

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, SR.

Father of Captain/Shoreside Engineer

Via telephone

Wednesday,
January 13, 2021

APPEARANCES:

CDR [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

CWO [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED], Investigator
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED]
U.S. Coast Guard

BRIAN YOUNG, Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 CDR [REDACTED]: We're just kind of following up on some of the
3 questions that we asked you previously. As we conduct our
4 investigation, we uncovered some more information and just wanted
5 to follow up with you being your role as kind of the support
6 engineer, the mechanic who did a lot of the major work onboard.
7 Just trying to get some more information, clarify some questions
8 we had.

9 So, for today's interview, I'll do all the questions, pretty
10 much, and then at the end, I'll open it up to the board for
11 additional questions or follow-up questions that they have. Do
12 you have any questions for us right off the bat?

13 MR. BLETHEN: Not really. I told you knew what I knew
14 already, remember?

15 CDR [REDACTED]: No, no, no. I do, yeah. Again, I wanted to --

16 MR. BLETHEN: I work on a lot of boats; that's not the only
17 one, you know, that's what I'm saying, but -- you know what I
18 mean?

19 CDR [REDACTED]: Yeah, no, I totally get -- and I really -- again,
20 I just wanted to offer our condolences and sincerely appreciate --

21 MR. BLETHEN: Well, thank you very much. I get that, but --
22 I don't know. I'll try to help you out if I can (indiscernible).

23 CDR [REDACTED]: Yeah, and I -- we sincerely appreciate you taking
24 the time to talk to us again.

25 MR. BLETHEN: I'd like to thank -- you know, I'm glad you

1 guys are checking into it, that's all.

2 CDR [REDACTED]: And, like I said, appreciate you taking the time
3 to talk to us and helping us out, so thank you for that.

4 MR. BLETHEN: Yep.

5 INTERVIEW OF ROBERT BLETHEN, SR.

6 BY CDR [REDACTED]:

7 Q. So, with that said, really had like three kind of vessel
8 systems we wanted to kind of look at today, or just maybe two
9 systems and then one just general condition. So dealing with the
10 fuel system, the bilge system, and then just if there were any
11 like lists or heeling conditions on the vessel that you were aware
12 of.

13 So the first question is, can you explain the tanks and
14 components of the fuel system and how it functioned on the *Emmy*
15 *Rose*?

16 A. Typical southern boat. You know, boats, shrimpers -- it was
17 a shrimper to begin with, right?

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. Southern boat, you know what I mean?

20 Q. Yep.

21 A. It's a (indiscernible) boat, which we talked about for a
22 second yesterday, and it had two big saddle tanks on each side of
23 the engine room, probably held -- I don't know, I'm guessing
24 15,000 gallons of fuel. Guessing, I'm guessing. Don't hold me to
25 it, you know what I mean?

1 Q. Yeah, yep.

2 A. Usually put 4,500 gallons fuel in it, both tanks, easily, you
3 know what I mean? So it didn't list, you know what I'm saying?
4 And I'm trying to think back, (indiscernible) now, but --

5 Q. I think --

6 A. I believe it has a transfer pump so you could transfer fuel,
7 because I remember (indiscernible) burn the return off the
8 engines, you know what I mean?

9 (Simultaneous speaking.)

10 Q. Um-hum.

11 A. -- the valves, do the -- which you probably already know.
12 The only tanks in the boat were forward there in the engine room;
13 both sides of the hull were fuel tanks in the engine room. And
14 the engine room was big because it was a shrimp boat, because they
15 didn't load it up with fish like in a ground fish boat, you know
16 what I mean?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Shrimp doesn't take up that much room, you know. Probably
19 held 78,000 pounds of fish, the fish hold itself, all right. And
20 as far as I know, I know all the plumbing was all right for them
21 because I've seen it and -- when I was around, you know, but --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. Other than that, I don't know.

24 Q. Okay. And then --

25 A. The typical -- it's a typical southern boat, you know what

1 I'm saying?

2 Q. Can you kind of explain what you mean by that?

3 A. It's a shrimper, it's a -- you've seen the boat, pictures of
4 the boat I'm sure, but --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. It's a shrimper, was a shrimp boat to begin with. I mean, it
7 was built for shrimping, you know what I mean?

8 Q. I do.

9 A. And they put the tanks on the -- if you're in the engine
10 room, port/starboard are the fuel tanks, you know what I mean?
11 They're fucking -- well, they -- I didn't mean to swear, but they
12 go up to the deck, you know what I'm saying? So they --

13 Q. I do.

14 A. They're pretty big tanks. And the engine room was
15 (indiscernible) compared to, you know, like a lot of other boats I
16 work on where they're built in Maine for ground fishing or
17 whatever, like a Galley and Stevens (ph.) or something, but --
18 about all I can tell you about that. I don't know.

19 Q. Okay. So they would -- the next question I had is the tank
20 vents, where were the tank vents located? Fuel tank --

21 A. On deck under the wheel -- under the whaleback, if I
22 remember. I'm not sure. I never fueled it up.

23 Q. Oh, okay.

24 A. Because they always fueled it up in Massachusetts, you know
25 what I mean?

1 Q. In Gloucester?

2 A. Yeah, probably in Gloucester, I imagine, because fuel is
3 cheaper down there than in Portland, you know what I mean?

4 Q. Um-hum. So, sorry, back --

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 A. I'm trying to think. I can ask Rink and call you back --

7 Q. Well, that's fine -- yeah, we're going to talk to him again,
8 too, so no need. Just whatever your recollection was is fine, so
9 thank you. So you said the vents came up on deck --

10 A. As far as I know, they're -- and I don't know if they had the
11 check valves on them or not.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. They probably did. They were up under the whaleback. And
14 usually that's a pretty dry place. Usually the wet place on the
15 deck is in the middle, mid-ship of the deck, you know what I mean,
16 on a shrimper. I've fished on them before, actually, and I've
17 worked on a lot of them. That's about all I can tell you about
18 that.

19 Q. Okay. Next question --

20 A. Best of my recollection.

21 Q. And the vent is just right on deck there, so if you
22 overfilled the fuel tanks, it would come out on deck?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. We never overfilled them. I know my son didn't. Because you

1 never fill them up --

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. -- fuel, you know what I mean?

5 Q. Um-hum.

6 A. They're -- probably are always like two-thirds full, I would
7 guess, by looking at the sight gauges on them. And there were
8 valves on the sight gauges so you could shut them off, you know
9 what I mean? So, if the sight tube was leaking or something,
10 you're not going to leak fuel in the bilge.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. You know what I'm saying? But --

13 Q. All right. Next question I have is, what was the standard
14 operation of the fuel system? So where -- you said they loaded
15 fuel in Gloucester, and then how was it used? How was it
16 transferred? Do you know what -- I know you said you had a
17 16-cylinder Cat on there. What was the typical burn rate?

18 A. No, it was a 12-cylinder --

19 Q. Sorry, 12-cylinder.

20 A. -- 3412, 624 horsepower. I've rebuilt a bunch of them.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. And the engine was in pretty good shape, actually, which I
23 was surprised, because the boat was a Carlos boat that came from
24 New Bedford, and the engine wasn't in bad shape. I adjusted the
25 valves on it, fixed a bunch of water leaks. But according to Rink

1 -- I just fixed his other boat, had his engine apart on this other
2 boat -- the boat was fishing like not long before he bought it,
3 you know what I mean? It was -- I don't know whether it was squid
4 fishing or what, but -- so it was fish -- somebody had it fishing,
5 doing something, but -- down that way, you know, down -- I'm from
6 Portland, so I know they do a lot of squid fishing and stuff down
7 there. But anyhow, the -- I really didn't think the boat was in
8 that bad -- wasn't in bad shape. If it was, the first one I
9 would've told was my son.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. (Indiscernible), you know what I mean?

12 Q. Um-hum.

13 A. I work on a lot of boats -- not a lot of boats, but enough,
14 you know. I've been doing it for years, but --

15 Q. Yeah, no --

16 A. -- the bilges looked good, the boat looked pretty good, you
17 know. The only thing I didn't spend a lot of time in was the
18 lazarette, which I guess is a big deal.

19 Q. Well, yeah, I mean --

20 A. I don't know, but, you know.

21 Q. Yeah, we're --

22 A. I've been down there maybe once or twice, you know, but it
23 was dry and typical southern boat, had steering rims, you know,
24 like you could buy at a tractor place or something. Typical --

25 (Simultaneous speaking.)

- 1 Q. Yeah, thank you. But --
- 2 A. They're all pretty much the same, you know.
- 3 Q. I do, yeah. The question I --
- 4 A. It didn't have the -- didn't have the WagnerTech steering,
5 like from Seattle or whatever, you know, like the other boats I
6 work on have that. They're all different, you know, but --
- 7 Q. Yeah. The question I wanted to just try and (indiscernible)
8 was just kind of the fuel system itself, if you could explain --
9 so they would obviously load the port and starboard tanks to, you
10 said about three-quarters full, and then would they pull from one
11 tank first? Could you, you know, could you cross-connect? Could
12 you take fuel from both tanks, or was there a day tank --
- 13 (Simultaneous speaking.)
- 14 A. Yeah, you can.
- 15 Q. -- the engine?
- 16 A. There was a line that went between both tanks.
- 17 Q. Do you know how they would typically manage that? So they'd
18 load in Gloucester and then, when they would operate, would they
19 pull from both tanks? Is there a day tank that you can use for
20 the engine or how --
- 21 A. I don't know how they did it. I never went fishing on it. I
22 don't know how they did it. My son tried to get me to go several
23 times; I don't want to go, but -- thank God, but -- usually
24 there's a line that runs between both tanks, you know what I mean?
- 25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. You can either burn off both, or you can burn off one so you
2 got a bunch of fish on one side of the boat so you can burn the
3 return off the tank where it's lower, you know what I mean?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. You know what I'm saying? You put --

6 Q. I do.

7 A. -- fuel back in the tank that's got -- I mean the tank that's
8 fuller and put it back in the one that's lower.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. I've been fishing a lot. I know how it works, but --

11 Q. And why would you --

12 A. -- I don't know exactly how they were doing it, to be honest
13 with you.

14 Q. Why would you need to do that?

15 A. Say you got a bunch of fish, you put your paw (ph.) to one
16 pen for your haddock, or whatever you got, right. You don't mix
17 them up, you know. And so say you got 5,000 pounds of fish in one
18 pen. Boat's listing some. You put it in the other pen, you know
19 what I mean?

20 Q. Got you. Is it --

21 A. And the other thing is, if you got -- which I had, I fished
22 on a boat like that, the *Alexander W*, a few years. And if you got
23 stern net reels, you got the port net out or the starboard net
24 out, it's going to make the boat list, you know what I mean?

25 Q. Yeah. So I guess the question is, is it fair to say that you

1 would do -- use the fuel tanks and the levels to manage a list or
2 try and mitigate a listing condition?

3 A. That's one way you do it.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And I think it had a -- I know it had a transfer pump,
6 actually, now that I'm thinking about it. So you can turn the
7 pump on just like -- it's like a gear pump, furnace pump.

8 Q. Yep.

9 A. And you pump fuel from one side to the other, to make it
10 quicker, you know what I'm saying?

11 Q. Yeah. And --

12 A. Instead of trying to burn and return, you know what I mean?

13 Q. You could try and balance the tanks out.

14 A. Yeah, you balance it out. You don't want the boat laying
15 over, you know, if you can help it.

16 Q. Yeah. Would you say --

17 A. They all lay over some, but --

18 Q. Yeah. How -- do you know how fast that pump would transfer
19 it?

20 A. No, I don't.

21 Q. Okay. Do you know what kind of pump it -- you said it was
22 just a --

23 A. I believe it was just like a gear pump, like you'd buy -- you
24 could buy it at (Indiscernible) or anywhere, you know what I mean?

25 Q. Yeah, okay.

1 A. Not some marine type of pump. I don't even know if they make
2 one, to be honest with you.

3 Q. In your experience, those types of pumps, what was the usual
4 -- I mean, if you had to guess off the top of your head, how --
5 what would the transfer rate be on one of those?

6 A. I'm thinking. I don't know. I don't want to say, because --

7 Q. Okay. That's fine.

8 A. -- don't know, you know what I mean?

9 Q. No, totally get it. No worries.

10 A. Yeah. I don't want to blow smoke.

11 Q. Yeah. And then that -- the 3412 Cat, what would you say the
12 typical burn rate was on one of those? Or fuel consumption rate?

13 A. Depends how hard you run it, but -- I mean, the
14 (indiscernible) everything else, you know what I mean?

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. You can figure it out. I mean, it's burning 550 gallons a
17 day.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Maybe 600. He had a 3304 generator that he ran when he was
20 fishing, but he had another generator, too, for backup, and that
21 probably burns at least 80 gallons a day, you know, 24 hours.

22 Q. Yep.

23 A. I'm guessing around 600 gallons a day for the boat.

24 Q. The boat would burn 600. Okay.

25 A. Yeah, at the most.

1 Q. To run all of the machines --

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 A. -- same engine on several boats I've been on, and several
4 engines I've rebuilt, and depends how you run it, you know what I
5 mean?

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. If you run it at 1,400 RPMs, you burn a lot less fuel than at
8 1,700. The engine's rated for 1,800 (indiscernible).

9 Q. Okay, great. The next question I had is, how did the fuel
10 system need to be lined up to conduct those internal transfers?

11 A. Well, the transfer pump goes to a manifold with valves on it.
12 They'd go port -- with that particular boat, port or starboard.
13 So you could turn the starboard suction on, and the port would
14 turn on pump then, you know what I mean? Basically, to make it
15 simple.

16 Q. It can either go from port --

17 A. Most of the boats I've been on and a lot of boats I work on,
18 you got tanks in the stern, too, you know, but --

19 Q. This boat didn't have any stern tanks?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay. And then --

22 A. Just the two saddle -- I call them saddle tanks --

23 Q. Yeah, port/starboard.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And then the generator, did it -- how big was the generator

1 tank?

2 A. That could run the same way, off either tank.

3 Q. Okay. So you could take fuel from either of those tanks.

4 A. Right, and they all had Racor filters and --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- there were valves on the filters to -- there was a winch
7 engine as well, did the same thing, a 6-cylinder Caterpillar. And
8 then there was an engine up forward in the forepeak, which was a
9 20kw 271 Detroit, and that one burns --

10 Q. Yep.

11 A. -- the fuel, but it returns a lot too. He didn't really use
12 it fishing because he had so many big electric motors for steering
13 and everything else, so that's more of a -- as a backup and a dock
14 generator, you know what I mean?

15 Q. Yep.

16 A. When he tied up.

17 Q. For shore power.

18 A. Yeah, but if --

19 (Simultaneous speaking.)

20 Q. -- shore power.

21 A. -- other generator quit, it could run the pumps and steering
22 and get, you know, lights and get home, basically.

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. That's the way I understand it, and I worked on
25 (indiscernible). It needed more than 20kw to run the boat, but --

1 (Simultaneous speaking.)

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- fishing, you know.

4 Q. Yep. All right, hey, next question I had for you was -- and
5 I think you kind of already answered this -- was how fast or how
6 long did it take to transfer between tanks? You said you had that
7 gear pump, and you're not really sure on how quick --

8 A. No, I really don't know.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. I don't know. Rink might know; I don't know.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I never went fishing on it.

13 Q. And I understand. The next question I had, does the fuel
14 system have the ability for both fuel tanks to feed the main
15 engine? I think you said that is yes, that you could take suction
16 from both or fuel from both.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And I can tell you, too, as far as Racors went, they had the
20 big Racor filters, and the fuel filters were changed a lot. They
21 had a whole forepeak full of filters, you know what I mean?

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. And my boy was really good at -- he was a pretty good
24 mechanic actually. And the filters were always clean. The fuel
25 really wasn't bad on the boat either. We didn't have algae (ph.)

1 problems or anything like that.

2 (Simultaneous speaking.)

3 Q. -- the tanks, yeah.

4 A. A lot of boats I've worked on, we've had -- especially change
5 of season (indiscernible) problems.

6 Q. Yep.

7 A. As far as I could tell, but the boat hadn't been fishing that
8 long either, you know.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. But the fuel was pretty clean because I'd go down and change
11 the oil, this and that, and -- yeah, most of the time, when I
12 pulled the Racors out, they were clean, you know, but -- to change
13 them anyhow, you know.

14 Q. Yeah, just to do the maintenance --

15 (Simultaneous speaking.)

16 A. -- of them, you know.

17 Q. Yep. All right, next question was, did the crew, to your
18 knowledge, do internal transfers?

19 A. What's that mean?

20 Q. Well, they -- so the crew or someone would transfer fuel
21 onboard. You pretty much -- I think you already answered that
22 one, but you said they would manage -- if they had fish loaded,
23 they would transfer fuel within -- while they were underway.

24 A. I think -- I'll you what I think.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. I don't know this either. (Indiscernible) the engine room
2 with my son, and he worked with me for a long time, too, on and
3 off, you know what I mean?

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. And he'd been on a lot of boats. He was on the *Athena*, one
6 of Carlos' boats, years -- in fact, he's been on about every boat
7 (indiscernible), you know.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. And he took care of the engine room, you know what I mean?

10 Q. Yep.

11 A. Because I don't think the crew is very capable with doing
12 that, personally, but that's my opinion. I wouldn't let them do
13 it. And I didn't know the crew.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. I knew one of them, just -- I didn't hang around with any of
16 them, I never fished with any of them, but one guy was a kid
17 and -- whatever, I don't -- you know what I mean? I don't know.

18 Q. Yeah. So you --

19 A. I know Bobby took care of everything that way. If they had a
20 hydraulic leak, he took care of it, because you always have
21 problems (indiscernible). And I've been with Bobby, you know, and
22 we always take care of our own stuff, you know.

23 Q. I do. So I guess --

24 A. I've been with pros fishing. I've never been with people who
25 don't know what they're doing either, you know.

- 1 Q. Yep, I understand. So I guess the question is, so Bobby
2 would do -- pretty much any engine room stuff, he was the one that
3 would do it. He would --
- 4 A. Yeah, it would be Bobby --
- 5 Q. Okay. He would do the internal --
- 6 A. -- I guarantee you that. I can guarantee you that.
- 7 Q. Yeah. He would do the --
- 8 A. Because he don't let nobody down in the engine room unless
9 they know what they're doing, you know what I mean?
- 10 Q. Yeah, I do.
- 11 A. And he's always -- he's full of energy, you know. He's
12 always -- I fished with him. I know (indiscernible). But, when I
13 was with him, I'd do the engine room, you know, but --
- 14 Q. Yeah.
- 15 A. I was down, every tow, I'd be in the engine room, after we
16 hauled back, like (indiscernible) so -- you know what I mean?
- 17 Q. Yeah.
- 18 A. But I'd always go down, look around, make sure everything was
19 all right.
- 20 Q. Yep. All right, so the next question I have, do you know if
21 Bobby would traditionally do an internal fuel transfer when they
22 were returning to Gloucester?
- 23 A. No, I don't know that.
- 24 Q. Okay.
- 25 A. I can't answer that. I'm sorry.

1 Q. No worries. All right, so the next set of questions I have
2 relate to the bilge system. So if you can kind of explain the
3 bilge system and its components, kind of which sections of the
4 vessel took suction from, and then how it had to be lined up for
5 that to work properly.

6 A. It's not very complicated, but I'll explain the best I can.
7 I'm kind of vague on it, but I pumped the boat out a lot for
8 Bobby, because he lived in [REDACTED], and the boat would
9 be here or somewhere, you know what I mean? He's like 45 minutes
10 away one-way, you know what I'm saying?

11 Q. Yep.

12 A. So I'd go down and pump the boat out because ice would be
13 melting, you know, whatever, you know what I mean?

14 Q. Yep.

15 A. I really didn't -- that wasn't my duty. I didn't work --
16 fish on the boat and stuff. But there's two bilge manifolds, you
17 know what I'm talking about?

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. With -- I'm trying to think on this boat; I work on other
20 boats too. He had an engine room suction on one -- you know, this
21 is one manifold: engine room suction, fish hold, lazarette on that
22 particular boat, and I think forepeak. I'm trying to think.
23 Actually -- yeah. And there were 2-inch MP pumps, Marine Products
24 pumps, for each manifold, and lazarette, of course. So you had
25 two suctions for each compartment, all right.

1 And it did not have -- like one boat I work on all the time,
2 we get troughs; the ice and stuff goes in the trough. We call
3 that the fish hold pump. Then there's a shaft alley where the
4 shaft is, the bottom of the fish hold.

5 Q. Yep.

6 A. Well, this one didn't have it.

7 Q. Okay, I know what you're saying now.

8 A. Anything that went in went in the shaft alley. I call it the
9 shaft alley; whatever you want to call it. The bottom of the fish
10 hold. When I was around, I always used the one manifold on the
11 starboard side, but -- and then there was two big sea chests, one
12 on each side, with gate valves with big handles on them. I can't
13 tell you what brand they were, whether they were Perco (ph.),
14 whatever they were. But they're there, you know.

15 And then there was two deck pumps for the deck hoses, because
16 you use the deck hose on the deck to clean the fish and wash the
17 deck and all that stuff. You use another one a lot of times for
18 the lobster tank, because you get lobsters if you're in
19 Massachusetts. You can't have them up here, but down there you
20 can, you know. (Indiscernible) five under the lobsters or
21 something like that. And the suction lines had check valves in
22 them, which aren't always reliable, and you know that probably,
23 but --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- like most boats, you know what I mean? And there are

1 electric pumps, 3 horsepower Baldor (ph.) motors, 3-phase motors.
2 The other thing you could do, which is probably -- most of the
3 boats I work on, they do it, you could crack a valve to prime the
4 pump --

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- bolt that comes off the sea chest, another pipe comes off.
8 It's a either inch-and-a-half, 2-inch pipe, off the sea pump --
9 sea chest I mean. And there's a ball valve there, you can open it
10 up a little bit; I always did. So if you're busy and you forget
11 the pump's running, you don't burn the seal out of the pump, you
12 know what I mean?

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So you're going to pump (indiscernible) or whatever, you
15 know. Anyhow, there's a (indiscernible) on each side of the
16 engine room and a pump for each (indiscernible) in those pumps as
17 far as --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- you know what I mean?

20 Q. Um-hum.

21 A. But, if you had a problem, you could take the deck hose pump
22 -- or Bobby could do it, or I could do it -- and you can make it a
23 bilge pump, you know what I mean?

24 Q. Yeah. Run it the other way.

25 A. You know when you get a (indiscernible), they're bilge alarms

1 and stuff, you know, but things happen all the time, so I don't
2 know. So, say one section plugged up, you get another pipe off
3 the other manifold, you know what I'm saying?

4 Q. On the port or starboard side?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. So you could -- most boats are that way usually.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. A decent boat.

10 Q. I noticed, too, on the bilge manifolds, I think it was on
11 some pictures, they had the valves labeled, I think it was in
12 Portuguese, like a P, S, and L.

13 A. Oh, everything was in Portuguese on there. It was a Carlos
14 boat.

15 Q. Yeah. Do you know what that --

16 A. I couldn't even understand it. I don't know.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. I know what was what, you know what I mean?

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. I see it all over the place, and they use magic marker.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. I'm like, whatever. Actually, I worked for Carlos a little
23 bit, for like 2 days, then said, I'm done with him. But, you
24 know, New Bedford, but --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Yeah, I don't know. He had the *Athena*, too, which is still
2 fishing -- or was, I don't know where it went now. Bobby fished
3 on that for a year, and on that boat, it was the same -- about the
4 same size boat, same net reel configuration, and they had the
5 winches up -- they put a wheelhouse up on top of it, you know what
6 I mean?

7 Q. Um-hum.

8 A. Like regular -- like a fishing boat, and they had the winches
9 up there, and that had like a lot bigger engine than
10 (indiscernible) too, you know. I don't know. Just scalloping and
11 ground fished, you know, but Bobby's done that for quite a while
12 with friends (ph.), you know, but -- I don't know. I can't read
13 Portuguese either. I think it was labeled, as I remember, because
14 I knew what was what. I don't remember.

15 Q. Yeah, that was the question. Do you know like what that -- I
16 mean, you said a -- like was it for the lazarette, the fish hold,
17 the engine room? What were the -- do you remember what the actual
18 manifold -- the valve hookups or the -- what it was for?

19 A. The aft one was engine room -- no, lazarette -- I don't
20 remember.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Whatever, fish hold -- that's the only thing I ever really
23 pumped, because you can't pump the engine room (indiscernible) --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- because it's always -- you know, (indiscernible) with

1 something, you know.

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. (Indiscernible).

4 Q. So you said --

5 A. I don't remember.

6 Q. So you said you would pump the fish hold all the time?

7 A. Yeah, ice melts.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I don't think the insulation was that great in the fish hold.
10 We didn't have refrigeration.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. You know what I mean? So -- I think Rink was going to put it
13 in eventually, but -- like *Black Beauty* or whatever in Boston, we
14 have a refrigeration.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. So it keeps the -- you can keep the temperature down to like
17 35 degrees or whatever and -- because that boat, you couldn't even
18 fish in the summer without refrigeration because of the
19 insulation, you know what I mean?

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. Ice melts and stuff embarks (ph.) -- usually just ice
22 melting.

23 Q. Would it take -- would -- the bilge pump in the fish hold,
24 was it a good one? Would it take good suction or would you have
25 to clean it out at all or it worked good?

1 A. Well, I mean, cleaning -- they cleaned it all the time.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. Whenever you unload fish, you got to clean down there,
4 because there're fish scales and stuff in there, you know what I'm
5 saying?

6 Q. Um-hum, yeah.

7 A. Same with Willie's boat and -- you don't know Willie, but I'm
8 just using that for an example, but that boat (indiscernible) and
9 it's been fishing for 40 years. Yeah, you always got to clean
10 that. You got to clean the shaft alley out too. Stuff gets down
11 in there. Then you got, I don't know what you want to call it,
12 strainers on the end of the pipe --

13 Q. Yep.

14 A. -- and they'll plug up with scales or whatever, you know what
15 I mean? You don't have trash or anything in there. It's just
16 fish scales and it's like black water, you know. We'd always --
17 like the *Black Beauty*, we always -- I don't do it, that's the
18 crew's job, but you clean that out -- actually, we pressure-wash
19 that one. You want your pumps working, and that's why you have
20 two, you know what I mean?

21 Q. Yeah. All right, hey, the next question I have is, in the
22 first interview we did, you stated that you or the crew checked
23 the bilge alarms every time the boat came in. Can you --

24 A. I did.

25 Q. How did --

1 A. Yeah, I did it. Because my boy was on there, and Rink owned
2 the boat, you know what I mean?

3 Q. How did you do that? Did you go down and lift all the
4 alarms, or did you go up in the wheelhouse and just test it that
5 way? What was -- how did -- can you explain how you did it?

6 A. There's a micro-switch in the alarm, you check it that way,
7 all right. And I'd blow on the hose. There's a hose that goes
8 down to a bell (ph.); disconnect it and blow on that and make sure
9 it went off. You know what I mean? And make sure the bell was
10 clean. It's a murphy alarm; I don't know if you're familiar with
11 them.

12 Q. Yeah. So --

13 A. The alarms stay mounted on the bulkhead, so the engine room
14 one would be mounted on the bulkhead between the engine room and
15 the fish hold.

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. And the alarms stay 6 feet up from the bilge, all right.
18 You'd be looking at -- oh, maybe not eye level, but chest level.
19 And there's a piece of tubing that goes down to a bell, so when
20 water goes up in there, it pushes the air up and it sets the alarm
21 off. There's a micro-switch in there. There's a diaphragm and a
22 micro-switch; that's how they work.

23 Q. Yeah. So you said you would go to that hose and blow air in
24 there to make sure that that would indicate --

25 A. Yeah, with my mouth, yeah.

1 Q. Okay. So not just push -- like not push the test button or
2 like jump the circuit or anything like that to test it.

3 A. Nah, no.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Plus there's a murphy panel in the wheelhouse with a silence
6 button, which I don't agree with. They all have them, you know
7 what I mean?

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. And there's a light that blinks anyhow, no matter whether you
10 push the silence button or not, you know what I mean?

11 Q. Yeah, the visual alarm.

12 A. A little alarm, like a backup alarm.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Or an engine alarm or whatever, you know. Yeah, I checked
15 them all the time.

16 Q. And how did you guys check the one in the lazarette?

17 A. Same way, but I didn't do it.

18 Q. Who -- who did it --

19 A. I'm going to be honest with you about that.

20 Q. Okay. Who did --

21 A. Rink and Bobby did the lazarette shit.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I never really had a reason to go down there. I'm always
24 busy.

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. So I'm not right up on the lazarette, to be honest with you.
2 I've been down there, but --

3 Q. Were you there when they tested that one? Would they do the
4 same method that you did, or would they --

5 A. No, I wasn't.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I can't -- I'm not going to lie to you.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No, I wasn't. I don't lie.

10 Q. No, thank you. All right, moving on to --

11 A. But --

12 Q. Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

13 A. I just know that my kid was on his game, you know.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. He's had issues over the years, but he was on his game; he's
16 really good on a boat. I've fished with him. And between me and
17 him, we never -- we didn't sleep much, you know?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. I know we never did. He had a really good reputation as far
20 as that. I don't know, you know. I wish I knew what happened,
21 but I don't know.

22 Q. Yep. No, I understand.

23 A. And I really don't believe he was behind the wheel for
24 whatever happened. You can feel the boat if it's full of water or
25 something, you know?

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. You can feel what -- you know, you're Coast Guard, so
3 whatever.

4 Q. So --

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 A. -- my opinion.

7 Q. I just had another couple questions here, and then I'll open
8 it up to everybody. So the next has to do with just kind of
9 listing or heeling conditions. I know we talked about it earlier,
10 but did you know any heeling or listing conditions, if the vessel
11 would have a certain -- if it was in certain loaded or trim state?

12 A. Not really.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I was surprised because it was a shrimper, you know.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. They don't draw (ph.) as much water as a lot of boats, you
17 know what I mean? But it really didn't, you know. I know a lot
18 of boats were designed by Gilbert, I've worked on his
19 (indiscernible) boats and stuff, and they'll list like hell, you
20 know?

21 Q. Um-hum.

22 A. I never really -- I never noticed it in the harbor, you know
23 what I mean? That's all I can tell you there.

24 Q. And then I know you kind of mentioned sometimes, maybe if
25 they had a catch onboard, they would use -- do some internal fuel

1 transfers to maybe balance the boat out. Would they use any other
2 -- like I don't know if they had any water tanks or any ballast
3 tanks or anything like that --

4 A. No, no ballast tanks that I know of.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. I know boats I've been on, worked on, that have them, but a
7 lot of boats have a boom they used -- this one didn't have that.
8 It's a swinging boom where you haul with the cargo winches that
9 are on.

10 Q. Yep.

11 A. We'd haul the cart (ph.) in, remove the doors or whatever,
12 and it didn't have that one. The booms were stable. The boom is
13 built more like a scalloper.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. And Bobby actually moved the booms in, which made it better,
16 and plus it puts the bag in the middle of the boat, mid-ship,
17 instead of dumping the bag on one side or the other, you know what
18 I mean?

19 Q. You said he -- how did he do that? Did he cut them and move
20 them in or --

21 A. Put new stay (ph.) wires on them, shortened them up. They're
22 like seven-eighths stay wires. Their boom going off one side and
23 the other --

24 (Simultaneous speaking.)

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- way off. But shrimp boats, you fill up the
2 (indiscernible) wings too, you know.

3 Q. Yeah, yeah. That's where they'd bring the net and
4 everything.

5 A. Actually, he moved them in a little bit. Mike was there and
6 I was around.

7 Q. Do you know when that was done? What time of year?

8 A. I don't know, probably a month after he had the boat. I'm
9 guessing; I don't know.

10 Q. July/August?

11 A. Yeah, August -- I don't think the boat even started going
12 until the end of July. I got a picture in my phone, I think it
13 was July 3rd when he left for his trip, you know.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. Reason he did it, he moved it in so you're not dumping the
16 bag on one side or the other, you know.

17 Q. Dump it center.

18 A. And you're not putting the bag on the stern, because you
19 don't want all kinds of weight on the stern, you know what I mean?
20 You already got two net reels back there and shit.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. And it makes it easier to pick the pile, all that stuff, you
23 know, so -- picking the pile, I mean getting rid of the discard
24 and keeping the fish, whatever you're doing, you know what I mean,
25 the keepable fish.

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. And it makes it quicker and easier, you know.
- 3 Q. Yep. All right, the next question was -- had to do with
4 hydraulic oil. I think -- did you guys typically bring hydraulic
5 oil onboard?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. And how many --
- 8 A. There's always -- there's oil (indiscernible).
- 9 Q. Yeah.
- 10 A. There's a big hydraulic tank that's welded to the bulkhead
11 between the fish hold and engine room, I believe, as I remember.
12 I got to -- you're taxing me (ph.) now, but all boats have them.
13 Usually holds, I don't know, 2- to 300 gallons of hydraulic oil,
14 you know. But usually you have a bunch of buckets for it --
- 15 Q. Like 5-gallon --
- 16 A. -- too, so if you -- yeah, 5-gallon buckets. So if you blew
17 a hose or something, you could -- something happens, you could put
18 hydraulic oil in, you know.
- 19 Q. Yeah, get your hydraulic --
- 20 A. Steering usually runs off the same tank, too, you know.
- 21 Q. And then where would -- how many would you typically have or
22 would you bring or anything, typically?
- 23 A. Maybe 30, 40 gallons. But another thing you can do is a lube
24 oil tank on the boat, which has 30-weight motor oil in it.
- 25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. If you had a problem, not talking about a catastrophic
2 problem, but a problem, and -- say you're all the way out on
3 George's Bank (ph.); you don't want to come in, you know, 18 hours
4 or whatever, 15 hours. You can take 30-weight oil and put diesel
5 fuel in it, thin it out a little bit, finish your trap, come in
6 and fix the problem.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. I mean -- you know what I mean? But that's -- I've been out
9 when that's happened.

10 Q. Okay. And then where would -- you said the hydraulic tank
11 itself is on the bulkhead between the fish hold and the engine
12 room. What about these buckets --

13 A. I think it was. I'm trying to (indiscernible). I don't
14 know.

15 Q. The buckets of hydraulic oil, where would you guys store
16 those?

17 A. In the forepeak. There was a tool bench --

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. -- and there's shelves -- there's a tool bench, a vice, and
20 shelves, and the top shelf was full of filters and spare hydraulic
21 hoses, because you don't want to come in if you don't have to, and
22 all kinds of wrenches and everything else, you know. Plus we had
23 motor oil up there too.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And there's a lube oil tank was on there. I know that was on

1 the starboard side, on the fish hold bulkhead. That probably held
2 2, 3 gallons of motor oils.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Plus we usually had, I'd say -- transmission oil's a
5 different weight than the engine oil. The engine runs 30-weight
6 in, straight 30, Mobil, and the transmission, we use 40-weight in.
7 It's a Twin Disc, the transmission. We had oil there for that,
8 too, but if you had a problem, you could put 30-weight in it if
9 you really needed to.

10 Q. Yeah. All right. The next question I had is, you kind of
11 mentioned it, obviously the vessel didn't have an insulated fish
12 hold, but --

13 A. It was insulated, but they just don't insulate them that
14 good.

15 Q. Yeah. Refrigerated, excuse me.

16 A. Refrigerated, yeah, exactly.

17 Q. And you said that they would obviously load the fish hold,
18 they would create some unbalance -- or a little list here and
19 there. They used the fuel tanks to potentially balance that out a
20 little bit.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. But were you aware of any other kind of conditions where you
23 would have -- like things sloshing around or like water moving
24 from one side of the vessel to the other or gear drifts, that type
25 of thing?

1 A. Not that I know of. And you're pretty careful about that,
2 especially if it's rough, you know what I mean?

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. We used to take the chain (indiscernible) and put it over the
5 fish hold hatch, you know what I'm saying? If it was going to be
6 -- if we were going to have a storm, you know what I mean?

7 Q. To keep it from coming off?

8 A. Yeah. Because you don't want it to come off (indiscernible).

9 Q. Yeah. And then another question, too, the lazarette hatch, I
10 think Rink said it just kind of sat on top there; there wasn't any
11 dogs or anything. Is that your recollection?

12 A. Kind of, yeah.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. But it was up high, had a high (indiscernible).

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. It was in the dry spot on the boat, but whether it came off
17 or not, I don't know. It wasn't that rough when it sunk. My
18 buddy was out there in the *Black Beauty*. I called him up
19 immediately when Rink called me, it's like 3 or 4 in the morning.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. I don't know what time it was -- it was early morning, and I
22 was freaking out, and Billy said -- Billy Train (ph.) -- he was
23 right -- wasn't that far away, probably 40 miles away. He said,
24 nah, it's just sloppy, you know. It was windy and rainy, and they
25 were -- I was going to Gloucester that morning to meet the boat,

1 but he said it wasn't really bad at all. And the *Black Beauty* is
2 a lot more smaller, you know.

3 Q. Yep. Okay, no, thank you for that --

4 A. But that particular boat, I think everything's dogged down.
5 I don't know. That's my opinion, but whatever.

6 Q. And then the last question I had just was regarding any
7 additional equipment or things changed or moved around since you
8 started working on the boat back in July/August. I know you
9 mentioned the booms were moved in a little bit or the loading
10 arms --

11 A. Yeah, not much. Probably 2 to 3 feet. I don't think -- that
12 wouldn't affect the boat. I know boats.

13 Q. Yeah. And then any -- like I know new --

14 A. As far as the engine room, everything was the same. The
15 trawl doors are always in the same place, and they weren't very
16 big anyhow. They weren't big enough, I don't think.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. You know, for the net -- fishing-wise, you know.

19 Q. Um-hum.

20 A. The engines were all in the same place. Had a, like I said,
21 a 3304 on the starboard side of the engine room, the -- in front
22 of the forepeak bulkhead, I put a new generator in, but I had a
23 generator, a 65 JW, I had that rewound and (indiscernible) and put
24 that back on. I believe that had a new regulator in it.

25 And the GM engine, the only thing I did to that -- we were

1 going to replace it with a Northern Lights John Deere engine, 30kw
2 or something, but the only thing I did to that was I put a voltage
3 regulator on it, changed fuel filters. Bobby changed the oil in
4 it (indiscernible). Other than that, I don't know.

5 There's a winch engine on the port side, behind the forepeak
6 bulkhead, and that's a 3306 Caterpillar. And I didn't do much on
7 that. I changed the oil on it and put a thermostat in it, fixed a
8 couple leaks and this and that. Didn't really do much.

9 Q. Yep.

10 A. We really didn't have any big problems with the boat, to be
11 honest with you.

12 Q. Yeah. But no -- you weren't aware of any -- like obviously
13 you guys didn't do anything, but any major -- before you took the
14 boat, were any major things done to it, more -- like new net reels
15 added or --

16 A. No.

17 Q. -- new equipment put onboard or anything?

18 A. Not to this -- since Rink owned it, that I know of, there was
19 nothing done to it. Biggest thing Rink did to it was spend a lot
20 of time. He spent like most of the summer and good part of the
21 spring, whenever he got it. And I've worked on a lot of boats
22 with Rink, but I didn't work on this one at that time till he got
23 it going, but -- other than the generator I told you about.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. I did all of the oil changes and everything, checked

1 everything over before it left, you know what I mean? But as far
2 as I know, what he did to it is painted it. And any welding
3 necessary was done; he's got a welder. I don't know. You'll have
4 to ask him. But as far as I know, nothing -- he really didn't do
5 anything to it. The boat was all right, you know, as far as I
6 could see. It's what it is. All these boats are so old now, it's
7 (indiscernible), you know.

8 Q. Yeah. Roger.

9 A. That one's newer than a lot of them. I think it was an '87
10 or something. I don't remember. Which seems old, but nowadays,
11 it isn't, you know.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 CDR [REDACTED]: All right. That's all the questions I had for
14 you today. What I wanted to do, again, is thank you for taking
15 the time to talk with us, but I wanted to open it up to anybody
16 else who might have any questions. I know -- first up will be
17 Mr. [REDACTED] if he wants to talk.

18 [REDACTED], do you have any questions?

19 MR. [REDACTED]: Yes, sir. I just have one question.

20 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

21 Q. On a previous interview with Rink, he estimated that, at the
22 end of a typical trip, there would be about 1,000 pounds of fuel
23 in each tank remaining. Would that be enough to cause a
24 significant list if enough went from, say, the starboard fuel tank
25 to the port fuel tank?

1 A. Not really.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. I don't think so. Because a pen of fish is like -- I don't
4 know on that boat, but typical boat, a pen of fish is probably
5 5,000 pounds.

6 Q. Okay. So, in your opinion, if the thousand that was in the
7 starboard got inadvertently shifted to the port, say, nothing
8 really would happen to the boat?

9 A. Nah, it wouldn't tip it over, make it unseaworthy, I don't
10 think.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you.

12 A. That's my opinion. I'm not a marine architect, but --

13 Q. Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. [REDACTED]: That was my only question.

15 MR. BLETHEN: You're welcome.

16 CDR [REDACTED]: Thanks, [REDACTED].

17 Hey, Mr. Young, were you able to join the call?

18 (Pause.)

19 CDR [REDACTED]: Okay. Hearing nothing, I'll move on to
20 Lieutenant [REDACTED]. Do you have any additional questions?

21 LT [REDACTED] No, Commander, I have no further questions.

22 Thank you very much, Mr. Blethen.

23 CDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

24 Moving on to Mr. [REDACTED].

25 MR. [REDACTED] Yes, sir.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

2 Q. Maybe just one question from a previous transcript. I think
3 you were commenting a little on when they replaced the prop, if
4 you recall.

5 A. Yep.

6 Q. You were saying they also had to remove the rudder, and they
7 had to cut the bolts off, and I wasn't sure from the transcript,
8 were you referring to the flange inside the lazarette that holds
9 the rudder post to the rudderstock or --

10 A. No.

11 Q. -- the exterior bolts?

12 A. They're exterior. There's a flange out -- you got a rudder
13 post that goes up through the (indiscernible) through the hole in
14 the packing gland, and on the outside of the boat, in the water,
15 there's usually -- it's a 8-bolt, they're usually three-quarter or
16 seven-eighths inch diameter bolts, and you cut those off. And
17 usually what you do is take steel and bend it and weld it around
18 in case the bolts did get electrolysis or whatever or break or
19 something. And what I do when I do it is I weld the nuts so the
20 bolts are stuck (ph.); I put a tack weld on every nut so they
21 can't back off. So what you do is cut them off and you put new
22 bolts and (indiscernible) bolts. That's how you do it.

23 Q. Okay. But to -- do they actually drop out the rudder when
24 they also undo the flange inside the lazarette?

25 A. No --

1 (Simultaneous speaking.)

2 A. -- Portland Yacht Service did it. You can call Randy up down
3 at Portland Yacht and ask him.

4 Q. Okay. Yes, sir. Thank you.

5 A. They did the job, Portland Yacht Service in Portland, Maine.

6 Q. Okay. Just wanted to (indiscernible). Thank you very much.

7 A. Yep. Right. I was supposed to be there; I couldn't be
8 there. (Indiscernible).

9 (Simultaneous speaking.)

10 MR. [REDACTED]: Thank you.

11 CDR [REDACTED]: All right, Mr. Blethen, that concludes the
12 questions that we had for you. If you have any questions or
13 anything like that for us, we're standing by to answer them.

14 MR. BLETHEN: Not really. If you ever find out what
15 happened, I'd love to know, but --

16 (Simultaneous speaking.)

17 CDR [REDACTED]: Yeah, yeah. I mean, I'll --

18 MR. BLETHEN: -- for me. I'll never know. It bugs me every
19 day, you know what I mean?

20 CDR [REDACTED]: Yeah, we're working --

21 MR. BLETHEN: It still bothers me. And you told me it would
22 be a long time before you knew, so --

23 CDR [REDACTED]: Yeah, we're still -- like I said, still working
24 through evidence. We're able to get our -- get some documents up
25 to our Marine Safety Center up in -- or down in DC. They're going

1 to do some calculations for us, do some modeling, so that's going
2 to be helpful.

3 MR. BLETHEN: Yeah, I'd love to know, you know. Whether it's
4 good or bad, I'd like to know.

5 CDR [REDACTED]: We're still digging through the statements and
6 interviews we got and trying to --

7 (Whereupon, 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 CFV *EMMY ROSE* WITH
LOSS OF LIFE, OFF THE COAST OF
PROVINCETOWN, MASSACHUSETTS,
ON NOVEMBER 23, 2020
Interview of Robert Blethen, Sr.

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM007

PLACE: Via telephone

DATE: January 13, 2021

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 large black rectangular redaction box covering the signature of the transcriber.

Autumn Weslow
Transcriber