put in a ramp, got the
25 permitting for it to put in an (indiscernible) ramp to haul it

1 out. Some of the work was done in protected water, and then the
2 majority of it was done after it was hauled out --

3 Q. Okay. On a Northline property?

4 A. -- with putting in a bottom, the whole bottom getting
5 replaced.

6 Q. Okay. And that was on the Northline property, I guess?

7 A. Correct. I believe it was out on lease from -- to give back
8 to the city once that we -- yeah, but I would -- I guess I would
9 redirect that question to Pat.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But yeah, that was essentially done on Northline property.

12 Q. Okay. Let's see --

13 A. But yeah. And I guess the -- I would definitely give that
14 question to Pat, because it may have been leased as well, and I
15 wasn't a part of any of that decision making.

16 Q. Was it by the Northline headquarters?

17 A. Yes. It was near. But it was adjacent to Northline
18 headquarters there.

19 Q. Okay. Okay. Let's see. You know, you describing the four
20 water-tight compartments. The forward one was the engine
21 equipment and what else?

22 A. So it went from engine room and refrigeration equipment, so
23 compressors and condensers and other heat exchangers. And then
24 the two little compartments, two and three if we're moving back
25 towards the stern, had fish holding tanks in them.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And then the last compartment had, you know, various
3 equipment like, you know, our sewage treatment system and our
4 fresh water. And primarily I guess what would be just plumbing
5 and tools and tool storage and all the other sort of various --
6 that stuff we need to sort of maintenance part. So it was
7 essentially a maintenance room on top of a few other items, as
8 well as hydraulics and so forth.

9 Q. Okay. And you said that you guys, you sealed off the forward
10 two compartments and you guys took shelter in the last two, the
11 third and fourth compartment?

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Yeah. That's correct.

15 Q. Okay. Let's see. You said that one of the anchors that you
16 guys put down was a 5,000-pounder. What -- do you know how much
17 the other one weighed?

18 A. I believe they were both -- both of those -- it's sort of
19 technical -- you know, it's the detail. I would definitely ask
20 Drew or Pat on that, would know. But I believe they were both
21 5,000-pounders though.

22 Q. Okay. And you guys were floating into the shore. What was
23 the aspect? Were you floating in sideways or stern first?

24 A. No. We were -- our anchoring system was stern. But with the
25 anchor dragging and being pushed by the wind, we nosed into shore.

1 But with -- both the anchors ended up being deployed by the end of
2 it, but we definitely drove -- sorry. We were dragging anchor,
3 you know, for quite a ways while getting -- preparing our other to
4 set in line with it.

5 Q. Okay. So I guess the barge's bow was closest to shore,
6 correct?

7 A. Yes. It was until, you know, the wind and wave action put it
8 parallel to shore.

9 Q. Okay. And when it went parallel, was it the port side or the
10 starboard side that was closest to shore?

11 A. I believe it was port side. I'm sort of orienting my mind
12 around it, right. I believe it was the port side.

13 Q. And that, you said, that was from the waves, wind and waves?

14 A. Yes. Correct. And then, you know, dragging the anchor the
15 small distance, you know, to turn sideways.

16 Q. Okay. Let's see. What time was it that you think you lost
17 power?

18 A. Oh, we -- I think Pat shut it down sometime early in the
19 morning. But at that point, you know, I don't know if I had even
20 looked at the time, you know, for that point, so, you know. He
21 made a decision to shut down the power at one point as he cleared,
22 bracing for the superstructure so it would slowly come down and he
23 did not want power going upstairs at the time.

24 Q. Okay. And let's see. So upstairs in the superstructure,
25 that's the processing plant and accommodations and all that?

1 A. The accommodations were all upstairs, up off the deck. In
2 between, on the deck, a freezer was built and fish brine station
3 on the stern. So in between the superstructure, the living
4 quarters and crew quarters and galley, you know, was a freezer,
5 and below deck, we had engines, fish holding tanks and other
6 equipment, hydraulics, you know, like I said, sewage treatment and
7 fresh water.

8 Q. Okay. So on the deck level, that was the freezer, the fish
9 brine. Were the crew quarters and galley, was that a deck above
10 that or is that all on the main deck?

11 A. That was all upstairs off the deck on the superstructure. So
12 you head up off the primary deck where the freezer is and go
13 upstairs to crew quarters.

14 Q. Okay. So is this one deck up, one more deck up.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. And nothing above that?

17 A. There was -- this was converted into a helicopter pad by this
18 logging group, I believe, so they did have the helicopter pad that
19 was turned into net storage for fishermen. So it held nets.

20 Q. Okay. That's good.

21 A. You know, a small -- you know. I don't know what the square
22 footage of that would be, but not the entire length of the barge.

