

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD TOWING

VESSEL *DESPERADO* ON LAKE SALVADOR

NEAR NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA ON

FEBRUARY 17, 2023

Accident No.: DCA23FM018

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Interview of: MICHAEL MCKENZIE, Deckhand
Desperado

On board the *Desperado*
Louisiana

Wednesday,
February 22, 2023

APPEARANCES:

LUKE WISNIEWSKI, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

■ ■ ■ ■ Investigator
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:50 a.m.)

1
2
3 ■ ■ All right. Good morning. It is 22 February 2023.
4 It is 0950 in the morning. We are here -- Coast Guard and NTSB
5 are here conducting a 46 CFR Part 4 joint investigation into the
6 fire aboard the ITV *Desperado* which occurred on 17 February 2023.

7 Can everybody please state their names? I will go first.

8 This is ■ ■ ■ U.S. Coast Guard.

9 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Luke Wisniewski with the National
10 Transportation Safety Board.

11 MR. MCKENZIE: I'm the deckhand on *Desperado*, Michael
12 McKenzie.

13 ■ ■ Okay. And Michael, do we have your consent to
14 record this interview?

15 MR. MCKENZIE: Yes, sir.

16 ■ ■ Okay. Thank you very much. And the last thing I
17 want to do here is just can you please confirm that I have your
18 correct name, phone number, and email there?

19 MR. MCKENZIE: Yes, sir.

20 ■ ■ Okay. Thank you so much.

21 All right. We're going to move on here.

INTERVIEW OF MICHAEL MCKENZIE

22
23 BY ■ ■

24 Q. So I think we'll get started with just, if you don't mind,
25 please walking us through what happened in your own words, and

1 nobody will interrupt you, and just please go ahead.

2 A. All right. So we were leaving the rig and going through Lake
3 Salvador, and we were about halfway through, and it was around, I
4 believe, about 3 o'clock, 3:30. And I was laying down, the other
5 deckhand, he was washing the dishes, and the captain was driving,
6 of course, and out of nowhere the fire alarm went off. So we
7 hurry up and go to the wheelhouse, and the captain says it's a
8 fire, so we run down. Then get down to the deck, we close the
9 door which goes down to the engine room, and then the two breather
10 hatches, we closed one of them. Then we couldn't get the fire
11 extinguisher in the door because the flames were coming out, so we
12 put the fire extinguisher in the breather and tried to put it out
13 from there. And then after it went out -- the fire extinguisher,
14 you know, we used all of it. After it went out, we closed it.
15 The other two hatches were already closed.

16 Then we up to the front deck, closed the fuel --

17 Q. Shutoff.

18 A. -- fuel shutoff valves, we closed those. And the right
19 around about 5 minutes, the crew boat was there to get us and then
20 we got off board.

21 Q. Okay. What crew boat was that?

22 A. That was *Miss Jessica*, I believe.

23 Q. *Jessica*, okay. And how long have you been on board?

24 A. Like --

25 Q. Like total time you've worked for the company.

1 A. Probably about -- actually on the boat, probably about 2
2 months.

3 Q. Two months. Okay.

4 A. This was our eighth job.

5 Q. Eighth job. Okay. Great. And then any previous maritime
6 experience?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Okay. Sorry. I'm just taking a few notes here.

9 A. That's fine.

10 Q. Okay. And then explain your working relationship, your
11 dynamic, you know, with the other deckhand and the master. Is it
12 a good working relationship? Like just explain that.

13 A. Oh, yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. We got good chemistry. We all work together good, no
16 problems.

17 Q. No issues?

18 A. No issues at all.

19 Q. How do you all know each other? Just from here or previous?

20 A. Well, I worked -- the captain, I was working for him before
21 he got the boat for about 4 years. And my buddy, that's the other
22 deckhand, I got him the job here.

23 Q. Okay. Cool. What did you do for him previously?

24 A. We did roofs, like different type of construction work.

25 Q. Okay. Construction. Cool.

- 1 A. Yes, sir.
- 2 Q. So 4 years, so you've known him a while.
- 3 A. Yes, sir.
- 4 Q. All right. So -- okay. What type of work does the vessel
5 do?
- 6 A. We push barges. We use the crane some. Like we'll tow
7 stuff. That's pretty much it so far.
- 8 Q. Would you say it's like various or is there a certain
9 industry that you kind of work for?
- 10 A. No, sir. It's like different -- the boat's rigged up for
11 like different type of work, you know. So --
- 12 Q. Yeah. Gotcha. And what were you doing during this -- the
13 incident? What were you doing at that time?
- 14 A. Like before it happened?
- 15 Q. The type of work that the vessel was doing.
- 16 A. Just keeping the boat up and, you know, tying up the barges
17 and --
- 18 Q. What was the job that the vessel was doing?
- 19 A. Oh, we were rig tending in Bayou Couba.
- 20 Q. Rig tending. Okay. How do you spell Couba? Is that
21 C-u-b-a?
- 22 A. C-o-u-b-a.
- 23 Q. C-o-u-b-a. Got it. Thank you.
- 24 A. Out of Lake Salvador.
- 25 Q. Okay. Yep. Lake Salvador, got it. All right.

1 Let's see here. So I know we kind of talked about it a
2 little bit earlier. Just so we have it on the recording here, so
3 what type of fire extinguishing systems are on board?

4 A. I couldn't really state it, but we used the, you know, the
5 dry chem.

6 Q. Dry chem, yep.

7 A. Yes, sir. That's the only one we were able to use.

8 Q. And is that the big one on wheels?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I brought the small one from the wheelhouse when we ran
12 down, but it wasn't good for nothing. You know, it didn't serve a
13 purpose, so I just put it down on the deck.

14 Q. Okay. So the only one used was that big -- that semi-
15 portable dry chem, right?

16 A. Yes, sir. And then we hurry up and closed the hatch
17 because -- you know, smother it out.

18 Q. Yeah. And then are you familiar, is there any other type of
19 systems that could fight a fire on board?

20 A. We didn't use any, but the fire hose.

21 Q. Fire hose. Okay.

22 A. We didn't want to use it because it was, you know, oil
23 burning.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. So it wouldn't have really --

1 Q. Okay. Do you ever do any type of drills on board, run
2 through like fire drills, abandon ship, man overboard type of
3 stuff?

4 A. Yes, sir. About every month or so we would do one.

5 Q. Every month or so. Okay.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. When's the last time you did one? Rough estimates are fine.

8 A. I think like 2½ weeks ago.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Or 2 weeks ago, something like that.

11 Q. Which ones did you do; do you recall?

12 A. We did the man overboard and the fire drill.

13 Q. Awesome. Okay. So familiar with the fire, that's good
14 practice.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Are you thankful you ran that?

17 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, it was good.

18 Q. Okay. So tell me about any other type of training that
19 you've had while working for the company.

20 A. I mean, we're crane certified, crane rigging certified. We
21 did all the drills, you know, before Coast Guard came. We went
22 over those very well, you know, the first inspection. Anything
23 besides that, I don't --

24 Q. Gotcha. So when you came on board did the captain give you
25 like a rundown, you know, familiarization?

1 A. We went over a lot of stuff.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. Like we had a bunch of papers like this, going over it.

4 Q. Okay. What are those? So we have watch duty, emergency
5 instructions, life jackets, fuel transfer, primary
6 (indiscernible). And these are all right here in the -- what do
7 you call this space here?

8 A. The, I guess the --

9 Q. Galley?

10 A. Galley. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. Great. That's great. Okay, so you can constantly
12 review these.

13 A. And we have them in the wheelhouse also.

14 Q. Okay. Excellent. All right.

15 What about maintenance? Who does the maintenance, how often
16 is maintenance conducted, and are there logs?

17 A. Yes, sir, we have the logs. We write everything down on the
18 logs. You know, if we would check the oil -- them engines don't
19 burn a lot of oil. You know, we'll keep them full. You know,
20 everything was to the T, everything was checked and --

21 Q. So who -- are you typically doing the maintenance or --

22 A. Yes, sir. I check it and --

23 Q. Check it.

24 A. I get with my captain to make sure, you know, I'm doing it
25 right because I'm still new. But I mainly do everything. Like if

1 we got a leak, I'll tighten up whatever needs to be tightened or
2 fixed or, you know, put more seal on it. Just stuff like that.

