

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SINKING OF THE CFV *EMMY ROSE* WITH
LOSS OF LIFE, OFF THE COAST OF
PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS,
ON NOVEMBER 23, 2020

Accident No.: DCA21FM007

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Interview of: ROBERT BLETHEN

Father of Captain/Shoreside Engineer

Sector NNE, South Portland, Maine

Wednesday,
December 9, 2020

APPEARANCES:

CDR [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

CWO [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED] Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard

BRIAN YOUNG, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 CDR [REDACTED]: Good afternoon, this is Commander [REDACTED]. This is
3 the December 9th interview with Captain Robbie Blethen, or
4 Robert Blethen.

5 MR. BLETHEN: Yes.

6 CDR [REDACTED]: So, Mr. Blethen, in accordance with the Privacy
7 Act, Title 5, U.S. Code 552, the following information is provided
8 to you when supplying personal information to the U.S. Coast
9 Guard, 46 U.S.C. 6001 and Title 46 Code of Federal Regulations
10 Part 4 authorizes the collection of information. The Coast Guard
11 uses the requested info in gathering facts to determine causes
12 surrounding marine casualties. This information assists in
13 promoting the safety of life, property, and the protection of the
14 marine environment through preventing reoccurrences of accidents.

15 Marine casualty information is needed for Coast Guard
16 investigations of vessel casualties involving death, injuries,
17 vessel damage, property loss, and data reports as determined by
18 Congress. Information gathered is also used to determine whether
19 new or revised safety initiatives are necessary. The information
20 gathered may also be disclosed under the Freedom of Information
21 Act via a written request. Do you have any questions?

22 MR. BLETHEN: No, I don't.

23 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. For the Board or for the recording, I'll
24 spell my name, Commander [REDACTED]

25 CWO [REDACTED]: Chief Warrant [REDACTED]

1 MR. [REDACTED]

2 MR. YOUNG: Brian Young with the National Transportation
3 Safety Board, Y-o-u-n-g.

4 CDR [REDACTED] And then, sir, if you can just say your name and
5 then spell your last name.

6 MR. BLETHEN: Robert Blethen, B-l-e-t-h-e-n.

7 CDR [REDACTED] Okay. At this time I'll kick it off to [REDACTED].

8 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT BLETHEN

9 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

10 Q. Hi.

11 A. Hi.

12 Q. So I'm going to start the questions. Just trying to get your
13 background.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. How much experience do you have in the commercial fishing
16 operations?

17 A. Thirty-five years, probably.

18 Q. Thirty-five years.

19 A. Yeah. Before that I did everything. I've always been around
20 boats all my life, but as far as commercial fishing, probably
21 since 1985.

22 Q. Did you start off sailing on commercial fishing vessels?

23 A. I fished a lot on and off over the years but don't really
24 like it. And I fished with my son, too. What I did, I've always
25 been a mechanic, basically. To make a long story short. And I

1 got -- I was working at Port Shallody (ph.) and somehow I ended up
2 on the waterfront working on boats, I took care of a fleet of
3 boats. I went to Galant (ph.) for a while, then -- a short time
4 and I saw the money back in the '80s was pretty good, you know. I
5 worked on a fleet of boats, Sea Lion Corporation, took care of
6 them.

7 Then I went to North Atlantic Corporation and took care of
8 three -- three to four boats for them. Basically shore work,
9 engine overhauls and anything from that to welding whatever. And
10 then I went to Caterpillar, I was a field mechanic for -- at the
11 time, it was Southworth-Milton and now it's Milton CAT. And then
12 I went fishing for a year. Then I went and worked for myself and
13 then when it was slow, I worked for Poland Springs Bottling
14 Company taking care (indiscernible) taking care of the, you know,
15 bottling.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Whatever you want to call it. And pretty much worked for
18 myself since the mid '90's. I worked in Boston a lot, too. I was
19 supposed to be there today, actually. Boats landing at Atlantic
20 Coast Seafood down on the Boston fish pier, I worked there quite a
21 bit. And I work up here, I work a lot of lobster boats. And I've
22 been lobstering a lot, just in the winter. I'd go, I got a friend
23 who's got a boat in Portland and a couple of really good friends
24 and they'll talk me into going. We only go out a couple days here
25 and -- weather-wise, you know, off Boon Island and stuff, but I'll

1 do that, too, because -- fishing business has been sketchy, you
2 know? So --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- you make good money doing that. Not that I like it, but
5 that's about it.

6 Q. So right now do you work for yourself or --

7 A. Yes, I'm self-employed.

8 Q. You're self-employed?

9 A. Um-hum. And I pay my own taxes and all of that. I'm not --
10 I'm not like a big legit business, I never got there, never wanted
11 to. I've had a lot of shops and this and that. I have a shop at
12 my house now, but I just work for people like the owner of this
13 particular boat. And actually, I've worked for Bart McNeel over
14 the years a lot. And Willy Biola (ph.), I worked for a lot in
15 Boston, the *Olympia* in Boston. *Black Beauty*. Johnny Raymond
16 (ph.) used to own the *Olympia*, now Mike Walsh owns it. I don't
17 know.

18 Q. Is it just you or do you have someone that helps you?

19 A. Just me now. A while back, years ago I had my son working
20 for me. He's very -- was very mechanical. And another guy. And
21 I was working all the time to pay everything and I decided to just
22 work for myself. I don't want to be big, you know, I make a
23 living.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. My wife works, too. Whatever.

1 Q. How many boats do you currently --

2 A. Not that many. I work on a lot of different -- you know, I
3 might work on a boat for a week and not work on it again for a
4 year, you know what I mean?

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But I'm like a shore engineer. I sort of did it for Bart
7 years ago and I did it for Sea Lion and North Atlantic and
8 somewhat for Rink, or Newbold, I call him Rink.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. But when he had the *Emmy Rose* because he didn't want to deal
11 with it, my son ran it, you know, because he's got another boat,
12 too, and he's got other things going, so that's a picture of that.

13 Q. So would you be considered as the shore engineer for the *Emmy*
14 *Rose*?

15 A. Yeah, kind of, yeah, I guess. Yeah. I took care of anything
16 from oil changes to, you know, like the main engine where I -- I
17 overhaul a lot of engines, taking an engine and pull it apart
18 right now, the other boat. And on that particular boat I did -- I
19 took the electrical end off this Caterpillar generator, it had two
20 generators, we sent it out and had it fixed, rewired, put that
21 back in, put a voltage regulator in the Detroit generator. I do a
22 lot of electrical stuff, too, but -- hydraulic stuff, whatever,
23 you know. And a lot of -- I just done it for years, like stuffing
24 boxes and all that stuff. And welding, but I don't want to be a
25 welder and I don't call myself one, but I've done it pretty much

1 all my life. I won't weld under the waterline. You can't when
2 the boat's in the water or any obstacle.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. I used to, but I won't now. You know, I smartened up. You
5 know, welding. Whatever. I just sort of do everything, I guess.
6 I did work for Caterpillar as a field mechanic and worked on --
7 they knew I came from the boat business, so I worked on a lot of
8 boats, like Casco Bay Lines and Rockland Ferry up there and stuff
9 like that, but that was all Caterpillar related, like engines,
10 generators, transmissions, whatever.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Used to do a lot of fishing up there 2 years ago, but all the
13 big boats are in Alaska now and all the (indiscernible).

14 Q. If there were any repairs that needed to be made to the *Emmy*
15 *Rose*, how was that documented? Did Rink just call you and say oh,
16 we need this fixed and you would just go and do it or how did that
17 process work?

18 A. My son would leave a list, he's all over the boat, he was.
19 He's very mechanical. He's been on boats since he was a kid and
20 he was just turning 40 when (indiscernible) out there. And Rink
21 would tell me what he wanted done and Rink's the guy with the
22 money, and we talk and we'd talk about what needed to be done and
23 if I saw something I'd let him know, he and Bobby, you know, my
24 boy, and if it was unsafe we'd definitely fix it. If it's
25 something stupid and it could get by a trip, you know, something

1 -- anything that was unsafe, we'd fix, I'm not just saying that,
2 you know what I mean? I didn't want -- number one, I don't want
3 anybody to get hurt and I've always been very careful and I've
4 never had any -- I've never had a boat get towed in.

5 Q. That's impressive.

6 A. And I've been out there and know what it's like, which helps,
7 because I've been there in the winter, I know what you're dealing
8 with, you're tired and cold and all that crap. And work with the
9 captain on the boat myself. My guys took care of the boat. The
10 boat was hauled out not too long ago to have a propeller put on it
11 here in Portland at Portland yard service. Before that, I wasn't
12 around when it was hauled out of New Bedford.

13 But from what I could see the boat was in decent shape, you
14 know. I wasn't over every inch of the boat either, you know, but
15 I've had parts of the main engine apart and the hydraulic engine,
16 the winch engine, I mean generators, amongst other things, lights
17 and heaters and whatever, you know, hydraulic stuff and the boat,
18 to me, looked -- you know, it's a southern shrimper, but it looked
19 like it was in decent shape. If it wasn't, I would've said
20 something to my kid, the status, you know.

21 Q. How many times would you say you've been onboard the *Emmy*
22 *Rose*?

23 A. I don't know. Good question. Like I said, I worked on it
24 before they're going full out. I did the generator and a bunch of
25 other stuff. One of them. And then after that, pretty much every

1 time they went fishing, you know, I went to Gloucester a couple
2 times because sometimes they'd take out in Gloucester. They
3 always take the fish out down there, usually. But I'd go down
4 there and Bobby, we'd go for 5, 6 days or whatever and we'd come
5 in there and unload, get fuel, ice, and some more food and go back
6 out because you get tired of bringing the boat up here, which is,
7 you know, 8, 9 hours.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. To take a day or two off, you know. So we'd just do two,
10 then you come up and take 2 days off, you know. He lived up in --
11 he lived up in Georgetown, you know, it's a ways to get home, you
12 don't get in until 1:00, 2:00 in the morning and -- you know.

13 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay, I don't have any further questions.

14 MR. BLETHEN: Okay.

15 CWO [REDACTED]: Thank you.

16 MR. BLETHEN: Yeah.

17 BY [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Mr. Blethen, I was going to ask you about the *Emmy Rose* and
19 the history of the vessel, to the best of your knowledge, just --

20 A. I have no history. I mean, history as far as Rink. I know
21 (indiscernible) --

22 Q. Yes, but like as far as the -- as far as the vessel goes, as
23 far as the *Emmy Rose* --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- how much knowledge you have of the *Emmy Rose*. For

1 example, do you know where the vessel came from, did you happen to
2 look at the vessel before it was sailed --

3 A. I never seen it out of the water until it was in Portland --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- and I know it came from Carlos in New Bedford.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And I actually went down when I was slow. Another time I
8 worked on the *Athena*, it's another boat he owned, he doesn't own
9 any boats anymore, he can't.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. But I went down and he ended up with a lot of boats I used to
12 take care of. He bought a bunch of boats up here, like the *Drake*
13 and the *Endo del More (ph.)*, *Jamie (ph.)* and *Ashley (ph.)*, *Teresa*
14 *Allison (ph.)*, he ended up with all those boats and those are the
15 boats I used to take care of up here.

16 Q. Are you talking about Carlos Rafael?

17 A. No, repair. They were just customers.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And then a lot of the boats I repaired got bought up in the
20 buyout years ago.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. With the permits. As far as the boat, I don't know the
23 history.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I never even seen it in my life until it came up here.

1 Q. Okay, which was -- do you know what time frame that was?

2 A. End of June.

3 Q. End of June, okay. And is that when you first started
4 working on the *Emmy Rose* as far as doing maintenance and --

5 A. No. I really didn't -- Rink was doing a lot of work on it --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- and painted the whole thing and he's pretty -- he's a
8 worker, you know.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. And he's owned a lot of boats. The generator had a problem,
11 that's why I got involved in it.

12 Q. Okay. When would you say you first started, you know,
13 working on the boat?

14 A. Regularly?

15 Q. Regularly and --

16 A. End of July. Never went fishing, too, I don't -- it's in my
17 phone, July 30th, I believe.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. It was the first trip. I got pictures of my boy leaving with
20 us.

21 Q. So had you done any work on it prior to its first sailing,
22 fishing trip?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. I did.

1 Q. And that was the end of July time frame?

2 A. No, that was probably early July.

3 Q. Early July.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. And do you know what the normal maintenance and repair
6 schedule is? For example, you mentioned sometimes work was done
7 in Gloucester but was most of the work done while the vessel was
8 back in Portland?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. And is that where you would typically work on --

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. -- the vessel?

13 A. Yeah. Either Fish Gear (ph.) or Hobson's wharf.

14 Q. Okay. Are you at all familiar with the replacement of the
15 propeller when it was in dry dock up here?

16 A. No, but I was down there.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I know Rink -- it had a propeller on it that had too much
19 pitch in it.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. The engine's -- it's continuous through the engines, 12
22 cylinder Caterpillar. It's designed to run at 1800, that's
23 continuous duty. It can run to that, you don't usually do it --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- because you don't want to burn the fuel, either, and wear

1 and tear. But you couldn't -- I think wide open it was 13 -- 1350
2 RPMs --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- because the wheel is too big.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. So Rink got a wheel and took it to New Bedford and had it
7 redone --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- and we hauled the boat here and looked it all over and put
10 a wheel on it.

11 Q. Okay. Do you know who put the wheel on? You say we, but it
12 was --

13 A. Portland Yacht.

14 Q. Portland Yacht? Okay.

15 A. Yeah. Probably, right.

16 Q. Okay. Did you have any oversight on that as a representative
17 of the company and watch them do it?

18 A. Yeah. I put a lot of wheels on, too.

19 Q. Okay, but you didn't put this wheel on?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. The boat guy did it.

23 Q. Did you see them do it?

24 A. Some of it, not much.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. No.

2 Q. Any issues that you noticed when they were --

3 A. No, I looked the boat over and the boat looked good.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Like I said, it was out of the water. I believe it was last
6 -- I don't know. It was out of the water when he bought it.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. And then he went to steam it up here and one of the keel
9 coolers was leaking or something and so he hauled it back out and
10 he was out there quite a while.

11 Q. Okay. And while it was out of the water getting the
12 propeller repaired or replaced, did you notice anything when you
13 were walking by or taking --

14 A. No, (indiscernible).

15 Q. Everything looked fine from --

16 A. Yeah. I would've said so, too.

17 Q. Okay. When you have to do any repair or maintenance, where
18 do you get your parts from?

19 A. Depends what it is, you know.

20 Q. Okay. Do you have a specific -- a store you go to, to get
21 parts or --

22 A. No, you got to go everywhere. It's hard to get parts around
23 here now, anyhow, but it was a Caterpillar engine and I get it
24 from Milton CAT.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. And like I'm doing a Cummins engine, I get them from
2 (indiscernible).

3 Q. All right.

4 A. If I need hydraulic parts, it could be a lot of places, like
5 Motion Industries or --

6 Q. Places close to Portland, though?

7 A. If I can, yeah.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Possibly, but it's kind of hard. People don't stock much
10 anymore, you got to --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. Like Caterpillar, a lot of the parts are in the Milford,
13 Mass, the main store.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. And they have a shuttle that runs from York, Pennsylvania
16 warehouse and --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- stops at all the stores here every night pretty much, you
19 know.

20 Q. And this is kind of a broad question, but what type of work
21 have you performed personally on the *Emmy Rose*?

22 A. Maintenance, oil changes, filters, fuel leaks. I was, you
23 know, like replacing fuel lines. I've had the temperature
24 regulators in the main engine and winch engine. I've had the
25 cooling system apart on the main engine and replaced all the seals

1 and gaskets --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- because it was -- they were leaking. Valve adjustments.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Transmission, we didn't have any trouble, it wasn't rebuilt
6 that long ago, I don't believe. I know the guy who did it. Just
7 the regular oil changes and stuff on that.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And I'm trying to think. Winch engine, temperature
10 regulator, and odds and ends, you know, nothing -- nothing major.

11 Q. Okay. Any work with the bilge system, bilge pumps?

12 A. Bobby rebuilt a couple and I rebuilt a couple.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. They're just MP pumps and I don't know if you're familiar
15 with them (indiscernible).

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Three horse electric motor, pumps. They're not pacer pumps
18 or the other ones.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Which is common, you know, impeller still gets wear plates.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. The bilge system looked decent. I really never had any
23 problems with them, with anything, and Bobby took care of a lot of
24 it, too, you know.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. As far as I could see --

2 Q. Did you notice any unusual collecting of water anywhere in
3 the vessel while you were doing your maintenance?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I seen the engine run, actually (indiscernible) in the bilge
7 and got off real quick.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. It seemed pretty good, you know.

10 Q. All right.

11 A. What I'm looking at.

12 Q. And do you know if the bilge alarms were audio and visual
13 alarms?

14 A. Yes. Murphy alarms.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. We always check them, too.

17 Q. Okay. And when you say we always check them, how often is
18 that?

19 A. Every time the boat's in. Make sure the things are working.

20 Q. Okay. So about once a week, would you say?

21 A. Yeah, basically. They don't go that long anymore, it's
22 usually 5 to 7 days.

23 Q. All right. There's a hatch on the main deck above the
24 lazarette.

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. Was there a way to secure that hatch or --

2 A. I never went in the lazarette, I'll be honest with you. I
3 don't lie.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. I never had a reason to. And Rink and Bobby told me the
6 lazarette was in perfect shape.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And I never had to do the stepping blocks down there, or
9 hydraulic rims (ph.) or anything.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Or follow up for the autopilot. So I never really went down
12 that, I was always too busy, anyhow.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And that's one thing I wished I'd done.

15 Q. Okay. Why is that?

16 A. Just I like to look the whole boat over. Like to buy any
17 other boat I work on, I've been everywhere.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I'm done. I've been working on the *Black Beauty* since '96,
20 so -- you know.

21 Q. Okay. All right, are you familiar at all with the hatch that
22 leads into the lazarette?

23 A. I know what you're talking about, I'm trying to visualize it
24 right now.

25 Q. Okay. We have --

- 1 A. Whether it had dogs on it or not --
- 2 Q. We have --
- 3 A. -- is what you're asking me, right?
- 4 Q. -- a chart in front of you.
- 5 A. Yeah, I see it. It's right here.
- 6 Q. Would that be -- so the lower level is what we're referring
- 7 to on the chart?
- 8 A. Yeah, this is -- well, these are the stern ramps, right?
- 9 Q. Yeah.
- 10 A. That's the hatch to the lazarette, I'm sure, you know.
- 11 Q. Yes, yeah.
- 12 A. Which would be in between -- in front of these -- between the
- 13 two net reels.
- 14 Q. Okay, so you're pointing at, what picture is this? It's --
- 15 A. That's one chart you just gave me.
- 16 Q. -- the stern picture. But you had no contact with that as
- 17 far as how --
- 18 A. I'm just trying to picture whether it had dogs on it, you
- 19 know what I mean?
- 20 Q. Yeah.
- 21 A. The dog goes down like the door.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. The dogs and everything else.
- 24 Q. Was it raised off the deck?
- 25 A. Yeah, it's quite a combing (ph.).

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And that's actually a drier part of these boats. Where they
3 get water when it's rough, it's between the bulkhead and here, you
4 know what I'm saying?

5 Q. What are you pointing at right now?

6 A. All right, there's a bulkhead to the living quarters.
7 There's the stairs to the engine room. These up here would be the
8 living quarters where this bulkhead is.

9 Q. Okay, so we're still on the --

10 A. This is the deck.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. All right.

13 Q. The main deck picture.

14 A. This is just above the pens and the deck would be across all
15 this. There we go.

16 Q. So we're on the top -- it's the main deck picture.

17 A. See, there's the lazarette in between them. Right. The wet
18 part of the boats and that's, you know, mid-ships.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. Right in here.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Actually, the deck was raised there, it was wood, because you
23 haul back there, there's a haul-back station waiting there because
24 it's a southern boat, because you can't see from the wheelhouse.
25 You can see to dock the boat and stuff, but you can't see the nets

1 and we had a camera system on the boat, too.

2 Q. Okay. Do you know what the camera's pointed at?

3 A. Winches, as far as I know, but I don't know for sure the
4 engine room.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I don't like cameras because people sit in the wheelhouse and
7 watch me work.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Some boats I unplug them when I get there, but they can sit
10 at home and watch me.

11 Q. So on this boat, though, the camera showed the engine room --

12 A. The main engine, the winch engine, the generators.

13 Q. Do you know if it showed the lazarette by any chance?

14 A. I don't know that. I don't believe it did.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. I never saw it on the screen in the wheel, it's like a 20-
17 inch TV screen and it's split up.

18 Q. Okay. Three cameras or do you know how many?

19 A. Probably six.

20 Q. Six cameras.

21 A. I'm guessing, yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And Bobby wanted to put one on the booms, they're up high, so
24 he could see between the net reels.

25 Q. Um-hum.

- 1 A. Not between the net reels, but back aft by the aft net reel's
2 better.
- 3 Q. Right.
- 4 A. In case somebody gets hurt --
- 5 Q. Right.
- 6 A. -- the guys are out there hanging out doing nothing.
- 7 Q. Yeah.
- 8 A. You know what I mean? He was kind of -- he was a worker, you
9 know.
- 10 Q. Could you speak to the doors that were replaced? Do you have
11 any knowledge of that --
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. -- why the old doors were taken off, why the new doors were
14 put back up?
- 15 A. They weren't spreading.
- 16 Q. Okay.
- 17 A. They spread the net. You're talking about the trawl doors?
- 18 Q. Yes.
- 19 A. Yeah. They're on the back, they're on the -- what they do is
20 they spread the net open.
- 21 Q. Um-hum.
- 22 A. You get your main water and it goes down to the doors from
23 the winches and then behind the doors you have ground cables.
24 Right.
- 25 Q. Right.

1 A. I'm trying to explain.

2 Q. Well, I mean, do you know why --

3 A. And then what they do is spread like a foil, they spread the
4 net on the bottom.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. If you're not getting enough spread, you're not catching
7 fish --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- if the doors are laying down or --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And they're Bison doors.

12 Q. Is that a brand name or it's just a --

13 A. Yeah, it's a pretty popular door.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Like now we use mostly NET doors and it's kind of bare bones
16 that way, we didn't have sensors on the doors and anything.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. But like the *Black Beauty*, we got door sensors and personal
19 computer and head rope sensors and -- like a sensor is 20,000 and
20 the --

21 Q. So did he replace -- did he replace the doors because the new
22 doors were heavier and it would help spread the nets better?

23 A. I believe so, yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And they still are pretty small.

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. By my standards.
- 3 Q. Okay. Do you know who put the doors on?
- 4 A. We did.
- 5 Q. We did?
- 6 A. Yeah, Bobby and Rink and if I'm around, I help, but the crew.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. It's more crew work.
- 9 Q. Right.
- 10 A. As far as welding on the doors, I'd do it or Bobby would do
- 11 it.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. Or he'd hire spot welders. Bart McNeel --
- 14 Q. Okay.
- 15 A. -- it's a friend of his who always around.
- 16 Q. And what were you actually welding on the doors?
- 17 A. The shoes, they're like hardened steel and they go across the
- 18 bottom --
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. -- because they wear out over time --
- 21 Q. Oh, okay.
- 22 A. -- and they break loose.
- 23 Q. Yeah.
- 24 A. They're bolted, they ain't welded.
- 25 Q. Okay.

1 A. It's like a -- I don't know what you'd call it. Like on the
2 bottom of a plough, you got hardened steel.

3 Q. Yes. Yeah.

4 A. Because they're going through sand, rocks, mud.

5 Q. Right. Okay.

6 A. And they put a lot of miles on them over the course of a
7 year. A few months, you know.

8 Q. Could you discuss any unresolved maintenance issues that
9 you're aware of or would you pretty much -- whatever the work list
10 was when they came in, you took care of it before they went back
11 out?

12 A. Yeah, pretty much took care of everything unless it's
13 something frivolous --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- and he doesn't want to spend the money, like a bigger TV.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. Or something like that, you know what I mean?

18 Q. But prior to this last trip, was there anything that you're
19 aware of that wasn't addressed --

20 A. No.

21 Q. -- or taken care of?

22 A. I didn't see any safety issues.

23 Q. All right. Any leaks or flooding conditions that you're
24 aware of --

25 A. No.

- 1 Q. -- or that you heard?
- 2 A. Nothing abnormal, just ice melting --
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. -- which is normal.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. Lot of boats this time of year don't have that big a problem
7 with it. Most boats now have refrigeration. It's a big deal to
8 have fresh fish and --
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. And you save money on buying ice, too, so you still have ice,
11 but it's not all melting away, you know.
- 12 Q. Um-hum. I know you said you did a lot of welding. Anybody
13 on the boat do welding?
- 14 A. The only one that welded anything would be my son.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. Because nobody else could. The only thing he welded on, to
17 the best of my knowledge, was the doors.
- 18 Q. Okay.
- 19 A. It's that part of the boat, really, hitting the bottom on the
20 water when you're fishing, you know.
- 21 Q. All right.
- 22 A. You're up alongside the rails when you're in.
- 23 Q. Yeah.
- 24 A. Between the -- these blocks.
- 25 Q. Okay. So the stern picture again?

- 1 A. The door sitting here.
- 2 Q. Right.
- 3 A. So that's a gallus frame, those are the tow blocks --
- 4 Q. Yeah.
- 5 A. -- and the doors are right here.
- 6 Q. On the port side.
- 7 A. Right.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. Usually, because you don't -- if they're outside and you're
- 10 fishing and you're, like, going to steam 5 miles, you tighten them
- 11 up and chain them.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. So they're not going --
- 14 Q. Right.
- 15 A. You know what I mean?
- 16 Q. And there was extra sheathing on the stern?
- 17 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 18 Q. For that particular purpose, to prevent --
- 19 A. Right, yeah.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. Because the boat would get all beat to death back there.
- 22 Sometimes they do that and they put double, big thick double
- 23 plates on and --
- 24 Q. All right.
- 25 A. -- there's a lot of ways of doing it.

1 Q. Okay. And this vessel had that?

2 A. Yeah, it had the flat bar.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know if hot work was allowed while the vessel
4 was under way or was it more strictly limited to when they're in
5 port?

6 A. Pretty much in port. You know, if you had a problem with a
7 door, you might go out and weld on it, but you know what I mean?
8 You can do it.

9 Q. So the capability was there --

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. -- for them to do it at sea.

12 A. There's a welder on the boat (indiscernible).

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And in your opinion, who would've been doing that work at
16 sea?

17 A. My kid.

18 Q. Your son, okay.

19 A. These other guys couldn't weld.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. At least the ones I've seen on the boat.

22 Q. All right. The last question I have really is any unique
23 characteristics or design of this vessel that was different from
24 other fishing vessels in this area?

25 A. Other than it was a shrimp, southern shrimper, not really.

1 Q. Okay. And how is that different, how would you say? Is it
2 the way it sits in the water or the way it takes certain --

3 A. It is long, low, and -- low is probably good, I guess, but,
4 you know, I'm used -- we're used to having the wheelhouse up. I
5 mean, you go down, the living quarters are under the wheelhouse --

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. This one here, the wheelhouse is up forward, then you got the
8 living quarters in the head.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. Then you got a galley, then you got like a mud room that goes
11 up to the deck.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And I worked on a lot them, the Sea -- two of Sea Lion's were
14 that way.

15 Q. Did the vessel sit low in the water?

16 A. This one didn't, really.

17 Q. No.

18 A. It's a pretty big boat.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Wasn't bad.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. The bows on them are kind of pointy, so they take water. And
23 I've been on -- the first one I ever went on I took with a guy
24 down to Montauk, New York, and it was rough and I thought the
25 waves were going to come through the pilothouse, you know.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. But this particular one, too, had scuppers like in the back
3 corners here --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- so the water would drain right out, you know.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Boat must have been somewhat seaworthy, I don't know what
8 happened, but --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- I think it's been fishing for 30 years.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. You know, I don't know. It drives me crazy.

13 Q. Did your son ever say anything about how the vessel rode in
14 rough weather conditions?

15 A. He said it wasn't bad, he just said the bow, you know, but
16 that isn't going to sink the boat, right, (indiscernible). It had
17 been holding up water, number one, it drains right out and it's
18 got huge scuppers, you know.

19 Q. And that's on the main deck, as well, the big ports or --

20 A. Well, forward of the pilothouse. And I couldn't see anything
21 unsafe about the boat, to be honest with you.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I'm not just saying that. If I did, I would've said
24 something.

25 Q. Okay, nothing on -- did the vessel --

1 A. That spot. There's the stem, there's the pilothouse. If you
2 stand in there, this right here come up to here on me.

3 Q. There you go, here's a better --

4 A. Yeah, looking at the picture.

5 Q. So we're looking at a side profile --

6 A. Yeah, you got it.

7 Q. -- of the vessel.

8 A. From here to here. And if you look, see these scuppers right
9 there?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. This is stopped here, water can't go through here. That was
12 storage. Although scuppers, if there's water in here, it goes
13 right out those, there's one on each side.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Which I was impressed to see. They were bigger than average,
16 you know, which I like. You want to shed water as fast as
17 possible, right?

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. You must know that.

20 Q. So nothing unusual, then, really?

21 A. Not really to me, no.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. If I thought it was unsafe, I would've said something to my
24 kid, too.

25 Q. All right.

1 A. He asked me to go on it several times. I'm 62, I don't want
2 to go fishing.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. Especially during COVID with a bunch of guys I don't know.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. You know, all younger than me. Well, usually --

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. -- generally speaking. I said no way.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. I didn't (indiscernible).

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. And he works me too hard.

13 Q. Yeah. Okay.

14 A. I've been with him.

15 CDR [REDACTED]: I have no further questions at this time.

16 MR. BLETHEN: Okay.

17 BY MR. YOUNG:

18 Q. Good afternoon, sir, this is Brian Young with the NTSB.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Thank you for your time, and from my agency, we're very sorry
21 what you're going through.

22 A. Thank you.

23 Q. I appreciate you spending the time you spend with us. Had
24 you ever gone out to sea on the *Emmy Rose* at all, rode her at all?

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Just on like a boat ride down the harbor.

3 Q. Okay. And never fished on her, right?

4 A. Test something and check something. No.

5 Q. Before I did this job I used to work on a ship that towed a
6 really heavy plough, it was 20 to 30 tons, and everything -- every
7 time the thing came up we'd have to weld the tow because it would
8 get beaten up.

9 A. Right.

10 Q. Would that be kind of common with the doors, that the tows
11 get beaten up and --

12 A. Yeah, they get beat up.

13 Q. And would it be common to have to weld and fix the tows in
14 between?

15 A. Not usually --

16 Q. No.

17 A. -- but I've done it when I was fishing on (indiscernible).
18 But Peter's really fussy about the doors, but it's not something
19 you usually do. No, not really. I'd say no, unless you have a
20 problem, a shoe fell off or something. We usually got a spare
21 shoe around to something, you know, because you don't want to come
22 in if you're a hundred miles, 18 hours or 15 hours out, you know.

23 Q. Right, right.

24 A. It's expensive to come back in to fix something and then go
25 back out.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. You know, I don't believe -- I don't know, I can't say. I'm
3 not going to say something I don't know.

4 Q. Sure. And when the new doors came on --

5 A. They weren't new, they were used.

6 Q. Used. Would they require a bunch of welding to be done on
7 them to fit them or modify them for use on the *Emmy Rose*? Are
8 they kind of ready out the door?

9 A. They're ready, they're just bigger.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And they're repaired before we send them out fishing, you
12 know. Tuned up, we call it.

13 Q. So it would just be a matter of reconnecting them to the
14 shackles and gear and pins and --

15 A. Well, that's just back straps and five-eighths chain.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Stuff like that. And as far as the doors themselves, before
18 you send it fishing you make sure the shoes and everything were
19 fine, and the boomerang (ph.) and all that.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. You wouldn't send them out, you know, having to work so hard.

22 Q. Right, right.

23 A. Because you want the net in the water all the time.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. And you only have one set of doors. You have two nets, one

1 set of doors, so --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. The net -- there's always a big hurry when you haul back.

4 Get the fish out and get a net in the water.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. Because if the net's aren't in the water, you're not making

7 money.

8 Q. Yeah, got you. When Rink was drawing the pictures for us, he
9 kind of talked about the storm doors in the back on either side of
10 the ramps.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. We didn't really understand how they were configured. Do you
13 know anything more about the storm doors on the stern of the --

14 A. Stern ramp doors?

15 Q. Yeah. Were they hinged, if you remember, or --

16 A. I thought they lifted up.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then there are pins on each side.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. It's like a lot of boats, most boats. Some of them are that
21 way, but you lift it up. They lay down inside the boat --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- so the net can come up over them.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And you lift them up and there's a round bar on the top and

1 it's rounded so the twine don't catch on it and all that, and you
2 run two pins in through the, you know, side of the hull --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- into the door. And that's what keeps it closed. So if
5 you're hauling back and it's rough out, this particular boat is
6 not as bad because you have a winch engine to keep the boat going
7 ahead. But a lot of boats you have the power takeoff on the front
8 of the main engine until you got these -- have it slowed down
9 pretty good or else you'll burn the power takeoff off the pumps.
10 And the boat will be going backwards, actually. And I've been out
11 there, you know, 20-foot seas, the boat going backwards and you
12 want stern ramps. Plus you want to close them if it's rough
13 because you'll wash your fish out once you're dumping on deck.
14 That's about all I know about the stern ramps. And they bend.

15 Q. Right, right. And then when you're steaming, they would
16 typically be closed for the --

17 A. Yeah. If it's rough out.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. If it's not rough, we don't put them out.

20 Q. Or you leave them open.

21 A. Right. And if it's rough, at least the boats I have been on,
22 and I'm not a fisherman, we'll take the chains off, we chain the
23 hatch down, the fish hold hatch, too.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And we tie everything down. We know if something's coming

1 and, you know, especially in the wintertime, you tie any buckets
2 down and everything down --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- chain the hatch. The last thing you want to do is have a
5 problem, you know.

6 Q. Right, right. So during fishing, those stern doors could be
7 open and closed several times based on the operation --

8 A. Right, every time you haul back.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Especially in the winter, you know, it's always kind of
11 rough, you know.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. In the summertime you leave them open.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Unless it's bad weather, you know. At least the boats I've
16 been on, but I don't know, Rink would know more about that than
17 me.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Do you think those doors are wide enough that one man
21 couldn't lift them up and close them or --

22 A. Usually, yeah.

23 Q. Yeah, they're not that big?

24 A. No.

25 Q. You talked a little bit about the bilge system, I know the

1 pumps had been -- maybe the impellers had been replaced --

2 A. Right.

3 Q. -- which is normal. If you can remember any part of the
4 piping system, do you remember any check valves in there or the
5 way it was designed?

6 A. I believe it had check valves in the bilge system, yeah.

7 Q. And would that be in each of the --

8 A. I don't think you can -- actually, I don't think you can get
9 insurance without it.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I know I'm replacing them all the time on other boats and
12 plus you get a Coast Guard inspection, which I believe you have to
13 have. You guys know, I don't know. But we have to get one every
14 year or two and if you don't have check valves, you don't get a
15 sticker on the window, you know what I mean? You know, like all
16 that stuff's going to be inspected, anyhow.

17 Q. Right, right.

18 A. That's all pretty common stuff, you know.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. Used to be you didn't need it, but --

21 Q. Well, we understood there to be four bilge pumps on this
22 boat.

23 A. Yeah, I believe it was four. Yeah. You use two for a deck
24 hose, two usually, because you got a lobster tank in the winter.
25 If you take it out in Massachusetts, you do. Up here, you don't.

1 But you got to keep water going through them, they're 2-inch
2 pumps, and then you got another deck hose from doing the fish.
3 You got a wash box and you can wash the fish, clean the deck. And
4 then there are two more pumps, bilge pumps, two are backup pumps,
5 anyhow, you know.

6 Q. Right. And you said they were electrically driven motors --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- off the generator, right?

9 A. Three horsepower, three phase Baldor motors. And there are
10 two generators. So if one goes, hopefully the other one works.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. A lot of boats you might have a hydraulic pump or a belt-
13 driven emergency pump or something, you know what I mean?

14 Q. Right.

15 A. In case you lost electricity and you couldn't get it, but
16 that one didn't.

17 Q. Right, right. And could any of those four pumps be used to
18 pump any of the bilge --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- suction?

21 A. Yeah. Yeah, like my kid couldn't -- even if it was strictly
22 a deck hose, you could turn it into a bilge pump pretty quick.

23 Q. Um-hum, um-hum.

24 A. You know what I mean, cut the pipe off, jam a hose on it and
25 stick it in the bilge. You know what I'm saying?

1 Q. And would those bilge pumps have to be primed to get them
2 running or would they suck any bilge without any seawater priming?

3 A. If the impeller and everything is good, they'll pump it out.

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. And they got a flapper in them. Once they're full of water
6 they stay.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. But if they're half worn out, might not. I don't know.

9 Q. Right.

10 A. Can I be a real pain in the ass?

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. I had a cup of coffee before I got here.

13 CDR [REDACTED]: Do you need to take a break?

14 MR. YOUNG: Yeah, I could take a break.

15 MR. BLETHEN: If I could just take a quick --

16 MR. YOUNG: Sure.

17 CDR [REDACTED]: Sure.

18 (Off the record.)

19 (On the record at 1:27 p.m.)

20 CDR [REDACTED]: This is [REDACTED], we're reconvening. The
21 time is 1:27.

22 So Mr. Young.

23 MR. YOUNG: Sure, thanks.

24 MR. BLETHEN: Sorry about that.

25 MR. YOUNG: No, no problem at all. We appreciate your time.

1 BY MR. YOUNG:

2 Q. So we're talking about the bilge system and the pumps and it
3 seems like the pumps were able to pump. From any of the bilge
4 suction, you could use any pump. Do you recall how many
5 different bilge wells there were on that boat?

6 A. Four.

7 Q. Four.

8 A. That I can recall. Lazarette, you'd get double. You got two
9 manifolds, so for one pump you'd have engine room, two engine
10 rooms, forward and aft, lazarette -- I mean fish hold, this
11 particular boat. Didn't have a separate shaft (indiscernible)
12 pumps in the lazarette. And under the four (indiscernible), I
13 believe the water tank.

14 Q. And did each one of the bilge suction areas have a float for
15 an alarm?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. That's how you would know --

18 A. Yeah, you have to. We do it, anyhow. And they're actually
19 decent alarms, kind of like the old flappers go down there, had
20 the alarm of the hose that goes to a bell. It's called a Murphy
21 alarm. Probably the Coast Guard has them, too.

22 Q. So there's no lever that would get lifted like --

23 A. No, it would get stuck on or --

24 Q. Right, right. And you --

25 A. And (indiscernible) the boat.

1 Q. Right. And you said you tested them most every time they'd
2 come in?

3 A. Yeah, pretty much test them, yeah.

4 Q. Were there many that you saw that had maybe caused a problem
5 frequently or got stuck or failed or --

6 A. No. The worst ones usually are the fish hold because you get
7 fish scales and black good and everything and you've got to clean
8 them.

9 Q. Right, right.

10 A. Usually the engine room, lazarette (indiscernible), you know.

11 Q. And on the *Emmy Rose*, if you can remember, was the lazarette
12 regularly okay when they tested it?

13 A. Yeah, but like I said, I never went down there.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I kick myself in the ass for not, but --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- I didn't really have a reason to, and I took Bobby and
18 Rink's word for it.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. It's something (indiscernible) of the boat, anyhow.

21 Q. It seems in the pictures that it was kind of an odd place to
22 go to get into it, you know, it seems --

23 A. That's how they are, the fish don't go like that. We built
24 it brand new, the company that I worked for. You put it between
25 the net reels --

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. -- pretty much.

3 Q. And getting in there for greasing, so you know, part of the
4 rudder --

5 A. It's actually safer, in a way, than being out here, you know.

6 Q. Yeah, you're protected by the --

7 A. I personally like a net reel aft and forward, but just
8 stability wise.

9 Q. Other than getting into the lazarette to do some greasing,
10 would you know of any other reason people would need to get in
11 there?

12 A. Well, autopilot, you got (indiscernible).

13 Q. Um-hum.

14 A. You have problems with those, you got an arm that goes to the
15 quadrant. Make sure you don't get steering leaks and --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. Stuffing blocks, grease that. It's got packing on top of the
18 rudder post.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. You want to grease that and you got to grease the steering.

21 Q. Right. And that's done pretty frequently, right?

22 A. Yeah, but you don't want to go in there too much when it's
23 out to sea because -- unless it's got the enclosed steering
24 because you could get caught in it, you know.

25 Q. Um-hum. Yeah.

1 A. Or your arm is or something, you know. Usually grease that
2 to make sure.

3 Q. Right, right.

4 A. All that type of stuff my son did, greasing like the
5 (indiscernible), there's a lot of net reel bearings, you know,
6 billets and winches and winch bearings and --

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. -- that's usually crew -- somebody on the crew has to do
9 that.

10 Q. From what we've heard, it sounds --

11 A. They're not paying me to do it, you know what I mean?

12 Q. Right. It sounds like Bobby wasn't a wheelhouse captain, it
13 sounds like he was all over that boat.

14 A. He was on deck dressing fish, everywhere.

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. And you got shaft bearings, too, the main shaft, you got to
17 grease those. Most of those get lines that run from the bulkhead
18 in the engine room to the bearing because you can't get at them,
19 especially when you're hauling fish and ice.

20 Q. Right. So they got some copper tubing for the grease with
21 the fittings on the other side?

22 A. I use them on hydraulic type lines, but --

23 Q. Um-hum. When your son was out fishing, would he communicate
24 with you via phone or e-mail frequently?

25 A. I wouldn't bother him. It was Thursday night. He got a

1 satellite phone.

2 Q. His own?

3 A. I wouldn't call him on a side band, put it that way. That
4 was back when I had one, you know.

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. We have a satellite phone and they're in and out, they're not
7 by any means perfect, but Thursday night my wife and I called him,
8 it was his birthday. That was that trip (indiscernible).

9 Q. Right.

10 A. And I was going down to meet the boat Monday morning because
11 he was going to do one of those back-to-back things.

12 Q. Right, right.

13 A. And he didn't know it was his birthday and he said oh, I'm
14 officially 40. No, you're (indiscernible). He was just into
15 fishing, you know.

16 Q. Just another day, right?

17 A. Stuck in his own world there. I'm glad I talked to him.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Just for a minute. And she talked to him longer than I did,
20 my wife (indiscernible). My turn, the phone kind of -- I
21 satellite phoned him so that -- not perfect by any means.

22 Q. No, never. And was that the satellite phone that was in the
23 wheelhouse --

24 A. Yes. Yeah.

25 Q. -- that everyone used?

1 A. That's the only time I talked to him would be on that. If
2 he'd call me, I got an iPhone, he comes up unknown.

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. But he would leave a message. And I have the number, too,
5 but I don't call him. If he had a problem or something, he could
6 call me and I'd call him right back, you know.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. I got it, but --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. Really, I know when I'm -- I just usually -- I got
11 (indiscernible) a lot of boats, but I don't --

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. I figure they're out fishing and I don't feel like talking
14 (indiscernible). Get your girlfriend to talk (indiscernible).

15 Q. I know it was earlier on the trip when you did speak on his
16 birthday, but did he indicate if it was a good trip with fishing
17 or it hadn't been very good or --

18 A. No, they're doing all right, he said.

19 Q. Doing okay?

20 A. And he heard through other sources, they're doing really
21 good.

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. But I don't know if it's true or not, it's all speculation,
24 but I heard from people out there and I actually called the
25 captain of the *Black Beauty* 4 o'clock Monday morning to see if he

1 heard anything because he was probably 40 miles away, you know.

2 He was out fishing.

3 Q. Was he?

4 A. And he's in today. He was out this weekend, too, but -- and
5 he's a friend of mine, Billy Cranian (ph.). All he heard was
6 (indiscernible), you know. I wanted to know if he talked to him
7 because him and Bobby are friends.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Bobby worked on that boat for years. He does real good, you
10 know.

11 Q. Um-hum. Was the *Black Beauty* in the general area?

12 A. I think he might've been 40 miles away or something, which is
13 sort of general.

14 Q. Yeah. Did he say anything about what he thought -- what the
15 weather was like --

16 A. It wasn't that bad, just sloppy.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. Seen worse here, you know. It was windy and raining.

19 Q. It was here.

20 A. Twelve-foot seas or whatever. It's nothing for winter, you
21 know.

22 Q. Right, right.

23 A. Just sloppy. It gets worse, a lot worse. Saturday, I
24 believe, or this past storm, you can stay out in that, too, but he
25 came in (indiscernible). No, he said the weather wasn't really

1 that bad.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Plus I heard, I'm sure you guys know the briefing, they were
4 able to put a boat over the cutter to check lights that morning,
5 lights in the water, like EPIRB lights, to make sure there weren't
6 survivors --

7 Q. Oh, I see.

8 A. Officer from, I don't know, Cape Cod or Boston, whatever,
9 told us. He's a nice guy. So I guess it wasn't that bad if they
10 put that in the water

11 Q. Right.

12 A. We'd been boarded by him before, you know, fishing, so --

13 Q. Do you know about how much fish they could hold on that boat?

14 A. Probably 80,000 would be a guess, just a guess.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Don't know for sure. I think shrimpers have smaller fish
17 holds because you don't catch that much shrimp.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. Bigger engine room, smaller fish holds.

20 Q. That had a pretty big engine room?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Which is good for the mechanic, but --

24 Q. Yeah. Lots of room to move around.

25 A. Instead of crawling on your head.

1 Q. And when you're talking about the winch engine, that's a
2 separate engine that runs --

3 A. Yeah. A Caterpillar turbocharged (indiscernible) 3306, it's
4 basically a 300 horsepower engine. All it does is run two
5 hydraulic pumps.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Which powers the net reels, the winches, and the cargos and
8 the Pullmasters for the paravanes, to lift them up and down. Most
9 boats try to have them.

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. Better for fishing, better on the main engine.

12 Q. Right, right. So the main engine is just connected to the
13 propeller shaft for propulsion and then the winch engine is all
14 for the fishing gear?

15 A. The fishing gear and generating electricity.

16 Q. And then they had battery backup on all the navigation
17 systems, would you know?

18 A. Don't know. The computers, you mean?

19 Q. No, more like the VHF radio and --

20 A. Yeah, you got to have a battery in the wheelhouse.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. See, if you had flooding or something, you can't have all
23 your batteries down below. Insurance company, I don't know about
24 the Coast Guard, but the insurance company requires you to have a
25 battery with a charger up above, like, usually you put them under

1 the dash in the wheelhouse or somewhere like that. So you can get
2 a call out and give a position if you have a mayday or whatever,
3 you know what I mean?

4 Q. Right, right.

5 A. Say that the engine room's flooded or something like that.

6 Q. Right, right. I know you --

7 A. Plus a satellite phone, which is worthless. You can take it
8 with you on a life raft (indiscernible). And probably a handheld
9 radio, but VHF isn't going to do you much good, probably.

10 Q. Right, right. I know you know a lot about the pumps for the
11 bilge system and the horsepower. Do you know, by any chance, what
12 they're -- how many gallons per minute they were able to pump?

13 A. No, but I could find it.

14 Q. Is it just --

15 A. (Indiscernible) MP pump, it would be easy to look up.

16 Q. Okay, okay.

17 A. Marine products. You could call Rose's in Gloucester and ask
18 them. I don't have the literature on them, I might at home.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. They've been around forever.

21 Q. When you were on the *Emmy Rose* doing a lot of work or being
22 on the vessel in general, did you remember taking any good
23 pictures or videos that might help us understand some of the
24 layout or some of the equipment?

25 A. No, I just got outside pictures.

1 Q. I'm sorry?

2 A. I just got outside pictures. I was going to take pictures of
3 the engine room and stuff.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. I hadn't done that. If I rebuild an engine, I do, or
6 something.

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I just put pictures of the day, the first time I went
11 fishing, I think it was July 30th, and I was going to, but I
12 didn't think it was going to sink, either.

13 Q. Right, right.

14 A. You know what I mean?

15 MR. YOUNG: That's all I have. Thank you very much.

16 MR. BLETHEN: Yeah, you're welcome.

17 MR. YOUNG: I appreciate your time.

18 MR. BLETHEN: Hope I helped you a little bit, I don't know.

19 MR. YOUNG: Oh, yeah.

20 BY [REDACTED]:

21 Q. I've got a couple of questions and then just some follow-up
22 questions, we'll kind of move to follow-up questions. So this is
23 [REDACTED] So you mentioned CCTV on board the vessel. And
24 what were the spaces again that had it?

25 A. What's that?

1 Q. The closed -- the TV cameras. Do you remember exactly what
2 spaces?

3 A. The deck.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And the engine room and the port peak.

6 Q. Okay, not in the fish hold?

7 A. Not that I know of.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I wouldn't think he'd have them. They'd get broken down
10 there, too.

11 Q. Okay. And then if you can, just as far as getting repair
12 notifications or how would you know, you know, when the boat came
13 back to port what you needed to repair? Would they just, like,
14 give you a piece of paper and say fix this or --

15 A. Pretty much a list because he's on the boat 24 hours a day.
16 And if I saw something, I'd fix it. But as far as maintenance,
17 like oil and stuff like that, we know what -- how many hours it
18 had on it --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. -- when I did it and the date. And I also write it on the
21 oil filters and stuff.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And you got -- say he's going to go on another trip, the
24 engine itself required 500 hours for the main engine. If it had
25 like 400 on it, I'd do it. Do it early instead of later because

1 you don't want to overhaul an engine, it's too expensive. And --

2 Q. So how would you --

3 A. -- it's pretty much how we do it on all of them, which is not
4 like an oil tank. When I first started doing the shore
5 engineering stuff, I made log books and everything, nobody would
6 fill them out. You had a daily report, you had to do it if you're
7 an engineer.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. And you're supposed to -- a checklist. It was a waste of
10 time. I gave that up quick.

11 Q. And then just another question. You guys said you had the
12 prop replaced, I think, back in -- was it --

13 A. I don't remember when it was, it wasn't that long ago.

14 Q. Okay. And then how did you know what size prop to get?

15 A. You give the horsepower, you give the propeller company the
16 horsepower, the size of the nozzle, which is a quart nozzle --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- (indiscernible) and length of the boat and if you can, the
19 weight, 10-inch, they have a formula. And we know what was on it,
20 too, you know.

21 Q. And so you go to the manufacturer or the prop shop and they
22 tell you --

23 A. Yeah, like Scandia propeller in New Bedford --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- or Fairhaven or whatever. They have a formula and they've

1 done enough of them.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. They pretty much know.

4 Q. And then do you know when you did the prop replacement, do
5 you know how they got the rudder off?

6 A. You got to cut the bolts off for the flange. There's a post
7 that goes into the lazarette. Then there's seven H bolts. Go
8 down through it, you either unbolt them and cut them off and then
9 you have plates along the seam, a couple steel plates involved
10 there, too, just for safety. And I usually tag the nuts when I do
11 it.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. That's why you have to cut them all off.

14 Q. And did you guys --

15 A. We tore it up out of there with a forklift or whatever. Or
16 come-alongs. A lot of times I'll weld a pad on it and I'll use
17 two chain come-alongs. I have one off American (indiscernible)
18 just recently.

19 Q. And so did you guys -- did the shipyard do that work?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. And then --

22 A. Far as I know.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. I was going to do it and I was busy. I was doing another
25 boat and I didn't want to do it that bad, so --

1 Q. Um-hum. And then no shaft replaced or anything, you just
2 pulled the rudder, put the new --

3 A. Right.

4 Q. -- (indiscernible) and the prop in.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay. And then the next question I had was, so if for some
7 reason you had to do a shoe repair on the door at sea --

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. -- how difficult of a job would that be?

10 A. It's not. You get the (indiscernible) winches and the main
11 winch, you get the door set and cut the bolts off or take them off
12 and grind the weld off or whatever and change the shoe. Should
13 weld it back on, there's a welder on the boat.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. The worst part of it, if it's raw out and wet, you can get
16 shocked, you know. It's not really super hard to do.

17 Q. So you'd have to actually take it off of the ice in the
18 gallows and bring it and drop on deck --

19 A. Yeah, I put it on deck. You can't get at it between the
20 gallows and the -- I don't believe he had to do that, I don't
21 know. I never heard he did.

22 [REDACTED] Yeah, just asking. I think that's all that I
23 had.

24 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

25 Q. I have just a couple of follow-up questions. Was the *Emmy*

1 Rose set up to take lobster? Did they have or you had mentioned
2 where they had something with water going through it constantly.

3 A. What we do is take -- do you know what an intacter (ph.) is?

4 Q. No.

5 A. It's a big plastic insulated box, you'd see them down at like
6 fish companies and stuff, you know, it's pretty big, you know what
7 I mean?

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Usually tie them to the reel. That's what most boats do.
10 You don't really get many lobsters still at this time of the year,
11 anyhow, you know, when they move off shore.

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. And you just put the deck hose in it. And it overflows on
14 the deck (indiscernible) you have fresh, you know, saltwater with
15 the air in it to keep the lobsters alive. You're allowed, like in
16 Massachusetts, last I knew, 500 lobsters. Not pounds, lobsters.
17 As you're doing it, you go through them. If they have eggs on
18 them or V-notch tails or anything, you'll get in deep trouble or
19 usually the big females you throw over because they don't live for
20 some reason. You want selects, as possible, but you don't always
21 get that. Two to four pounds give us more money.

22 Q. And then do you -- going back to the propeller, do you know
23 which company it was purchased from?

24 A. He told me and I don't know. This one he didn't buy it, I
25 don't know where he got it, but he took it to them and had them

1 repurpose it and it's a company in New Bedford and I've never
2 heard of it because I -- for some reason I thought he had a
3 Scandia, and H&H Propeller I know in Salem and this and that.
4 I've never heard of the place. And there's a place in New
5 Hampshire that does them. Some boats I work on, we have a
6 (indiscernible), it's huge. It gives you better performance and
7 less vibration and stuff. I don't know who did it, you'll have to
8 ask Rink. He told me the name and it didn't sink in. I didn't
9 really listen.

10 Q. My final question is just did Bobby ever mention, like, the
11 working relationship with him and the crew or can you tell me,
12 like, the times you saw them, did they work well together?

13 A. He told me he thought he had a good crew. He's had guys he
14 didn't like and he got rid of them. But he said basically he
15 thought he had a decent crew. And I really didn't know the crew.
16 I knew who Jeff Matthews was because I've seen him around for
17 years. The other two guys I didn't know. I liked the blonde kid,
18 he seemed like a good kid, he's a worker. Bobby liked him, I knew
19 that. The other guy on the boat, I don't know how long he'd been
20 on there, I never really -- I don't pay attention to them and if
21 they give me any, I said get away because I don't want COVID, I
22 don't know where they've been, you know what I mean? I can hear
23 you from over here (indiscernible). I really deal with Bobby and
24 Rink --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- pretty much. I don't deal with them guys. You know,
2 during this -- I don't want people near me.

3 CWO [REDACTED]: All right, thank you.

4 MR. BLETHEN: I'm old, I don't want it.

5 BY [REDACTED]

6 Q. I just have two. Does Mike's Propeller sound right to you?

7 A. Could be, yeah.

8 Q. Out of New Bedford?

9 A. Yeah, it's fairly new or something, they're cheap. I don't
10 know what it is.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I just heard about it, I asked Brian Woodman (ph.) about it,
13 too, a shore engineer down there for Bart and could be, I don't
14 know. I don't want to say that, because I don't know.

15 Q. Okay, all right.

16 A. I'm sorry.

17 Q. So the only question I have --

18 A. Rink could tell you that for sure because he took it down.

19 Q. You have bulkhead penetration with wires and piping going
20 through it. Do you know how that was kind of sealed up to sort of
21 try to get it water tight? Was it like a spray foam or what was
22 kind of in there?

23 A. Wires, you get watertight grommets --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- like you use outdoors. It's more industrial. The shaft

1 that's in the stuffing box between the fish hold and the engine
2 room like you'd have outside the boat --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. -- between that. And other than that, the bilge pipes got
5 couplings --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- that are welded into the -- because it's a steel boat
8 instead of fiberglass, then they're welded into the bulkhead and
9 they're threaded, so you got one type screwed in one side and then
10 the fish hold you use another (indiscernible).

11 Q. Okay. How about from like the lazarette into the engine
12 room, anything there?

13 A. I never noticed, but usually there is -- there's a pipe there
14 but it's up high.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. It would be ceiling level.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. And you have like autopilots running through there.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And also, if you have fuel tanks aft or hydraulic lines you
21 have for steering, they all run up -- it was up on the overhead.

22 Q. Okay. But you never did --

23 A. They don't run down underneath.

24 Q. Did you happen to ever do any of that, making sure that they
25 were secure?

1 A. I never had to work on that --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- on the boat. I have on most, but not that one.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Haven't been around the boat that much, we really didn't get
6 it going until July and in the fall I was out once and -- you
7 know.

8 MR. [REDACTED]: Right. Okay, that's it.

9 MR. BLETHEN: I should say August, it was the end of July.

10 MR. [REDACTED]: All right.

11 MR. BLETHEN: Then Bobby's going pretty hard, too.

12 MR. [REDACTED]: Thanks.

13 MR. BLETHEN: Yeah, you're welcome.

14 BY MR. YOUNG:

15 Q. This is Brian Young with the NTSB. Just two follow-up
16 questions. Do you know when the last time the engine was
17 overhauled?

18 A. No, I don't. It doesn't look like that long ago.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And I don't know who did it. Probably Brodeur, I guess.

21 C.P. Brodeur from New Bedford would be my guess because they did a
22 lot of Carlos's stuff. Or one of his shore crew. Many he had.
23 And I'm really -- I wasn't impressed with it. It was all right.
24 I'm more meticulous when it comes to that. I didn't think as far
25 as all that stuff. You know, it ran good and it had a later edge

1 (ph.) on it and I did adjust the valves and fixed a bunch of
2 smaller stuff on it. Didn't use oil. I would say it hadn't been
3 that awful long.

4 Q. Um-hum. Since you had worked for CAT, you've seen a number
5 of marine diesel engines and from your experience, do you think
6 the engine was in decent shape?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Pretty much. Wasn't pretty, but it was all right.

10 Q. And when they did replace the propellers, a lot of talk about
11 that, do you think it was necessary for them to remove the rudder
12 stock or were they able just to pull -- pulled it right off the
13 flange?

14 A. Yeah, we had to take it off.

15 Q. They never took --

16 A. You got to take the rudder off on that boat.

17 Q. The stock, what about the stock? The rudder stock.

18 A. What are you talking about now, the post that goes inside the
19 boat?

20 Q. Yeah, yeah.

21 A. No, you don't take that off.

22 Q. Okay, so you just drop it at the flange below outside?

23 A. Right, yeah.

24 Q. Okay. And you had mentioned another port engineer, a shore
25 engineer, Brian Woodman. Did he work on the *Emmy Rose* at all?

1 A. No.

2 Q. No. He was --

3 A. I just mentioned him because he'd know about whatever you
4 asked me. I've forgotten, but --

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. -- I worked with him and know him for years.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. He used to be an engineer on oil tankers. He's older than I
9 am, he's worked on boats for years. Me and him work together a
10 lot.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. He's getting old now.

13 Q. But he didn't do any work on the *Emmy Rose*, such as I just
14 asked you?

15 A. No, he's friends with me and Rink.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. He's around. I get the hydraulic stuff off him, more
18 hydraulics, you know. He used to have a hydraulic shop, too. I'd
19 bring it down and ship it out and we've just been friends for a
20 long time.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. The same business type stuff, you know.

23 Q. Right.

24 A. I talked to him today, for that matter.

25 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Well, thank you again.

1 MR. BLETHEN: Yeah.

2 MR. YOUNG: I'm all set.

3 BY [REDACTED]

4 Q. One final question.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. [REDACTED] here. What are your thoughts on the sinking?

7 A. Mine? I don't really want to say. I have a lot of thoughts
8 on it.

9 Q. Yeah, I mean, anything you think you might want to share that
10 you think might be helpful to the Board?

11 A. I really don't know, you know, I can beat myself up on it.
12 Something happened either quick or they were sleeping, you know.
13 I don't know, I wish I knew. I know it's -- I never got up once
14 on a fishing boat where everybody wasn't asleep. We had a bridge
15 watch on one boat. Well, two boats. It goes off every 15 minutes
16 and you got to reset it and there's a key that locks it. The
17 key's in the captain's room. And then there's a speaker in there.
18 If it goes off, you're nailed with a \$500 fine and the second time
19 you're fined, so -- because the boat had problems before, but I
20 don't know.

21 I know my son didn't sleep and didn't need much sleep. I
22 don't know who was behind the wheel, I wish I knew. I really
23 don't think he was. I know they were heading in to take out fish
24 and they -- this side of Provincetown from what I've seen on the
25 picture there, up in there. Not that awful far from Boston. And

1 like you said, it was 1 o'clock in the morning. You never know
2 what time of day it is out there. This time of the year it's dark
3 all the time, anyway. I wish I knew. The Coast Guard officer
4 that gave the updates and stuff said there was no chance it was
5 run over, that's what he said. There's nothing in the area.

6 Q. Yeah. Yeah, we can -- I can give you an update just talking
7 about the investigation.

8 A. I believe that, yeah.

9 Q. Do you have any more comments or anything?

10 A. No, I'm good.

11 [REDACTED] Okay. We can go ahead and we'll end the formal
12 interview.

13 (Whereupon, at 1:56 p.m., the interview 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 CFV *EMMY ROSE* WITH
LOSS OF LIFE, OFF THE COAST OF
PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS,
ON NOVEMBER 23, 2020
Interview of Robert Blethen

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM007

PLACE: Sector NNE, South Portland, Maine

DATE: December 9, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber