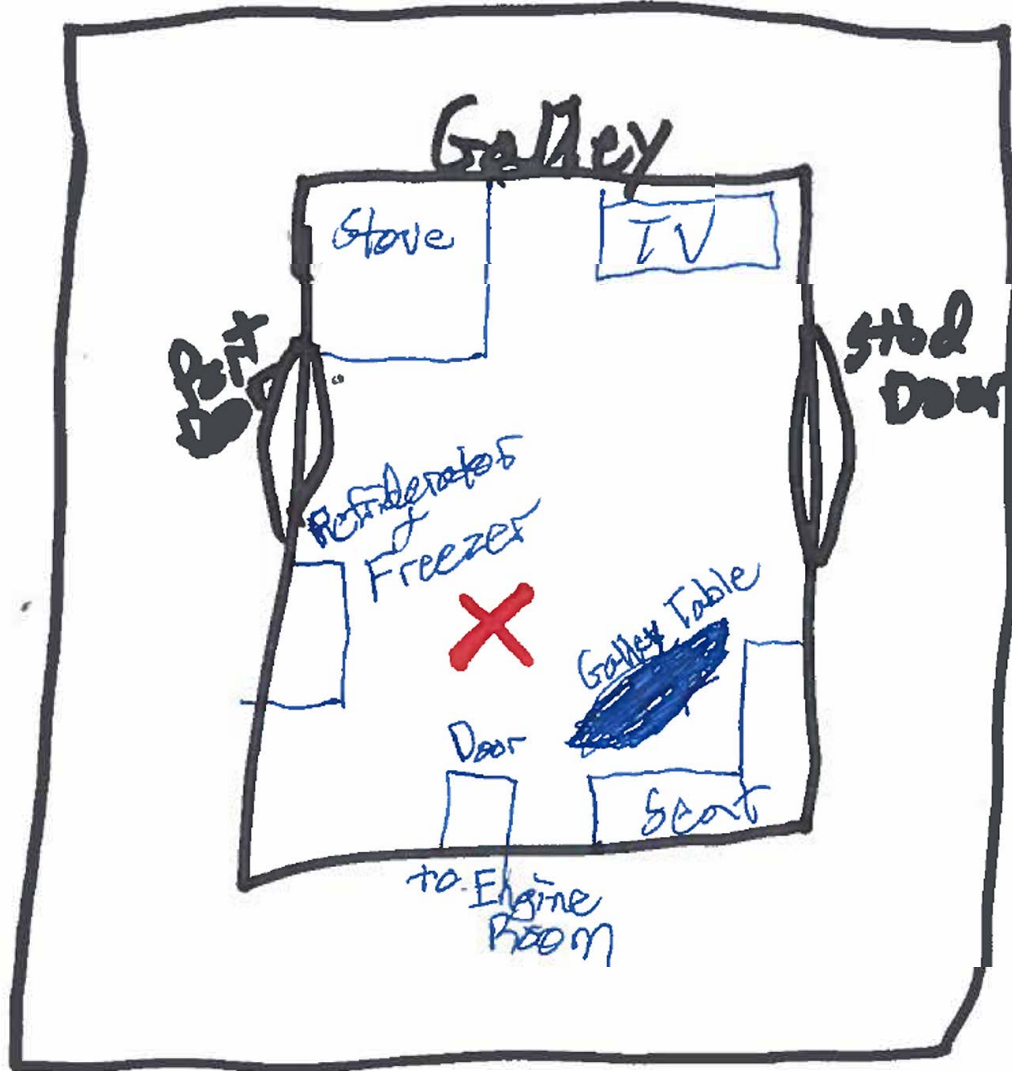


This sketch mentioned on page 36 of the transcript.

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Stern

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2-21-20

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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COLLISION OF THE BARGES PUSHED BY
THE TOWING VESSELS *RC CREPPEL* AND
THE *COOPERATIVE SPIRIT* ON THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEAR LULING,
LOUISIANA, ON JANUARY 26, 2020

Accident No.: DCA20FM012

* * * * *

Interview of: NATHAN DUGAN, JR., Deckhand
RC Creppel

Via telephone

Friday,
February 21, 2020

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL KARR, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

██████████ ██████████ Senior Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

MSSD2 ██████████ ██████████ Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

LTJG ██████████ ██████████ Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

██████████ ██████████ Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

MICHAEL MCMAHON, Attorney
(On behalf of Elite Towing)

GEORGE VOURVOULIAS, Attorney
Harmon, Smith & Vourvoulias
(On behalf of Mr. Dugan)

VERA DUGAN
(Mother of Mr. Dugan)

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:06 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. [REDACTED] So today's date is February 21st. It is now
4 10:06. We'll start with over here. We'll just kind of work
5 around to Nate, and then we'll just get rolling with some
6 questions. Okay?

7 All right. Go ahead.

8 LTJG [REDACTED] This is Lieutenant JG [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with New
9 Orleans --

10 MR. [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] also with Sector New
11 Orleans, Investigations.

12 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, Investigations,
13 National Center of Expertise.

14 MR. MCMAHON: Mike McMahon on behalf of Elite Towing.

15 MR. VOURVOULIAS: George Vourvoulias on behalf of Nate Dugan,
16 Nathaniel Dugan, who is present here today. We're at our law
17 offices, Harmon, Smith and Vourvoulias, on Poydras Street, New
18 Orleans, Louisiana.

