

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

FLOODING OF TOWING VESSEL *UNCLE* *

BLUE ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER * Accident No.: DCA23FM023

ON MARCH 26, 2023 *

* * * * *

Interview of: TYROME LAMARK, Lead Deckhand
UNCLE BLUE

Aboard M/V *Uncle John*
Near Mile 184
Lower Mississippi River

Wednesday,
March 29, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigator
United States Coast Guard
Marine Safety Unit, Baton Rouge

LT. [REDACTED]
United States Coast Guard

MARCEL MUISE
National Transportation Safety Board

MICHAEL ALEXIS, Owner
Alexis Marine LLC

COREY P. PARENTON, ESQ.
On behalf of Alexis Marine LLC

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Tyrone Lamark:	
By CWO [REDACTED]	4
By Mr. Muise	13
By CWO [REDACTED]	15
By Mr. Muise	16
By CWO [REDACTED]	18
By Mr. Muise	18
By CWO [REDACTED]	21
By Mr. Muise	22
By Lt. [REDACTED]	24
By CWO [REDACTED]	27
By Lt. [REDACTED]	27
By CWO [REDACTED]	29
By Lt. [REDACTED]	34
By Mr. Muise	35
By CWO [REDACTED]	38

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 CWO [REDACTED] The interview is Tyrome Lamark who was the lead
3 deckhand on board the *Uncle Blue*, and he was awake about to
4 relieve the watch at 0600.

5 My name is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]-
6 [REDACTED]. I'm the investigator with the Coast Guard, Marine Safety
7 Unit, Baton Rouge. Will the other parties going clockwise
8 introduce themselves and explain?

9 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise, M-u-i-s-e, with National
10 Transportation Safety Board.

11 MR. PARENTON: Corey Parenton, P-a-r-e-n-t-o-n, Staines,
12 Epling & Kenney on behalf of party-in-interest, Alexis Marine
13 LLC.

14 MR. LAMARK: Tyrome Lamark, lead deckhand on the *Uncle John*.

15 LT [REDACTED] Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard,
16 MSU, Baton Rouge as well.

17 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. So,
18 Mr. Lamark, starting on --

19 MR. MUISE: Do we have permission?

20 CWO [REDACTED] Do we have your permission to record this
21 interview?

22 MR. LAMARK: Yes.

INTERVIEW OF TYROME LAMARK

23 BY CWO [REDACTED]

24 Q. Okay. So I want you to start on the -- with your watch
25

1 before, not the watch you were coming onto, but your watch the
2 evening before on the 25th from the time you went on watch,
3 everything you did, what you did, and then throughout the night,
4 throughout your sleep, and then coming on watch leading up to the
5 taking on water and eventually sinking.

6 A. Okay. So my normal watch, you do engine room checks every
7 hour, on the hour. We had the deck barge, dirt barge in transit.
8 So every 30 minutes, we go check and see if our lights are
9 working, our transport lights. Also checking the engine room
10 every other hour.

11 MR. MUISE: Every other hour or every hour.

12 MR. LAMARK: Every other hour.

13 MR. MUISE: Every other hour, gotcha.

14 BY CWO [REDACTED]

15 Q. Okay. So when did you come on watch? The last watch you
16 stood, what time did you come on watch?

17 A. I get up early. So I go -- I usually come on watch before
18 like 6 o'clock. It be like 5:30.

19 Q. So the last watch you stood was on the evening of the 25th?

20 A. Right.

21 Q. At 5:30.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Can you tell us everything that happened from the time you
24 came on watch on the 25th until what time you came off watch?

25 A. I don't remember everything to detail but I know we cut the

1 barge loose, took off with the barge. That's pretty much it.
2 Went through the locks. It's all riding through to there, like
3 you just ride the barge.

4 MR. MUISE: Do you remember where you were? Do you remember
5 what lock you went through?

6 MR. LAMARK: Through the Harvey Lock.

7 MR. MUISE: You went through the Harvey Lock.

8 BY CWO [REDACTED]

9 Q. So at 5:30 or 1730 on the 25th, you went through the Harvey
10 Lock?

11 A. I don't remember the exact time.

12 Q. It can be approximate. It's an estimate. Not --

13 A. Went through the locks, rode up (indiscernible).

14 Q. So what time did you come off watch on the evening of the
15 25th?

16 A. It was about -- close to 6 but it wasn't exactly 6, you know.
17 You know, people have -- you say come off watch?

18 Q. Yeah, you went on watch --

19 A. Oh, 6. Like in the evening?

20 Q. Yes.

21 MR. MUISE: You came off at midnight?

22 MR. LAMARK: Yeah.

23 MR. MUISE: Okay.

24 MR. LAMARK: Because some companies do 12s. We do 6.

25 BY CWO [REDACTED]

1 Q. Yeah. So you did a 6 hour watches and you did it from 6 to
2 midnight. You know you went through the Harvey Locks. You're not
3 sure about what time. Was it before sunset or was it still
4 daylight?

5 A. I'm not sure.

6 Q. I just ask so we can try to narrow down the time. So from
7 5:30 to you came off watch, did you make rounds of the vessel and
8 the engine room?