3 Q. Awesome. All right. Let's see here. And you said there is
4 a logbook, right?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. I'm just going to write that down, logbook.

7 All right. So what about rounds of the spaces? How often
8 are you guys walking around the ship, looking in the engine room,
9 stuff like that?

10 A. See, we -- each hour we'll go check the engine room, the
11 generator room and everywhere, you know. But we all came to
12 conclusion we're going to start checking it every 30 minutes.

13 Q. When was that?

14 A. That was, you know, I mean, after -- like when we're on the
15 boat, we check it every hour --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- you know, to make sure everything's okay.

18 Q. That's what you currently did before the fire?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Or I should say before the fire you did that? Okay.

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And now?

23 A. Now we're going to do it every 30 minutes.

24 Q. Now you're going to do every 30. Okay. Awesome. Thirty
25 minutes from now on. Okay.

1 Let's see here. So you're doing rounds every hour. That
2 includes engine room, correct?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. That includes -- that's pretty much just a walkaround of the
5 vessel; is that right?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Void spaces?

8 A. Hmm. I mean --

9 Q. Not really?

10 A. -- we check those like every now and then to make sure, you
11 know, water ain't coming in.

12 Q. Sure.

13 A. But not too often.

14 Q. Okay. Is there a written or like a procedure that's in
15 place, you will check it every day, week, whatever, or is it just
16 kind of captain tells you?

17 A. Just as captain tells us.

18 Q. Okay. Gotcha.

19 A. As -- I believe.

20 Q. That's no problem.

21 A. From my knowledge.

22 Q. Okay. All right. So walk me through -- you said *Miss Jess*
23 took you off the boat, correct?

24 A. (No audible response)

25 Q. Okay. And then when did the firefighter show up?

1 A. See, we were already heading down the ICW, I believe that's
2 what it is, and then we seen the firefighter just coming through.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And we stopped one of them, but they said -- we told them the
5 fire was already out, but they were going to go ahead and check
6 it, you know.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. But I think only one of them made it to it because the waves
9 were so big, you know.

10 Q. Yeah. I --

11 A. So they just turned around at the start.

12 Q. Gotcha. That does make sense. I talked to the fire chief.
13 He said one of the boats, they were taking water over the bow so
14 they went out with their other one only.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. So they checked it. Did they pass any information to
17 you guys after that about, you know, hey, here's what we found
18 or --

19 A. They didn't open any doors or anything, but they felt, you
20 know?

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. And they said the fire, you know, done cooled down and
23 everything, so, you know -- but one more thing I need to tell you.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. So about -- we were about 5 miles or like, you know, a good

- 1 ways from the boat --
- 2 Q. Yeah.
- 3 A. -- and we could tell like the smoke went out after 10
- 4 minutes.
- 5 Q. Really?
- 6 A. Yes, sir.
- 7 Q. So this was daylight, right?
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. It was getting dark but we could still see the boat.
- 11 Q. Okay. So as you're being taken with the *Miss Jess*, that's
- 12 when you kind of noticed it from distance that the fire had went
- 13 out?
- 14 A. Yes, sir.
- 15 Q. And then what were your thoughts on damage at that time?
- 16 A. See, I mean, I thought it was going to be way worse than it
- 17 was.
- 18 Q. Yeah. Okay.
- 19 A. But I was -- I mean, I was thinking like if it only burned
- 20 for 10 minutes, it wasn't terrible, but --
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. -- we wasn't for sure, you know?
- 23 Q. Hard to tell. Right.
- 24 A. Yes, sir.
- 25 Q. Especially from 5 miles.

1 A. Oh, yeah.

2 Q. I gotcha. So I hate to make you relive this, but tell me
3 what was, you know, going on in your brain when this happened.
4 You said you were -- where were you at the time when the fire
5 started, the alarm went off?

