

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SINKING OF THE SEACOR MARINE  
LB *ROBERT* NEAR LAKE CHARLES,  
LOUISIANA, ON NOVEMBER 20, 2022

Accident No.: DCA23FM007

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Interview of: COREY BOUTTE, Chief Mate  
Lift Boat *Robert*

Marine Safety Unit  
Houma, Louisiana

Wednesday,  
November 30, 2022

APPEARANCES:

BART BARNUM, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

CHARLES ARNOLD, Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

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

MICHAEL CENEC, Designated Person Ashore  
Seacor Marine

PETER TOMPKINS, ESQ., Outside Counsel  
Seacor Marine

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:53 a.m.)

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2  
3 MR. ARNOLD: Today is Wednesday, November 30th, 9:53 a.m.  
4 We're starting the interview with Chief Mate of the lift boat  
5 *Robert*, Mr. Corey Boutte.

6 My name is Charles Arnold. I'm a civilian marine  
7 investigator with Coast Guard. We're looking into the incident  
8 that occurred on the lift boat *Robert*, on or around November 20th  
9 of this year, 2022.

10 And we're doing an interview to get your insight on certain  
11 questions about the incident.

12 Focus of the investigation is to find out what happened and  
13 prevent it from happening -- hoping to put out some  
14 recommendations to prevent it from happening again.

15 Again, like I mentioned before I started, ask you -- we will  
16 be recording today just so we can better understand what you're  
17 saying and we don't misquote you. Things of that nature.

18 So, we'll go around the room for the interview.

19 Again, my name is Charles Arnold. I'm with the Coast Guard.

20 MR. TOMPKINS: I'm Peter Tompkins. Outside counsel for  
21 Seacor Marine.

22 MR. BARNUM: Morning. Bart Barnum, NTSB. Office marine  
23 safety.

24 MR. CENEC: Michael Cenec, Seacor Marine, DPA.

25 CWO [REDACTED] Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm with

1 the investigations here in the systems room.

2 MR. ARNOLD: So, again, what you say is important. I'm going  
3 to write stuff down as well just to get some key points. So, I am  
4 paying -- my attention is on you this morning.

5 MR. BOUTTE: Yes, sir.

6 MR. ARNOLD: But, just to let you know that I will be, at  
7 times, writing stuff down. It's not to take away from what you're  
8 saying, it's just so I can jot down these points.

9 If you have any questions, anything, the way it's going to go  
10 from here is I'm going to start asking questions. Mr. Burton --  
11 sorry, with some questions as well. And then we'll go around, if  
12 anybody's got any follow up, things of that nature.

13 Do you have any questions?

14 MR. BOUTTE: No, sir.

15 MR. ARNOLD: I think Mr. Bart mentioned that there will be  
16 transcripts of the recording coming out later on.

17 MR. BARNUM: Yes, sir. This recording will be turned into a  
18 transcript and will be provided to yourself and the company. And  
19 you get a chance to review it and make any changes that are  
20 accurate, and we'll make the corrections.

21 MR. ARNOLD: All right. So, with the recordings, any  
22 questions would be yes or no. It won't give us any head nods or  
23 anything like that.

24 Also, want you to give your best answer. If you don't know,  
25 you don't know. You don't want to guess or things like that.

1 Just give your best response. Again, if you don't know, you don't  
2 know.

3 INTERVIEW OF COREY BOUTTE

4 BY MR. ARNOLD:

5 Q. So, we'll start off with your name and your position and your  
6 background.

7 A. Okay. My name is Corey Boutte. I'm the Chief Mate on the  
8 lift boat *Robert*. I've been in the current position as chief mate  
9 on the *Robert* for five months. Been a captain, previous, since  
10 '96 until five months ago. On the lift boats the whole time.

11 Q. Whole time?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. So, about how many years working on vessels, on boats?

14 A. That would be, roughly, 28 years.

15 Q. And, where were you before the *Robert*?

16 A. I was running the lift boat *Caitlin*.

17 Q. So you were a captain on the *Caitlin*?

18 A. Yeah. On the *Caitlin*, yes, sir. Roger. It being sacked.

19 Q. And how long were you on the *Caitlin*?

20 A. Two years.

21 Q. What's the size?

22 A. 235.

23 Q. 235. And the *Robert* is?

24 A. 335.

25 Q. So, what kind of licenses do you hold?

- 1 A. A 1600 intercoastal. Masters.
- 2 Q. And that's the only licensing restriction or anything?
- 3 A. Yes, sir.
- 4 Q. Okay. So, you're the chief mate on the *Robert*, so we'll go  
5 back to this incident here, South Marsh 137. Prior to November  
6 18th when everyone left, how long were you on --
- 7 A. I came onboard November 2nd. The vessel was on location.  
8 Which was on a Wednesday and we work 21 and 21. That's whenever  
9 my hitch started.
- 10 Q. Had you been on previously at the same location?
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. When did you work previously at that location?
- 13 A. The hitch before the last hitch. Yes.
- 14 Q. Around October timeframe? September? Do you remember?
- 15 A. October. Yes. Well, we, Burnell and I were the crew that  
16 put the vessel on location.
- 17 Q. So, when y'all work in a crew area, do y'all shift at the  
18 same time? Meaning, y'all leave and come on location at the same  
19 as one crew?
- 20 A. Yes. We're -- we have our same crew and we relieve each  
21 other every 21 days.
- 22 Q. And what's the crew size on the -- for the boat crew?
- 23 A. For the boat crew, plus our third party, is 22.
- 24 Q. Third party is?
- 25 A. Is your BR hands, your galley hands, your cooks. It's we're

1 a total of around 22. Yes, sir.

2 Q. So, you got there on the 2nd. What's your normal operations  
3 when you come onboard?

4 A. When I come onboard, chances are it's in the morning. So, we  
5 do our turnover with my relief. And we all sit in an office room  
6 together. You've got the two captains, two mates, and we all sit  
7 down and we pretty much talk about things that transpired while we  
8 were home with the crew that were onboard. And anything we need  
9 to know. And then once we're finished, obviously, the crew boat's  
10 waiting for them down below. It usually takes an hour and 15  
11 minutes, hour and 30 minutes, you know, no rush. And, then I go  
12 to bed because I have to get up at 1800. My hitch, hitch time  
13 starts at 1800 and Burnell just takes over the captain.

14 Q. That 1800 hitch, is that because -- is that normal?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Or, because of 24 hour operations?

17 A. Right. It's I mean, it's normal.

18 Q. Normal.

19 A. It's normal. We have a -- I'll hold a 12 hour watch, which  
20 is from 1800 to 0600 in the morning.

21 Q. Okay. Any red flags or any issues that came up during the  
22 transfer? Y'all do transfer notes?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Things like that?

25 A. Yes. The captains do relief, do a turnover, turnover notes.



1 Handovers.

2 Q. Y'all said y'all came out by lift boat.

3 A. We came out by crew boat.

4 Q. Crew boat, I'm sorry. Not a lift boat. Any red flags in the  
5 transfer?

6 A. No. None that I know of. It was a basic, you know, a  
7 general crew change. I mean, there was no, nothing talked about.  
8 No major issues with the vessel.

9 Q. So, y'all were on the South Marsh 137. Y'all had a client --  
10 do y'all call them a client, crew?

11 A. Yes. It's a client.

12 Q. Client, crew --

13 A. Contractors.

14 Q. -- they're contractors on location to do decommissioning work  
15 on the 137?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Was work going okay when you got on there? When you started  
18 that night, everything was going okay?

19 A. Yeah. Everything was fine. We had periods where the swells  
20 were rocking the vessel, and then we get to where we can't conduct  
21 crane operations safely, so they'll call it. It's unsafe to lift  
22 the cranes or what have you, and you know, we pretty much, we  
23 discontinue crane operations.

24 Q. So they were doing 24 hour operations as well?

25 A. They always, yes.

1 Q. So, when you came on, y'all did safety meeting?

2 A. Yes. Safety meeting's always at 0600 and 1800. I attend the  
3 1800 one.

4 Q. You talk about what's going on for that hitch? That shift?

5 A. That shift. Yes, sir. And a company man usually starts off  
6 the safety meeting. Then he's going to turn it over to the P&A  
7 supervisor. It all depends what company rep. He then, then  
8 they'll turn it over to the safety guy, which is like an Acadian,  
9 ASSati (ph.), they generally represent on the safety side. Which,  
10 they have two guys, one in the daytime and one in the nighttime.  
11 And a company man in the daytime and the -- it's a full crew for  
12 day and night.

13 Q. So, you mentioned something about the weather and the swells.  
14 Did y'all stop crane operations due to the swells, or the wind?

15 A. It all depends. It all depends. If you know, the vessel's  
16 swaying. It all depends.

17 Q. How was the weather out there when -- on your time. From the  
18 2nd to the --

19 A. It was pretty windy. It wasn't -- It was windy. It's like  
20 the winds were out of the northeast, and it stayed pretty much 15  
21 to 20.

22 Q. Fifteen --

23 A. Which is fine. It all depends on how the seas hits us. What  
24 angle the swells hit us. But, pretty much everything's fine and I  
25 mean it takes a pretty good ground swell to rock the vessel.

1 Q. And when you say 15 - 20, do you mean wind or do you mean  
2 seas?

3 A. No, 15 to 20 knot winds.

4 Q. I'm going to ask you the questions like I don't know anything  
5 at all.

6 A. Got you.

7 Q. So, and that's why -- not to -- So, weather was 15 to 20, and  
8 do you monitor the weather reports?

9 A. We sure do.

10 Q. Any issues with the weather reports that you monitored --

11 A. No.

12 Q. -- from the 2nd to the time you left?

13 A. Well, everything was fine. I mean, you had your casual --  
14 you're going to get a front pretty much every week. Every five to  
15 seven days you're going to have a front and that's just your  
16 front. So, what you want to be watching, whenever they hit, you  
17 know, to make sure you're not in the middle of some type of  
18 operations that where the crane is hooked up. You know, whenever  
19 the winds pick up.

20 And they generally pick up, and then, you know, as the  
21 front's passing through, it'll lay back down. You know, given the  
22 time of the year.

23 Q. So, what is your job description as the first mate? What are  
24 your duties?

25 A. So, my duties are, it's to -- I oversee the vessel operations

1 from 1800 to 0600 at night. I mainly do bridge watch. Stay up I  
2 the bridge and, you know, I am there to support two crane  
3 operators that are working on deck. Any issues we have in the  
4 galley. I basically, I'm handling everything that the captain  
5 normally does, in his absence.

6 Q. Okay. So, I was only able to print out one picture that was  
7 after. But, this is one of the current pictures after they  
8 were -- it listed and they were able to get it kind of level.

9 So, when y'all would jack up to the platform. I kind of call  
10 this area here the well deck, because this is where the wells are  
11 and I call this -- the top one -- the production deck.

12 A. Um-hmm.

13 Q. Where, you know, open area. You've got some trees I guess.  
14 Where would y'all jack up to on the platform to do work?

15 A. To do work --

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. -- would be the production deck.

18 Q. The top deck?

19 A. The top deck. Yes, sir.

20 Q. What cranes were y'all using?

21 A. We mainly use the big crane which is on the port side. The  
22 one with the gantry. That's our main crane.

23 Q. Still on the last hitch on November 2nd. So, the weather  
24 reports start coming in. Was there any time that y'all were  
25 waiting on weather or, issues, right after you got there?

1 A. There was front a few days where it was too rough for us to  
2 work. I'm sure there was a few days in there. I have to go back  
3 into the logs. Just off of memory. I'm sure there was a few days  
4 where we shut it down.

5 Q. And what does that consist of? Dropping the crane? Jacking  
6 down?

7 A. Yeah. Well, we pull in the gangway. Pull in the gangway.  
8 Lower the vessel to right below -- right above the sea height.  
9 The current sea height. And just wait it out. Wait until the  
10 seas calm down.

11 Q. So the bad weather comes. You get a forecast in and you  
12 start to process -- or, I say you -- at what time did you, were  
13 made aware, hey, there's weather coming in, we need to start  
14 batten down the hatches? Or, we need to start doing something  
15 to --

16 A. You talking about the last weather incident?

17 Q. Yes. Yes.

18 A. That happened sometime Thursday. Thursday, it was right  
19 around Thursday where I went to bed around Thursday morning.  
20 Yeah. Thursday morning I went to bed and I knew he, Burnell had a  
21 call with our operations. You know, that, to see what we were  
22 going to do. And when I woke up Thursday evening to come on my  
23 watch, that's when everyone was going. I say everyone, 33 people  
24 left the vessel, non-essential. And, so he gave me the rundown on  
25 what to do that evening. What to secure and batten down for and

1 we were flying out mid-day Friday. So that's what we done.

2 Q. So, on your shift -- I'll call it a shift -- six then on  
3 Wednesday night, were they still doing well work? Was work still  
4 being performed on location?

5 A. Not sure. I want to say yes, but I'm not sure. I'd have to  
6 go back into the logs and look. I think they were, but I'm not  
7 sure.

8 Q. So, they're still doing, possibly doing work on the night  
9 before. You go to sleep. You wake up and some people are gone.  
10 So, what happens on your Thursday night shift?

11 A. So, I come on Thursday night and we have our little meeting  
12 with my crew, because the contractors were alerting on. So, I  
13 have my meeting with my guys and just kind of -- what we usually  
14 do is, when I come on tower, prior to coming on tower, I get with  
15 Burnell and the captain and we will go through everything, just  
16 him and I on the turnover notes. Then, I have a meeting at 06 --  
17 at 1800 with the two crane operators, the engineer. We sit down  
18 and we talk about, you know, what they're going to do. What's all  
19 going to transpire that night. And, so, our orders were to secure  
20 the vessel and pull chain. They had started. They pulled the  
21 chains and everything to secure the equipment on deck. They had  
22 already shifted the equipment around. They had already shifted  
23 fuel and water and it was already in place. They did that during  
24 the day.

25 And so we finish, basically binding down equipment and making

1 sure that the doors that we were not going in and out of, AB  
2 locker, just things that seal to room. Just the rooms that we  
3 weren't going to be going in that morning, to Friday morning. To  
4 secure them, making sure they were all batten down.

5 Q. How about any hatches on deck? Anything that needed to be --  
6 anything on deck that needed to be closed up? You know, you  
7 mentioned equipment. Anything on deck that, other than the  
8 equipment, needed to be done?

9 A. No. We moved everything. We made sure all of the equipment  
10 was secure. We made sure things couldn't fly overboard. We  
11 pulled in the lifebuoys. The ring buoys. I mean, we -- it wasn't  
12 a rush. So we had the time. It wasn't like we were, we had five  
13 minutes to get off of the vessel. We had the time to keep going  
14 around. Keep going around to secure everything. And that's what  
15 we did.

16 Q. Kind of like check and double check?

17 A. We triple checked.

18 Q. Was there any discussion about why were you closing  
19 everything, locking everything down?

20 A. You mean with my guys?

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. They already, everyone knew, you know, that we were leaving  
23 the vessel due to the upcoming weather. So there was no --

24 Q. And then at 6:00, did you go in? Or, did you stay up with  
25 the day crew --

1 A. Friday morning?

2 Q. Friday morning, yeah.

3 A. Friday morning I laid down. I did lay down probably for  
4 about three hours, three hours, and then I got up around 10:30.  
5 And we were off the vessel, I think the first helicopter landed  
6 around 11:00, 11:15.

7 Q. So, have you ever evacuated a vessel before?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Is this the first time?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. What are the procedures knowing that you are going to leave  
12 the vessel? Or, are there any procedures?

13 A. For this particular situation it was, we, to my  
14 understanding, given the forecast of the sea height, we jacked it  
15 down, you know, to that certain safe spot. Given the forecast.  
16 And racking the cranes. Making sure everything's secure. You  
17 know, we knew if she were to go down, if, you know, God forbid,  
18 she were to go down, we knew that she would go down possibly on  
19 the port side, given that everything was -- all the seas and the  
20 winds were coming out of the north, northeast -- east, northeast  
21 is going to be hitting her on the starboard side. So, that's why  
22 the arrangements were made to possibly run everything, the  
23 generator and fuel and all of that stuff on the starboard side.

24 Q. What all you running? Or active?

25 A. The generator.



1 Q. The generator. And that was for, so y'all could leave some  
2 safety systems on while y'all left?

3 A. Yes. That powers the vessel.

4 Q. You need -- did you leave any lights on, or, any beacons or  
5 anything?

6 A. No. Yeah, the deck lights. I mean, all the lights. I mean  
7 we basically just closed the doors and left her lit up.

8 Q. Did the platform have any lights?

9 A. No. The platforms, they don't have any lights.

10 Q. They're dead.

11 A. Well, they have your nav lights on the corners, you know,  
12 that's it. But, they have power packs that we put up there with  
13 little generators that -- while the guys are working at night to  
14 illuminate.

15 Q. When y'all leave on Friday, did you go home? Did they  
16 station you somewhere to, with the intent of coming back?

17 A. Yeah. I landed in Abbeville, which I'm from. So, I just  
18 went straight home. Five minutes from my house. And the next  
19 morning I reported back to Morgan City on a vessel that's behind  
20 the office.

21 Q. Did y'all have an intent to go back on location? Do you know  
22 when --

23 A. My hitch was until that Wednesday and I'm available for the  
24 company, yes.

25 Q. Was there any communication to the crew about the weather

1 coming in and how was that communication put out to the crew, that  
2 we've got bad weather coming in and this is what's happening?

3 A. Well, it was discussed with Burnell and I during the week.  
4 Just kind of watching, monitoring weather. Monitoring upcoming  
5 weather. And we usually go through, I usually go through that  
6 with my 1800 meeting in the afternoons. Just general, because I  
7 like to let my crane operators know if we've got weather coming,  
8 you know, that way if anything happens, we can rack the cranes and  
9 so forth.

10 Q. The crane operators are from November 2nd to the 18th when  
11 y'all left, was there any stability issues? Any alarms? Any  
12 concerns other than rocking that you mentioned earlier?

13 A. Well, when the vessel sways, you'll get, if you catch a  
14 pretty good little ground swell, you'll get the tilt alarm to go  
15 off. I'm up there. I monitor, you know, the tilt alarm and if  
16 she starts swaying a bit too much, then that's when we make the  
17 decision to pull in the gangway and come on down.

18 Q. Is there any movement you have to do? Any ballast tanks you  
19 have to --

20 A. There, no ballast.

21 Q. -- release? Any moving the legs?

22 A. No. No. It's just, you know, you'll get that ground swell,  
23 you know, it just moves the vessel, hits the legs.

24 Q. Just enough to move your feet a little bit.

25 A. Right. It just hits the legs and it causes the vessel just

1 to shake a little bit and that's it. And, you know, she doesn't  
2 list or anything like that. There's no settling or anything.  
3 That's all done pre-load.

4 Q. So, taking it back from this last hitch. The first hitch.  
5 When you originally got out there and you said that y'all jacked  
6 down, were you on tower, on shift when y'all jacked down? Or were  
7 you in --

8 A. Last hitch? Yes. I jacked it down, yes.

9 Q. Any issues there?

10 A. Not at all. Just made the decision to jack it down. And  
11 jacked it down and, you know, Burnell got up. Obviously he can  
12 see right whenever he gets up and it's in my notes. You know, he  
13 said, you jacked down? I told him, I said I jacked down. He  
14 said, yeah, I understand. And he said good.

15 Q. Did y'all have to move location or anything when y'all  
16 jacked?

17 A. No. No. It's just basically coming down. You just come  
18 down to a safe, just right above the wave height.

19 Q. No. What I mean is, like, when you first got out there, per  
20 the plan. Did y'all, were set down in one location, have to move  
21 to a different location?

22 A. Oh. This time? No. No. The vessel had been on location  
23 for a couple of months.

24 Q. Are there any manuals you follow or any checklists for  
25 jacking up, jacking down?

1 A. Moving locations?

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. Yes. We've got a quite a bit of paperwork to do if we move  
4 the vessel, yes.

5 Q. As far as just moving up and moving down, is that something  
6 that you just place in your log?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. In a new log, moved gangway, lowered vessel, and do you put  
9 the height?

10 A. No. I don't put the height or anything. That's just a -- I  
11 put it in my turnover to Burnell that I lowered the vessel.

12 Q. Was there any -- before that, were there any issues, on the  
13 two hitches you were there, were there any issues with weather?  
14 Any concerns of stop work that, hey, the weather's bad, we need  
15 to -- that you're aware of?

16 A. In last hitch and this hitch? Yes. I mean, we got -- due to  
17 the vessel's movement, you know, they'll call an all stop.

18 Q. So, on the last part though, when you get the word that okay,  
19 we've got weather coming in, we're evacuating, did you ask any  
20 questions?

21 A. No. On that one, that was a bit, the weather -- you know,  
22 seeing the seas and everything, the intensity of what was coming,  
23 yeah. That was a little bit of a -- our norm. Then you're six to  
24 eights, occasional tens, maybe, that's, you know, that's normal.

25 But this was a bit, a bit higher than that.

1 Q. In your experience with lift boats, you consider it a -- have  
2 you been in significant weather where you've had to leave location  
3 and leave the vessel on --

4 A. No. I've never left. I've always had -- was able to jack  
5 down and get into what we call a safer harbor. Shallower water.  
6 It's just this time you know, was, the winds were too much all  
7 week long. There wasn't much of a weather window, enough window  
8 to get out.

9 Q. Do y'all follow any type of tee time, when weather comes in?  
10 Is there something, a plan, that says when weather comes in you  
11 have -- y'all start documenting, we have this much time to lift  
12 legs and get to a safe --

13 A. Yeah. We had what's called a severe weather planning. We  
14 have one of those in Helm.

15 Q. And Helm means?

16 A. Helm is a program that we use. It's a, it's a program we use  
17 and that it's, it's sort of like cloud, Icloud in the office.  
18 Michael can get to it. Anyone from the office can chime in and  
19 receive all of our paperwork. We can do an internal audit just in  
20 Helm. I mean it's just, all our paperwork is in Helm in  
21 regarding.

22 Q. How did you find out that the incident occurred?

23 A. How did I find out?

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. The captain called me. Yeah. Burnell, Burnell's the one

1 that called me.

2 Q. Did you -- were you part of the response after the fact?

3 A. No, sir. No, sir. I was stationed on the, the name of boat,  
4 something like that, the *Keith Cowan*. And we had to monitor the  
5 vessel's location, it was every four hours I want to say. Just to  
6 keep track of the vessel on AIS.

7 Q. Were you aware of, when y'all started going out to  
8 location -- are you, as a mate, is it part of your job description  
9 to be aware of the location where you're going to and where you're  
10 going to be jacking down in situation -- situational awareness of  
11 the area?

12 A. As a mate, yes. I mean, you know, given my experience, I  
13 mean, if I was a captain and had a seasoned mate, I would, you  
14 know, you always up to taking any information that person has.  
15 You know, I mean, at the end of the day, the Master has the  
16 ultimate decision. Makes the ultimate decision. But, I would be,  
17 I would want some feedback or, you know, a second pair of eyes, in  
18 other words.

19 Q. Any issues that you saw while jacking up? Or, any  
20 concerns --

21 A. On this one? No.

22 Q. -- got out there?

23 A. This one, you know, we did our standard pre-load and you  
24 know, no. No. No, what can I say? She settled perfectly fine.  
25 Like she normally does. And jacked up everything. Everything

1 went according to plan.

2 Q. Okay.

3 MR. ARNOLD: I don't have any further questions right now.

4 Mr. Bart, do you have any?

5 MR. BARNUM: Yep. This is Bart Barnum with the NTSB.

6 BY MR. BARNUM:

7 Q. Chief mate, I do have some questions, are you  
8 good to go, do you need a break?

9 A. No. I'm good.

10 Q. All right. Talking about the vessel had, you guys had to  
11 stop work due to weather a couple of times in your hitches out  
12 there. Is that, in your experience and career, long career on  
13 lift boats, is that typical?

14 A. Yeah. I've had that done on any other jack up that's, you  
15 know, that's in deeper water or, you're at the top of the legs,  
16 your vessel tends to -- you know, it's going to have some sway to  
17 it. It's not going to be as stable as it is if you're in 20, 30  
18 foot of water and your at the bottom of the legs. Obviously, you  
19 know, you -- every vessel, I mean, I've been on the 145s where you  
20 know, it's tedious because you're, everyone's -- let's say if your  
21 wirelining, or whatever, and everyone's hands placement, you get  
22 crane swaying, moving should I say, it's going to be, you know,  
23 your vessel's moving, your crane's moving, so everyone's there  
24 with their hands trying to place a lubricator above the well head.  
25 You know, so it's -- you'll get some contractor that feels unsafe.

1 You know, it's a pinch point. You might be, it might be close  
2 proximity to other equipment where you're placing equipment, or  
3 doing work. So, I mean, it's a judgment call that everyone has  
4 the right to call.

5 Q. You mentioned that you're expecting -- or that forecast had  
6 seas and wind from the day of the casualty and a couple of days  
7 before, was on the starboard side of the vessel. And therefore,  
8 you secured the port side of the vessel?

9 A. No. I was securing the whole vessel.

10 Q. But you were running the auxiliaries and the generator on the  
11 starboard side?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Could you just explain why that choice was made as opposed to  
14 the port?

15 A. And that was done -- this is me, you know, waking up and  
16 learning what was discussed prior to, you know, while I was in  
17 bed. Because I wanted to know, you know, why was it -- I guess  
18 that was a decision and I didn't get it from the Captain or the  
19 engineer. I 'm just assuming, you know, that if the vessel was to  
20 list over and you were to take on water, your generator's at the  
21 highest point. That's my understanding of why that -- because I  
22 heard them talking about it and I didn't question it, there was  
23 too much going on.

24 Q. Okay. Yeah. I was just curious. I didn't know if there was  
25 an issue with air intakes or something like that.



1 A. No.

2 Q. It's where it was just the potential if it did list, that  
3 starboard would be in a safer spot.

4 A. And I'm assuming that's --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- that the meaning of why.

7 Q. I don't have much here for you sir. The operations. The  
8 typical operation of setting your air gap with weather coming in.  
9 You were talking about putting it right at the water's edge, or  
10 the highest wave, is that what you're saying?

11 A. Um-hmm.

12 Q. So, I understand the air gap, when you evacuate the vessel,  
13 was at 25 feet? Is that accurate, do you recall?

14 A. It was twenty some odd feet.

15 Q. And that was set, presumably, because those were the  
16 forecasted seas you were getting. Was there talk about setting a  
17 higher air gap?

18 A. Not with me.

19 Q. Not with you.

20 A. No. That was done during --

21 Q. And I should've asked the Captain that previously and I  
22 forgot, so maybe I'll follow up with Michael or you guys and see  
23 about that. Just curious.

24 I think, you were talking about a typical front moves through  
25 every five to seven days, in that location or in your experience.

1 With, you chuckle.

2 A. Well, it's not our location. It's pretty much, you know, a  
3 front will run through, you know, five to seven days in the United  
4 States.

5 Q. Any geographical area.

6 A. Right. That's you know --

7 Q. This front that moved through, was that a typical five to  
8 seven day front that you see? Or, is it --

9 A. No. This was like a low. A low that came from off of Texas.  
10 It built up. And the way the graphs were showing, you know, we  
11 were on the tip. Like, it went big here and it was like a smaller  
12 you know, and we were right at the tip of it. You know, it  
13 wasn't, to my understanding, I'm not a meteorologist, but it was  
14 not at your standard front that drives through from -- your normal  
15 front. This was a low.

16 Q. Okay. Understanding your not a meteorologist, do you, are you  
17 required to get any better training at all? This is just  
18 something you picked up?

19 A. Yeah. I would like to further my license, absolutely.

20 Q. What, for your 1600 near coastal master's, are you required  
21 to take any weather training?

22 A. No. We just had a series of weather questions that were on  
23 the 1600 ton test. That was it. Clouds and so forth.

24 Q. Your daily meetings or turnovers with the Captain, are you  
25 also analyzing the weather? Or, do you use -- what weather

1 sources you have?

2 A. We have access to Buoyweather. We have access to GeoStorm.

3 And, there's another one, weather --

4 Q. The new one?

5 A. Yes. It's a new one.

6 Q. I understood. It's brand new.

7 A. WeatherOps.

8 Q. Are you referencing your navtechs at all?

9 A. We do reference it. I'll look into the navtech. I mean,  
10 it's right above my GMDSS, so when I'm testing my GMDSS, which is  
11 a daily test, I look at it. Yes.

12 Q. Last question. You mentioned the cranes, they were all  
13 secured when you evacuated? The cranes onboard.

14 A. Absolutely.

15 Q. Just in the cradle? Or did you secure them additionally?

16 A. You put them in the cradle. The three out of the four have  
17 swing locks. So you engage the swing lock, even though it's in  
18 the cradle.

19 Q. Um-hmm.

20 A. And then you secure the blocks. Which you, you tie down the  
21 blocks.

22 Q. Got you. On deck or something. And I can probably get the  
23 pictures, but, did any of those shift after the casualty?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. They were in right. I looked at multiple pictures, and they  
2 were all secure.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. They were still secure I should say.

5 MR. BARNUM: That's all the questions I have, Charles. Thank  
6 you. Thank you.

7 BY CWO [REDACTED]

8 Q. When the vessel was jacked up to the production deck, right?

9 A. Um-hmm.

10 Q. How do you secure the gangway from the vessel to the watch  
11 deck?

12 A. You've got a roller on one side, and then, we chain and bind  
13 it on the -- usually we chain and bind it on the platform.  
14 Because the vessel, the lift boat was going to move. So,  
15 therefore the roller it will move and it doesn't, you know, that's  
16 a little secured on this part on the platform where we chain and  
17 bind it.

18 Q. Okay. And then you mentioned that, one, there's bigger  
19 swells and the vessel does move a little bit. Sways a little bit?  
20 Does that cause the vessel to move a little bit? Instead of it  
21 just going like this and back, does it go and then down?

22 A. It's not going to be up. The vessel's going to move side to  
23 side like that.

24 Q. Just side -

25 A. Side to side.

1 Q. Will that cause it to move location at all? Or, does it  
2 always return back to it's location --

3 A. Always returns. Yes. Yeah. Because it's like a pendulum.  
4 I mean, it's exactly. It's in the mud --

5 Q. Yep.

6 A. -- and the swells hit the leg, and that's all she does. I  
7 mean, it's just --

8 Q. So, would it at all pick a leg, just shift a little bit and  
9 then go back down? Or, because that leg's dug in the mud, it's  
10 always stationary, always stays there?

11 A. Always.

12 Q. Always.

13 A. Absolutely. You're at twenty some odd feet. You're pad is  
14 twenty some wide feet on this location. It was twenty --

15 Q. Yeah. It was the --

16 A. Seven, I think it was the penetration. They were all three  
17 different. But, no. She's going to always remain. I mean, it's  
18 just mother nature. It's just the seas. It, you know --

19 Q. So, when you mentioned that the vessel was on location for  
20 months. When you say location, is there a cushion there? Is  
21 there, it might've moved a few feet, but that's still counting as  
22 location, or is it exactly at this spot as where it was.

23 A. Yes. I cannot even think about the vessel even moving.

24 There's no -- I cannot even fathom the vessel shifting --

25 Q. Or sliding along the bottom --

1 A. -- or sliding. No, sir.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. There's no way. I just, that's -- no.

4 Q. Perfect. Okay. That's all I had.

5 BY MR. ARNOLD:

6 Q. So, like I mentioned earlier, this is unusual that nobody was  
7 out there at the time the incident occurred. Do you have any  
8 idea, or, any thought, that you know what happened to the *Robert*?

9 A. No. I wasn't there after, you know, after we left and you  
10 know, I don't know. I mean, I --

11 Q. First time, you said, evacuating totally from a lift boat.  
12 Would you have done anything differently?

13 A. No. I would've kept everything the same. Like I said, the  
14 weather was pretty rough prior to us leaving, so we didn't have  
15 that weather window to get out. No. I mean, we may the decision  
16 to, you know, the office and Burnell, and made the decision to  
17 leave, to get all non-essential off, and I cannot think of  
18 anything.

19 Q. Now, I forgot to ask this. Everybody got off by helicopter?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Was it a search and rescue helicopter? Or, was it a regular  
22 helicopter? So the weather at the time was okay for just a  
23 regular helicopter to come through?

24 A. Absolutely. Everything was fine.

25 Q. Is there any recommendations that you would have for Coast

1 Guard, NTSB, or, Seacor, maybe? Or, for industry as a whole, for  
2 this type of situation in the future?

3 A. No. I mean, I've tried racking my brain you know, prior to  
4 coming over here and after the incident. You know, if there was  
5 anything we could've done different, and no. I feel we did  
6 everything we could. The office was there for us. Great support.  
7 Communication was good. You know, I feel that, you know, it's  
8 just you know, mother nature didn't allow us to get off location  
9 and get in a safe harbor.

10 You know, if we were to jack down, it would have been rough.  
11 You know, you, you -- in other words, pushing the limits you have  
12 all personnel on board, you just, it's not feasible, you know, to  
13 risk everyone's lives to try to get the vessel out of there. And  
14 it being in the conditions that involves -- we made the right  
15 decision.

16 MR. ARNOLD: Mr. Bart, do you have any further?

17 MR. BARNUM: No further questions, thank you?

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. Based on everything that you know about it now, hindsight  
20 being 20/20, can you think of anything that could have prevented  
21 it?

22 A. Hmm-mm.

23 Q. Weather buoys being better maintained, the legs being able to  
24 go up higher? The platform being more -- anything at all that you  
25 can think of that may have prevented it from occurring?

1 A. No. Not at all. I mean, we have access to, I mean, it's  
2 just, 2022. I mean, we have -- we compare the weather reports to  
3 each other just to make sure that, you know, it's, you take a  
4 general on all of these weather reports. You know, and comparing  
5 them together and everything was looking the same.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. So, no. She was within her limitations. You know, prior to  
8 this weather.

9 MR. ARNOLD: Well, it's 10:45 and we'll go ahead and end the  
10 interview at this time. Thank you.

11 (Whereupon, at 10:45 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:           SINKING OF THE SEACOR MARINE  
                                  LB *ROBERT* NEAR LAKE CHARLES,  
                                  LOUISIANA, ON NOVEMBER 20, 2022  
                                  Interview of Corey Boutte

ACCIDENT NO.:               DCA23FM007

PLACE:                        Houma, Louisiana

DATE:                         November 30, 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.

A black rectangular redaction box covers the signature of the transcriber. A handwritten mark, possibly the letter 'A', is visible above the box.

---

Angela Allen  
Transcriber