

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

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FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK* \*

NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION, \*

Accident No.: DCA22FM022

VIRGINIA ON JUNE 8, 2022 \*

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\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: CHRISTIAN MARTIN, Passenger  
*Spirit of Norfolk*

via Microsoft Teams videoconference

Thursday,  
July 14, 2022

APPEARANCES:

██████████ Investigator  
United States Coast Guard  
District 5

RANDY WADDINGTON, Commander  
United States Coast Guard  
District 5

██████████ Lieutenant Commander  
Legal Advisor  
District 5

MICHAEL KARR, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

CHRISTOPHER ABEL, Attorney  
Wilcox Savage Law Firm  
Bay Diesel

MAGDALINE GALITOU  
Attorney for Captain Neto  
Phelps Dunbar

ERIC DENLEY  
*Spirit of Norfolk*

ALAN M. WEIGEL  
City Cruise and Hornblower Group

I N D E X

ITEM

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Interview of Christian Martin:

By Mr. [REDACTED]

7

By Mr. Karr

20

By Mr. Denley

24

I N T E R V I E W

(4:13 p.m. EST)

1  
2  
3 MR. [REDACTED] Which is a public facing site. Eventually,  
4 usually it takes three or four weeks to get transcripts produced.  
5 So if you would for the record acknowledge that we are taping this  
6 interview.

7 MR. MARTIN: Okay. Just say like I recognize that we're  
8 taping it?

9 MR. [REDACTED] Yeah, that's great.

10 MR. MARTIN: Okay. Okay.

11 MR. [REDACTED] And just for -- since your wife is with you,  
12 would you acknowledge that we're taping this interview, ma'am?

13 MRS. MARTIN: Yes, you're taping the interview.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Great. So we're going to introduce  
15 who's on the phone call, and I'd like everybody to state their  
16 name and their affiliation, and then spell their last name, and  
17 I'll start with myself.

18 I'll start with myself, and then I'll go through the people  
19 on the call, and then we'll go with you, Mr. and Mrs. Martin, so  
20 my name is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] from the United States Coast Guard.  
21 That's [REDACTED], and I'm a member of the District 5 Coast  
22 Guard formal investigation team. Mr. Karr?

23 MR. KARR: I'm Michael Karr, K-a-r-r, with the National  
24 Transportation Safety Board.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Denley?

1 MR. DENLEY: Yes, this is Eric Denley. It's D-e-n-l-e-y, and  
2 I'm with City Cruises and *Spirit of Norfolk*.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Abel?

4 MR. ABLE: Yes, this is Christopher Abel, A-b-e-l, of the  
5 Wilcox, Savage Law Firm representing Bay Diesel.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Counsel for Captain Neto (ph.).

7 MS. GALITOU: Magdalini Galitou, G-a-l-i-t-o-u, with  
8 Phelps Dunbar.

9 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Weigel? We have Mr. Weigel with us,  
10 W-e-i-g-e-l, and in the room with me are Commander Randy  
11 Waddington,  
12 W-a-d-d-i-n-g-t-o-n. He is not participating in the interview,  
13 and we have Mr. Travis Taylor, T-a-y-l-o-r, a member of the  
14 Coast Guard investigation team.

15 And, Mr. and Mrs. Martin, would you please state and spell  
16 your name for the record?

17 MR. MARTIN: Yeah, my name is Christian Martin. Do you need  
18 the spelling of the first name or just last?

19 MR. [REDACTED] Just last name, please.

20 MR. MARTIN: Okay. M-a-r-t-i-n.

21 MRS. MARTIN: Katlyn Martin, M-a-r-t-i-n.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you all. Did I omit anybody?

23 MS. [REDACTED] This is Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] legal  
24 advisor for the formal investigation board also on the phone.

25 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you, ma'am. So today is July 14, 2022.

1 The time is 4:13 p.m. Eastern Time. We're conducting an interview  
2 with Mr. Christian Martin who was a passenger aboard the *Spirit of*  
3 *Norfolk* on June 7, and the location is a telephonically by Teams  
4 Meeting.

5 We are conducting this interview to determine the events  
6 surrounding the fire and subsequent total constructive loss of  
7 the excursion vessel, *Spirit of Norfolk*, which occurred on  
8 June 7, 2022 in the Norfolk Harbor.

9 Just so you know what happens here, Mr. and Mrs. Martin,  
10 interviews are kind of fluid, and things can change over time, so  
11 if you know any changes for your testimony of if you want to  
12 modify or retract anything, if you'll let the investigation know  
13 through an email address which I'll say at the end, we'll make  
14 sure that everybody on this phone call that gets a record of any  
15 changes, or additions or modifications.

16 And then eventually we're going to publish a report of  
17 investigation and if you see that report, and you say, wait, I  
18 have new information, or something is substantially different than  
19 it appear in the report, you can also notify us and we'll make a  
20 determination whether or not to update or change the report. And,  
21 finally, there's an extensive book called the Marine Safety  
22 Manual. It's a Coast Guard publication and it's Volume 5, and it  
23 explain in great detail how we conduct these investigations, and  
24 why we conduct them, so I'd be happy at some other point to give  
25 you more information or a link to that.

1           So if everybody would make sure their cellphone's off, we'll  
2 commence the interview.

3   INTERVIEW OF CHRISTIAN MARTIN

4           BY MR. [REDACTED]

5   Q.    So, Mr. Martin, you have a very important story to tell as a  
6 passenger aboard the *Spirit of Norfolk*, and the information that  
7 you provide could be critical in understanding what happened on  
8 that day which is a very complex day, and I know it was a -- had a  
9 big impact in your life. So what I'd like you to do is take a few  
10 minutes to sit there quietly and without us interrupting you, our  
11 plan is to have you from the -- you know, just imagine you're --  
12 it's that day, you're slowing walking up to the vessel with your  
13 wife, and you're about to get aboard, and just tell us the entire  
14 story in as much detail which will help us recreate that event so  
15 that we can figure other aspects of the investigation out. So  
16 just take a moment, and when you're ready, just go ahead and  
17 begin.

18   A.   Okay. So I just want to preface with my memory is not so  
19 great at times. And specifically regarding like going up to the  
20 vessel, you know, I wasn't really I would say paying attention,  
21 you know, because nothing was off to me. So I guess in that  
22 regard I didn't see anything that was off.

23           You know, so when we got on the vessel, there was a couple of  
24 staff members taking our picture. We went in and we were greeted  
25 to sit at a table. You know there was just some waitresses or

1 waiters I guess giving us drinks. We sat down at tables. You  
2 know, everything was pretty normal then. I don't think we had  
3 moved -- yeah, well, we didn't move at that point.

4 I can't recall if we went to get food before we left. Did we  
5 -- yeah, okay. So I guess we just kind of sat there, waited for a  
6 couple people to arrive, and then once we set sail, you know, we  
7 were still getting drinks, water and things like that, and then  
8 the staff came around, let, you know, a couple tables at a time go  
9 get some food. There was a DJ playing some music. Some of the  
10 kids would be dancing. There was a lot of kids on this ship, so  
11 some of the kids were just dancing around on the little stage in  
12 the middle.

13 And then at -- a little bit later, most of us were done  
14 eating. My kids wanted to go up -- well, my kids and most of the  
15 other kids, wanted to go up on the upper deck, the open deck, so  
16 we made our way up there, and, you know, the kids were all just  
17 playing the games. There was a foosball table, and a giant Jenga  
18 table. My kids were playing with those.

19 We stayed up there for quite some time. Some of the staff  
20 was coming around just mostly trying to see if we were wanting to  
21 buy our original pictures that we took at the beginning. I saw a  
22 couple staff walking around just making sure people were okay, I  
23 guess, but -- and then my youngest son was getting bored. He's  
24 four. Four at the time. So we went downstairs into -- down to  
25 the main deck. Now we never went on the middle deck just to



1 clarify that, so we went down there looking for his mother, my  
2 wife who's here with me.

3 We sat down at our original table, waited for her to come  
4 back from the restroom and essentially that's when the DJ made the  
5 announcement that he needed everyone to go to the upper deck.  
6 That was all he said. Yeah, well, yeah, go to the upper deck  
7 immediately. He didn't really say what it was. I honestly just  
8 assumed that it was some sort of kid thing that, you know, they  
9 were trying to surprise the kids with.

10 So I waited a little bit because I knew my wife was coming  
11 out of the bathroom, so we were just going to all walk up  
12 together. We went -- ended up walking up to the top deck through  
13 the side stairwell and as we started walking up, me -- my wife had  
14 already noticed a smell, but me and a bunch of the kids -- well, I  
15 started noticing a smell, and I heard some kids talking about it  
16 smells like popcorn, so as we were walking up the steps, the smell  
17 of basically burnt rubber, maybe burnt plastic, that kind of  
18 smell, something along those lines, started getting stronger.

19 And then we came out to the upper deck, everyone was standing  
20 up there. There was several -- well, I guess -- in the process of  
21 us going up, there were several staff members telling us, you  
22 know, where to go to the top deck. And so once we got up there,  
23 everyone was crowded under the awning where the bar was  
24 essentially because there was a lot of black smoke covering the  
25 top deck.