6 A. I was in my bed.

7 Q. You were sleeping right here? Okay.

8 A. Yes, sir, taking a nap.

9 Q. So you were sleeping and then tell me like what, you know --

10 A. Well, I heard the fire alarm. Then I heard my captain, you
11 know, calling us, so I hurried up and ran up. And I don't know,
12 like when we went down there, I know I seen the fire. Well, we
13 first seen the smoke from like the wheelhouse, you know, the smoke
14 was coming around. And we went down on a -- as soon as like I
15 seen like the tow tanks that were holding gasoline, which they
16 were empty, but, I don't know, that was just triggering in my head
17 like, you know, it could blow up. But the fire didn't get to it,
18 but -- I don't know, it was scary, but I was keeping -- you know,
19 trying to keep a straight mind to do what I needed to do, you
20 know, but --

21 Q. Do you feel like -- I mean, did your training automatically
22 kind of kick in at that point, you would say?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Great.

25 A. Definitely. I was just thinking of everything we could do if

1 my captain wasn't, you know --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- if was doing something else. But he kept us in line doing
4 what we needed to.

5 Q. Okay. Great. All right, let's move on here. So -- oh, so
6 you said the fire department didn't really give you like a report,
7 they just kind of called and said, hey, fire's out?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Is that right?

10 A. Well, they came face to face with --

11 Q. Face to face. Okay.

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. They didn't give you guys any paperwork; do you recall?

14 A. I honestly don't remember.

15 Q. Okay. No problem. All right. So I noticed you guys did
16 some cleanup on the vessel, quite a bit of cleanup.

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. So what's the plan for the vessel now, if you know?

19 A. Well, we cleaned it up, we painted. We're going to get the
20 electrician in, hopefully get it done before this weekend -- well,
21 over the weekend, so when Coast Guard comes, you know, to inspect
22 the boat, it'll be ready the first of the week.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. And today we're going to Houma and a couple places to get
25 some stickers, parts, hoses, that may be, you know, affected by

1 the fire.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And just anything else -- you know, some of the parts on the
4 engine that got affected by the fire, we're going to change those.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Just anything extra that, you know, may cause a fire again,
7 we're going to try to like prevent that, you know.

8 Q. Gotcha. That's great. Okay. So correct me if I'm wrong
9 here. *Miss Jess*, that's the one that picked you up, right?

10 A. The crew boat that picked us up, yes, sir.

11 Q. So *Miss Jess* -- I'm just writing all this down. *Miss Jess*
12 picked up -- picked you up. Okay. And then who -- what other
13 vessels were involved? If you know their names.

14 A. The *Sea Cat*, they didn't do anything, but they stand by for 4
15 hours to --

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. -- you know, they were going to tow us but they didn't. Then
18 about 2 days or 3 days later, the -- what was the name of it? The
19 *Olivia Jane* towed us back to the dock here.

20 Q. Okay. So let me go back to the *Sea Cat*. Why didn't they tow
21 you in?

22 A. Because Coast Guard still had to evaluate some stuff. They
23 didn't -- they weren't for sure. I'm not really sure what reason.

24 Q. Okay. So Coast Guard -- okay, Coast Guard held you in place.

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay. And then what happened with the *Sea Cat* at that point?
2 Captain told them to go or what happened then?

3 A. Yes. He told them to just leave. They were coming back to
4 Larose, so we're going to try to get towed from them, you know, to
5 come here. But we just told them to leave because Coast Guard
6 still had to, you know, evaluate and see.

7 Q. Yeah. So how did you feel, I mean, at that point? So you're
8 out here, you know, you all are ready to be towed in, correct?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And then Coast Guard's telling you to hold. I mean, did you
11 guys feel unsafe at that point, because you were out here kind of
12 alone, right?

13 A. Yes, sir. I mean, it was -- I wasn't too much worried about
14 it, but it was kind of a risk, you know. Like, you know, a boat
15 could have hit us at night, you know, if the wind drifted them
16 off.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. You know, it's plenty of reasons why, you know, it was kind
19 of sketchy. But, I mean, we were safe, you know. Nothing
20 happened, but --

21 Q. Did you guys have lights? Your deck lights --

22 A. Yes, sir. We had lights.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. We had the deck lights on, you know, all the amber lights or
25 whatever, you know, had them on. But --

1 Q. Okay. Great. Anything else on that? Are you good there?

2 A. I think that's good.

3 Q. Okay. All right.

4 MR. WISNIEWSKI: So I -- Luke, NTSB. I just want to jump in
5 there.

6 So your -- when you said the lights were on, did you have
7 battery or did you have your generators available to run?

8 MR. MCKENZIE: I'm not really sure what runs them, to be
9 honest. I don't know if they run off a battery or the generator.

10 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

11 BY [REDACTED]

12 Q. But was the generator running at that time?

13 A. I mean, we did run the generator, you know, but I'm not sure
14 if it was running the lights.

15 Q. I gotcha.

16 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Okay.

17 [REDACTED] But you had lights?

18 MR. MCKENZIE: Yes, sir.

19 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Did you have the house here? Did you have
20 the galley lights and air condition? So you had the comforts
21 of --

22 MR. MCKENZIE: Yes, sir.

23 MR. WISNIEWSKI: -- the vessel? All right.

24 [REDACTED] If you want to, you can ask some more.

25 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Yeah, I'd like to go back a little bit, you

1 know, all the way back to the beginning. Luke, NTSB.

2 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

3 Q. So you were saying earlier about you worked 4 years for him
4 and it wasn't in the maritime, though?

5 A. Not at all.

6 Q. It was construction? It was just shore side?

7 A. Construction. On land. Construction, yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. And then for me, I'd really like you to just go
9 through a little bit more of a detail on -- you talk about how we
10 secured the fire -- you know, fuel shutoffs. Tell me exactly like
11 what you did. Like what you --

12 A. What I did?

13 Q. Yes.

14 A. Okay. So I came down, I grabbed that fire extinguisher, like
15 the small one, you know?

16 Q. And where was that at? That's on the wheelhouse?

17 A. It was left side of the wheelhouse. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And I came down. First thing we did, you know, the two
20 hatches were already closed. My captain was closing the big door
21 because a lot of the flame was coming through. So I closed one of
22 the hatches and then --

23 Q. Do you remember which side it was, port or starboard?

24 A. No, sir.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. But I know, you know, the dry chem or whatever, I shot that
2 in the starboard side (indiscernible).

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And then after that, it went out. I closed it. Then we ran
5 up. My captain and the other deckhand, while they were shutting
6 the fuel off, I shut one of them off. I only shut one off. And
7 that was on the port side, I believe, the fuel shutoff.

8 Q. Was it the forward one or the aft? Do you remember?

9 A. I really can't. It was all happening quick.

10 Q. Sure.

11 A. I was in shock, you know?

12 Q. Understood. And with the dry chem, when you were
13 extinguishing -- using that extinguishing agent, did you exhaust
14 it? Did you use everything that was in that canister?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. You did?

17 A. Completely, yes.

18 Q. You did. Okay. All right. And then you then closed the
19 ventilation after you exhausted that extinguisher --

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. -- dry chem?

22 A. And I was holding -- you know the cover that's on the dry
23 chem?

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. I was holding that over while I was blowing it through so

1 none of the flames got me or anything, or it was like smothering
2 it more, you know? So, but --

3 Q. Good. Appreciate that detail. Yeah, please continue.

4 A. But --

5 Q. So you shut off the -- you think something on the port side,
6 can't remember if it's the forward or aft fuel shutoff.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. What'd you do next?

9 A. After that, my captain, he was going to grab the logbooks,
10 you know, and I just sat, you know, on respond waiting for my
11 captain to give me orders. Then the *Miss Jessica*, it came up and
12 we jumped on the boat. That's pretty much it. It all happened
13 very quick.

14 Q. Very good.

15 A. Within 5 -- 5, maybe 10 minutes, you know. We did it quick.

16 Q. Now what attire were you in? Shirt, shorts? Did you have
17 work pants on? Did you have your -- you have boots on? What did
18 you have?

19 A. I had boots, work pants. I had, I believe, a long-sleeve on.
20 I had my vest on, you know, my working vest. And --

21 Q. Okay. A flotation device?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Work vest. All right. Good.

24 A. We all had a -- my captain -- me and the deckhand, we had
25 both working vest on and he had just a regular life vest, you

1 know, like the -- not the working vest, but just a --

2 ■ ■ PFD?

3 MR. MCKENZIE: Yes, sir.

4 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

5 Q. It was a PFD, it was already -- the hard foam or the soft
6 foam? It wasn't like a Mustang? It was an inflatable one?

7 A. It wasn't inflatable. It was -- you know the square ones --

8 Q. Okay. Yeah, square --

9 A. -- that go around your neck?

10 Q. Yep.

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And we had the whistles on them. We had the -- it's like a
14 highlighter light or, you know, so you could -- but, I don't know,
15 that's about it from my knowledge, you know. On my part, you
16 know.

17 Q. Um-hum. That's good. And then what maintenance or were you
18 involved at all with the maintenance on the hydraulic steering
19 system? You know, we believe, from what your captain has showed
20 us, that one hydraulic hose split. Were you involved with any of
21 that maintenance? Did you do any of that?

22 A. No, sir.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. I mean, that morning, you know, before anything happened, I
25 fixed a leak, had to tighten up a bolt. I got the water out the

1 bilge.

2 Q. But not on the hydraulic system? You tightened --

3 A. No. No, sir.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Just regular procedures that we do. You know, get the water
6 out the bilge, make sure there's no oil leaking anywhere, just
7 normal stuff.

8 Q. All right. So you pumped down the bilges at what time?

9 A. I can't really recall, but I'd say like 10 o'clock.

10 Q. All right. Ten o'clock.

11 A. We got a vacuum, you know, we just get the water out.

12 Q. All right.

13 ■■■ Is there normally a lot in there?

14 MR. MCKENZIE: No, not -- just like maybe a gallon or two.

15 ■■■ Okay.

16 MR. MCKENZIE: In every spot. That's about it.

17 BY MR. WISNIEWSKI:

18 Q. And you mentioned you make a round about every hour.

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. So I know you said you were in your rack. Did you make the
21 last round of the engine space or who was the one that performed
22 that?

23 A. I mean, I did probably about 2 hours before that, but I
24 believe like Payton, which is the other deckhand, I believe he did
25 the last one.

1 Q. Okay. And just take me through your round. What do you do?
2 You go down the engine room ladder and --

3 A. First thing I do, I go down the engine room ladder, yes, sir.
4 I check both of the engines and make sure there's no leaks. Then
5 I check, you know, the bilge, make sure there's no oil in the
6 bilge. You know, I go in the generator room, just make sure
7 nothing's unnatural. You know, that's pretty much all I do. And
8 then just go around the boat, you know, just make sure
9 everything's regular, nothing out of pocket or just unnatural, you
10 know. That's pretty much all we do.

11 Q. Okay. Is there -- do you flip any bilge pumps or make sure
12 nothing's hung up when you do your engine room round or are you
13 just -- are you looking in the bilges for water? Like just take
14 me through a little bit more, right? Your sound -- do you listen
15 to the engines running, that if you hear any abnormalities? You
16 know, just -- I'm looking for that like level of stuff. Like what
17 do you actually do? What are you looking at? You're doing great.

18 A. Okay.

19 Q. I just want to make sure you're capturing everything, because
20 you're doing a good round. So you think you did it 2 hours
21 before, but -- so you're back in the engine room, you look at your
22 starboard, port engine?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. And then you go forward and that's your generator space,
25 right? And what are you looking at in the generator space?

1 A. Okay. Well, on the air compressors usually every day I bleed
2 the water out of them.

3 Q. Yep.

4 A. And we check -- also we check the stuffing boxes, you know,
5 make sure they're not leaking bad.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Tighten them up if they need it. I mean, that's pretty much
8 it. Like I just make sure on the engines like I check every hose,
9 I check every, you know, fitting, I check every -- anyplace oil
10 could come out.

11 Q. Do you check the dipstick --

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. -- level in there?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. What are they -- what's the level usually maintained at?

16 A. Full.

17 Q. Full?

18 A. We always keep them up. Yeah, them engines don't burn,
19 don't, you know --

20 Q. They don't consume much oil?

21 A. Uh-uh. No. No, sir.

22 Q. Okay. All right. Do you do any maintenance or do you look
23 at the steering hydraulic tank, the reservoir? There's a sight
24 glass on the port side of it.

25 A. Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir.

- 1 Q. Do you look at that?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. How do you have to get around that to view that? Do you
4 crawl around the back side of the engine?
- 5 A. Yes, sir.
- 6 Q. Okay. When's the last time you think you've done that?
- 7 A. I mean, I checked that probably that morning. I checked
8 everything. I checked the day tanks. I checked the hydraulic,
9 you know, the hydraulic tank. I checked the, you know, the clutch
10 oil. I didn't check the main engine oil, but --
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 A. That day --
- 13 Q. Do you remember what the hydraulic oil level was --
- 14 A. It was full.
- 15 Q. -- in the steering gear?
- 16 A. It was full.
- 17 Q. The reservoir was filled?
- 18 A. Yes, sir.
- 19 Q. All right. And you didn't see any leaks, didn't see anything
20 there that looked abnormal to you?
- 21 A. No, sir. That morning on the starboard side, which the fire
22 didn't have nothing to do with, on the starboard side it was, in
23 the back -- I can't tell you what it's called, but it was a leak.
24 I had to tighten up a bolt.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And then there was also another seal we had to change, which
2 we haven't done it yet, which is up there -- we already got it in
3 the wheelhouse, but -- it was like on the exhaust manifold, I
4 think. It was a small leak. It wasn't like dripping or anything.
5 It was just, you know, creeping on the engine. But that's about
6 it. Everything was kept up.

7 Q. So when you say creeping, will you just see the black exhaust
8 coming out or the soot?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. All right.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. That's good. Thank you.

13 MR. WISNIEWSKI: I'll turn it back over to you, Lieutenant.

14 BY ■ ■

15 Q. Yeah, so just a couple more question on my end. And I
16 appreciate you being thorough on all this. I really do. So --

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. You know, you experienced everything that happened, so I got
19 to ask what do you think could have been done to prevent this?

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm not trying to intrude on your
21 all's conversation, but there's -- where's (indiscernible)?

22 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Pause the interview.

23 (Off the record.)

24 (On the record.)

25 MR. WISNIEWSKI: Resume the interview.

1 BY ■ ■

2 Q. All right. Yeah. So, you know, you were on board during the
3 fire, you experienced the whole thing. What do you think could
4 have been done to prevent this from happening?

5 A. There was really nothing we could have did to prevent it, but
6 like my captain my said, we could put the shield -- or we could
7 put the fire -- whatever it's called, around the hose. That may
8 prevent it.

9 If -- I mean, really Coast Guard could have done nothing.
10 They got out there -- the helicopter got out there within 20
11 minutes, but they turned around because we were already on the
12 crew boat. But if that crew boat wasn't there, it'd took -- we'd
13 have probably had to jump overboard. You know, we didn't know how
14 bad it was going to get. Coast Guard would've been there within
15 15 minutes after the fire, so --

16 Q. Great. But in terms of -- so just so I'm clear, and correct
17 me if I'm wrong here. So a hydraulic line busted on the port side
18 steering pump, and then it sprayed onto the engine hatch --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. -- which then hit the turbo at some point, right --

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. -- causing a spark? Okay. Causing that to catch fire.

23 So --

24 A. And we could tell the flame was coming from the port side,
25 but we didn't know what from. You know, it could've came from the

1 generator room or anything on the port side, you know.

2 Q. Okay. How could you tell it was coming from the port side?

3 A. Because the flames -- you know, when we had the door open,
4 you know, going to it, the flame was coming --

5 Q. I see.

6 A. -- from the port side.

7 Q. Okay. Gotcha. Gotcha. Okay. Excellent. And then my last
8 question is, is there anything further you want to tell us that
9 might help us with our investigation?

10 A. Nothing in particular, but -- no, sir, not really.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you.

12 A. I said pretty much everything.

13 Q. Yeah. Well, we appreciate it.

14 ■ ■ Luke, do you have anything else?

15 MR. WISNIEWSKI: No other questions. Thank you.

16 ■ ■ Okay. So it is 22 February 2023. It is 10:17. We
17 are concluding the interview.

18 (Whereupon, at 10:17 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD TOWING VESSEL
 DESPERADO ON LAKE SALVADOR NEAR
 NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA ON
 FEBRUARY 17, 2023
 Interview of Michael McKenzie

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM018

PLACE: On board the *Desperado*

DATE: February 22, 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.



Kay Maurer
Transcriber