23 Q. Okay. Let's see. And you guys started dragging anchor
24 about, was it 2300?

25 A. Oh, yeah. Like that's probably around the right time. We

1 broke free and then set our emergency anchors, our backup anchors.
2 So, you know, it was a little bit of rushing to immediately set
3 those. So yeah, I would estimate that's probably approximately
4 the right time we started setting anchors and dragging towards
5 shore.

6 Q. And about what time did you guys come ashore, you know, the
7 barge was on the beach or ran aground?

8 A. Yeah. You know, I'd estimate anywhere between -- I
9 can't -- you know, as we were busy trying to sort of slow it down,
10 I can't estimate, you know, how much time was spent dragging. Up
11 to anywhere from 20 minutes to an hour. But like I said, I would
12 definitely point to someone else who was maybe more aware of -- I
13 think we were all sort of trying to get things set.

14 So in that scenario, we weren't really paying attention to
15 how much time it took. But probably somewhere at midnight or so,
16 I would estimate, or before midnight, maybe in the range of 1130
17 to midnight just -- if we're calling 11 when we broke through,
18 broke free. So we might get various inputs for time on that, I
19 would think.

20 Q. Okay. So it didn't take very long at all to drag anchor and
21 go aground?

22 A. Yeah. No, it didn't take long at all, and I suspect we
23 drifted, with wind blowing as hard as it was, quite a ways before
24 we even got our emergency anchor down and dragging. It did slow
25 us down to some degree and caught once, but it loosened, and we

1 continued drifting.

2 Q. Okay. Let's see. Let's see. You said the holding barge was
3 taken ashore on the 28th. And where was it taken ashore to?

4 A. It was taken to Dillingham and hauled out there. I think
5 that it may have been the evening of the 28th that -- or the early
6 morning of the 29th, maybe, if I recall right. I believe we
7 started that process early in the morning. But you would --

8 Q. Okay. And --

9 A. -- have to check in with Pat on that date there as we
10 coordinated with a group in town to haul it.

11 Q. Okay. And it would be hauled out of the water for the
12 winter?

13 A. Yes. It's hauled out of the water for the winter.

14 Q. Okay. And you said the processing barge and the landing
15 craft -- see, the landing craft went to Naknek? Was that what the
16 name of the city was?

17 A. The landing craft was taken into Dillingham by a couple of
18 our crew members.

19 Q. Okay. But the processing barge, was that going to go to
20 Dillingham also or was it going to go to some place called Naknek?

21 A. Yeah. It was going to go to Naknek. So we hauled our
22 holding barge --

23 Q. How do you spell Naknek?

24 A. -- our holding (indiscernible), yes. And the freezer barge
25 was going to get hauled out at Naknek.

1 Q. How do you spell that?

2 A. N-a-k-n-e-k.

3 Q. Naknek. Okay. Okay. Let's see. And what time did you guys
4 leave the barge? What time did you guys come ashore?

5 A. Oh, now I'm guessing we were around for 30 minutes before
6 somebody came over and picked us up. I'd like to say we got into
7 the community of Ekuk, you know, those locals who drove us, and we
8 got in around 8 o'clock, and I was able to sort of make some phone
9 calls to let people know we were okay.

10 Q. Okay. You guys were in Ekuk around 8 o'clock. What time did
11 you guys all get off the barge?

12 A. You know, I'd like to say we may have slept for an hour or
13 two before jumping off, around 7, because we were up the whole
14 night. Once we were able to sort -- it was calm but still dark
15 out. We sort of waited another -- we had a little brief period
16 where we waited to go outside as we couldn't see if it was safe or
17 not.

18 Q. Okay. Okay. Let's see if I have anything else.

19 A. I suspect the tides on that morning, looking back to be able
20 to sort of get an idea of when the tide was out through how much
21 longer we had to wait until daylight.

22 Q. Okay. You guys, you don't happen to know the -- did you guys
23 keep track of the tides, the times of the tides and all that?

24 A. We were competently aware of it as, you know, we often use
25 the sort of in between low and high tide, sort of side tide to

1 come in when, you know, certain things need to get done, like
2 pulling our anchoring system and stuff like that. I think it
3 needs to sort of get prepped in between, you know, the current.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Before the current picks back up.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So we, you know, we're typically keeping track of that.

8 Q. So you guys have the tide table or you're watching on the
9 computer?

10 A. Yes. Yes. We follow the tides. We have both, you know,
11 paper and you can follow on the computer.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Hey, [REDACTED]

13 CWO [REDACTED] Yeah.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: Could we get the tides for that last day or
15 two from them?

16 CWO [REDACTED] Um-hum.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: You know --

18 CWO [REDACTED] For that one, from Northline? No. You sent
19 me the tides from Omakstalia Point, which is off the Naknek River,
20 which is a little bit north of their grounding position.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Zack, is that what you guys were using?

22 MR. KLEIN: We were close to Ekuk. I'm not sure because I'm
23 not from that area. I don't know what the point is called. I
24 know Clark's Point is very nearby and adjacent to Ekuk, so I would
25 probably look to that as sort of the defining feature as we were

1 south of that sort of 3 miles, I believe.