1           So I guess we were facing -- the side with the fire was  
2 facing towards the wind, so the wind was basically carrying the  
3 smoke up the -- up and over the ship onto the deck, so it was  
4 quite in our faces, you know, put it that way.

5           But at this point nobody really said what was happening, you  
6 know. I assumed it was just some sort of exhaust or something  
7 like that. Then I heard someone -- or, no, I didn't, I didn't  
8 hear anyone. I saw a couple people leaning over the side looking  
9 down to where the fire ended up being, and so I just went over to  
10 investigate because, you know, I knew my wife and my kids were  
11 safe, so I thought, you know, I'll go check out and see what's  
12 happening because at this point no one has told us what's  
13 happening. You know, we were all just on the deck.

14           Actually now that I don't think there was a formal  
15 announcement that there was a fire. We were just told to go up to  
16 the top deck and basically it spread that there was a fire, you  
17 know, because there was like 100 people on this top deck.

18           So I went and looked over the edge, saw that there was flames  
19 just coming out of a room, flames with black smoke. I believe at  
20 this point there was a tug boat. It was either coming in or it  
21 was spraying water already, not directly towards the fire, but  
22 like parallel to the boat so the wind was carrying droplets of  
23 water into the fire. And then I saw one of the staff member  
24 talking to a fellow father that I sat with at the table, so I went  
25 over there to talk to them and the father had just talked to the

1 employee and the employee told him that the fire was in one of the  
2 engine rooms, so they were trying to fight it off, but I never got  
3 any discussion from any of the crew. It was just from the other  
4 father who had talked to the crew.

5 So do we continue to when we got onto the other ship?

6 Q. Yes, sir, please, just continue your story through the whole  
7 process where you just left off, just keep going.

8 A. Okay. Just making sure. Okay. So at this time some of the  
9 staff had realized that there was too much smoke, people were  
10 breathing in smoke, so they went to investigate if the middle  
11 deck, the one that we hadn't gone yet was safe and clear of smoke  
12 and clear of fire. At some point someone said that it was so we  
13 started evacuating, going down the steps, and the steps towards  
14 the main lobby again. But instead of going to the second deck,  
15 they kind of just chauffeured us down to the bottom deck where we  
16 were started to get -- or they started to hand out life jackets.

17 We never went onto the main deck. We were kind of one of the  
18 first people that went down to that open area where you come in  
19 and off of the ship. So we got handed a couple of the first life  
20 jackets. We were instructed at the beginning how -- I guess I did  
21 forget this. We were instructed in the beginning on how to use  
22 these life jackets; however, you know we're kind of thinking that  
23 that stuff will never happen so, you know, it wasn't engrained in  
24 my memory how to use them, but luckily one of the ladies that  
25 worked on the ship was able to put a life jacket on our son --

1 sons, and then we could end up putting them on ourselves.

2       So -- and then we kind of just waited there. Someone told us  
3 that a ship was coming. There was a nearby ship and we were going  
4 to off board onto that ship. I don't remember how long it passed,  
5 but we kind of just waited in the little area like at the bottom  
6 of the steps, and this other vessel came up, pulled next to us.  
7 It looked like they tied on. They tied on somehow. I wasn't  
8 really paying attention to how that happened, but they were  
9 somewhat close, and then they started -- they were close enough  
10 that an adult could get over to the other boat, but there was a  
11 significant crack between the ships, so it made it a little  
12 nervous for me when I was having to pass over my son, so we  
13 started -- some of the other adults started climbing out to the  
14 other ship. It came to me passing off my four-year-old to someone  
15 that I have no clue who they were, and I was a little freaked out  
16 about how big the gap was. My wife was there essentially freaking  
17 out about the same thing, and somehow they ended up moving the  
18 boats a little closer. I did, afterwards I did see that there was  
19 another tug boat that looked like it was pushing the ship, the  
20 ship we were off boarding onto into the *Spirit of Norfolk* so I'm  
21 assuming that's how the ships got closer.

22       So they got a little bit closer. I handed my son over. I  
23 got over, and then, you know, we all crammed into the -- I can't  
24 even remember the other ship's name, but we crammed into there.  
25 The other staff was, you know, just telling us to sit anywhere we

1 could, making sure that everyone got in, and, I mean, then after  
2 that, you know, as soon as everyone got on board, we just pushed  
3 off and sailed back home and got into the harbor and then the  
4 people originally on that ship left before us, and then we were  
5 finally able to leave.

6       Nothing really -- there was not really an interaction with  
7 many of the crew. I mean, I talked to some of the crew on the  
8 ride back to the dock, but nothing to essential, so, yeah, that's  
9 essentially end to end of what happened.

