

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

CATHLAMET FERRY COLLISION *

NEAR WEST SEATTLE FAUNTLEROY *

Accident No.: 

DOCK IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON *

ON JULY 28, 2022 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: DAVID COLE, Captain
Cathlamet

Onboard *Cathlamet*

Thursday
July 28, 2022

APPEARANCES:

██████████, Lieutenant
United States Coast Guard

██████████, Chief Warrant Officer
United States Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:11 p.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED]: Good afternoon. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED]. I am onboard the *Cathlamet* conducting interviews in
5 regards to the collision between the *Cathlamet* and the Fauntleroy
6 Ferry Terminal. Today's date is the 28th of July 2022, and the
7 time is 1411.

8 In the room is myself, Lieutenant [REDACTED].

9 CAPT COLE: David Brian Cole, Captain of the *Cathlamet* on the
10 morning watch.

11 CWO [REDACTED]: Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED].

12 And just for the record, Captain, do you have any problems
13 with us recording --

14 CAPT COLE: No. She asked me. I don't have any issues at
15 all.

INTERVIEW OF DAVID COLE

16
17 BY LT [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Great. So, Captain, if you wouldn't mind just walking me
19 through your day from the time you got onboard the *Cathlamet* until
20 post-collision.

21 A. I came aboard. Had my usual coffee, you know, made the
22 landing at Vashon for the other crew to let them get over from the
23 other boat to check it out, switch out. And then just was taking
24 the boat from Vashon over to Fauntleroy, and I got engagement, and
25 the next thing I know I hit, I hit the dolphin. That's all I

1 know. I mean, I, I don't know what to say.

2 Q. Okay. So as you were making your approach --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- do you remember the engine speed that you guys were
5 transiting? How fast was the vessel going?

6 A. It couldn't have been going more than maybe five at the most
7 because this, the number two engine slows down very well. When I
8 got engagement out there, and I come in slow like I always do on
9 the boat to make my approach, and I always come from this area
10 over -- to the south. Because I'm used to the telegraph -- from
11 years ago -- to make landing easier, you know, (indiscernible)
12 around. So that's -- I do that a lot.

13 Q. Okay. And then when -- at what point, what distance to the
14 terminal do you normally slow the speed of the vessel?

15 A. You slow the speed of the vessel as you're approaching.
16 Usually by the time you hit the dolphin you're doing five or less,
17 you know.

18 Q. Okay. And what announcements do you make? What
19 preparation --

20 A. We don't.

21 Q. You don't make any announcements?

22 A. Just call it maybe tell the chief we're coming in -- get
23 engagement. He'll tell me you got engagement. I'll say thank
24 you, and then just make the landing.

25 Q. Okay. Do you notify the terminal or do you --

- 1 A. I call the terminal.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. On the handset.
- 4 Q. And were you able to call them this morning before the
5 landing?
- 6 A. I'm almost positive I did, yeah. I mean, I called them like
7 I always do every day (indiscernible) our approach.
- 8 Q. Okay. So at what point did you take over for the
9 quartermaster to make the landing?
- 10 A. I took it out there a ways, probably between a half mile and
11 three-tenths.
- 12 Q. Okay. And did the quartermaster stay on the bridge with you?
- 13 A. He did.
- 14 Q. For the entire duration of the --
- 15 A. He was --
16 (Crosstalk)
- 17 A. -- the whole time, correct.
- 18 Q. Okay. Were you guys still in communication or was he doing
19 something else?
- 20 A. I wasn't watching Bill totally. He might have stepped back
21 to the, to the chart area for a second. And that's the last time
22 I had -- yeah, he was at the chart table.
- 23 Q. Okay. And at what point did you realize you were going to
24 strike the Dolphin?
- 25 A. It was -- this happened all of a sudden. I mean, it's like,

1 you know, then I grabbed the controls, and I wasn't -- I'm sure
2 there was a dolphin that slowed me, right, when I hit it. But I
3 got the vessel stopped so that I can get back so we didn't go into
4 the beach, and that was my goal, you know, to stop the vessel.
5 I got that done. I was coming back out, and that's when Al came
6 up, and he said, Dave, take a break for a minute, and he made the
7 landing. (Indiscernible) for him, you know, had already backed
8 the boat out and was coming over, and he offered to put it
9 (indiscernible).

10 Q. Sir, at any point did you think that you -- the vessel had
11 grounded or --

12 A. No.

13 Q. No. Okay. And so was there anything different about your
14 approach?

15 A. No. I always, you know, I usually come the same way, and I
16 used the two points here -- show you -- use these two points right
17 here which is (indiscernible) and the next one, right? When they
18 make a line you're at 3/10ths, quarter miles, you know. That's a
19 -- it's a visual instead of, you know what I'm saying, watching
20 the radar. And I'm always engaged and everything and quarter
21 mile, 3/10ths.

22 Q. Um-hmm. Okay.

23 A. I just kind of come in because that end of the boat is
24 slower. It slows down a lot more. So if you stop, maybe put a
25 lot of turns on it, it will stop way before you get in. So I just

1 usually let (indiscernible) work my way in.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Slows down as we get closer and closer.

4 Q. And can you describe the weather and the prevailing sea state
5 at the time of the mooring?

6 A. Can I what?

7 Q. How was the weather --

8 A. The weather's just like it is right now.

9 Q. And what about the sea state, the current? Did you notice
10 anything?

11 A. No, I don't. I didn't -- wasn't paying attention to the
12 current. I usually look at the -- to see if -- which way she's
13 running, you know, when I come in, but I didn't, I didn't look up
14 -- see that. So I don't know which way it was going when I hit.
15 Like I say, I was (indiscernible) around, come in, stopped the
16 boat.

17 Q. So I guess in my mind I'm trying to understand just the, the
18 chain of events, right?

19 A. Right. I understand.

20 Q. And so I guess my biggest confusion or area that I don't
21 fully understand yet is just after you, you had started to make
22 your approach --

23 A. Right.

24 Q. -- did you change -- did you have to compensate with the -- a
25 harder turn or change your propulsion, I guess, before then you

1 noticed that you were not going to make the approach to the, the
2 terminal as you intended, and you were set down --

3 A. I was, I was --

4 (Crosstalk)

5 A. -- I don't know if I would say set down, but I was over
6 there, and I was just like and I started backing hard on it, you
7 know.

8 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Do you have any questions?

9 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

10 Q. So I'm trying to -- when you, when you left Vashon --

11 A. Um-hmm.

12 Q. -- were you at the helm or was --

13 A. Bill was --

14 Q. -- Bill at the helm?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. So he --

17 A. He takes the boat out.

18 Q. Takes the boat out.

19 A. And then I take over after a while, you know.

20 Q. Okay. And what's, what's the standard though? What is
21 Washington State ferry standard --

22 A. I think it's -- usually take it a half-mile -- right in
23 there.

24 Q. Half-mile --

25 (Crosstalk)

1 A. Half mile right in there. I mean, we don't go that fast down
2 there. So and there's -- and like I said that end slows very
3 well. So --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- engagement 3/10ths.

6 Q. All right. So --

7 A. Or just before, just -- either at 3/10ths or just before, you
8 know, I always have it.

9 Q. All right. So is it -- it's ferry's policy that the master
10 lands the ferry or can the quartermaster land the ferry?

11 A. The quartermaster can land. Well, no, he can't land, old
12 days, so I'm thinking old days. It's just me or the mate, that's
13 it.

14 Q. You or the mate?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. That's Wash State ferry policy?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Okay. And at -- in that policy does it say where you're
19 supposed to relieve the quartermaster at?

20 A. You know, I always relieve him usually at half a mile. I
21 mean, when I have like Chris or one or the other AVs out there
22 doing the wheel, I usually take over at a half mile.

23 Q. Okay. You said half miles, 3/10ths.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And so when you were using your landmarks for 3/10ths --

- 1 A. Right.
- 2 Q. -- so in this natural harbor, right --
- 3 A. Um-hmm.
- 4 Q. -- are you using the point --
- 5 (Crosstalk)
- 6 A. -- right over there where the big mansion is.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. And that's going down towards the condo. That line when
- 9 you're coming in, right, and you do a line from where they're
- 10 standing there, it's 3/10ths right there.
- 11 Q. Okay. So it's the next point, next point, next point past
- 12 that --
- 13 A. Correct, correct.
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. Yeah. And it's a visual that we've used forever down here.
- 16 Q. Okay. And then I notice you got a couple of Furuno radars
- 17 here.
- 18 A. Right.
- 19 Q. Do you set track lines on those, and any alarms to say, hey,
- 20 you're getting off course?
- 21 A. I do not.
- 22 Q. You do not?
- 23 A. No. I do not. Because I've been down here forever.
- 24 Q. Sure.
- 25 A. And I don't -- I didn't.

1 BY LT [REDACTED]:

2 Q. How many years have you been with the ferries?

3 A. Probably 37.

4 Q. 37.

5 A. Right -- 37, right in there. I'd say 36 to 38.

6 Q. And how many years on this specific --

7 A. Down here? Well, I was here for a long time before I was a
8 mate. I worked -- I worked in the cabin, I worked mate -- I mean

9 AV. I never took a steady mate's job. I worked on call, and I
10 was like on the top -- back in the old days it was like the top
11 five. The dispatcher had his favorites, and I guess I was one of
12 them, I guess, but I -- because I worked a lot with a lot of
13 senior guys, and we went through (indiscernible).

14 Q. So specifically how long have you been the master of --

15 A. Oh, this --

16 (Crosstalk)

17 Q. -- Fauntleroy?

18 A. -- at least, what, four years down here.

19 Q. Four years?

20 A. At least.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Same thing every day. I mean, I do the same thing.

23 Q. I appreciate you taking the time with us. I know it's
24 probably been a really long day for you.

25 A. I just, you know (indiscernible) stuff to help you guys --

1 Q. Yeah, absolutely. And we really appreciate it because we do
2 want to try to understand exactly what happened.

3 A. Right.

4 Q. To hopefully prevent stuff like this from happening again.

5 A. Something happening again.

6 Q. Exactly. So --

7 A. I totally understand. I know when I came in once before and
8 I was working the telegraph on this (indiscernible) I learned a
9 big lesson, and I tell everybody that if you ever work this boat
10 on telegraph you make sure the quartermaster is standing right
11 there next to you because my hand slipped off, and I went instead
12 of going stern, I went ahead with the telegraph. I hit like that
13 (indiscernible) this one. And I tell everybody, you know, when
14 you make a mistake or something happens like that you always tell
15 other people. That's what I always do. Especially the new mates.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. I try to help them.

18 Q. I know your morning starts pretty early. So what time did
19 you actually have to arrive onboard the vessel this morning?

20 A. Well, you've got to be here by 3:30.

21 Q. 3:30.

22 A. And Chris picks me up because he lives on the way, and he
23 picks me up usually 5 to 3, right in there.

24 Q. Okay. And how were you feeling when you woke up? Were you
25 feeling --

- 1 A. I felt fine.
- 2 Q. -- your normal self?
- 3 A. Yeah.
- 4 Q. Yeah. Felt rested?
- 5 A. Well, I don't know if I'd call it 100 percent rested. You
6 know how it is. I mean, it was hot out, very hot, you know,
7 trying to sleep.
- 8 Q. And so if I'm understanding correctly you didn't make the
9 first two landings --
- 10 A. No.
- 11 Q. -- here? You --
- 12 A. No.
- 13 Q. -- didn't take over until around 7:30-ish?
- 14 A. I took over for the (indiscernible). We left there at 7:05,
15 I believe, 7:10.
- 16 Q. And you --
- 17 A. (Indiscernible).
- 18 Q. And you made that departure?
- 19 A. Correct.
- 20 Q. Okay. And so what do you do in the mornings, like, once you
21 get onboard and you don't actually take over as master, are you
22 able to just --
- 23 A. I walk around, check things out.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. Look at the (indiscernible).