19 MR. DUGAN: Nathan Dugan.

20 MR. VOURVOULIAS: Also present is, as previously stated, is
21 Vera --

22 MS. DUGAN: Vera.

23 MR. VOURVOULIAS: -- Nathan's mother.

24 MR. [REDACTED] And then on the phone, if you guys could just
25 quickly introduce yourself.

1 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm the Senior Investigating Officer
2 with the Coast Guard in Mobile, Alabama. I've been assigned as
3 the Chairman or Lead Investigator into the events of the *RC*
4 *Creppel* and the *Cooperative Spirit* and *Glory First*.

5 MR. KARR: And I'm Michael Karr of the National
6 Transportation Safety Board. And the National Transportation
7 Safety Board along with the Coast Guard is also investigating the
8 accident.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Wonderful.

10 MR. KARR: And Karr is spelled with a K.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Karr with a K. Got you. Okay. Real quick
12 we're going to pause just for a second because [REDACTED] recorder needs
13 a battery. So give us 30 seconds.

14 (Pause.)

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

16 INTERVIEW OF NATHAN DUGAN, JR.

17 BY MR. [REDACTED]

18 Q. So Nathan, again, I appreciate you meeting with us again. I
19 know first time we spoke was pretty soon after the event, and I
20 realize it's pretty traumatic, obviously. And I explained we did
21 not know as investigators a whole lot what was going on, like,
22 details of a lot of things that occurred. So felt now that it was
23 a good time to -- now that we have a little bit idea what
24 happened, you with a little more time passed, maybe we can fill in
25 some holes and -- little bit of holes here.

1 So that's kind of our purpose and goal, I guess. So with
2 that -- so realizing that we've already kind of talked, we'll just
3 kind of rehash a few things as far as how long you've been onboard
4 and what happened and all that kind. Okay?

5 But let's go ahead and start with what was your position on
6 the *RC Creppel*, and what were -- okay, for the recording, Nathan,
7 just state your name again, and spell it for the recording.

8 A. Nathan Dugan, N-a-t-h-a-n, D-u-g-a-n, Junior.

9 Q. Okay. Thank you. So with that, can you just give us your --
10 what your position was on the *RC Creppel*, and some of your roles
11 and responsibilities on that -- on the *RC Creppel*?

12 A. I was a deckhand, in charge of keeping the boat clean,
13 (indiscernible) tow, pretty much everything, engine room, cooking,
14 you name it.

15 Q. Okay. Very good. And how long have you been a deckhand on
16 the *RC Creppel*?

17 A. Six years.

18 Q. Six years. Okay. And how much -- is that the only
19 experience --

20 A. No.

21 Q. -- as a deckhand or do you have --

22 MR. VOURVOULIAS: So we have a clear record, wait until he
23 finishes asking the question. So that's not talking over each
24 other.

25 BY MR. [REDACTED]

1 Q. So with your -- so 6 years on the *RC Creppel* as a deckhand.
2 Do you have any other experience as on the water or on a towing
3 vessel?

4 A. I have about 14 years all together.

5 Q. On various boats?

6 A. Between Elite and Marquette.

7 Q. Okay. So you've worked for Elite Towing along with Marquette
8 Towing as a deckhand for --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- years, correct?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay. So let's go ahead, and just from your best
13 recollection of what occurred, if you can kind of give us your
14 version of what happened from, let's just say, the time you woke
15 up that morning. And kind of explain what you did when you woke
16 up, what you -- any activities you did leading up to before the
17 incident, and then after the incident as well.

18 And just -- go ahead, and just what you recall. Please, go
19 ahead and let us know.

20 A. Woke up about -- our cabin (ph.) woke up about 4 o'clock.
21 Picking up the empty barge. He was tied up on the other side of
22 the river waiting on the fleet. We had been there since 10:30
23 that night. Fleet couldn't take it. We told him just to find a
24 spot, hang on until we can get with you all. Just woken up at 4
25 o'clock. Headed across the river. Boat was waiting there with

1 it -- with the barge in tow. Took maybe half-hour if that.

2 (Indiscernible), back to the boom and the galley.

3 Q. Okay. So you're in the galley, and then what -- from there,
4 what did you do in the galley leading up to the collision?

5 A. Me and the other deckhand went into the galley. Shawn, the
6 Captain, was in there making coffee. Just chit-chatting with him
7 about the day. He went upstairs. Deckhand Matt went upstairs not
8 too long after -- maybe 5 minutes after that. The general alarm
9 rang. I went to grab a lifejacket, and that's when I felt the
10 impact.

11 Q. Okay. When you felt the impact, did you have your lifejacket
12 on?

13 A. Yeah, just put it on.

14 Q. So once you felt the impact, what happened then?

15 A. Threw me across the room. Then seconds after that, the
16 refrigerator/freezer fell over that was bolted into the wall.
17 After that water started coming in.

18 Q. Okay. And you were still inside the vessel --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- when the water was coming in? So as the water was coming
21 in, what did you do?

22 A. Trying to find the quickest way to get out. Swimming around
23 in it because it started getting over my head.

24 Q. And at that point was the vessel upright? Was --

25 A. It was leaning.

1 Q. Leaning. To which side?

2 A. Starboard.

3 Q. So water was coming in. You were starting to have to swim at
4 this point?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Do you recall how you exited the vessel or at what point you
7 exited? How long do you think you were in the vessel before you
8 exited as the water came in?

9 A. Maybe couple minutes. I saw a door, watertight door, I guess
10 from the impact it knocked it open. I could see darkness through
11 it, so I swam towards it towards the opening.

12 Q. Okay. So --

13 A. And as I was going through the door, I seen Matt, the other
14 deckhand, trying to come down the stairs. That was the last time
15 I seen him.

16 Q. So Matt, the other deckhand, as you were swimming or as --

17 A. Swimming, trying to get to the door. And I couldn't say
18 nothing. I was freezing.

19 Q. This might be hard to recollect a little bit, so if you need
20 to take some time, please don't hesitate. Okay? But these are
21 important tools for us to fully understand here, so -- but if you
22 need any kind of break, please let me know. Okay?

23 So the vessel is filling -- the boat's filling up with water.

24 A. Pretty fast.

25 Q. Pretty fast. While you're swimming, you see Matt?

1 A. Yes. I couldn't say anything to him. I was cold and I was
2 shaking, (indiscernible).

3 Q. Did he say anything that you're aware of?

4 A. No. He ran back upstairs. That was the last --

5 Q. So from what you recall, you saw him coming downstairs, and
6 then you saw him go back upstairs?

7 A. Back up.

8 Q. Okay. So you had seen on the -- which door do you -- was it
9 you recall? Was it the starboard side, the port side?

10 A. No. Port.

11 Q. The port side. So that was up?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. So you saw some light or some dark --

14 A. Dark.

15 Q. -- coming through that. Okay. Did you have to pull that
16 door open?

17 A. Push it.

18 Q. Push it. Okay. And once you pushed it, you were able to
19 swim out? You were --

20 A. No.

21 Q. -- able to --

22 A. I had -- I seen a barge with a wire hanging off of it. I
23 swam to it, grabbed on to it.

24 Q. Do you recall if that was one of the barges you were
25 pushing --

1 A. Wasn't one of ours, because (indiscernible).

2 Q. And so you grabbed onto a wire that was hanging in the water,
3 I assume?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. What did you do at that point? What --

6 A. I tried to climb up it. It was a empty barge. I was tired,
7 cold, couldn't make it. So I just got out of the water -- climbed
8 up it enough to get out of the water.

9 Q. And then eventually somebody came -- or another vessel came?

10 A. About 10, 15 minutes, yes.

11 Q. And then do you recall what vessel that was that came and
12 picked you up?

13 A. The *Louisiana*.

14 Q. The *Louisiana*.

15 A. MV -- pretty sure it's *Magnolia*.

16 Q. N, like, NV?

17 A. MV.

18 Q. MV.

19 A. Motor vessel.

20 Q. Oh, Motor Vessel. Okay. Motor vessel *Louisiana*. Okay. So
21 they were able to get you out of the water, and get you on --

22 A. (Indiscernible) pulled me on, helped me get out of the wet
23 for a little, gave me clothes.

24 Q. And then do you recall, once you were on deck there, at that
25 point did they bring you to shore, and that's where -- did you go

1 to the hospital at that point?

2 A. (No audible response.)

3 Q. And just what was the extent of your physical injuries? Was
4 there any --

5 A. My knee was bent in (ph.). My back's still kind of sore from
6 it. Scrapes and scratches.

7 Q. Basically some bumps and bruises?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Are those -- are you feeling better from the physical
10 injuries? Are there --

11 A. My back is still kind of bothering me, but everything else --

12 Q. Okay. So if I can go back a little bit. That's a really
13 good description. I appreciate that. A little more --

14 A. I remembered a lot more than --

15 Q. Yes, yeah.

16 A. -- first time I met you.

17 Q. Right, right. Which is kind of what I was hoping for a
18 little bit as well, right? So if you can go back real quick prior
19 to the incident occurring where you woke up at 4 o'clock. How
20 come you were woken up? Was it a rotation or --

21 A. Routine.

22 Q. Routine. Okay.

23 A. Head over to the fleet, pick up the boss.

24 Q. So you had a job task where --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- you needed to pick up the vessel. The vessel needed to
2 pick up a barge. So do you remember exactly what that job task or
3 order was?

4 A. Pick up -- we had to -- we had one barge already.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Picking up an empty.

7 Q. Okay. So you were loaded with one barge?

8 A. One barge.

9 Q. Okay. And you were tasked to get -- pick up an empty from
10 where exactly?

11 A. Upper Saint Rose Fleet.

12 Q. Upper Saint Rose Fleet?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. And then so if you woke up at 4:00, do you know at
15 about what time you showed up to that Upper Saint Rose Fleet and
16 started to make the tow for that? About how long after you woke
17 up?

18 A. They usually give us 15, 20 minutes.

19 Q. To wake up and --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- get your bearings and stuff? Okay. So was the vessel
22 already there at Saint Rose when you woke up?

23 A. We were across river because we got there the night before,
24 fleet (indiscernible). Tied it off at night. Got up that morning
25 (indiscernible).

1 Q. So can you go in a little more detail on -- so your job,
2 and -- was it the other deckhand's as well --

3 A. Yes. He --

4 Q. -- his job to help make the tow?

5 A. Um-hmm.

6 Q. So can you kind of, in a little more detail, from the time
7 you woke up some of the things, procedures, and some of the things
8 you do just to -- prior to making the tow, and just a little bit
9 about making the tow, like, what that entails?

10 A. Come up with a game plan about how we're going to do it.

11 Q. Okay. Just you and the other deckhand or is it the whole
12 crew?

13 A. The whole crew.

14 Q. The whole crew. And at that point, who was the captain on
15 watch?

16 A. Lester Junior.

17 Q. Lester Junior. And so when you come up with this game
18 plan -- so you have a loaded sulfuric acid barge, I believe,
19 right?

20 A. (No audible response.)

21 Q. And the job task was to --

22 A. Put it in tow.

23 Q. Put it in tow. In a one-in-one formation or --

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. -- side-by-side? One-in-one. Okay. Is there -- what does

1 the game plan kind of entail? What does that mean? So just for
2 someone who doesn't do it, can you kind of explain, like, what
3 your --

4 A. How we're going to lay the wires.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Pretty much it, just --

7 Q. To lay the wires from the barge that you already had in tow?
8 Because you have a loaded barge that's sitting lower and an empty
9 barge that's sitting higher, so a little --

10 A. High-low they call it.

11 Q. What's that?

12 A. They call it a high-low coupling.

13 Q. A high-low coupling. Okay. So you guys come up with a game
14 plan for how you're going to make the tow.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Then what -- at that point, what is the vessel's procedures
17 as you, as you go out on deck and do all that? What are -- life
18 vests required?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Communication --

21 A. Lifejackets, work boots, headlights if it's dark, radios.

22 Q. And the comms, or the radio, is communicating with who?

23 A. Captain at the wheel.

24 Q. So Lester?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. So when you wake up -- I don't want to put words in
2 your mouth. I'm just trying to visualize. You wake up, little
3 coffee, get your bearings a little bit, figure out what the game
4 plan is. You're in the galley, I assume, or kind of
5 (indiscernible) to the galley, is that kind of where you would
6 meet?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. And the tow is up forward, correct?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. That's where you're going to go out on deck. So do you
11 recall -- how do you get outside the vessel from where you were
12 at?

13 A. Through the galley.

14 Q. Through the galley door?

15 A. Galley door.

16 Q. Port or starboard? Do you recall?

17 A. Probably the starboard. That's the main one (indiscernible).

18 Q. Okay. And then so you go up on to the loaded barge. You
19 push up against the empty barge. And then both you and Matt have
20 to crawl --

21 A. We had somebody helping us from the fleet.

22 Q. Oh, okay, okay. So you had another --

23 A. Another deckhand.

24 Q. Got you. From another vessel --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- or from the fleet itself? Okay.

2 A. From the fleet.

3 Q. And they're throwing wires down to you or you --

4 A. Handing them up.

5 Q. Okay. So the tow is made up at this point. Once it's made
6 up, what do you and Matt do?

7 A. Make sure all the wires are tight.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Back to the boat.

10 Q. Okay. So you come down from the loaded barge? Once it's all
11 tied up --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- and all made up?

14 A. Made up.

15 Q. And you come back inside the vessel or do you wait out --

16 A. Back inside.

17 Q. -- on deck? Okay. Do you remember where -- once you came in
18 where you went to?

19 A. Galley.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Galley. Okay. I'm good for now.

21 [REDACTED] do you have some questions that you would like to ask
22 Nathan?

23 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Good morning, Nathan. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S.
24 Coast Guard. Thank you for taking the time to meet with me. I
25 know it's difficult for you. A couple of things to follow-up

1 with.

2 BY MR. [REDACTED]

3 Q. What type of -- what is your work schedule as far as on/off
4 the vessel?

5 A. 14 and 7.

6 Q. 14 and 7. Is this your -- were you on your normal on-time
7 or --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. And what about watch? What is your watch?

10 A. We didn't really work watch as a deckhand. You just, you
11 work during the day. If we need to get up at night, we would go
12 to bed a little early, because it's always better to have two
13 deckhands out on tow instead of sending one person out by himself.
14 So we mainly just stayed up here on the (indiscernible) around the
15 boat. Like I said, if we had to get up at midnight or so we'd go
16 to bed a little early. Basically 12 hours -- 12-hour days.

17 Q. No set watch?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Schedule watch? Okay. You had mentioned that some of your
20 responsibilities were to keep the vessel clean?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. (Indiscernible) the tow?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Cook?

25 A. Cook, yeah.

1 Q. And engine room --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. What are your responsibilities as far as the engine room?

4 A. Changing oil, checking it every hour or so, taking on fuel,
5 everything in the engine -- any kind of work in the engine. Not
6 as far as like mechanical stuff.

7 Q. So when it comes to mechanical things, how is that handled?
8 And let's say you're underway. Do you make a round in the engine
9 room, check for things?

10 A. Yeah, see if there's a problem, anything going on.

11 Q. So one or the other deckhand is always up then? That fair to
12 say?

13 A. Not necessarily always, because it's only two of us on the
14 boat.

15 Q. Okay. So you have two deckhands and two captains, right?

16 A. (No audible response.)

17 Q. So if one captain is always up when it's underway, right, and
18 the other captain would be resting?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And then both deckhands could possibly be resting as well?
21 So they would just have one person up when underway is possible?

22 A. Um-hmm.

23 Q. That particular morning you had mentioned that you had gotten
24 up at 4:00.

25 A. Around 4:00, yeah.

- 1 Q. Who got you up?
- 2 A. Lester Junior called in the room over the PA.
- 3 Q. Okay. So the other deckhand was with you? He was also in a
4 rack?
- 5 A. Yes.
- 6 Q. Okay. And the other captain was as well?
- 7 A. Yes.
- 8 Q. Just Captain Lester was up standing by while you all were
9 waiting --
- 10 (Simultaneous comments)
- 11 A. -- standby --
- 12 Q. -- waiting? Okay. So going back to the engine room type
13 thing, when you're underway, how often are rounds made in there?
- 14 A. I try to do it every hour. Unless I'm really busy doing
15 something, I'll try -- I'll get to it, but at least try to do it
16 every hour.
- 17 Q. So if you're underway and you guys are in the racks, right,
18 and the only one up is the captain, how would you get up -- how
19 are you getting up or being notified in time to go make that
20 hourly round?
- 21 A. We don't.
- 22 Q. Okay. So there's no set --
- 23 A. Yeah. No set time.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. Just when I'm up.

1 Q. If you're up --

2 A. If I'm up --

3 Q. -- you're going to go once an hour?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Does Matt also, the other deckhand, he pretty much does the
6 same type of thing?

7 A. Um-hmm.

8 Q. If you guys find something that's a concern, an issue, what
9 do you do?

10 A. Report it to the wheelhouse.

11 Q. Report it to them, and then do you know what they do?

12 A. They call the company, (indiscernible).

13 Q. Okay. Are there ever any times that your responsibility
14 would be to turn on or turn off any blowers in the engine room?
15 Are the blowers on constantly running?

16 A. When we shut down the engines, we turn the blowers off.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. When we're standing by.

19 Q. Are you guys -- is there any types of conditions when you're
20 running, when you're underway, that you guys are required -- or
21 expected, I should say, to do anything like close doors, dog doors
22 or anything like that?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. You are required? What's the requirement? What are the
25 expectations?

- 1 A. Keep them closed at all times.
- 2 Q. When underway?
- 3 A. When underway.
- 4 Q. And who would give you that directive?
- 5 A. It's company policy.
- 6 Q. Company policy. Did the captain ever follow-up and ask if
7 that had been done?
- 8 A. Um-hmm. All the time.
- 9 Q. All the time. Okay. Do you recall if the doors were closed
10 that particular morning when you were underway after the fleet --
11 from when you departed the fleet underway?
- 12 A. Starboard side was open.
- 13 Q. I'm sorry?
- 14 A. Starboard side was open.
- 15 Q. Starboard side was open?
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. Port side was --
- 18 A. Was closed.
- 19 Q. Closed. Dog closed?
- 20 A. Yeah. That's the one that got busted open and we was able to
21 get out of.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. I guess from the impact knocked it loose.
- 24 Q. Who would have closed that door? Do you recall?
- 25 A. I would have or somebody would.

1 Q. Do you recall?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Is it expected that all doors would be closed or --

4 A. Should have been.

5 MR. ██████ Should have been all closed, but the starboard
6 was open. The port was closed. No further questions. Thank you.

7 MR. DUGAN: Thank you.

8 MR. ██████ ██████ or Mike, is there any questions you have
9 for Nathan at this point?

10 MR. KARR: ██████ I'll let you --

11 MR. ██████ Go ahead, Mike.

12 MR. KARR: You want me to go?

13 Yeah, Mike -- this is Mike Karr of the --

14 MR. ██████ Mike Karr, are you on the line?

15 MR. KARR: Yes, I am. Michael Karr of the NTSB.

16 BY MR. KARR:

17 Q. How many -- the galley, is that on -- is the galley on the
18 main deck? And would you explain the decks above the galley?

19 A. Yes, sir. The galley is on the bottom deck. The second deck
20 would be the, like, the living quarter area. And then the third
21 deck would be the wheelhouse.

22 Q. When you were talking about seeing the other deckhand, what
23 stairway did you see him?

24 A. The ones coming from the deck down to the galley.

25 Q. And then can you describe -- is that -- can you describe if

1 it's an enclosed stairwell?

2 A. I mean, it didn't have a door or nothing. It just came
3 straight down, straight down to the galley.

4 MR. KARR: All right, thank you.

5 MR. [REDACTED] So this is [REDACTED] with Coast Guard.

6 BY MR. [REDACTED]

7 Q. Just to clarify. So we have galley --

8 (Simultaneous comments.)

9 Q. -- next deck is living quarters.

10 A. Living quarters.

11 Q. And the next deck is wheelhouse?

12 A. Wheelhouse.

13 Q. Okay. So --

14 MR. KARR: So --

15 MR. [REDACTED] Go ahead, Mike,

16 BY MR. KARR:

17 Q. So can you describe the last conversation you had with
18 Nathan -- with Matt before you saw him on the stairwell?

19 A. Just chit-chatting about the morning, and ready to get down
20 to the locks, tie off and (indiscernible).

21 Q. And what was -- when he left that conversation, did he tell
22 you what he was going to do? Was he going up to the bridge? Was
23 he going up to go back to bed?

24 A. I figured he was going back up to go lay back down for a
25 little while.

1 Q. Can you describe how the barges, how the sulfur -- can you
2 describe how the navigation lights were put on the sulfur -- the
3 barges that you guys were pushing?

4 A. Yes. The lights set up on the bow of the empty barge. The
5 red light goes on the port, amber light goes middle, and green
6 light goes on the starboard.

7 Q. And did you or Matt put those out there?

8 A. Both of us did.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. Because there's always two of us out on, out on a tow with
11 any kind of tow work.

12 Q. Can you tell me when you guys were out on the barges -- well,
13 were you, were you out on the barges when you guys were underway
14 in the river?

15 A. For just a few minutes because we turned the barge loose and
16 finished tightening up the wires, and then got down and went back
17 to the boat.

18 Q. Can you tell us anything about the river that you noted that
19 night with the --

20 A. (Indiscernible).

21 Q. Pardon?

22 A. It's high right now. The current's going pretty fast. Just
23 seemed like just another, another normal day.

24 Q. How was the visibility?

25 A. It was a little rainy. I don't remember seeing any fog or

1 nothing, but it was raining a little bit.

2 Q. Had you ever gone up -- after 4 o'clock had you ever been up
3 on the bridge?

4 A. No. I never went back up to the wheelhouse.

5 Q. Do you know -- are you familiar with the incapacitation alarm
6 onboard the *RC Creppel*?

7 A. Yes. We had one.

8 Q. Can you explain to me how that works? Because I do not know
9 how that works.

10 A. If there's no movement, I forgot how many seconds it is in
11 the wheelhouse, it will set it off.

12 Q. And --

13 A. There's a speaker in the galley, and it goes throughout the
14 boat, the alarm.

15 Q. And what does the alarm sound like?

16 A. Just a loud ringing noise.

17 Q. Have you ever heard that alarm go off?

18 A. Not that one, no. To test it, just to see if it's working,
19 but never for any other reason.

20 Q. Have you ever steered the *RC Creppel*?

21 A. Have I ever what?

22 Q. Steered.

23 A. Oh, steered? Yeah, every once in awhile if William (ph.)
24 needed to use the bathroom or something like that.

25 Q. Can you describe the visibility from where you would steer

1 the vessel?

2 A. Straight out the window.

3 Q. How about when you look to your left, when you look to your
4 right, anything block your vision?

5 A. No. Big windows. Nothing in the way to block the vision.

6 MR. KARR: All right, Mr. Dugan, that ends my questions.

7 Thank you.

8 MR. DUGAN: Thank you.

9 MR. [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] again.

10 BY MR. [REDACTED]

11 Q. Quick follow-up on that. If you had to guess, since you've
12 been up with the (indiscernible) steering, about how far out in
13 front of the bow do you think you can see? No, no. I'm not
14 talking horizon. I'm talking how far in the water. So you have
15 the bow, like, before you can kind of see the water right in
16 front --

17 A. You've got to kind of stand up to see down. You can't
18 (indiscernible). You have to stand up (indiscernible).

19 Q. You can easily see the bow from a sitting position?

20 A. Yes. If you have a barge you can see -- the barge
21 (indiscernible) if you're sitting in the middle. Big window in
22 the middle, and two big ones on each side, left and right side.
23 (Indiscernible).

24 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, so you have a 360-degree window viewing.

25 Okay. [REDACTED] do you have some questions or anything you'd

1 like to follow-up with?

2 MR. [REDACTED] I do. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] the Senior
3 Investigating Officer with Sector Mobile.

4 BY MR. [REDACTED]

5 Q. Nathan, thank you for coming and talking to us today. I
6 really appreciate this. This is very helpful. I just have a
7 couple of questions. How many exits from the galley are there?

8 A. There's two directly inside the galley.

9 Q. And do they go directly outside port and starboard?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And then I'm assuming the engine room -- there's an exit from
12 the galley to the rear to the engine room?

13 A. Yes. There's a door between the galley and the engine room
14 to go into the engine room.

15 Q. All right. And then in the engine room there's two doors,
16 port and starboard as well?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Just one last question. When you were recovered by
19 the Motor Vessel *Louisiana*, did you happen to turn around and look
20 at what had occurred, and what did you see, if you did?

21 A. Once I got back in the boat I didn't go back out.

22 Q. Okay. So at no point after they recovered you did you turn
23 around to look at the *Creppel* or the *Cooperative Spirit*?

24 A. Everything was going on so quick, I couldn't think to look
25 around, and -- once they got me on the boat and pulled me in the

1 galley.

2 Q. Okay. All right. Did you happen to maybe just glance to see
3 if the *Creppel* was down at that point or was she still floating?

4 A. I don't know.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Okay. I don't have any further questions.
6 Thank you.

7 BY MR. [REDACTED]

8 Q. Nathan, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again, Coast Guard. Couple of follow-ups
9 for you. One, you mentioned that you saw Matt coming down and go
10 back up the stairs. I may have misunderstood. I thought you
11 mentioned that when you were going out the door is when that --

12 A. Right before I got out.

13 Q. So when you saw Matt, was that before you felt the impact?

14 A. No, after.

15 Q. After the impact? Or during the impact?

16 A. It was after the impact.

17 Q. Right after --

18 A. Right when everything (indiscernible).

19 Q. Okay, so after the impact. All right. Prior to that, were
20 you able to hear any comms from any source like a hand-held radio,
21 wheelhouse (indiscernible) when you were in the galley?

22 A. No. Because once we finished (indiscernible) the tow we put
23 our radios on charge -- turned them off and put them on charge.

24 Q. So you heard no comms whatsoever with anyone?

25 A. (No audible response.)

1 Q. And was Matt in the galley with you when you guys -- building
2 tow when you got underway?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. You all were having some conversation then at that
5 point?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. Great. How long have you worked on the *RC Creppel*
8 with the two captains?

9 A. Shawn, I worked since I started there. I've worked with him
10 the whole time.

11 Q. So excuse me. When you --

12 (Simultaneous comments.)

13 (Indiscernible.)

14 A. -- over a year. Same with Matt, little over a year. About a
15 year and a half.

16 Q. Matt?

17 A. Matt was about a year and a half.

18 Q. And what was the, what was the working relationship between
19 the four of you?

20 A. We got along like family. No problems.

21 Q. 14 years experience, you've seen good, you've seen bad
22 wheelmen, people, handle boats, right? Tell me what you -- what
23 is your personal evaluation of how Shawn handled the vessel?

24 A. One of the best.

25 Q. Your evaluation of how Captain Lester handled?

1 A. He was good.

2 Q. Good as well?

3 A. Um-hmm.

4 MR. [REDACTED] That's all I have. Thank you very much. I
5 appreciate you.

6 MR. DUGAN: You're welcome.

7 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I have one follow-up question.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Go ahead, Michael.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Sorry. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with Sector Mobile
10 again. One final question.

11 Nathan, right before the impact when you were in the galley,
12 did you notice any changes in engine rpm or the -- going forward,
13 backwards or any changes or any noises like that?

14 MR. DUGAN: No. I didn't notice anything or feel anything.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. All right. Thank you.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Are you all through?

17 MR. KARR: And this is Mike Karr.

18 To confirm, you heard the general alarm before the collision?

19 MR. DUGAN: Yes.

20 MR. KARR: Thank you.

21 MR. DUGAN: Seconds before the collision.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Is that it, Mike?

23 MR. KARR: Yes.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. This is [REDACTED] I just have one more
25 question.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]

2 Q. When you got woken up at 4 o'clock, at any point did you see
3 Shawn?

4 A. (Indiscernible) between when I got woke up. The first time I
5 saw him was (indiscernible) for the watch change.

6 Q. So you didn't see Shawn -- okay.

7 A. Yeah, (indiscernible) getting ready to (indiscernible).

8 Q. So and you saw him because there was -- they were about to
9 change -- relieve watch?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Watch relief. About what time --

12 A. They usually do it anywhere between (indiscernible) and 6:00.

13 Q. So normal --

14 A. I don't know if he made it all the way up there
15 (indiscernible) or stopped at the bathroom before --

16 Q. So he already had gone upstairs.

17 A. Somewhere upstairs.

18 Q. Shortly before impact any -- was there any (indiscernible)
19 call?

20 A. Minutes.

21 Q. Minutes before --

22 A. Not long.

23 Q. You wouldn't know for sure where he was at (indiscernible).

24 And at any point did you see Lester throughout the -- from 4:00
25 a.m. once you got woken up?

1 A. No.

2 Q. You spoke to him via radio maybe --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- and that's about it?

5 A. About how far we need to position the barge, stuff like that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. (Indiscernible) because he was -- Lester was getting ready to
8 go to bed.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

10 MR. KARR: I've got three more questions.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Go ahead.

12 BY MR. KARR:

13 Q. What time would Shawn and Lester normally switch the watch
14 at -- in the morning?

15 A. When it -- by 6 o'clock for sure, but they would do it
16 sometimes 5:30, sometimes 5:45, but by 6 o'clock they were
17 switched.

18 Q. And that -- the morning of the accident, in your opinion did
19 you think they were doing a -- they were going to switch about the
20 time you were in the galley or later?

21 A. Somewhere around that time. Like I said, anywhere between
22 5:30 and 6:00 they would swap over.

23 Q. All right. Have you ever watched the two of them change the
24 watch? I'd like to know if you can tell me what you've observed
25 take place between the two of them and, for instance, how long it

1 would take.

2 A. Yes. I've seen them a few times relieve each other. They
3 just pass on any kind of information about anybody they talked to
4 or any kind of boats or traffic or anything like that they would
5 pass on to each other. It'd maybe take -- depending how ready
6 they were to get out of the wheelhouse, 5 minutes, 10 minutes or
7 they'd sit up there for a little while.

8 Q. And in the past, have you ever noticed if -- say, in this
9 case, have you ever seen Lester hang around after Shawn relieved
10 him to chat a little bit or would Lester --

11 A. He'd come downstairs -- come down and he'd chit-chat with us
12 a little bit, and then go upstairs.

13 Q. Say that again. Have you ever seen him --

14 A. Yes. He would get off watch. He would come down to the
15 galley. He'd get something to eat, kind of chit-chat with us a
16 little bit, and then go upstairs, go to bed.

17 Q. Did you ever see Lester stay on the bridge and chit-chat with
18 Shawn after he -- after Lester had been relieved?

19 A. Yeah, just about what's going on. Because, I mean, they've
20 been knowing each other forever. They'd just kind of chit-chat a
21 few minutes and then swap watches.

22 MR. KARR: All right, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Dugan.

23 MR. DUGAN: You're welcome.

24 MR. [REDACTED] Couple of follow-up question. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S.
25 Coast Guard.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]

2 Q. I asked you earlier doors that were closed, and I guess I
3 didn't specify. What were the conditions of the doors in the
4 galley, open or closed?

5 A. (Indiscernible.)

6 Q. Pardon?

7 A. Both doors in the galley?

8 Q. Yes.

9 A. Just one was open.

10 Q. Which one was open?

11 A. Starboard side.

12 Q. Starboard side was open. Okay. And port side was --

13 A. Port side --

14 Q. -- closed?

15 A. -- was closed. I only (indiscernible) open -- the starboard
16 side.

17 Q. Okay. And what about in the engine room?

18 A. Closed.

19 Q. They were both closed?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Who closed those?

22 A. I don't remember for sure, but we always close the doors.

23 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

24 MR. [REDACTED] All right, this is [REDACTED]

25 (Simultaneous comments.)

1 MR. VOURVOULIAS: Let them ask you the questions. I just
2 don't want it to get attached without any questions.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

4 So Mike and [REDACTED] -- this is [REDACTED] Mike and [REDACTED] I had
5 Nathan kind of draw us a little picture of where his location was
6 on the vessel at the time of the incident. And so I have a
7 picture, which I can't -- I don't know if -- I believe [REDACTED]
8 texted -- the picture, but not sure if we'll use it as evidence,
9 but we can at least have him kind of describe it, so -- but I
10 think it's pretty self-explanatory where it is. Sort of this is
11 the galley, this box right here.

12 MR. DUGAN: Yeah.

13 BY MR. [REDACTED]

14 Q. And you're kind of -- what's forward in the galley? This is
15 engine room, aft?

16 A. It's just the galley right here.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. This is the galley.

19 Q. And what is, what is this?

20 A. This would be (indiscernible) boat -- deck of the boat.

21 Q. Okay. So engine room would be where?

22 A. (Indiscernible) the boat.

23 Q. So starboard side, this was the door that was open?

24 A. Open.

25 Q. Correct? And the collision went to port, so which would

1 obviously -- leaning to port?

2 A. Starboard.

3 Q. Oh, yes. I'm sorry. I apologize. You're right. So if it
4 leaned to starboard, you're sure the port door was --

5 A. It was dogged, but I'm guessing the impact or something, I
6 don't know what, something knocked it open.

7 Q. And from your recollection, do you know where the impact was
8 on the boat?

9 A. I felt it. I don't know where --

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So I think myself, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] do you
11 have anything?

12 (No audible response.)

13 MR. [REDACTED] We don't have any further questions. Do [REDACTED]
14 or Mike -- do you have any further questions?

15 MR. [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] No, I don't.

16 MR. KARR: This is Mike Karr.

17 Were there any doors on the living quarters deck, and were
18 they open, and were there any doors on the bridge deck, and were
19 they open?

20 MR. DUGAN: Yes. There's two doors on the second deck, two
21 doors on the wheelhouse deck. They were both closed. And they're
22 not watertight doors.

23 MR. KARR: All right, thanks.

24 MR. [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] again. I believe the last thing
25 here.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]

2 Q. So on the picture that Nate drew for us, there's a red X.
3 Can you describe the red X you put on here, what that's
4 indicating?

5 A. It's about where -- I'm guessing where I was standing when I
6 felt the impact.

7 Q. So when the collision occurred, that's where -- about where
8 you were standing?

9 A. Was standing.

10 Q. Okay. Is there anything in this particular area? Is this
11 where the fridge was that --

12 A. Yes. Fridge. The freezer was probably about in here --

13 MR. VOURVOULIAS: Don't put that in because we're not going
14 to be able to tell by just --

15 MR. DUGAN: Yeah.

16 MR. KARR: I've got another question.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

18 MR. KARR: I've got another.

19 BY MR. KARR:

20 Q. So, Mr. Dugan, where do you think Shawn was when you were in
21 the galley and it was flooding?

22 A. I don't know. He walked upstairs, and I don't know if he
23 made it to the wheelhouse or stopped in his room or stopped in
24 that bathroom. I'm not sure.

25 Q. And how many minutes or seconds after he left the galley did

1 the accident occur?

2 A. Maybe 5 minutes.

3 MR. KARR: All right, thanks.

4 MR. DUGAN: You're welcome.

5 MR. [REDACTED] All right. [REDACTED] Mike, you guys done?

6 MR. [REDACTED] Yeah. I'm good.

7 MR. KARR: Yes.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. All right. Okay, if we can --

9 MR. [REDACTED] We are going to ask that Nathan sign and date
10 that he drew this.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Yeah. So just here in person we're having Nate
12 just kind of identify a couple little things on there. We'll have
13 him sign and date the drawing that he made and then -- so just
14 evidentiary kind of stuff.

15 So okay, guys. I think we're done here. So if there's
16 nothing else, we're going to go ahead and hang up.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Yes. Just, thank you so much, Mr. Dugan, for
18 coming in today. Again, I really appreciate you taking your time
19 out of your schedule to do this for us.

20 MR. DUGAN: You're welcome.

21 MR. KARR: Thank you, Mr. Dugan.

22 MR. DUGAN: Thank you.

23 MR. [REDACTED] All right, Mike. We'll talk to you guys. All
24 right?

25 MR. KARR: All right.

1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay, we're signing off.

2 MR. KARR: Signing off. Bye.

3 (Whereupon, at 10:56 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: COLLISION OF THE BARGES PUSHED BY
THE TOWING VESSELS *RC CREPPEL* AND
THE *COOPERATIVE SPIRIT* ON THE
MISSISSIPPI RIVER NEAR LULING
LOUISIANA, ON JANUARY 26, 2020
Interview of Nathan Dugan, Jr.

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM012

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: February 21, 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.


Katherine Motley
Transcriber