10 Q. Thank you very much. I have some -- this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
11 with the Coast Guard, some follow up questions. You mentioned  
12 getting on board the *Victory Rover* which was the vessel that you  
13 evacuated on board to. Did someone go around and take a head  
14 count to make sure that you and your family and the other  
15 passengers from the *Spirit of Norfolk* were accounted for?

16 A. Yes. Well, was it a staff or was it just -- okay. Yeah, it  
17 was -- I remember some of the parents counting, but, yeah, a staff  
18 member went around counting to make sure that everyone got off  
19 board.

20 Q. And when you saw a staff member, are you talking about a  
21 staff member that had been aboard the *Spirit of Norfolk*?

22 A. Honestly I couldn't tell you. I don't remember that much,  
23 you know. I was still in the recovery phase I guess, but I  
24 remember it was someone that I didn't know. And, you know, they  
25 looked like they knew what they were doing.

1 Q. And then going back to the story that you told and, you know,  
2 you had very good detail, when you -- you repeatedly say staff.  
3 So when you say staff, are you talking about anybody that worked  
4 on *Victory Rover*? There are two kinds of crew. There is vessel  
5 crew and then there's kind of waiters, waitresses, bartenders,  
6 DJs. Was that sort of an all-inclusive thing or are you speaking  
7 about like the crew that operated the actual vessel?

8 A. I don't really remember being seeing a real difference, but  
9 the crew that I remember was mostly like waiters and things like  
10 that, not like ship captains or anything. Well, not the ship  
11 captain, of course, but like people manning the boat. I don't  
12 know what you would say for that, but, yeah --

13 Q. Well --

14 A. -- that I'm referring to.

15 Q. Yeah. I don't know this detail, so I'm going to just based  
16 on another conversation, do the crew, do the wait staff, do they  
17 wear like black uniforms and maybe a boat crew person wear like  
18 khakis and a white shirt and shoulder boards or --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- is there anything like that?

21 A. Yeah. It was mostly the people in black pants that were  
22 helping us.

23 Q. All right. So you also mentioned the safety briefing where  
24 they told you how to put on the life jacket. Could you, as you  
25 recall, give us some detail about when that happened and what that

1 was like for you as a passenger?

2 A. It was after we had gotten the okay that everyone that was  
3 coming was on board, because we -- specifically our school was  
4 waiting on someone, but, anyways, once we realized that everybody  
5 that was going was on board, that was when they did it, before we  
6 shipped off or anything like that, but it was right then.

7 As far as the actual demonstration, there was one of the wait  
8 staff that looked like -- that was demonstrating putting on a life  
9 jacket. It kind of just reminded me of the same spiel that the  
10 staff on a plane gives you when you take off, so it was one of  
11 those things that it was kind of like in the background for me.  
12 I'm used to seeing it, and I thought I know how to put on a life  
13 jacket, so I'm not really going to put my full attention to it, so  
14 it wasn't necessarily that they weren't making it well known that  
15 they were doing it, if that makes sense.

16 Q. Did they use the public address system so that all the  
17 passengers could hear it loud and clear or did they just sort of  
18 yell it out to the crowd?

19 A. I want to say they used a -- there was some sort of  
20 microphone. They weren't just yelling, but I wanted to -- it  
21 might have been the one the DJ was using, so I don't think it was  
22 like a ship system. It was more of like speakers.

23 Q. And in that briefing in addition to, you know, demonstrating  
24 how to put on the life jacket by actually trying to show you how  
25 to put it on, do you recall if they mentioned anything about what

1 to do with children if they had to put on life jackets?

2 A. I don't recall, no.

3 Q. And did they talk about more than that? Did they say, for  
4 example, that in case of emergency we will tell you where to go?  
5 Did they say you will hear an alarm, like -- something like that?  
6 Could you describe how they talked about something other than just  
7 life jackets?

8 A. I really only remember the life jacket discussion. I don't  
9 remember them -- I mean, I could speculate and like maybe -- no,  
10 not even do that, but I think it's kind of just engrained in me  
11 that if an emergency happens, the staff will tell me where to go,  
12 but I don't really remember them saying that nor anything about an  
13 alarm.

14 Q. Shifting to the emergency, did you hear any alarms, and even  
15 subtle ones like buzzers or sort of a ringing of a bell or  
16 anything like that during the time the emergency started?

17 A. No. The only reason I even knew to go up to the upper deck  
18 was because the DJ said so. And, I mean, I wasn't like one of the  
19 last people to leave, but nobody was really like forcing us to  
20 leave if that makes sense. I mean, I was sitting there for  
21 probably 30, 40 second waiting on my wife, so, again, I -- the way  
22 it was presented to me was almost like they just wanted all the  
23 kids together to like do some fun on the excursion or something.

24 Q. So once the, you know, once the emergency started, did you  
25 see anyone on board the vessel which you described as staff get



1 out or use any firefighting equipment, like fire extinguishers or  
2 run out a fire hose or anything like that?

3 A. No. I mean, we were all on the top deck for, you know, the  
4 majority of it. I know the fire was -- I'm pretty sure it was on  
5 the bottom, one of the bottom decks, so we were, you know, at  
6 least a level away from it, but, no, I didn't see anybody.

7 Q. And I think you said in you recounting that it wasn't until  
8 your reached the upper open deck where some of the passengers had  
9 clustered under the awning before you saw or smelled smoke?

10 A. Before I saw smoke. As we were walking up the steps I could  
11 smell some rubber or plastic burning, but I couldn't tell what it  
12 was. It -- since there was cooking on board, I almost thought it  
13 was like one of the chefs ended up burning something, you know. I  
14 didn't think it was anything major, did not think that I had  
15 anything to do with while we were going upstairs, although the  
16 higher we got, the stronger the smell got, you know, because we  
17 were getting to the open deck area, but, yes, there was only smoke  
18 once we got onto the deck, but the smell happened as we were  
19 climbing the stairs.

20 Q. And when you ventured over and looked over the rail and you  
21 saw flames, you described it as flames and black smoke.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. Can you describe like the intensity of the flames? Were  
24 there like just occasional tongues of flame or was there a  
25 constant flame? Can you describe the flame as descriptively as

1 possible?

2 A. So it was -- it looked like it was coming out of a single  
3 window. It was pretty much a constant flame, and it almost  
4 reminded me of like when you see racing accidents and there's like  
5 the car's on fire, but it was constant flames, there was no  
6 flickering or anything. The only thing that was really flickering  
7 might have been the amount of smoke that came out, and it was  
8 pretty much like the solid black smoke coming out, so, I mean,  
9 that was kind of all I could see. The smoke was predominantly  
10 everywhere and, you know, I didn't want to -- I didn't want to  
11 spend too much time away from my kids, but --

12 Q. So while you were on the upper deck, did you happen to notice  
13 a large ocean going ship approaching your position?

14 A. A large ship? No. I saw a couple tug boat, you know, like a  
15 couple smaller boats that looked like they were just -- they ended  
16 up coming to provide water is all it was really.

17 Q. And once you -- once -- and I'm almost to the end of my  
18 questions. I just have one or two more. Once you got the life  
19 jackets out, how difficult was it for you to put the life jackets  
20 on for you, and then I'd like you to talk about how difficult or  
21 easy it was to put the life jackets on your -- did you have one  
22 child or it sounds like you had more?

23 A. I had two. I had an 11-year-old and a 4-year-old.

24 Q. Okay. How about you putting on your life jacket?

25 A. Well, I put mine on last, so I did that after I already knew

1 how to put it on, so it was pretty easy for me, but it was kind of  
2 confusing to put on my child simply because I didn't know like  
3 where the strap went or really how to tighten it. It was  
4 different than most life jacket's I'm used to, so -- but the --  
5 once the staff -- once one of the waiters, waitresses near us had  
6 hers on, she started helping us, showing us how to do it and stuff  
7 like that, and it was pretty easy at that point.

8 Q. Was the life jacket you put on your child, your youngest,  
9 your 4-year-old, was that a child life jacket or was that the same  
10 size as yours?

11 A. It was a child's one.

12 Q. And did they give it to you, the crew or did you take it out  
13 of like a storage area?

14 A. The crew gave it to us.

15 Q. My final question is, you know, we would ask you to do that  
16 diagram at some point and send it to us electronically, but did  
17 you take any cellphone videos or stills that you might have?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. I'd like to get those sent to that *Spirit of Norfolk*.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. I mean, we'll talk about that transparently with the people  
22 on this phone call and you can send them to that email address and  
23 we just -- we're looking for any images that would show the fire,  
24 the evacuation, the routine crew's photos that may even hint at  
25 showing smoke or anything like that would be very helpful, but the

1 casual photos of your family on the cruise unless they illustrate  
2 something that we might have talked about, we're not interested in  
3 those, so that's the end of the questions I have at the moment.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Karr from the NTSB, if you'll follow,  
5 please.

6 BY MR. KARR:

7 Q. This is Mike Karr with the NTSB. Mr. Martin, I have a few  
8 questions following up on what Mr. [REDACTED] asked you. Did you  
9 note any unusual sounds before the DJ asked everyone to go to the  
10 upper deck?

11 A. No, I will say I was predominantly around kids, and, you  
12 know, kids -- younger kids so they were being kind of loud, but,  
13 no, I did not hear any unusual sounds.

14 Q. Any other -- any unusual sounds after the DJ told you to go  
15 to the upper deck between then and when you left the *Spirit of*  
16 *Norfolk*?

17 A. No, nothing that I can recall, no.

18 Q. And what school were -- was your -- were your children  
19 associated with that had you on the *Spirit of Norfolk* that day?

20 A. B.C. Charles in Newport News.

21 Q. When you left the vessel, did you say that the gap had  
22 closed?

23 A. Yes. Yeah, it was only a handful of people had transferred  
24 before I'm assuming the tug boat pushed the two ships together  
25 because the -- one of the crew from the other ship was trying to

1 pull a rope. I'm assuming that would have -- whatever it was was  
2 holding the two ships together, but that didn't seem to work, but,  
3 yeah, it was pretty quickly because we were maybe the third,  
4 fourth family that got off, so we were pretty -- we were one of  
5 the first people that got off, so they closed that gap pretty  
6 quickly.

7 Q. So some people crossed the gap to get off the boat.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And --

10 A. Like I said, it was a gap that was, you know, pretty easy to  
11 traverse as an adult, but, you know, it was -- but when it came to  
12 handing my kid over, I was very uncomfortable with it.

13 Q. Yeah. Can you estimate the width?

14 A. The width? I mean, if we're talking about solely between the  
15 ships maybe like two feet at most.

16 Q. All right. Thank you.

17 A. Um-hum.

18 Q. Once you got off the *Victory Rover* at the park, can you  
19 describe the process, people you talked to from the time you left  
20 the ship until you left the park area?

21 A. I think when we got off someone, I can't remember who it was,  
22 I think it was someone from the Coast Guard, was handing out  
23 little pieces of paper just to get our contact information which  
24 I'm assuming is how you guys got mine, and some of the people were  
25 filling out the forms, some weren't. I mean, I just went over and

1 filled it out with one of the other fathers. I mean, that was  
2 about it. We didn't really talk to many of the other people. We  
3 were kind of just wanting to get our kids and get out of there. A  
4 news crew approached us for an interview, but, you know, we just  
5 wanted to leave, so we left. But there wasn't much really  
6 interaction between us and anyone else.

7 Q. Did anyone at the park --

8 A. But let me -- go ahead, I'm sorry.

9 Q. Did anyone at the park take your name or account for you like  
10 taking roll?

11 A. No. No, so once we got off the ship, that was it. Yeah, I  
12 don't remember anyone going around counting or anything like that.

13 Q. All right.

14 A. The only person I interacted with was the Coast Guard lady  
15 who gave me the piece of paper and I handed it back to her.

16 Q. When you were on the *Victory Rover*, did your school  
17 coordinator make sure that -- did you speak to the school  
18 coordinator and did she -- or did he or she make sure that all the  
19 people that your school brought were accounted for?

20 A. Yes. Yeah, we had multiple parents that kind of organized  
21 this whole thing, and they were all checking and making sure that  
22 everyone got on board.

23 Q. And how did they -- can you just briefly describe how they  
24 did that?

25 A. I mean, for me they came up and asked me or conversed with

1 me. I guess they weren't directly asking me, but they saw all the  
2 kids. The kids that didn't have parents, they were making sure  
3 that those kids were on there. I mean, most of these -- the two  
4 people that I can think of that were from B.C. Charles knew most  
5 of the kids, you know, so they could kind of just look around and  
6 tell that the kids were there. It wasn't like a -- at least I  
7 didn't see anyone with a piece of paper like marking off to make  
8 sure physically everyone was there. But I did think, I do think  
9 that they did have a count, so, I mean, they could have made sure  
10 their count was ready.

11 Q. Did you have any other personal interaction with crew members  
12 -- this was after the emergency occurred. Did you have any other  
13 personal interaction with crew members other than when they  
14 assisted you with the life jackets?

15 A. Yeah. So we were all kind of huddled in the entrance where  
16 the ship was. There wasn't a lot of seating, so most of the kids  
17 were sitting down, but I was talking to the DJ and a couple of the  
18 waitresses, but it was more of a can you believe what happened  
19 kind of conversation, and that was about it. It wasn't anything  
20 like formal or anything.

21 Q. You mentioned you were familiar with life jackets. Just  
22 briefly describe your familiarity. Are you a boater?

23 A. Not really. I've been on a couple of boats, but I've just  
24 been around life jackets for my kids in swimming pools, but, I  
25 mean, that's no -- it's like those little, just a vest that clip

1 in the front. Oh, oh, from my water parks and such. When you  
2 take your kids to water parks, they make you wear these vests.  
3 There's just a couple buckles in the front and then a strap that  
4 goes underneath their legs. Those are the only real life jackets  
5 that I've been acquainted with.

6 Q. And last question, is -- when you looked at the fire, what  
7 color was the flame?

8 A. It was an orange.

9 Q. All right.

10 A. Bright orange.

11 Q. Thank you, Mr. Martin.

12 MR. KARR: That's all I have, Mr. [REDACTED]

13 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you, sir. Now we'll go to Ms. Galitou  
14 with Phelps Dunbar for Captain Neto if you have any questions,  
15 ma'am.

16 MS. GALITOU: No questions, sir. Thank you.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you. Mr. Abel for Bay Diesel?

18 MR. ABEL: Yes, I have no questions. Thank you for your  
19 cooperation, sir.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Mr. Denley with Hornblower?

21 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, thank you.

22 BY MR. DENLEY:

23 Q. I do have a couple of questions, and I'd just like to start  
24 by, you know, thanking you for participating and just passing  
25 along how sorry we are that you had this experience on board the



1 *Spirit of Norfolk*. The -- I think you described to Mr. Karr when  
2 he was asking you the gap between the *Spirit of Norfolk* and the  
3 *Victory Rover* I guess before the gap was closed, you said it -- I  
4 think I wrote down it was two feet at most. Can you say what the  
5 gap was after they closed it? Do you have an estimate?

6 A. It was something like -- I mean, you couldn't really put your  
7 foot in between the ships, so it was much tighter.

8 Q. Okay. So just to be clear, the gap was close enough so that  
9 you couldn't put your foot in between it?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. I'm sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.

12 A. Oh, no, I was just reiterating that it was maybe about a  
13 couple inches at most.

14 Q. When you -- kind of going back when you went up from the -- I  
15 guess the main deck up to the outside deck where the smoke was,  
16 could you maybe estimate like how long it was between when you got  
17 up there and when the crew started to take you down to the below  
18 decks when they went to check to see if there was some on the  
19 lower decks?

20 A. I mean, it wasn't a short time. Okay. Well, my wife is  
21 telling me that she has time stamped images from all of it, so we  
22 could go back and look to see actually how long it was, but --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- it wasn't a long time, but it wasn't a short time either.  
25 Like I had time enough to make sure my kids were okay, make sure

1 that one of my friends and his kid were okay, walk over, look at  
2 the fire, walk around a bunch of people looking at the fire again,  
3 talk to a father, go on the other side of the boat and then walk  
4 back, so, I mean, I at least did a full -- I mean, I'm not saying  
5 the ship's big, like it wouldn't take that long, but I at least  
6 walked around the entire upper deck at least once and we still had  
7 a, you know, good 5, 10 minutes kind of just standing there  
8 waiting. But we can get a more -- a clearer, or like an actual  
9 number for you when we go back and look at images and send them --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- to you guys.

12 Q. Thank you. Once you went down below deck, once you got off  
13 that open deck, was there smoke down in the lower decks, and was  
14 there smoke in the area that you were kind of waiting to get  
15 across to the other vessel?

16 A. No. Not that I -- no. I mean, if there was, it was nothing  
17 that I could even breathe in, so, but, no, I don't recall  
18 anything.

19 Q. Okay. Were you or was anybody injured? Were you or your  
20 family injured at all when you went from one vessel to the other?

21 A. No. No, the only thing was, you know, everybody got soaked,  
22 but --

23 Q. And why did they get soaked?

24 A. It was mostly the tug boats for -- or I don't know if they're  
25 tug boats. They're smaller boats that have like two people on

1 them that were spraying water. Several of them were spraying  
2 water from different areas, and the wind was just carrying the  
3 water. That was pretty much why.

4 Q. Did -- are you aware of anybody that was there, anybody that  
5 was part of your group, were you aware of anybody in that group  
6 that was injured as a part of this process?

7 A. No, I am not.

8 Q. And how about -- you and your family, I know that you -- you  
9 know, the smoke was thick up on the top. Any issues since this  
10 incident with the smoke?

11 A. No, not that I could definitively say. No.

12 Q. Okay. And then kind of going back, as you were kind of  
13 waiting, you know, you went to the third deck or the open deck,  
14 and then you went back down, could you generally describe the  
15 scene? Was there panic? Maybe just kind of describe the scene  
16 from your perspective.

17 A. We were in the -- like the -- yeah, the doorway, the doorway  
18 at the bottom of the steps. There was a lot of people there, so I  
19 mean we were pretty crowded, like side-by-side. Nobody was really  
20 like panicking per se, and most of the crew was focused on getting  
21 life jackets to the people that were there. I didn't see how they  
22 were getting life jackets to everyone else, but the like 10 or 12  
23 people that were in that little doorway, they were focused on  
24 getting them life jackets, but I couldn't see any panic.