2 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Hey, [REDACTED] what -- where'd you say the
3 tides I sent you, where was that from?

4 CWO [REDACTED] It's at Omakstalia Point, 8½ miles west of
5 Naknek River entrance.

6 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

7 CWO [REDACTED] As long as they were east of where they were.
8 See if we can find tide tables for Clark's Point would probably be
9 the most accurate.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay.

11 CWO [REDACTED] I'll look and see if I can find them.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And let's see.

13 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

14 Q. Hey, Zack?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. So the entire summer, was that all silver salmon season?

17 A. From the big market, I mean the large fish runs are
18 sockeye -- or the primary fish being harvested in Bristol Bay are
19 sockeye salmon or red salmon. They're both the same, but they're
20 called, you know, differently by different people. But sockeye
21 salmon are the primary and are being harvested there. There's
22 a -- the silver salmon (indiscernible) in the fall, a little
23 later, so that run is not as large, and we do not need a large
24 crew to move and freeze fish. That was -- needs to be bought at
25 the time.

1 Q. Okay. So you're out there for the sockeye salmon season and
2 the silver salmon season, correct?

3 A. Correct.

4 Q. Okay. Do you know the approximate dates those seasons were?

5 A. We started buying sockeyes in late June all the way up until,
6 you know, July 20th or so. So we could probably say anywhere --
7 and we can look up the dates it was first opened by Fish and Game
8 in late June. And, you know, we were buying fish on those first
9 days the fishermen were fishing.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. But Ben or Pat or someone could look to our first buy and our
12 last buys.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. But those are the approximate dates.

15 Q. Okay. And that was for sockeye salmon season. And what
16 were --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. -- the approximate dates for silver salmon?

19 A. You know, I don't know for sure specifically when. It was
20 early August to right up until around the 22nd or 24th that we
21 were buying silvers.

22 Q. Okay. But I can look those up from the Alaska Fish and Game?

23 A. Yeah. Yeah. And we should have a record of when those fish
24 were bought as well.

25 Q. Okay. And then let's see. So you said the fishing boats come

1 in at high tide or low tides? High tide?

2 A. Well, it gets opened up by the Department of Fish and Game
3 for specific times, and it typically opens when the tide is coming
4 in and closes somewhere near the end of the tide going out. And
5 fishermen typically deliver at the end of the tide. Depending on
6 the situation, they eventually end up opening it 24 hours, so
7 fishermen just have a tendency on delivering as fishing slows
8 down, which occurs usually at the outgoing point of the tide. So
9 it seems, you know, fishermen, they tend to come in and deliver
10 near the end of the outgoing tide.

11 Q. Okay. Okay. So you guys are doing 12-hour shifts and then
12 people were also working past that?

13 A. A little bit. We did not want to, you know, allow too much
14 over. Sixteen would be sort of the target number as believe most
15 processors run 16-hour shifts. We sort of, you know, ran 12-hour
16 shifts with the option of working a little more. But with the
17 smaller than normal crew or what was expected, we didn't work --
18 we didn't have too many people working too much down at -- you
19 know, in terms of laboring.

20 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Okay. I think that's it for me.

21 [REDACTED]

22 CWO [REDACTED] No more.

23 MR. FURUKAWA: Yep. Well, I think that's it for me.

24 Anything else from you, [REDACTED]

25 CWO [REDACTED] No, just speak up a little bit. No. I'm

1 doing good.

2 Thanks, Zack, for your time and your information. It's all
3 the information that we can hopefully use to compile this report
4 with information. And we plan to talk to your other crew, so if
5 you run into any of them or can contact them for us to let them
6 know that, you can use my email or give them Jon's as well. So
7 he's on the East Coast. We're trying to do this about this time
8 every day because it's during his workday in the afternoon, and
9 it's still my workday of the morning, so we can try and stay on
10 the close as it were. So if you run into anybody, let them know
11 that we'd like to talk to them. Similarly the same things, just
12 looking for background and their responsibilities, that kind of
13 stuff, and it'll help us write our report in the end. But I
14 appreciate your time.

15 And, Jon, if you got anything to sign off, or you can turn
16 off the recorder when you're ready. And I'm finished. So thanks,
17 Jon.

18 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. It is 1608 Eastern Daylight Time on the
19 15th of September, and we're ending the recording of the interview
20 with Mr. Zachary Robert Klein, the operations manager on the *SM-3*
21 barge.

22 (Whereupon, at 4:08 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: GROUNDING/STRANDING OF THE FISH
 TENDER BARGE SM-3 IN NUSHAGAK BAY
 NEAR EKUK, ALASKA, ON AUGUST 30, 2020
 Interview of Zachary Klein

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM027

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: September 24, 2020

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.



Romona Phillips
Transcriber