- 1 Q. Yeah. And so what did you do this morning?
- 2 A. Kind of the same thing.
- 3 Q. Yeah. Just hung out --
- 4 A. Hung out --
- 5 Q. -- watched the --
- 6 (Crosstalk)
- 7 A. -- bullshit. I just walked around. Our normal thing.
- 8 Q. Yeah. Your normal routine at this point?
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 Q. Okay. And are you taking any type of medication right now?
- 11 A. (Indiscernible).
- 12 Q. No medication? Okay. Is there anything happening in your
- 13 life right now that is sort of a change or anything like any
- 14 recent events, any sicknesses, any like personal things that are
- 15 going on? And take your time. We're in no rush.
- 16 A. My ex-wife has Alzheimer's.
- 17 Q. Okay. That must be really challenging. My grandma actually
- 18 passed away from Alzheimer's. It's a terrible disease. So I'm
- 19 very sorry to hear that. Do you still -- you're still close with
- 20 your ex-wife?
- 21 A. I am.
- 22 Q. Okay. And do you live with her or --
- 23 A. I don't --
- 24 Q. -- provide care for her?
- 25 A. She lives over here, and I live on the other side.

1 Q. Okay. Did something happen? Is this a recent diagnosis?

2 A. It's been going on for a while, but she -- sometimes it seems
3 they're worse.

4 Q. And did you have an interaction with her recently or anything
5 take place?

6 A. I talk to her (indiscernible). Just, you know, sometimes
7 you'll see them and, you know, I was with her for like 30 years,
8 and you can tell when they're having a bad day.

9 Q. Um-hmm.

10 A. And I'm sure you did too.

11 Q. Yeah, absolutely.

12 A. It bothers me.

13 Q. Yeah. I'm sure it would. I'm really sorry to hear that.

14 A. Sorry about that.

15 Q. No. No problem at all. So do you think that that has --
16 have an effect on you?

17 A. I don't think so. I mean, I, you know, that's been going on
18 for a while.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. But like I say the last time I had, you know, saw her it, it
21 was different.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. She was different.

24 Q. Um-hmm.

25 A. I blame myself.

1 Q. Oh, you can't blame yourself for someone having that. You
2 have no control over that. I'm sure she really appreciates you
3 still being there for her, and looking out for her even if she --

4 A. She does.

5 Q. -- maybe --

6 A. She does.

7 Q. Yeah. And that's so nice that you do that for her. Do you
8 have any other family in the area?

9 A. She does, yeah. I have -- have three sisters up here.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And I have a couple in Vegas.

12 Q. Okay. Yeah.

13 A. There's a lot of family (indiscernible).

14 Q. Yeah. That's good. That's really good.

15 CWO [REDACTED]: You want to take a minute, Captain, collect
16 yourself or you good?

17 CAPT COLE: What's that?

18 CWO [REDACTED]: I said do you need to take a minute, collect
19 yourself, or you good? Do you want to --

20 CAPT COLE: Yeah, I'm good.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Want to make sure you're --

22 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah. Take your time --

23 CWO [REDACTED]: Take a break.

24 CAPT COLE: I'm fine.

25 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

1 CAPT COLE: That always gets to me (indiscernible).

2 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

3 Q. So and, you know, we're kind of prying here, and
4 unfortunately that's what we got to do.

5 A. Right.

6 Q. So today were you thinking about it, about your ex-wife?
7 Because I know when --

8 A. I --

9 (Crosstalk)

10 Q. -- have loved ones --

11 A. -- if I don't think about it all the time.

12 Q. I'm sorry?

13 LT [REDACTED]: It's always on your mind. It's an awful
14 disease. It really is.

15 CAPT COLE: I just don't understand it.

16 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah. It's unfair.

17 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

18 Q. So just to go back with what Lieutenant [REDACTED] was saying.
19 You're not taking any medications?

20 A. No, sir, no.

21 Q. You're not taking any, anything to help with -- depressed
22 about this --

23 A. No.

24 Q. -- with your ex-wife to --

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. -- you know, sometimes people do the self-medication too, use
2 alcohol to cope and --
- 3 A. No, I don't.
- 4 Q. Not doing any of that?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. Okay. Was there -- one question I have is --
- 7 A. Okay.
- 8 Q. -- so when you were coming in --
- 9 A. Right.
- 10 Q. -- was there something that maybe the quartermaster said or
11 was there a radio call or something that --
- 12 A. No, I don't --
- 13 Q. -- might have deflected --
- 14 A. I just don't know. It was, I mean, it was just boom. Just I
15 can't say.
- 16 Q. Okay. So you just normal going --
17 (Crosstalk)
- 18 A. -- going in --
- 19 Q. -- course --
- 20 A. -- my normal thing, you know, backing (indiscernible)
21 engagement and everything, and done it a million times. Just like
22 riding a bike. I just don't know. I can't --
- 23 Q. So then all of a sudden you were on the --
- 24 A. I was --
- 25 Q. -- opposite side of the pier?

1 A. -- bam, you know. I was, like, oh, my god. I screamed at
2 Bill, and I backed down really hard right away. Called the chief
3 and told him, hey, I need, I need everything down there right now.
4 I'm on the wrong side of the dolphin. I don't want to go around.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So I saved (indiscernible) you can see the mud, you know,
7 when you're turning -- and it's normal because when you're coming
8 in it sprays everything to the sides.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Over the years. It's just that when you see someone like
11 that, and you know how they used to be, and then you interact --
12 sorry.

13 LT [REDACTED]: It's really hard.

14 BY LT [REDACTED]:

15 Q. Well, is there anything else that you want to share or --

16 A. No, that was --

17 (Telephone ringing)

18 A. Sorry.

19 Q. That's okay. I don't think I have anything else for Captain
20 at this time. I would like to get your contact information.

21 A. Sure.

22 Q. And then from you --

23 A. What is my phone number? I'm horrible at that --
24 remembering. So I just wrote it down because I've been writing it
25 out a lot on different forms.

1 Q. The other couple things, Captain, I know my colleague had
2 mentioned to you we need the 96-hour work-rest form from you?

3 A. Yeah, yeah. I got it from -- what was your first name?

4 CWO [REDACTED]: [REDACTED].

5 CAPT COLE: [REDACTED], okay. Sorry about that.

6 CWO [REDACTED]: No worries. It's been a long day.

7 LT [REDACTED]: And then as well as a written statement from
8 you.

9 CAPT COLE: A what?

10 LT [REDACTED]: A written statement.

11 CAPT COLE: A written, yes, I'll, I'll -- I will do that. I
12 promise.

13 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. So --

14 CAPT COLE: And then I got your card. So you --

15 LT [REDACTED]: That has my email.

16 CAPT COLE: -- want me to write it out? You want me to email
17 it to you or would you like it sent into --

18 LT [REDACTED]: Email works great or I can always come by and
19 pick it up.

20 CAPT COLE: Okay.

21 LT [REDACTED]: Whatever will be probably the fastest way to
22 get it to me.

23 CAPT COLE: Okay. Thanks. Then I have that on 24/7, you
24 know, because I work relief for probably 25 years here, I work
25 every (indiscernible) stay at home with the kids.

1 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah.

2 CWO [REDACTED]: So do you have AC at your place?

3 CAPT COLE: Well, some -- it's an old unit.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

5 CAPT COLE: Once in a while it works but (indiscernible).

6 CWO [REDACTED]: And it's been in the '90s.

7 CAPT COLE: And we open up the doors, you know, because I
8 live -- I don't live that far off the water on the other -- I live
9 between Wake Island and -- the south (indiscernible) or the
10 Manchester area. So the air is, you know, at night gets --
11 breeze.

12 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah. It gets a lot cooler there on the water --
13 (Audio interference)

14 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah. Able to get some sleep and all that?

15 CAPT COLE: Yeah. It's a miscall, just a miscall.

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. So you got a full night's sleep last night?

17 CAPT COLE: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, you know, it's sometimes I
18 sleep for a while and wake up, and, you know, lay there, and go
19 back to sleep. I mean, we all think about things.

20 CWO [REDACTED]: I -- you're preaching to the choir on this side.
21 Okay. Yeah, no, that's why I'm just asking, like, last night, you
22 know. I know when I wake up in the middle of the night, and I got
23 something on my mind --

24 CAPT COLE: (Indiscernible). I'm sure you do what I do.
25 It's like 12 o'clock or 1 or 11, whatever, then you're, like,

1 okay, so it's 1, you know --

2 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah. So there was nothing like that last night
3 or --

4 CAPT COLE: No. Because I was up and going at, like, 2:30,
5 2:35, right in there. So I know better than to sit down though.
6 You sit down after, you know, sometimes you don't get up, and I've
7 had that happen a couple of times. I missed the boat. I sat
8 down.

9 CWO [REDACTED]: Sure.

10 CAPT COLE: Fall back asleep. Ain't like it's ordinary for
11 an AV, you know, I got to be there and run the boat. So --

12 CWO [REDACTED]: Sure. Okay.

13 LT [REDACTED]: And then, Captain, do you mind if I also grab
14 your email address?

15 CAPT COLE: You know, the only one I have is my work one
16 right now because I got this phone, and it's just --

17 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Then I'll --

18 CAPT COLE: I haven't (indiscernible) to get them to
19 transfer. I have another phone that I have all my contacts in --
20 transfer them over (indiscernible).

21 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. I'm sure we'll be able to get in touch
22 with you.

23 CAPT COLE: But, yeah, if you call that number, I will, I
24 will answer.

25 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Great. Well, I really appreciate your

1 time today. I hope you have an opportunity to decompress tonight,
2 and just if you have anything --

3 CAPT COLE: I'm walking off over here --

4 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah.

5 CAPT COLE: (Indiscernible).

6 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah. That will be great. And just do you
7 have anything else that you wanted to share?

8 CAPT COLE: I don't have anything else.

9 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. Well, you have my card. If you do think
10 of anything that you want to share, kind of --

11 CAPT COLE: Could you give it to me again because, you know,
12 I want --

13 LT [REDACTED]: Yeah.

14 CAPT COLE: -- to make sure. I put it in my shirt I could
15 have sworn, and then do you -- did you give me one of yours?

16 CWO [REDACTED]: I don't know if I did.

17 CAPT COLE: -- mind giving me one? Thank you. I appreciate
18 it.

19 LT [REDACTED]: All right. Well, if there's nothing further,
20 Captain, this concludes our interview.

21 CAPT COLE: Okay.

22 LT [REDACTED]: And if I need anything further from you in the
23 next couple days, I'll be sure to reach out.

24 CAPT COLE: Okay. We'll do that. Thank you.

25 LT [REDACTED]: All right. Concluding the interview at 14:36.

(Whereupon, at 2:36 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: *CATHLAMET* FERRY COLLISION
NEAR WEST SEATTLE FAUNTLEROY
DOCK IN SEATTLE, WASHINGTON
ON JULY 28, 2022
Interview of David Cole

ACCIDENT NO.: [REDACTED]

PLACE: Onboard *Cathlamet*

DATE: July 28, 2022

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.

[REDACTED]

Katherine Motley
Transcriber