25 Q. If --

1 A. I mean, other than, you know, we're in an emergency, that  
2 kind of --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- situation.

5 Q. Yeah, right. I mean, given the -- kind of given the  
6 situation like you said, I mean, given the fact that it was an  
7 emergency situation and understanding that you can only speak to  
8 what you saw, did you feel like the crew members that were around  
9 you were attentive to you and your family?

10 A. Yeah. Yeah, the lady that ended up helping us put the life  
11 jacket on, I never formally asked her for help. She could just  
12 tell that I was having trouble putting the life jacket on and told  
13 me how.

14 Q. Well, thank you.

15 MR. DENLEY: I don't have any more questions.

16 BY MR. [REDACTED]

17 Q. You know, the subject came up -- is Mr. [REDACTED] with the  
18 Coast Guard -- about your wife sitting there with you. I would  
19 say that if she thinks that she has substantially additional  
20 information or something different than what you said, if she  
21 could just send us an email and we'll think about whether or not  
22 to conducted another interview. If that works for you, Mr. and  
23 Mrs. Martin?

24 A. She's sitting here shaking her head saying that she has a lot  
25 more details, so --

1 Q. Okay. Well, that would be helpful. I think with your  
2 permission we'll schedule an interview with her. But if you could  
3 send -- yeah, if you could send the photographs to the email  
4 address that I sent you, spiritofnorfolk@uscg.mil with the  
5 diagram.

6 And in closing, Mr. Martin, you know, you went through a  
7 significant event, and you've had some time to think about it, and  
8 I'd like to give you the opportunity to share with us like based  
9 on your experience what could be done better to help people in the  
10 same situation? If you want to share thoughts, that's great. If  
11 not, I understand.

12 A. I mean, at least -- well, we were kind of left in the dark a  
13 little bit about what was happening. It wasn't really until I  
14 went and investigated that I could tell that there was a fire. So  
15 I mean it would kind of -- you know, it would be nice to know that  
16 like there's a fire, we're trying to evacuate onto a different  
17 boat. Like no one really said these things. It was kind of like  
18 a crew member might have said it to someone else, and then somehow  
19 it got all relayed. Like it was like the telephone game. There  
20 wasn't like someone on a PA saying, you know, there's a fire,  
21 another ship is coming to evacuate us. It was, I don't know, it  
22 was kind of just like follow the herd kind of thing and we  
23 eventually got off. So definitely more clearer communication. I  
24 mean, I understand at some points, you know, the crew themselves  
25 don't really know what's going on, but once they know, you know,

1 it'd be nice to tell it to everyone, but that's the biggest thing,  
2 I think.

3 Q. All right.

4 MR. [REDACTED] So in closing, we're going to get some  
5 photographs when you can, and we're going to get the marked up  
6 diagram. And, then, Mrs. Martin, if you'll just put some comments  
7 down, we will consider an additional interview. Your interview  
8 today was very helpful and does anybody else have anything to add  
9 before we close the interview with Mr. Martin?

10 MR. KARR: Mr. [REDACTED] I'd like to ask one more question.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

12 MR. KARR: Mike Karr with the NTSB.

13 BY MR. KARR:

14 Q. Mr. Martin, when you were waiting to evacuate to the  
15 *Victory Rover*, was the side door closed? What I'm -- was it open?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Was there a gate? Was there a line?

18 A. No, there was nothing. It was just completely open.

19 Q. And how -- can you describe how the crew was keeping people  
20 from, you know, going outside the vessel or falling overboard  
21 before the *Victory Rover* arrived?

22 A. I don't remember the crew doing anything. It was kind of  
23 more just, you know, people's common sense not to go near the  
24 edge.

25 Q. All right.

1 A. It wasn't like -- no one told us not to go near the edge.

2 Yeah, it was just open.

3 Q. Thank you.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Any very brief follow ups? All right. Thank  
5 you very much, Mr. and Mrs. Martin. Thank you for everybody on  
6 the call. The time is 5:02 p.m. Eastern Standard Time, and we are  
7 turning off the tape recorders and ending the interview with Mr.  
8 Christian Martin. Thank you again, sir.

9 MR. MARTIN: Yup, thank you.

10 (Whereupon, at 5:02 p.m. EST, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

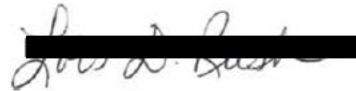
IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ONBOARD *SPIRIT OF NORFOLK*  
NEAR NORFOLK NAVAL STATION,  
VIRGINIA ON JUNE 8, 2022  
Interview of Christian Martin

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM022

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams videoconference

DATE: July 14, 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.



---

Lois D. Rush  
Transcriber