9 A. Oh, yeah. We make one every hour -- every other hour.

10 Q. Every other hour.

11 A. I keep saying every hour.

12 Q. Can you detail what that interim watch looks like?

13 A. So the interim watch, what you're going to do is go in the
14 engine room. You've got to check behind like the stuffing boxes
15 and all that. So walk around the engine room, like the
16 generators, look behind them, see if anything's leaking oil or
17 anything like that and check the D (ph.) tanks. That's pretty
18 much it.

19 Q. So a general walkthrough, a general look. Is there any
20 temperature gauges that you need to read or levels or soundings
21 you have to take or is it just visual?

22 A. It's mostly visual. It's mostly visual but I mean if
23 something -- you'll have to shut down the engine to check the
24 temperature of it. If it's out of oil or something, you can look
25 at the level gauge.

1 Q. That would only be for -- is that only for like a problem you
2 guys are trying to diagnose or keep an eye on?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. But like normal, no expected problems.

5 A. Normal, no expected problems, you would visually walk through
6 there, walk in behind stuff. It's mostly if something leaks or
7 anything, you know, problem leaks. So.

8 Q. Is there any checklist you use or have a log that you have to
9 fill out saying that you did the round?

10 A. It's probably in the helm. I'm not sure.

11 Q. So you're not sure. But when you say you're not sure,
12 there's nothing that you personally fill out or use to look at?

13 A. No, not nothing I personally fill out. There's probably
14 something at the helm that they check off saying that I did it,
15 and I have to tell them I did this and did that and this.

16 Q. Okay. So you have to report the round to the --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- master or the pilot?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. On your rounds, what other spaces do you check and what are
21 you checking for?

22 A. We usually walk around, like we check to see if there's like
23 any lines, you know, unhooked or any void tanks. Anything that
24 you see out of the order.

25 Q. So when you say any void tanks, do you -- on a typical round,

1 you don't open the voids?

2 A. No, you just make sure of the dogs.

3 Q. Just checking the dogs. Do you go in any of the other
4 spaces?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. Okay. About what time do you think the last round you made
7 of the vessel was before you went off watch?

8 A. It would probably be 5 o'clock.

9 Q. When you came off watch at midnight.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. So the last round you made was at 5 o'clock when you came
12 on --

13 A. No, no, no. I'm getting confused because I work dayshift,
14 nightshift, dayshift, nightshift. But it was before like -- I
15 think it was 10 o'clock and then my last one was like 11, 11:30.
16 I did it like right before I got off watch.

17 CWO [REDACTED] Mike, you want to introduce yourself because
18 we're recording. That way the transcriptionist can recognize your
19 voice.

20 MR. ALEXIS: Mike Alexis, owner of Alexis Marine.

21 MR. LAMARK: Is that it?

22 CWO [REDACTED] No.

23 BY CWO [REDACTED]

24 Q. Okay. So the last round you made was between 11 and 11:30.
25 About how long does it take you to make a round?

1 A. Probably 30 minutes.

2 Q. And on the evening of the 25th, can you think of anything out
3 of the ordinary, noises, smells, vibrations, the way the boat was
4 riding?

5 A. No, nothing like crazy. It's just like how we usually
6 normally ride. It was riding normal.

7 MR. MUISE: Was there any equipment that you guys were
8 keeping an eye on or maintaining? We discussed earlier about
9 temperatures or throttles or things like that? Were any of those
10 on the mind of the crew at the time?

11 MR. LAMARK: No, not that I know.

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]

13 Q. For tanks and voids, do you sound or check them for water
14 throughout your watch at any time?

15 A. Normally. Like if the boat was what you call. If the boat
16 is on the wake, you normally just do your walk arounds. If you
17 see a latch unlatched, you hook it back up.

18 Q. Is there any time throughout the day, like is there a company
19 policy or anything like -- besides checking to see if the dogs,
20 the hatch is on, that you open those up and look for water, the
21 dog --

22 A. See, me, normally I would open it and report it to my captain
23 if something was not (indiscernible). Normally they're closed all
24 the times.

25 MR. MUISE: Normally closed, if they're closed, and you find

1 them closed, it's not something you would open to look.

2 MR. LAMARK: Right, right.

3 MR. MUISE: It's already closed.

4 MR. LAMARK: It's already closed.

5 MR. MUISE: You see that it's closed visually on your round,
6 you're satisfied and walk through.

7 MR. LAMARK: Yeah.

8 BY CWO [REDACTED]

9 Q. And you kind of mentioned it when you said if there was
10 anything out of the ordinary, like the boat was riding funny or --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- you would --

13 A. You would, if there's a void tank latch open or something
14 like that.

15 MR. MUISE: Vibrating, steered weird or --

16 MR. LAMARK: Right.

17 BY CWO [REDACTED]

18 Q. Do you know the last time that you did check any voids on the
19 vessel or sound the fuel tanks?

20 A. Well, my last walk. My last walkthrough, and I --

21 Q. I said check. When you physically opened them and looked in
22 them?

23 A. Oh, no.

24 MR. MUISE: Inspected.

25 CWO [REDACTED] Yeah.

1 BY CWO [REDACTED]

2 Q. Inspected inside them?

3 A. Nothing was unlatched. So I didn't.

4 Q. You hadn't done that at no time in the near past.

5 A. Right. I didn't have to.

6 CWO [REDACTED] Do you have any more questions about rounds?

7 BY CWO [REDACTED]

8 Q. How long have you been on the boat? Well, actually let's
9 start, how long you been working with the company?

10 A. Five, five years.

11 Q. And you've been a deckhand that entire time?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. About how much experience do you have on the *Uncle Blue*?

14 A. *Uncle Blue*? I started on *Uncle Blue* years ago, when I first
15 got on. So.

16 MR. MUISE: Essentially since the beginning, extensive
17 history.

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. Did you go through any kind of training program?

20 A. Orientation.

21 Q. Just orientation?

22 A. Yeah. I mean you do normal, like drills and stuff.

23 MR. MUISE: Fire, abandon, obviously --

24 MR. LAMARK: Man over board, stuff like that.

25 BY CWO [REDACTED]

1 Q. All right. Can you describe what orientation consisted of?
2 You just said you had drills, but --

3 A. Like we all -- we'll talk to (indiscernible) or whatever, the
4 head person in charge. They're going to call everybody up there,
5 and we take this drill. Well, we have a drill as a duty for that
6 month. We go -- we walk through what the drill looks like, so you
7 see an actual person and we do like assessments. Basically we
8 talk, see how we could have did that better. That's
9 (indiscernible).

10 Q. Do you know when the last time was you ran a flooding drill,
11 a dewatering drill?

12 A. A flooding drill. I don't remember.

13 Q. Do you remember about when the last drill was that you ran
14 and what it was?

15 A. We have so many drills, sir.

16 Q. And when we ask you, if it's an estimate or an approximate,
17 that's fine, too. It doesn't have to be exact like to the date or
18 the time. Can you say like maybe a week, 2 weeks?

19 BY MR. MUISE:

20 Q. I guess a better question would be is a flooding scenario a
21 drill that's been ran in your 5 years on board? A responsive
22 meaning of saying, hey, avoids flooding or this is flooding,
23 rigging of dewatering equipment, rigging of bilge systems. Is
24 that a drill?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. We check the bilge. We've got bilge alarms.

1 That's what we got a bilge alarms for.

2 Q. Yeah, yeah. So, you're the experienced one here, right. I'm
3 not familiar with Alexis Marine or the company. Educate us.

4 A. So the boat was taking on water in the bilge. There's a
5 bilge alarm. That bilge alarm had done come off and let's the
6 cabin -- my bilge. So that means there's water on the deck and
7 that's normal for any boat to get water. So usually like I said,
8 it's -- there's flats (ph.) to get rid of the water that comes,
9 and what they discard of, anything that's in your bilge but fumes.

10 Q. Sucking out any bilge water --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- that you guys need to. But just to clarify, there's --
13 have you participated or heard of any drill on board Alexis Marine
14 vessels that would address a flooding scenario?

15 A. Yeah. But I don't remember how long ago it was.

16 Q. What do you remember from that?

17 A. That's what we had to do. We had to pull the bilge alarm,
18 and you had to fake out a scenario like you're talking to the
19 captain. There's water such and such in this area and walk them
20 through the protocols.

21 Q. What's those protocols? That's what I don't know about.
22 That's what we're here to find out about. Whatever you remember.
23 If you don't remember, that's totally cool.

24 A. No, I remember.

25 Q. I just want to make sure I'm on track and aware what the

1 situation.

2 A. Basically like -- all right. There's water anywhere. First
3 off -- first thing you do is alert the captain so he knows.
4 Before he even goes in there to check anything, you let him know,
5 hey, I'm going to check this. So -- but he already done knows the
6 drill.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. So, you be like, hey, captain, I'm going to check the engine
9 room. So I'm going. You act like you just fell upon this water
10 on the floor that's coming through the floorboards and you be
11 like, hey, captain, I think the bilge is overflowing or whatever.
12 And you report it to him and he says all right. Do the proper
13 protocols, that you do, which is sometimes it's just like hooking
14 the damn water pump to snuff the water.

15 Q. Okay. And that water pump, is that a fixed? Is that a
16 portable? Is that some big gasoline --

17 A. Yeah, some of them are stationary. Some of them are regular.
18 Some of them got fixed. Some of them got the one you just crank
19 up (indiscernible).

20 BY CWO [REDACTED]

21 Q. What's your typical time on the -- working on the boat and
22 off the boat?

23 A. My typical time? Like on my rotation?

24 Q. Yes, your rotation.

25 A. Me, generally I work 14 to 7.

1 Q. Fourteen on, and seven off?

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. And how long have you been on board?

4 A. This vessel?

5 Q. Yes.

6 A. Like 3, 4 days. I had just got on.

7 CWO ██████████ Do you anything more about his work history?

8 Any other questions.

9 BY MR. MUISE:

10 Q. So what's the process of being lead deckhand? What does that
11 mean lead deckhand?

12 A. All right. Lead deckhand, you're just a little bit more
13 experienced with the boat and how operations going than the
14 deckhands. So some deckhands may be green like on my normal
15 watch, I have a green deckhand.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. So I be training him how to (indiscernible).

18 Q. Green being new?

19 A. Yeah, like brand new.

20 Q. Is the lead deckhand the most senior deckhand on the boat,
21 experienced --

22 A. No.

23 Q. -- or is that like a special trust? Is that --

24 A. That's like -- all right. We got deckhand. We got a lead
25 deckhand, and then you got like a pilot like, you know, guys on

1 the boat --

2 Q. Like a steersman?

3 A. Yeah, steersman. So I'm a lead deckhand just training the
4 deckhands.

5 Q. Got it.

6 CWO [REDACTED] Are you working or thinking about moving up to
7 like steersman or anything?

8 MR. LAMARK: I don't want that headache. No, sir.

9 CWO [REDACTED] I've got a couple of follow-up questions about
10 (indiscernible). So when you were on watch as you were making
11 rounds, can you recall about how much water was in the bilge in
12 the engine room?

13 MR. LAMARK: Well, I wasn't on watch.

14 CWO [REDACTED] Well, when were on watch the evening before
15 between 6 and midnight?

16 MR. LAMARK: I didn't see any water.

17 CWO [REDACTED] You didn't see any water. Was it higher than
18 normal or anything?

19 MR. LAMARK: No.

20 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

21 BY MR. MUISE:

22 Q. What would be an expected level of normal for water? Is it
23 -- earlier you said there's always, right? There's always water
24 in the bilge, but is that like bone dry? Is that like 3 inches
25 along the center line?

1 A. So it's like --

2 Q. Give us an example.

3 A. All right. So that have like -- the tank is like this. And
4 it would have about this much water in it, like level-wise.

5 Q. Down to the V.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. A couple inches high down to the V. Okay.

8 A. That's normal. But any time you hear that alarm call, the
9 bilge alarm, that means it's high.

10 BY CWO [REDACTED]

11 Q. The last couple times you stood watch or been on the boat for
12 your 14 days on, do you recall the bilge alarm ever going off in
13 the past?

14 A. I wasn't on there 14 days. I was --

15 Q. But any -- the last couple times that you were on *Uncle Blue*.

16 A. It has never went off.

17 Q. And then the last 3 days that you were on there.

18 A. It never went off.

19 Q. It never went off. Did you hear anybody else talking about
20 being on watching and having the alarm going off?

21 A. No.

22 BY MR. MUISE:

23 Q. Do you know where all the bilge alarms are on the boat?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Could you tell me where the bilge alarms are?

- 1 A. There's a blue panel, they got -- that's like a manual switch
2 like. So you can actually cut it on and off from there. And then
3 there's --
- 4 Q. On the wheelhouse? The wheelhouse?
- 5 A. No, no, not from the wheelhouse.
- 6 Q. Where's the blue panel?
- 7 A. That's in the engine room.
- 8 Q. Oh, the blue panel is in the engine room.
- 9 A. So on the second deck like, as soon as you get up there.
- 10 Q. Okay.
- 11 A. There's a blue panel. They've got a bilge alarm right there.
- 12 Q. That's where the panel is.
- 13 A. And that way we can test it, like make it go off without --
- 14 Q. How many are there? Just the one in the front of the engine
15 room.
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. Just the one.
- 18 A. That I know of.
- 19 Q. Okay. There's just one that you know of. How high is that
20 alarm out of the bilge? Is it like 6 inches up, 4 inches? Do you
21 know where the sensor is on the bilge?
- 22 A. Uh-uh.
- 23 Q. You haven't seen it.
- 24 A. I ain't never seen the sensor.
- 25 Q. Okay. How do you test that?

1 A. You test it from the blue box. Like you flick it on and off
2 and when it sounds, that means like it's working properly. If it
3 doesn't sound at all, that means it's not going to alert that the
4 bilge is full.

5 Q. Now, where that panel is on the second deck, is there -- does
6 the alarm sound anyplace else?

7 A. No, it sounds everywhere. Like that bilge --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- the bilge alarm. It sounds everywhere.

10 Q. Okay. When you say everywhere, is it like a general alarm,
11 like if any alarm goes off, it's the same sound or --

12 A. No, it's not the same sound but it's like --

13 Q. It's got its own distinct sound?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. So if you hear it, you know it's the bilge.

16 A. The bilge, yeah. And then we walk in the thing, there's a
17 light. Like it'll say bilge alarm.

18 Q. When you say thing, like on the deck? You said on the second
19 deck, and I'm not sure. Is it that panel? Is it after the
20 galley, forward of the galley, up on deck?

21 A. So as you get in the engine room, it's right behind the black
22 door. Like it's right to the portside of the black door.

23 CWO [REDACTED] Anything else on the alarm?

24 BY MR. MUISE:

25 Q. Yeah, your normal duty role on board, is it a roving watch

1 kind of thing? Do you have specific assigned duties that --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- every couple of days or is it just a watch kind of
4 situation?

5 A. You don't have to wait. You watch, you clean, like typical
6 normal stuff like that --

7 Q. Watch.

8 A. would be.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Like wiping down walls because it's nightshift. Dayshift you
11 might be washing the boat, you know, but, yeah, typically you just
12 wiping down stuff and then you're checking on the lights, like
13 checking the face wires or whatever, seeing that they're still
14 intact.

15 Q. And you said that was for nightshift. Dayshift has different
16 responsibilities.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Or is it -- I guess what would be dayshift? What would be an
19 example of a dayshift change?

20 A. A dayshift, you'll be taking out trash or washing the boat,
21 but you would do all those same maintenance checks like boat,
22 checking the engines, around the generator. Whichever generator
23 you're not on, you make sure that other generator has oil in it
24 and stuff like that.

25 BY CWO [REDACTED]

1 Q. On the voids or any of the voids, stern voids, power voids,
2 can you recall any time in the past where you have had to pump a
3 void out?

4 A. No, sir.

5 Q. Within the 3 days that you've been on board, you haven't had
6 to. Do you know if anybody else that's been on watch has had to?

7 A. I'm not sure. If they did, they would probably let somebody
8 know, but I'm not sure.

9 Q. So nobody talked to you or you didn't hear anybody talking
10 about voids having water or having to --

11 A. Not that I know of.

12 Q. -- dewater.

13 CWO [REDACTED] Do you guys have anything else on the watch
14 standing, the voids, bilge system?

15 BY MR. MUISE:

16 Q. Any sort of like maintenance, is that covered by deckhands?
17 Do you guys do like oil changes or like fix things broken?

18 A. No, no, no. We don't do oil changes. We just report, you
19 know --

20 Q. This is something I saw.

21 A. Yeah, this is -- you report your findings and they'll get in
22 touch with the day maintenance people. They usually do that.

23 Q. Do you have like a -- does the vessel have, if you're aware,
24 like a monthly check sheet like whoever goes around and checks
25 smoke detectors or checks the bilge alarm?

1 A. Helm.

2 Q. Helm. The Helm has that.

3 A. Helm.

4 Q. Oh, Helm is the software you use?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Software. And who -- I guess who runs Helm on the boat if

7 you will? Like who's primary duty is that?

8 A. That would probably be the captain.

9 Q. It's not something that's your direct responsibility?

10 A. No.

11 Q. But it's something you may be told the captain says --

12 A. He might --

13 Q. -- tasking is off the Helm, go do that.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And who was the master on board at the time?

16 A. Well, we've got two of them. We have two captains. That was

17 Sweezey.

18 Q. Sweezey was on watch.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Is Sweezey -- the captains are on the same watch schedule as

21 deckhands? Are they also 6 hours or --

22 A. It depends what they want to do but they normally are 6

23 hours.

24 Q. Okay. So who are you standing watch with on your 6 hours?

25 A. Everett (ph.).

1 Q. Had he been the same one at the helm in your days leading up
2 to that?

3 A. No. No, I just got on.

4 Q. The 3 days leading up?

5 A. Yeah, yeah.

6 CWO [REDACTED] Before we move onto the casualty, anything
7 else.

8 BY MR. MUISE:

9 Q. Is there an engineer? Is one of those deckhands or
10 maintenance an engineer as well or --

11 A. No, no, there's no engineer on board.

12 BY LT [REDACTED]

13 Q. There is are six people on board. One boat operator master,
14 trip pilot, another pilot, yourself as the deckhand, another
15 deckhand. Were the other two deckhands as well?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Four deckhands on the boat?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. You were lead deckhand. On the other watch, was there --
20 like the green -- was the green deckhand with you or what was
21 other people's roles?

22 A. So, the other guy, when the incident happened, he was
23 sleeping. So he's a swing man. Like he works on both watches.
24 Like he might go 3 hours here, 3 hours there. He's training him,
25 but the other guy's green, too. So they don't have any experience

1 either. That's why I -- normally I go -- I might don't be
2 necessarily assigned to that watch, but I'll still stay up
3 sometimes and make sure they know what they're doing.

4 Q. Give your own feedback or --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- training it up. So both those two other individuals were
7 green or in training kind of.

8 A. Right.

9 Q. I've gotcha.

10 A. But a deckhand on watch would be not -- well, he's not really
11 a deckhand, a steersman.

12 Q. Oh, the steersman is --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- the other -- you're -- the one you relieve is the one
15 who's the steersman.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. In the 3 days leading up to your day with Eric, did he direct
18 you to do anything off the Helm maintenance system that you're
19 familiar with?

20 A. Just normal walking around the boat, not no drills but just
21 my normal check.

22 Q. Normal watch checks?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Eric didn't say, hey, this task off our maintenance thing is
25 due, go do this --

1 A. No.

2 Q. -- check this smoke detector or something?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Previously to this boat, on another ship, could you
5 describe to me again like so if Helm -- if that maintenance item
6 comes up, that master will direct you to say, hey, this thing
7 comes up. Is smoke detectors one of the things that you guys
8 check?

9 A. No, sir. Well, smoke detectors, that's more of a -- they
10 have a certain company that comes check that.

11 Q. Annual fire servicing --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. -- company group.

14 A. Like we'll check like water pumps or whatever, like fire
15 pumps --

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. -- we'll check those like once a month or whatever, whenever
18 it pops up in Helm that we need to do it. And I'll let him know
19 -- well, we normally test it out anyway more than the system tells
20 us to test it. You never know what the situation --

21 Q. Have you worked with Eric before?

22 A. Yeah, all-in-all not like the consistent, but a few times in
23 the past, yeah.

24 Q. Familiar?

25 A. Yeah.

1 BY CWO [REDACTED]

2 Q. The other captain, Sweezey, have you worked with him in the
3 past?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Just an estimate?

6 A. Like on and off.

7 Q. On and off for like 1 year, 2 years.

8 A. Years.

9 Q. Years. What's your crew relation between like everybody on
10 board and the captains and the deckhands? Does everybody get
11 along good?

12 A. For the most part.

13 Q. Do you hang out together like here on the mess desk or is
14 everybody to themselves or --

15 A. No, we pretty much to ourselves, but everybody get along
16 fine.

17 Q. Everybody gets along fine.

18 LT [REDACTED] No fistfights, but not a happy potluck either?

19 MR. LAMARK: Yeah, it's like -- it's just no--

20 BY CWO [REDACTED]

21 Q. It's a good working environment.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. You have no complaints about it?

24 A. No.

25 BY LT [REDACTED]

1 Q. Of the crew who was on, who would you say is the most
2 experienced with the *Uncle Blue* in your knowledge? Deckhands,
3 trip pilot, master, all involved?

4 A. I can't say who was the most experienced.

5 Q. Was that the first time you worked on boat?

6 A. No, I'm saying I haven't worked on that boat (indiscernible).
7 I started years ago.

8 Q. But then a while break.

9 A. I came back and worked 4 days, just give you another
10 refresher orientation, this is here, this is here.

11 Q. So was that -- maybe I missed it. Are you saying that coming
12 back on was the first time you've been on *Uncle Blue* in a couple
13 years? Like prior to 4 days ago, you had -- you could say, hey, I
14 haven't been on *Uncle Blue* in years?

15 A. It's like periodic. Like I might go on there for 2 days and
16 like 1 year, and then they might need me for 3 days.

17 Q. I see. So it's not -- your 14 days on isn't necessarily 14
18 days with *Uncle Blue* or with this boat or with this boat.

19 A. No, no, no.

20 Q. It's 14 days working and then they move you around?

21 A. I'm telling you, I'm -- like -- like say somebody got to go
22 home. I'll go relieve that guy, you know what I'm saying?

23 Q. Um-hum.

24 A. But normally I work in the fleet. So I'm working 14 days on
25 one boat. This is my boat.

1 BY CWO [REDACTED]

2 Q. So if you had to work on any boat more than the other, what
3 boat would you say that you work on the most?

4 A. The most? *The Mr. Jim.*

5 Q. What was that again?

6 A. *The Mr. Jim* or this one.

7 Q. Does Alexis Marine, do they transit up and down the
8 Mississippi River very much or do they primarily do fleeting
9 stuff?

10 A. They do transit a lot, but I don't know the work flow. So I
11 don't know. It's like I wouldn't know what they're doing unless I
12 get on the boat.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Your normal office is the fleeting.

14 MR. LAMARK: Yeah. So.

15 BY CWO [REDACTED]

16 Q. Out of the crew that was on board, do you know if they're
17 primarily fleet or what their background is? Like do they
18 normally do fleeting?

19 A. No, I don't know what everybody's background is.

20 Q. Is fleeting --

21 A. I only know when they're green. The office is going to tell
22 the captain aboard, he's going to say, hey, give them, you know,
23 the proper training.

24 Q. Instruction.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Is the fleeting office down at Harvey?

1 Is that where the fleeting offices are?

2 MR. LAMARK: No. I'm not sure where the main base
3 (indiscernible).

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. The (indiscernible).

5 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The fleeting office is
6 (indiscernible), Louisiana.

7 MR. LAMARK: (Indiscernible).

8 BY CWO [REDACTED]

9 Q. Is it fleets that Alexis Marine owns or --

10 A. No, not that they own. It's just --

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Contracted to other companies --

12 MR. LAMARK: Yeah.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- like Marquette or Kirby or Ingram
14 working in their fleets.

15 MR. LAMARK: Right.

16 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. Are you good with the work and company
17 and stuff? Basically I want to go through -- are you good work
18 and everything, because next I'm going to what happened after
19 watch relief and then when he woke up the next morning.

20 BY CWO [REDACTED]

21 Q. Okay. So can you describe like as you were coming off watch
22 on the evening of the 25th, describe what interchange between you
23 and your watch relief and then what you did from after coming up
24 watch until you woke up the next morning assuming you woke up.

25 A. Explain it to me one more time. Say it again.

1 Q. Okay. So at the end of your did your did your last round
2 between 11 and 11:30. After you did that round, what happened?
3 Who did you talk to? What did you talk to them about? Where did
4 you go? What did you do until the next morning?

5 A. So I made my rounds, and then I got up to the wheelhouse, and
6 I let the captain know I'm getting off watch and if I found
7 anything wrong or anything like that, I tell him because that's my
8 last round. So -- and then my relief, I will talk to him, let him
9 know if I found anything so he can look for it, you know.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And that's pretty much it. Then leading up to when I woke
12 up, like the day of the incident, I woke up at like 5, 5:30, and
13 then --

14 Q. Before we move on from 5, 5:30, so you did talk to your watch
15 relief?

16 A. When?

17 Q. Before you left watch?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. You saw him, you talked to him?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And you did a relief. Where do you do that relief at on the
22 boat or where did you do it at that time?

23 A. On the boat because everybody's sleeping on the boat.

24 Q. But on the boat, is it on the mess deck, in the pilot house?

25 A. Normally in the pilothouse, like we all meet in the

1 pilothouse.

2 Q. And it was -- all of you were in the pilothouse, the watch
3 relief?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. At midnight?

6 A. But it can be anywhere. That's what I'm saying.

7 Q. It could be anywhere.

8 A. As long as you --

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, on that day.

10 MR. LAMARK: That day.

11 BY MR. TAYLOR:

12 Q. Yeah, on that day, that specific one, you guys -- who all was
13 at that watch relief?

14 A. So it was me, Chris and Sweezey. I'm not sure who all was
15 there.

16 Q. And Chris is the deckhand that relieved you?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And Sweezey was the pilot or master coming on board to drive
19 the vessel?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And the off going, Eric, was already gone?

22 A. Yeah. They might switch -- I don't, I don't know. Like --
23 sometime it be like, you know, if you relieving somebody, you
24 might relieve them 10 minutes early or 20 minutes early, or
25 sometimes it might be Eric's already up there or Sweezey. You get

1 what I'm saying?

2 Q. Yeah. No, I got exactly what you're saying. And the --
3 because -- I mean when we ask these broad questions, what we're
4 trying to do is visualize from your eyes what's happening as
5 you're doing it. We're trying to like basically create a movie in
6 our minds, like as if we're on board. So that's why there's so
7 many detailed questions that we're asking. So -- and if we
8 rephrase the question a couple times, bear with us because we're
9 just --

10 A. Right.

11 Q. -- we're trying to see it in our minds. Okay. And -- then
12 so after your relief, you just --

13 A. So after my relief, I just go take my shower and that's it.

14 Q. How many hours do you think you slept?

15 A. I don't sleep hardly -- I don't know. You can't get used to
16 sleeping. I mean I don't know.

17 Q. So then when you got up to go on watch, would you talk us
18 through from the time you woke up until everything that happened
19 until you abandoned ship to the barge.

20 A. So when I woke up about 5:30, I seen the door of the engine
21 room, from inside the cabin, was open. So I looked, and I seen
22 the green guy, he was sitting on the bench, like the -- like this
23 bench, and I was telling him we got to, we got to get off. We had
24 already, you know, like the (indiscernible) was talking to me
25 about they got water in the engine room, and I told the other guy,

1 get his stuff, go to the muster station. So then I proceeded to
2 make sure everybody was in the muster station, like running up the
3 steps of the boat. Because I seen the water. As soon as he said,
4 oh, they got water in the hold. We're taking on water. So I
5 peeked in the engine room, the water was a like just everywhere.

6 Q. Above the deck plates?

7 A. (Indiscernible) --

8 Q. What you saw?

9 A. It was like coming in. I don't, I don't know how much water,
10 but it was like too fast, like to even go down there to see how
11 much.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From the second deck looking down?

13 MR. LAMARK: Yeah, from the second deck looking down.

14 BY CWO [REDACTED]

15 Q. Using the engines as a comparison, about -- or as a
16 measurement, about how high up on the engines would you say the
17 water was?

18 A. I don't know if you could see it like.

19 BY LT [REDACTED]

20 Q. Were the engines still running? Could you hear them?

21 A. No, they started, they started to like kill.

22 Q. They started to kill. Like do you remember now quiet but --

23 A. I don't even know if they were still running to be honest
24 because like I said, the lights was cutting off and stuff like
25 that. I couldn't see. It was water. I could see the water

1 because all you hear is the (indiscernible). And then ran
2 upstairs, got the guys, the green guy, Mike, told him to put his
3 boots on and his life vest, put it on outside, go to the muster
4 station.

5 Q. What woke you up?

6 A. I always get up at that time.

7 Q. Always get up at 5:30.

8 A. Um-hum.

9 Q. And then you rolled out of bed and then was someone at the
10 door or did you hear an alarm?

11 A. Yeah, I stand up. I sit on the edge of the bed. I look at
12 the floor. And then I walk out the door, and that's when it was
13 like -- just it was chaos.

14 Q. Opened the door to chaos.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay. You don't remember any alarm going off yet or anything
17 like that?

18 A. I think. I'm not sure. I don't remember.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Because it's a lot.

21 BY MR. MUISE:

22 Q. Who's the other deckhand who told you that we had to get off
23 the boat? What was doing when he told you that?

24 A. He was in the engine room.

25 Q. He was in the engine room.

1 A. Like at the door.

2 Q. Just in the engine room. Was he doing anything?

3 A. I think he went down there to check like his (indiscernible).

4 Q. Did he have a pump set up or anything like that?

5 A. Not that I know of.

6 Q. Was anybody like trying to pump water out of the engine room?

7 A. At that second, no.

8 Q. When you said the green guy, do you know who that was that
9 was just sitting there that you said, hey, we got to go, get off
10 the boat? Who was that?

11 A. That's Brian. He's not here. He's a little bit shaken up.

12 Q. You said Brian.

13 A. Brian. And then the other guy is on this boat, he was
14 asleep.

15 Q. Okay. So Chris and Ryan are the two that are on here?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So Brian works with Chris.

18 MR. LAMARK: Huh?

19 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Brian works with Chris?

20 MR. LAMARK: No, Brian works with me.

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So he was asleep, too?

22 MR. LAMARK: No, he was supposed to be asleep but he wasn't
23 asleep.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay. All right.

25 MR. LAMARK: You know what I'm saying. Some of us just get

1 up early. Like I like to wake all the way up before I get to
2 talking to anybody.

3 BY MR. MUISE:

4 Q. Back to when you saw the water coming in, where was that
5 water coming from?

6 A. I'm not sure. The water had already started rushing in like
7 it was just pouring. So I just made sure I got everybody off the
8 boat, like just alerting everybody to go to the muster station.

9 Q. Do you recall like the position of the boat? Was it --

10 A. Leaning.

11 Q. It was leaning like --

12 A. When the water was coming. It was leaning to the port.

13 Q. To the port.

14 A. So most of the water was on like the portside, if that makes
15 sense.

16 Q. Yeah. So maybe like was the deck level of the boat on the
17 portside under water?

18 A. Both sides was under water like --

19 Q. Both sides were under water. Okay.

20 A. But the port, it had the most water. Like you could still
21 walk like down on the starboard side.

22 Q. So this is the tow boat --

23 A. I can show you a picture.

24 Q. Yeah, I was going to say. You said the boat was kind of --
25 you can actually use it. That's the tow boat.

1 A. This would be the second deck. This would be the bottom. So
2 there was booku water on this side and this side. And a lot of
3 water was in the engine room. So we went up to the second deck.
4 I got everybody, and we came out. We go up the steps on this one
5 and hopped off, but they had a lot of water.

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All the way around the boat?

7 MR. LAMARK: Um-hum. Just a lot of water.

8 CWO [REDACTED] Do you have any more questions?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Actually, on your watch the evening
10 before, how was sitting? Was it sitting just normal? Was it
11 sitting on the stern a little bit?

12 MR. LAMARK: It was sitting normal, like how it normally
13 rides.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You didn't notice any difference.

15 MR. LAMARK: No difference.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What do you think happened?

17 MR. LAMARK: I don't know.

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. Have you heard any talk? Any ideas of what other people
20 thought?

21 A. I don't know. I wouldn't even guess. I'm not all what you
22 call inclined. I don't -- I can't tell you.

23 Q. Have you heard anybody else talk about what they think
24 happened?

25 A. No. I don't discuss that type of stuff.

1 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

2 Q. You guys don't discuss the boat sinking?

3 A. No. How it happened. We'll figure that out. You all will
4 figure it out and then we will discuss like what we can do to
5 prevent it. But it's not something that we go, oh, what you think
6 happened? Be like this or be like that. We don't do that.

7 Q. We're trying to find out if you saw anything out of the
8 ordinary leading up to or as it was happening like, oh, yeah.

9 A. Nope.

10 Q. Do you think --

11 A. It happened so fast. I mean --

12 Q. Do you think if the engine room doors would have been
13 closed --

14 A. The engine room doors was closed.

15 Q. -- at the time you got up or when you saw it, you said the
16 water was coming in.

17 A. It was closed.

18 Q. What do you recall?

19 A. We talking the one on the inside?

20 Q. The engine rooms doors were closed?

21 A. Yes. We talking --

22 Q. On both sides?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The inside engine room door was open?

24 MR. LAMARK: Right.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The inside engine room door was open.

1 MR. LAMARK: All the doors were closed. You don't even ride
2 down the river without the doors closed.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So what went well? Was there a piece
4 of equipment you're glad you had or some training you had?

5 MR. LAMARK: Yeah, just being all hasty. Just being hasty,
6 but being safe at the same time like all the drills that we worked
7 on. It's different doing them like in slow motion than actually
8 doing stuff. So luckily, you know, we had the training to do that
9 and nobody lost their life or got injured in the process.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Everybody did their job? Nobody was
11 bouncing off the walls?

12 MR. LAMARK: No.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. LAMARK: It was a traumatic experience.

15 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. We don't have any further questions.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right. It's 1347.

17 (Whereupon, at 1:47 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: FLOODING OF TOWING VESSEL *UNCLE*
BLUE ON THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER
ON MARCH 26, 2023
Interview of Tyrome Lamark

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM023

PLACE: Lower Mississippi River

DATE: March 29, 2023

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.


Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber