

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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SINKING OF THE FISHING VESSEL
REBECCA MARY SOUTH OF NANTUCKET,
MASSACHUSETTS, ON JUNE 17, 2020

Accident No.: DCA20FM021

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Interview of: KEVIN RALPH, Captain
Rebecca Mary

Wednesday,
June 17, 2020

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED], Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:46 a.m.)

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2
3 CWO [REDACTED] It's 11:46. We're picking up the interview
4 where we left off with the captain of the vessel.

INTERVIEW OF KEVIN RALPH

BY CWO [REDACTED]

6
7 Q. All right. So you left New Bedford around 11:12. You left
8 the Crystal Ice facility on the 14th.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. That was when you left the dock. Okay.

11 A. I believe so, yeah.

12 Q. And were you -- where exactly were you fishing? Where was
13 the intended --

14 A. We were, like, Atlantis Canyon.

15 Q. Okay. Atlantis Canyon. And from when you got out, when you
16 left New Bedford, and went right out to the Atlantis Canyon, did
17 you begin fishing immediately?

18 A. Yes. Yeah.

19 Q. And were you fishing the entire time up until the incident?

20 A. For the -- well, we were steaming home. Yeah, yeah. We were
21 2 days fishing, then we were on our -- almost back. We were
22 almost back to home, halfway home when --

23 Q. Okay. So you were done.

24 A. We left Crystal Ice -- the following morning at sunrise, we
25 set out. We fished that whole day, right. Laid up at night. Set

1 out again the following morning, fished all day till about 8:30 at
2 night. From there, we started steaming back to New Bedford to
3 unload the boat. We were just on our way back to pump out and do
4 the same thing, come back out, and just non-stop. That's what we
5 do. So --

6 Q. Okay. All right. So then from that point, from the time
7 that you stopped fishing and you --

8 A. Yeah. We were steaming home.

9 Q. -- were steaming home, can you give me kind of -- so is that
10 when this whole thing happened?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. You were on your way home.

13 A. We were on our way home, yeah.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. We were on our way back to New Bedford, yeah, to pump out.

16 Q. So let's do this. I just kind of -- I want to know what
17 happened from when you -- I guess in more detail from the -- when
18 you started fishing until the boat went down.

19 A. I pretty much just said it.

20 Q. Yeah. I mean, I --

21 A. I pretty much just said it. I mean, we got ice. From there,
22 we throw the lines off. We steam to the fishing grounds, right.
23 We set out. We fish for -- you know, we can only fish during the
24 daylight. We did that for two daylights. That's the longest we
25 can stay there that our catch will be good. Fished 2 days.

1 Whatever we get, we go home with. Left there, like I said,
2 8:30-ish last night, started steaming home. We were -- I want to
3 say we were 5 hours from the vineyard when we sank.

4 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

5 BY [REDACTED]

6 Q. And you guys headed back to New Bedford to off-load?

7 A. Correct, yeah.

8 Q. So is the daytime-only fishing requirement, is that something
9 you guys --

10 A. The fish come off the bottom at night. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. So it's just --

12 A. Just there's nothing to be caught at night.

13 Q. There's nothing to be caught at night.

14 A. So once the sun goes down, you know, settles, that's the last
15 drag of the day. And, again, we set out about 4:30 in the
16 morning. As soon as the sky starts getting light a little bit, we
17 set out, fish the daylight. We have those two clocks for the fish
18 to not go bad, and then we steam home. That was our -- you know,
19 just what we do. In and out, in and out, non-stop until --

20 Q. Got you.

21 A. -- the season is over.

22 CWO [REDACTED] What's the arrangement on the vessel in terms
23 of, like, what the catch -- is it -- are they iced? Are they --

24 MR. RALPH: They're iced, yeah, iced. Yep, yep.

25 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

1 BY [REDACTED]

2 Q. And do you have full catch onboard like --

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. -- loaded down?

5 A. We were on our way home to unload, to pump out, yeah.

6 Q. So let's just -- leading up to the incident, so you had ice.

7 You had the squid packed on ice. You had full load of squid.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. What alerted you, I guess, to something being wrong?

10 A. I got woken up saying that something wasn't good. I ran out,
11 and the back deck was -- the stern of the boat was already, like,
12 way lower than it should have been. I got woke up in a panic that
13 something was bad.

14 Q. So you were asleep. And who was it that came to --

15 A. Ed Andersen was at the wheel.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yep, on his wheel watch, which we do every -- you know,
18 2½-hour watches. Once we leave the ground and the guys -- the
19 deck's clear, we come in. We start our watches, and it just
20 cycles back to me. And I was still in the middle of --

21 Q. Okay. So Ed was operating the vessel?

22 A. Yes. He was at the helm.

23 Q. He was the only one awake?

24 A. Right, yeah.

25 Q. He noticed that something was wrong.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. He came to wake you up and let you know.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. And what were your actions? Like, what did you see
5 when you got up?

6 A. The stern of the boat was really, really low. There was a
7 bunch of water on the stern of the boat. It was just, it was just
8 flooded, the back of the boat. It wasn't a whole lot we could do
9 to actively try to save it. You know what I mean? We couldn't
10 get back there. We -- I turned the two pumps on, and that was
11 really all we could do. There's nothing we could do to get back
12 there to investigate or see what the fuck happened. Have no clue.

13 Q. So you turned the two bilge pumps on?

14 A. Yeah. We turned the pumps on that would pump that locker
15 out, but there was just -- there was no way it was going to --

16 Q. So it was -- was it the engine room that was flooded or the
17 lazarette?

18 A. No. It was the lazarette.

19 Q. Okay. The lazarette was flooded --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- and there's two pumps in the lazarette?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And you --

24 A. Well, there's one pump in the lazarette, and there's one pump
25 in the net locker.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. The net locker is the compartment forward of the lazarette.

3 Q. Okay. And both of those were submerged?

4 A. I mean, well, I don't know. I couldn't see in the net locker
5 to know that. But we pumped it -- I turned the pump on just to --
6 it was pretty much underwater by that point, and it was just
7 getting worse and worse every -- quickly.

8 Q. Do you know if -- were you, like -- when you hit the pumps
9 on, did you know that the pumps were on?

10 A. It was pumping, yes.

11 Q. It was pumping.

12 A. It was watching pumping, yeah.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Yeah. We were kind of hoping that it was going to -- because
15 we were steaming. We were kind of hoping that it was going to
16 maybe catch up to itself, but it never did. We watched the
17 waterline mark at where it was on the deck just to have an eye on
18 it, and it just kept creeping up, creeping up to the point where
19 the boat just frigging rolled. The stern went down, and it just
20 pitched and rolled over, and that was it.

21 Q. It rolled to port?

22 A. Rolled to port, yeah.

23 Q. In terms of just the arrangement of the vessel, the access to
24 the lazarette is all the way aft probably, right?

25 A. Correct.

- 1 Q. Is it a watertight hatch? Like, what's --
- 2 A. No. It's just a -- it's above the deck. It's about 2, 2½, 3
- 3 feet with a lid on it.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. Yeah.
- 6 Q. But could you see when you got out there, was that lid gone?
- 7 A. We couldn't get back there.
- 8 Q. Was that lid gone? Was it -- I mean --
- 9 A. I believe so, yeah.
- 10 Q. So once that water started coming, and once it got --
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. -- that --
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. Regardless of how it was coming in to begin with --
- 15 A. Right. Yeah, yeah.
- 16 Q. -- when it reached that point, it was going to down flood --
- 17 A. Right. Yeah. Once it -- no matter how fast we pumped it, we
- 18 had -- there was a following sea that was just washing into the
- 19 back deck.
- 20 Q. Right.
- 21 A. And it was just coming over the -- the stern was so low that
- 22 the waves were just coming over the rails. The rails were
- 23 probably -- whatever, not far from the waterline. You know what I
- 24 mean?
- 25 Q. And that space between the net locker and the lazarette is

- 1 watertight?
- 2 A. Yes, yes.
- 3 Q. And what's the access to that net locker?
- 4 A. It's -- the net locker, it's about 15 to 20 dogs around the
5 outside of it with a T-handle wrench.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. So --
- 8 Q. It's a watertight hatch --
- 9 A. Correct.
- 10 Q. -- to get into that space?
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. And that was locked?
- 13 A. Yes.
- 14 Q. It was closed?
- 15 A. Yes.
- 16 Q. And the laz was as well?
- 17 A. Well, the laz just has a lid on it with the two handles.
- 18 Q. Okay. So the laz is not watertight?
- 19 A. No. No.
- 20 Q. Okay. The space itself is, but the access --
- 21 A. Yeah. The access to it is --
- 22 Q. Got you.
- 23 A. Right. Yeah.
- 24 Q. And you said following sea. About what are we working with
25 as far as feet?

- 1 A. Oh, it wasn't a big sea. Maybe 3 feet-ish.
- 2 Q. Okay. Just wanted to get that --
- 3 A. Yeah. It was enough that with the boat, the stern of the
- 4 boat being that low, that it was just --
- 5 Q. Coming over the back.
- 6 A. -- crashing into the back of the boat, yeah.
- 7 Q. Okay. So they're moving -- space -- moving forward, what's
- 8 the next space on the vessel forward of --
- 9 A. The fish hold.
- 10 Q. Fish hold.
- 11 A. Which was -- yes, had the catch in it. And it had just been
- 12 pumped out. It was no water in the fish hold. So that was the
- 13 only thing that kind of kept us long enough to get our suits on.
- 14 You know what I mean? I think had the fish hold been flooded, we
- 15 wouldn't have had time to get our suits on. It would have been --
- 16 we'd probably all be dead. You know what I mean?
- 17 Q. Yeah.
- 18 A. So the fish hold being buoyant and, again, the engine room is
- 19 what held us where we were long enough.
- 20 Q. Is this an accurate representation?
- 21 A. Correct, yeah. Lazarette.
- 22 Q. Laz. Net locker. Fish hold. Engine room. Bridge.
- 23 A. Yep.
- 24 Q. Does the bridge sit -- kind of overlap on top, or is it
- 25 forward?

- 1 A. No, that's about right there. And then there's a water tank
2 in the bow, and then there's a --
- 3 Q. Collision bulkhead here and then --
- 4 A. Well, I'm just -- below deck.
- 5 Q. Okay. So there's another --
- 6 A. There's a water tank. Just the triangle of the bow is the
7 water tank.
- 8 Q. Okay.
- 9 A. That's filled with pressure water.
- 10 Q. And then there's a hold up here?
- 11 A. And then after that, there's a four-peak -- yeah, there's a
12 four-peak hold. Yep.
- 13 Q. Okay. So this was full?
- 14 A. The fish hold? Well, it had fish in it.
- 15 Q. Fish, that's what I mean.
- 16 A. No water, yeah.
- 17 Q. Full of squid.
- 18 A. The lazarette, obviously, was full. The net locker,
19 visually, I don't know. It was dogged and sealed, so I don't see
20 how. You know what I mean? I think it was just enough with the
21 lazarette and the weight of the -- you know, with the catch of the
22 fish, the weight of the fish.
- 23 Q. Yeah. How much fish would you say there was?
- 24 A. 75-, 80,000 pounds, somewhere around there. That's a
25 guesstimate until you pack out and get a true weight.

1 Q. Right. So going back to you stepping out and you saw the
2 condition of the vessel.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. The stern was sagging in the water.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. You said you flipped the pumps on. So you -- from there, you
7 went up to the bridge.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Turned the pumps on.

10 A. No. They're right there by the doorway.

11 Q. Okay. So there's access to the bilge pumps right there?

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. Okay. So you flipped those on, and then what did you do? At
14 this point --

15 A. We go --

16 Q. -- is the other crew sleeping?

17 A. Yes. I ran in, got them up, immediately got our survival
18 suits. And then I went straight to the radio, told them to get
19 their suits on, which they did. And then I was -- I ran up to the
20 wheelhouse to make our mayday call.

21 Q. So what -- approximately what time were you alerted?

22 A. I don't know. I was woke up out of a sleep.

23 Q. Okay. About what time did you call the Coast Guard?

24 About --

25 A. Okay. It had to be 5-something.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. I don't know. I wasn't looking at my watch or --
- 3 Q. From -- I kind of have an idea from, like, the times the
4 Coast Guard --
- 5 A. Yeah, right, yeah.
- 6 Q. -- gets notified. So about how much time went from the time
7 you were awake to the time that you made the --
- 8 A. To the boat sank, half an hour tops, 25 minutes maybe.
- 9 Q. How about from the time that you were awake until you saw --
10 until you hit the bilge pumps?
- 11 A. Oh, instantly. That was the first thing we --
- 12 Q. So seconds?
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. And then from the time that you called and said mayday on the
15 radio, how long?
- 16 A. Till the boat sank, 20 minutes, 25 minutes --
- 17 Q. But you --
- 18 A. -- something like that.
- 19 Q. You called the Coast Guard as the boat was sinking, or was
20 there like --
- 21 A. Yeah. We were steaming, right.
- 22 Q. Yeah.
- 23 A. So, and -- yeah, the boat -- we were steaming. The whole
24 stern of the boat was just underwater. You know what I mean? So,
25 yes. As we were steaming, I ran into the wheelhouse and was

1 communicating with the Coast Guard.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. To let them know we got the -- the guys put their survival
4 suits on. We got the raft out. I got the EPIRB; it's on. Just
5 to relay to them our position. You know what I mean?

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. To let them know where we are. And from there, back and
8 forth assessing was the boat getting worse or better? Were the
9 pumps keeping up? You know what I mean?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. From there, it was just a lot of back and forth to the radio.

12 Q. Got you.

13 A. To the guys, getting the raft situated or our -- getting our
14 suits, everything situated. It was --

15 Q. And just so you know, like, the reason I'm asking is because
16 I have to build a timeline of events.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So I know you're kind of trying -- I know you --

19 A. The time thing. I mean, to be woken up from a sleep like
20 that, I -- all I know was kind of -- I honestly don't know.

21 Q. Got you. Okay.

22 A. I don't know. It was just so hectic, I don't know what time
23 it was.

24 Q. But from just to kind of recall back, you were woken up.

25 A. Yep.

1 Q. You went back, you saw -- you looked at the aft deck. You
2 flipped on the bilge pumps.

3 A. Yep.

4 Q. One in the net locker, the other in the laz.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. From there, you went up to the bridge. You called the Coast
7 Guard.

8 A. Yep.

9 Q. At the same time, you hit the EPIRB?

10 A. Yeah. I went up and got the EPIRB as we were putting our
11 survival suits on.

12 Q. Told the crew to put their survival --

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. -- all about the same time?

15 A. Yes. Yeah. We all got our suits on. That was, like, one of
16 the first things. When we saw how bad it was, we all got our
17 suits on. And anything that -- running around that we did after
18 that was with our suits on. That was definitely the first fucking
19 thing --

20 Q. Got you.

21 A. -- that we were doing.

22 Q. So you got the suits on. You were doing -- you said you were
23 running around. What were you doing when you were running around?

24 A. Back and forth to the wheelhouse. Just, you know, giving
25 them an update on our position, the heading.

1 Q. The Coast Guard?

2 A. Yes. Yeah, right.

3 Q. Got you. Okay.

4 A. Yeah. And then from there, really there was nothing we could
5 do except for pray that the pumps were going to --

6 Q. Keep up.

7 A. -- somehow catch up to it.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. It just, you know -- and, again, like I said, we were
10 watching how it was progressing. At first we thought maybe the
11 pumps -- it was halfway up the deck. We thought maybe there was a
12 chance, but then I'd run up into the wheelhouse. I'd come back.
13 I'm like, oh, my god, it's to the point where the boat just
14 frigging rolled over.

15 Q. Rolled over.

16 A. We were --

17 Q. Did you guys discuss getting the life raft out?

18 A. Yes. Oh, yeah, yeah. We were -- as in the time that -- the
19 20 minutes or so we were talking strategy about how we're going to
20 deploy the raft, which wound up fucking getting sunk. It got hung
21 up in the wires and the rigging and popped it and sunk with the
22 frigging boat. So that didn't -- it didn't -- but there was no
23 way to tell which way the boat was going to --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. Where's the best way. Because we were -- the problem was we

1 were steaming.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. We can't fucking deploy the lift raft while we're steaming
4 and have it -- you know what I mean? How long is it going to stay
5 on that little rope? You know what I mean? So the second you
6 take the boat out of gear, the thing is going to -- it was going
7 to sink. You could just tell. The only thing that was keeping us
8 afloat was that we were steaming. You know what I mean? The boat
9 was moving, so there's really no option to deploy the raft on the
10 frigging deck. You know what I mean? It's only going to pop or
11 something. You know what I mean?

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]

13 Q. Where was that life raft located?

14 A. The port side right by the door, just right by the access
15 door for the mudroom, right there. We got it down off of the top
16 of the boat. It's up on top of the wheelhouse. We got it down
17 onto the deck by the port rail.

18 Q. That's -- so you --

19 A. Handed it down.

20 Q. -- normally it sits -- it's stored on top?

21 A. It's stored in the cradle on top of the wheelhouse.

22 Q. But the crew --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- brought it down --

25 A. Yeah. We got it down --

- 1 Q. -- to near the mudroom?
- 2 A. -- lower to the deck, yeah, yeah.
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. And that's a place that we could possibly launch it and try
5 to get in it.
- 6 Q. Okay. But like you said --
- 7 A. It didn't happen.
- 8 Q. -- it didn't happen.
- 9 A. It didn't happen.
- 10 Q. Did you guys actually deploy it? Did you actually --
- 11 A. Yes.
- 12 Q. You did open it up?
- 13 A. Yeah. When it got to the point where, like, the boat was
14 starting to roll, we threw it over, and it deployed. I had -- I
15 pulled the painter out.
- 16 Q. Yep.
- 17 A. Tied it to the rail real good. So when we chucked it over
18 the rail, it inflated, but then the boat, like I said, it just
19 started rolling, and the wires grabbed it, and we just -- I made
20 the guys jump. We all tried to jump together. The three of us
21 jumped -- were on one side, and then the -- Santos, he got scared
22 about jumping off of that side, and he ran to the other side of
23 the boat and jumped off on that side. But we all got in the water
24 pretty much at the same time.
- 25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. And then we just locked arms from there. I had the EPIRB. I
2 gave them my last position before we bailed out, and they came
3 right to us.
- 4 Q. Okay. All right. And then, so then the Coast Guard, the
5 helicopter came.
- 6 A. Yep.
- 7 Q. And they hoisted you in the basket.
- 8 A. Correct.
- 9 Q. And then you went to the Coast Guard Air Station?
- 10 A. Yes. Yeah, up in the Cape, yeah.
- 11 Q. And then --
- 12 A. Still in the Cape.
- 13 Q. Then came straight here.
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 Q. So, just so we get this picture from our air station. So
16 that's the vessel.
- 17 A. Yeah.
- 18 Q. Is that the life raft there? Looks like.
- 19 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. I thought it got stuck in the -- a wire grabbed it, and you
22 could hear it popping. It went shhhh.
- 23 Q. Okay. So, yeah. That's kind of a tough picture to see.
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. It looks like -- that's what -- it looks like that's the,

1 that's the CO₂ canister that --

2 A. Yeah, yeah.

3 Q. -- supposed to inflate.

4 A. Maybe, yeah.

5 Q. Looks like it's upside down.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. That looks like what we're looking at. I was just curious

8 because --

9 A. Yeah. The last I saw it, there was one of our stay wires had
10 grabbed it. You know what I mean?

11 Q. Yeah. It doesn't look good.

12 A. No, it wasn't. It definitely wasn't

13 Q. Doesn't look like something you'd want to get onto.

14 A. Yeah. I mean, we were comfortable in the suit. Once we --
15 soon as we jumped out, I told the guys, as soon as we get
16 together, lock arms and stay together. And that's what we did.

17 As soon as we jumped in, we hooked up and just stayed together --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. -- until the helicopter showed up.

20 Q. Appreciate that.

21 CWO [REDACTED] Do you have anything?

22 BY [REDACTED]

23 Q. You said -- so you said the three of you went off the port
24 side?

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. And the --

2 A. Gee went off the starboard side, yeah.

3 Q. And were you able to hook up with them?

4 A. Yes. Instantly, yeah. As soon as we were -- we got -- the
5 boat was clear out of our sight, he was right there, and we all
6 swam towards each other.

7 Q. So was it still upright and making way when you decided to
8 jump?

9 A. No, no, no.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. It was -- as soon as we got off, she went upside down. Just
12 about -- I mean, like we had cut it real, real close. You know
13 what I mean? As soon as we jumped, that was it.

14 Q. So when you jumped, the vessel was still in gear?

15 A. Oh, yeah, yeah. I never took it out of gear.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Never, no.

18 Q. And how fast approximately were you traveling? They said

19 3 --

20 A. No, 4 -- I mean, we were probably doing 5 or 6 knots. We
21 were probably steaming, you know, before everything got weird
22 maybe 7 or 8 knots. But once it -- the last I looked when I read
23 it, I was talking to the Coast Guard, I think it was around 6
24 knots we were still making. The guy said the engine was starting
25 to die. You could hear it, like, starting to die out. Probably

1 because of all the oil was --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. -- to one side or something, and it was just starting to cut
4 it out. It was still running, but it wasn't sounding good.

5 CWO [REDACTED] You have any more questions about that
6 timeline-wise? Because I was going to ask any issues with the
7 vessel, those types of questions.

8 [REDACTED] I don't think so.

9 BY CWO [REDACTED]

10 Q. So you said you've been the captain of this boat for 5 years.

11 A. Correct, almost. I believe 4½, somewhere around there, yeah.

12 Q. Has there been any issues with the vessel?

13 A. No, no. We've -- everything has been good up until this
14 point. We take good care of it. You know what I mean? We really
15 do. We take pride in having a nice, clean, organized boat, and we
16 have; we always have. This is -- all our safety gear was up to
17 date. Our drills were up to date. We had just done safety
18 drills. We had just done bilge alarm tests. You know what I
19 mean? We just tested not long ago -- 2 or 3 weeks ago. We --

20 Q. About 2 or 3 weeks?

21 A. Yeah, we just -- every month we do safety drills. You know
22 what I mean? And so --

23 Q. Do know the last time the vessel was dry-docked?

24 A. Well, it's about 3 years ago last time we hauled out, yeah.

25 Q. Three years?

1 A. Well, actually, last illex season, we hauled out to replace
2 the cutlass bearing.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. But that was only a day or two, and then we dunked right back
5 in.

6 Q. So is -- this was a single screw?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. So the cutlass bearing was replaced last year?

9 A. Brand new, yeah, yeah.

10 Q. During the season?

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. And why was it replaced?

13 A. We got some tilefish gear that wire wrapped around the prop,
14 and it pushed the frigging -- the bearing in.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah. So that was -- we just, like I said, we went -- we
17 were in the yard 2 days, couple days. They yanked us out. Left
18 us in the cradles and --

19 Q. Replaced it.

20 A. -- I don't know if they hung us up, but, yeah, it wasn't
21 long. It was a couple of days that we were in the shipyard.

22 Q. Did the shaft get looked at?

23 A. Yes. Yeah. It was a brand new half shaft. Three years ago,
24 when we were in the yard, the whole half shaft from the back end
25 of it was replaced. All brand new.

1 Q. Okay. So when it went to dry dock to get that cutlass
2 bearing replaced, did they pull the shaft, or did they just --
3 they just kind of did a visual on it?

4 A. I don't think they pulled the shaft.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. I think they just replaced the cutlass.

7 Q. Was there any vibration that you noticed?

8 A. No, no. It was -- she was smooth after that.

9 Q. So once they -- it was smooth?

10 A. Yeah, yeah. I mean, we've been fishing ever since. It's
11 been --

12 Q. Got you.

13 A. -- beautiful. You know what I mean? We just repacked the
14 stuffing boxes. Everything was -- like I said, we took care of
15 her. You know what I mean?

16 Q. Yeah. I got you.

17 A. We always have.

18 Q. And the last dry dock, was there any major work done to the
19 boat or --

20 A. Just a paint up. We painted the net locker. The lazarette
21 was sandblasted and painted. Was pretty much just cosmetic stuff.
22 There wasn't anything major, major.

23 Q. Okay. No tanks were added to the vessel?

24 A. No, no, nothing.

25 Q. No generator was replaced?

1 A. No. We replaced the generator this past winter, but it
2 wasn't anything to do with the shipyard. We took one of our old
3 generators out, and we replaced it with a brand new one.

4 Q. Okay. And where was the location of that generator?

5 A. Just forward of the engine, starboard side.

6 Q. Okay. And what -- was it a bigger one that you replaced it
7 with? More powerful?

8 A. A little more kW. It was a 40 kW. It was about the same
9 size, the same size.

10 Q. It was the same size?

11 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It wasn't --

12 Q. Same brand do you --

13 A. Nope. The one we took out was a Detroit; the one we put in
14 was a Kohler -- Northern Light Kohler.

15 Q. Okay. And that was just done this past winter?

16 A. Brand new. Yeah. Yeah, brand new.

17 Q. So if I ask if you had any concerns with the vessel or if you
18 and the crew ever talked about the vessel being not seaworthy or
19 something, issues with vibration --

20 A. No, we've -- we're all really comfortable. We've been
21 together as a crew for awhile. Everybody knows -- you know what I
22 mean? Everybody is -- we -- yeah, everything was good.

23 Q. So you've been working with this crew for --

24 A. Yeah. Santos has been with me for almost 5 years, and then
25 the other guys have been with me for over a year together, about.

- 1 Q. About how many trips a year do you guys make?
- 2 A. I don't know. A lot.
- 3 Q. Yeah.
- 4 A. A lot. I have no idea.
- 5 Q. So you guys -- this time you guys were fishing for the summer
6 squid. Like, what's -- what other species you guys normally fish
7 for?
- 8 A. Regular squid, regular loligo, calamari, fluke, scup,
9 whiting, sea bass, you know, mixed stuff. But mostly it's a squid
10 boat. That's what we do for the most part, yeah.
- 11 Q. Oh, okay.
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. Just, you know, size --
- 14 A. Yeah, yeah.
- 15 Q. -- size of the boat and gross tonnage and stuff, our first
16 guess is always a scallop boat.
- 17 A. Yeah, right, no, no. We're a squid boat for sure.
- 18 Q. Did you -- so when you guys, when you noticed the stern, did
19 you check or somebody, one of the crewmembers, check all the other
20 spaces to see if there was water --
- 21 A. Yeah. Well, we didn't -- I wasn't putting anybody down in
22 the engine room, but we -- visually I could see right to the
23 engine room bilge, the floor, and there's nothing. It was bone
24 dry.
- 25 Q. And what's the access to the engine room like? Where is that

1 access?

2 A. Right here. There's a bulkhead that goes into the mudroom.

3 Obviously, the engine room is below deck, right. And so this

4 square would be like a mudroom, alleyway into our quarters.

5 Q. So the quarters are underneath the bridge?

6 A. No. They're -- well, the bridge is just upper -- 3 or 4 feet

7 higher than our staterooms.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Yeah. Just two steps, couple steps up to the --

10 Q. Okay, and then -- but that access to the engine room, is that

11 a straight ladder?

12 A. Well, no, it's not straight, no, no, no. It's on an angle.

13 Yeah. It's an actual metal railing with --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- actual staircase.

16 Q. But you can see that --

17 A. Oh, yeah, yeah.

18 Q. Does that lead forward in the engine room, or does it lead --

19 A. It leads forward, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. So you could see pretty much --

21 A. Yeah, we could see the whole engine room. I could see the

22 engine. I could see the bilge. I could see everything.

23 Q. And there was no issue --

24 A. There was nothing in the engine room. It was bone dry, just

25 like it had just been pumped. He just pumped out. You know what

1 I mean?

2 Q. Here, just want to make sure -- so when you, when you said
3 you were woken up, you went down, and where were those controls
4 for the pumps?

5 A. The controls for the pumps are right at the mudroom door
6 there.

7 Q. So right in here?

8 A. Yeah. Yeah. Let me draw -- you want me to draw you a
9 picture or whatever? Here's the stern. We had -- there's a
10 bulkhead door right here that leads into the mudroom, right. And
11 then right here are the ladder going down into the engine room
12 being a right -- this is a little quick right here. There's a
13 door here. And that puts you into the living quarters, stateroom
14 -- the stateroom. There are two staterooms. And yeah, the two
15 steps right here up into the wheelhouse. There's a open door exit
16 right here, open.

17 Q. And then, like, the galley and stuff?

18 A. Yeah. This is our -- yep, yep. The stove -- I'm sorry.
19 It's just a little funky. So the staterooms -- right when you
20 come in the -- in this door --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. -- there's a stateroom, stateroom, and then this is our
23 galley.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yeah. This is the galley, and the galley table right here.

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. Right. So this is our kitchen and the two staterooms, and
3 then the bathroom is right here. And then that's your little step
4 into the wheelhouse.
- 5 Q. Okay.
- 6 A. I don't paint a pretty picture.
- 7 Q. So this is like the mudroom, and then right immediately to
8 the right, you can go down to the engine --
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 Q. -- room, and that's -- and you're down in the --
- 11 A. Right. You walk through this bulkhead door right here, and
12 the steps are right here.
- 13 Q. To go to the engine room?
- 14 A. To go down to the engine room. So -- and then your controls
15 for pumps are right here and everything, lights and --
- 16 Q. Got you.
- 17 A. -- that's all right there. And that mudroom door, which we
18 close -- once it got real bad, we closed that door. You know what
19 I mean? To make sure the frigging water didn't go down into the
20 engine room.
- 21 Q. Okay. So you closed this door here?
- 22 A. Correct.
- 23 Q. Okay.
- 24 A. Yeah.
- 25 Q. How big is that lazarette space? I mean, how far forward

- 1 would you say that goes on the vessel?
- 2 A. In feet, 8, 9 feet maybe.
- 3 Q. Okay. It's not a huge space.
- 4 A. The width --
- 5 Q. Full width.
- 6 A. -- of the boat. Yeah, you go down and -- no, it's not, it's
- 7 not a very big space. You go down. That's the -- right there is
- 8 the ladder. Yeah. I could probably lay down and almost touch.
- 9 You know what I mean? And almost touch the forward -- the net
- 10 locker bulkhead, yeah, somewhere around there.
- 11 Q. And it's only -- I mean, height-wise, it's --
- 12 A. Well, I can stand.
- 13 Q. You can stand up in there?
- 14 A. Kind of stand up in there, but yeah, it's the hull of the
- 15 boat. You know what I mean?
- 16 Q. Right.
- 17 A. So up to -- I can -- I don't know if I can stand up straight
- 18 in there, but close.
- 19 Q. Okay. So about 6 foot tall in there?
- 20 A. Correct, yes.
- 21 Q. And then the bulkhead is about 9 foot forward?
- 22 A. From the stern of the boat to the -- yeah. I want to say
- 23 somewhere around there -- 8, 9 feet. Something like that, yeah.
- 24 Q. And then the width of the entire --
- 25 A. Correct, yes.

- 1 Q. And which is -- what was the beam, about --
- 2 A. I don't remember.
- 3 Q. -- 20, 18, 20 --
- 4 A. I think so. I think it was around 18. I don't remember the
5 exact number.
- 6 Q. Just trying to figure out kind of how much volume in water
7 was in that space.
- 8 A. Yeah.
- 9 Q. In that net space, the net room.
- 10 A. The net locker, yeah.
- 11 Q. Net locker.
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. Smaller?
- 14 A. Nope.
- 15 Q. That space.
- 16 A. It was about the same.
- 17 Q. Same.
- 18 A. It was about, you know, obviously, the same rail-to-rail,
19 right.
- 20 Q. Yep.
- 21 A. And so that lazarette bulkhead would have shared the same
22 bulkhead. And then it may have been a little bigger. It may have
23 been a little deeper. You know what I mean? It's hard to say.
24 It's --
- 25 Q. Was there any way for water to get from this space to this

1 space? Or was it a solid bulkhead?

2 A. It was a solid bulkhead.

3 Q. There was no wire runs that went through it?

4 A. There's a couple wire runs, yeah, on the top. So yeah,
5 maybe, yeah. Because that's where the steering lines go through,
6 and --

7 Q. How big are those holes? I mean, have you ever seen those
8 lines in there?

9 A. Yeah. But they're all sealed up with foam and stuff.

10 Q. So there was, like, fire stuff --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- sealant in there?

13 A. Yeah, yeah. We just did it all. We just redid it all. So
14 it's been --

15 Q. What about -- so this net, this net locker space had to have
16 some sort of a vent or something for that space. I mean, what
17 was --

18 A. No, no, there's no vents.

19 Q. No vents, no --

20 A. No, no, no.

21 Q. -- deck vents or -- so it's totally --

22 A. It's sealed; once you dog it down, that's it. There's no --
23 it's just storage, just net locker.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. It was never for liquids.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. You know what I mean? To vent. It was always --

3 Q. Yeah. I was just thinking it would be -- if you store nets
4 down there that are used, might have an issue --

5 A. Well, yeah.

6 Q. -- organic matter or some kind --

7 A. Yeah, no. It was --

8 Q. -- in that --

9 A. It was a watertight -- supposed to be a watertight deal. You
10 know what I mean?

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. To keep it.

13 Q. Okay. How long ago did you say you put that foam in those --
14 the cable run?

15 A. We just re-sprayed a couple of trips ago. We just had some
16 little wires, but we had -- I don't know, 2 weeks ago maybe.

17 Q. And do you --

18 A. It was all sealed off. Everything was --

19 Q. Do you remember the stuff that you used?

20 A. Yeah. It was a two-part canister. It was more marine grade
21 shit for -- we got it from the hardware store. I don't remember
22 the name of it. It wasn't a big -- I mean, the pipe that the
23 wires go through was small, but I guess, you know, under -- if
24 it's underwater, it's going to be enough to frigging -- it was --
25 all that stuff was just sealed up.

1 Q. And why did you, why did you do that?

2 A. We had steering lines that were -- we raised up in the
3 ceiling. So we just had to cut a little bit of that foam out and
4 the wires that ran in through it.

5 Q. Got you. So would you say you -- I mean, were you guys doing
6 like a retrofit on the, on the steering system itself? I mean --

7 A. Just -- it was some lines that we just raised up so they
8 weren't sticking in the pens a little bit. You know what I mean?
9 We just lifted them up.

10 Q. Okay. So you just relocate them from --

11 A. Yeah. We didn't change anything on the bulkhead. We just
12 changed in the fish hold. You know what I mean? The bulkhead
13 stayed the same.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. There was -- it's -- they're welded fittings to the -- to
16 that net locker bulkhead, so none of that was messed with. You
17 know what I mean? And that's -- from the fish hold to that locker
18 was steel, solid steel plate. So I don't know. There wasn't
19 really any -- but from the fish hold to the net locker anyway.
20 From the net locker to the thing again, I think it was just -- it
21 was a bulkhead fitting, welded nipple. You know what I mean?

22 Q. How about the rudder assembly?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Is there any -- been any maintenance as far as --

25 A. It's been inspected, yeah. It's been -- that lazarette is

1 always dry. It's always super dry.

2 Q. So the rudder post goes through the laz?

3 A. Correct. Yes.

4 Q. Down, right down?

5 A. Yep. You go down the lazarette. The steering arms are down
6 there. And then the rudder post, yeah.

7 Q. So would it be fair to say the last time it was looked at was
8 3 years ago in dry dock?

9 A. No, no, no. We go down there every trip.

10 Q. The rudder itself, in like --

11 A. The outside of it would have been the last -- a year ago.

12 Not -- when we were -- got hauled out for the, for the --

13 Q. Okay. So the bearing was looked at --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- a year ago?

16 A. Everything, yeah, yeah, yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. All that stuff was looked at, yeah.

19 Q. And no maintenance needed to get done there? There was --

20 A. I don't believe we did anything. We did -- the shaft was
21 replaced. I think the rudder post was okay.

22 Q. Did -- sorry.

23 [REDACTED] I was going to say, so having been on this
24 vessel for however long it's been, over 5 years --

25 MR. RALPH: Yeah.

1 ██████████ -- as the master for 4½ years, what's your
2 best guess to what went wrong?

3 MR. RALPH: I don't know. I've been talking to the guys. We
4 just, we don't know. Ed said he pumped it out, and then like 20
5 minutes later, he said something felt funky, and we ran out in the
6 back, and he said the frigging -- that's when he came in all
7 panicked and got me, and the thing was just, it was just flooded.

8 BY CWO ██████████

9 Q. When you got to the bridge, were there alarms and stuff going
10 off?

11 A. No. No. He had just pumped the engine room out. I don't
12 know. No, I don't believe there was.

13 Q. Would normally -- was the vessel equipped with high water
14 alarms?

15 A. Yes. Yeah. And, like I said, we had just been inspected all
16 that stuff on our last --

17 Q. Three weeks ago you said.

18 A. So I don't know, maybe in the heat of the moment maybe. I
19 don't know. You know what I mean?

20 Q. I'll ask him that.

21 A. No, no, yeah. I don't know, yeah.

22 Q. That was Ed that was --

23 A. Yeah. You can talk to him. He'll tell you.

24 Q. So what's the arrangement for that pump that's in that
25 lazarette space in terms of where does it pump to? Straight over

1 the side?

2 A. So there's a tube that goes from the lazarette, just like
3 every other compartment that runs to the pump in the engine room.
4 And from there, there's a discharge that goes right over the side
5 of the boat.

6 Q. Okay. So there is -- so it's not directly over the side from
7 the lazarette? It goes --

8 A. No. It goes to the pump in the engine room, a part of the
9 engine -- manifold for different compartments. Yeah.

10 Q. Got you. But there's an individual pump in the space?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. No, no, no.

14 Q. So there's no pump in the lazarette?

15 A. There's a suction.

16 Q. It's just a pickup.

17 A. Every compartment has its own suction, its own pickup, right.

18 Q. Is there like a strainer around that pickup?

19 A. Yes, yeah, yep. They all have their own strainer. There's
20 two different manifolds. One we have -- for two pumps.

21 Q. Okay. So there's one suction line in that space in the laz?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. And then one suction in the net locker?

24 A. Correct. The fish hold has two. The engine room has two.

25 Q. What's the condition of, like -- let's just start with the

- 1 lazarette? As far as like where I'm going with it -- I'm not
2 trying to be sneaky --
- 3 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 4 Q. -- is did anything clog that filter?
- 5 A. No.
- 6 Q. It was straight?
- 7 A. Yeah. It was pumping. It was pumping.
- 8 Q. Okay. So you --
- 9 A. It was pumping like a fucking beast.
- 10 Q. -- saw it going over the side, so --
- 11 A. Oh, yeah. It was pumping. There was no -- I went -- I'm the
12 one that went down and switched it to the lazarette and the net
13 locker, and they were both ripping (ph.) overboard. That was the
14 -- one of the first things that we're trying to do to not lose the
15 frigging boat. You know what I mean?
- 16 Q. Yeah.
- 17 A. No, they --
- 18 Q. So those pickups, just so we understand the arrangement, is
19 that line from the lazarette, that service line go straight to
20 that manifold and then --
- 21 A. It goes straight to the --
- 22 Q. -- there's a separate line?
- 23 A. -- manifold, yeah.
- 24 Q. Each?
- 25 A. Each compartment has its own, own steel line running.

1 Q. Dedicated suction.

2 A. There's a suction in the bottom of the -- in the V. There's
3 a pipe that runs through the net locker. I believe it's under the
4 cement in the net locker.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Through the fish hold in the bilge, and then into the engine
7 room bulkhead where it goes up to a manifold, right. And then, so
8 we have two manifolds that we can pump all different compartments
9 out with.

10 Q. And then it's a single discharge over the side?

11 A. Well, there's two discharges.

12 Q. Okay. So --

13 A. I can turn two, two pumps on and pump whatever.

14 Q. Okay. So you lined up one pump for the laz, one pump for the
15 net locker?

16 A. Right, exactly. Yeah. And they -- the discharges come up
17 out of the engine room in the same spot and point out the
18 starboard side of the boat.

19 Q. But you would get water out of both?

20 A. Yes. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. So it was --

22 A. So, I guess, yeah, it was water -- it would have had to have
23 been water in --

24 Q. So it was taking water on the net locker?

25 A. Right, yeah.

- 1 Q. But you don't know --
- 2 A. Yeah, I don't know, no. No, no. Yeah. Because they were
3 both pumping, so it would have to be pumping something.
- 4 Q. Do you have any idea what the gallons per minute or gallons
5 per hour is, minutes, or what kind of pump it is?
- 6 A. I don't -- it was --
- 7 Q. Pacer?
- 8 A. A pacer. Both pacers, yeah.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. Yeah, yeah. I know searching for a reason, I couldn't tell
11 you honestly what I would even think it would be. Just to wake up
12 in a panic, and the stern's under the -- pretty much under the
13 water already. I don't -- there's no way for us to really know
14 what the fuck happened. You know what I mean?
- 15 Q. Yeah. Did it seem like -- was the -- do you guys normally,
16 when you're doing transit like that, you're on autopilot?
- 17 A. Yes.
- 18 Q. And did it seem like it was tracking?
- 19 A. Plot a course, yeah, we were on a course.
- 20 Q. Yeah. So it wasn't like you drifted or veered?
- 21 A. No, no.
- 22 Q. It's all good water in that area?
- 23 A. Yeah, no. Yeah, we were 50, 60 miles south of the Vineyard.
24 There's nothing there. It's nowhere near land anyway. So --
- 25 Q. Yeah. So once you guys got on your survival suits and jumped

- 1 in the water, how long were you guys in the water?
- 2 A. I said 5; the guys said 10. 5 to 10 minutes.
- 3 Q. Oh, 10.
- 4 A. It wasn't long. It wasn't a long time. The last I spoke to
5 them on the radio, they said they were 15 minutes out.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. So --
- 8 Q. Did everybody's survival suits fit correctly?
- 9 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 10 Q. They should have.
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. No issues with them?
- 13 A. Yeah. I'm a little bit of a big guy but, yeah, no, we all
14 got in them and --
- 15 Q. Okay. That's good.
- 16 A. Yeah.
- 17 Q. So no -- were there any issues when you were fishing?
- 18 A. No.
- 19 Q. The last time you were fishing?
- 20 A. No. No.
- 21 Q. Was there a lot of traffic out there?
- 22 A. No. No. There was --
- 23 Q. Any close calls --
- 24 A. -- two or three boats.
- 25 Q. -- with other boats?

- 1 A. (No audible response.)
- 2 BY [REDACTED]
- 3 Q. The steering commands work fine, like --
- 4 A. Everything, yeah.
- 5 Q. -- went all the way starboard, port?
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. You didn't have any issues with steering?
- 8 A. No.
- 9 Q. Ed never said anything about issues with steering?
- 10 A. No. No. There was nothing wrong with that, the steering.
- 11 It was -- we never had -- we've never had trouble with it. I plot
- 12 the course to where I want to be woken up. I tell them timeframe,
- 13 whatever. It's -- we've never had -- I've never had trouble with
- 14 it.
- 15 Q. No. I'm just saying like this particular trip?
- 16 A. No. No. Even as we were -- the boat was sinking, and we
- 17 were still -- I -- you know what I mean? I turned it a couple of
- 18 clicks to try to see if I could get it in a better frigging spot
- 19 as it was going. But no, we were -- even as we were sinking, we
- 20 were still holding our fucking course. We were still --
- 21 Q. Yeah. Yeah.
- 22 A. -- plotting right along the same line. I gave them our
- 23 bearings and our heading. You know what I mean? We stayed right
- 24 on that heading as we were sinking. So it was working.
- 25 Q. So the arrangement for the gear, just so I -- because I've

1 never -- I don't know if I've ever been on a boat that has this
2 sort of an arrangement. Is it like a built-in ramp that you haul
3 the net up or --

4 A. In the stern --

5 Q. -- is it lifted up over the --

6 A. No. Yeah. The stern's just wide open pretty much. I mean
7 it's, you know, it's above the water line. And there's a 10
8 degree, 15 degree ramp.

9 Q. It's a slight --

10 A. It's a steep ramp, yeah.

11 [REDACTED] Yeah, okay.

12 BY CWO [REDACTED]

13 Q. But there's no actual --

14 A. No.

15 Q. -- bulkhead at --

16 A. No, no, no, no. It's just all --

17 Q. So it's open sea?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. So getting water on the back deck is not uncommon?

20 A. That's -- no. We take waves in the stern all the -- yeah.

21 Q. But it would naturally just --

22 A. Right. It would naturally shed, but the boat was so --

23 Q. And are the side bolt works -- are there scuppers cut into
24 the sides?

25 A. Yes, yeah, yeah.

1 Q. Plenty of --

2 BY [REDACTED]

3 Q. How many? Do you remember --

4 A. Yeah. No, just --

5 Q. -- how many?

6 A. Oh, there's probably five or six scuppers on each side.

7 Q. Each side?

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So when you're hauling this up, I mean, these doors that you
10 talk about, are they -- they're not integral to the boat. They're
11 attached to the nets themselves?

12 A. No. So there's a big spool -- a big winch of wire, probably
13 400 fathoms of wire, heavy-duty wire. So there's one starboard --
14 I mean, you guys never seen a dragger?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Right. So, yeah, there's just a winch on each side. It goes
17 to the block.

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. Right. There's a big block. And then the main wire goes
20 down to the door, right. And so we just lower -- you just lower
21 the door to the bottom of the ocean on that main wire with the
22 hydraulic winch.

23 BY CWO [REDACTED]

24 Q. So those lines travel like right to here?

25 A. Yeah. See -- yeah. This is the bow of the boat.

- 1 Q. Yes.
- 2 A. Mid-ship there's two winches.
- 3 Q. Yep. Like right here?
- 4 A. Correct, yeah. And then the gantry. There's two blocks, big
5 blocks.
- 6 Q. Right.
- 7 A. Hanging, right. So the main wire goes from here. It goes
8 through the block and straight down to the door, and then the
9 door --
- 10 Q. Goes right --
- 11 A. Yeah, and then straight down to the door. And then as we
12 lower the door in the water, we'll steam on it, and it, you know,
13 it's on a 3:1 ratio from whatever our depth is. If we're in 100
14 fathoms of water, we set 300 fathoms of wire.
- 15 Q. Okay.
- 16 A. You know what I mean? So it's a 3:1.
- 17 Q. But none of this was happening?
- 18 A. No. We were steaming.
- 19 Q. You were steaming.
- 20 A. We were on our way home.
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. We were --
- 23 BY [REDACTED]
- 24 Q. I was just curious. So, like, when you guys are hauling
25 those nets up --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. -- I mean, do those doors hit the stern at all? I mean, as
3 you're hauling back.

4 A. They're tied up -- we bring them up, and they're tied up to
5 the boat. They're not on the stern, no. They're on the sides of
6 the boat, on the hips (ph.).

7 Q. I'm just curious, like, do they hit the stern? As you're
8 hauling them up, I mean, do they --

9 A. No.

10 Q. -- I mean, like --

11 A. They're on -- wish I had a picture, but they're just --

12 Q. Just trying to think, like, you know, is there --

13 A. So as we're steaming, we bring them aboard or -- you know
14 what I mean, sometimes we -- but no, they're just -- we have
15 hooks. So if we're steaming or something, we bring the door up,
16 we hook them, and they just get stowed there. Outside the boat or
17 inside the boat, it doesn't matter.

18 Q. Yeah. I just --

19 A. But they're not on the stern, no. As we're -- so as we're
20 steaming, right, they get lowered into the water, and then we'll
21 lower them in about 25 feet, and then I steam on it, and they
22 spread. What they -- they're just -- they just keep the net
23 spread open. It's just a big louver that you're just towing on,
24 and they're constantly pulling out to keep the net spread apart.
25 That's all they do.

1 Q. The net spread, yeah. What I was getting at was is it
2 normal, like, during the course of your fishing, like, that -- you
3 know, if we can't explain any possible other options in terms of
4 how water was getting into the vessel, is there --

5 A. Yeah, oh --

6 Q. -- something bang up against --

7 A. No, no, no.

8 Q. Any question --

9 A. Yeah, no. They're on the side of the boat, chained up.
10 That's where they live.

11 Q. Yeah.

12 A. Nothing would have punctured the stern, no.

13 Q. Yeah. Just trying to think because --

14 A. Yeah, no.

15 Q. Would there be reason for water to have been able to
16 penetrate the hull somehow?

17 A. No.

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. Were those nets still there when you looked out and saw those
20 -- the water on the aft -- on the laz?

21 A. We were -- our net was wrapped up. We were steaming.

22 Q. I understand you were steaming, but --

23 A. It was on the --

24 Q. -- they were both there? Like one didn't --

25 A. Oh, our doors, no. Our doors were -- the doors were there,

1 yeah. Our net was stowed, yeah.

2 Q. And then the only other thing I'm going to ask, I think --
3 and, Mike, if you have anything else -- is was there any machinery
4 in that laz?

5 A. No. No. The only thing that was --

6 Q. No machinery?

7 A. -- down there a couple dock lines. That's it. We put them
8 over the rail.

9 Q. Any through-hole fittings?

10 A. In the lazarette, nothing. No. I mean, the steering lines
11 and that little bit of wire, that's it. It goes from up forward.

12 Q. So the only thing in that --

13 A. Right.

14 Q. The only thing, the only thing is the rudder post that
15 penetrates that hole?

16 A. Right. Yes. The lazarette, yeah, yes, yeah.

17 Q. There's no valve next to it that --

18 A. No, no, no. There's no other -- nothing. No.

19 Q. Was there any valves on that bulkhead that communicated with
20 the net locker?

21 A. That could be -- no.

22 Q. Like a little valve that --

23 A. Nothing.

24 Q. -- you could use to dewater that and move water --

25 A. No. That's just a sealed --

1 Q. -- ballast or anything?

2 A. -- a solid bulkhead.

3 Q. Solid bulkhead.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. So no generator, no --

6 A. Nothing. No.

7 Q. -- backup fire pump?

8 A. It's just a empty compartment. You go down there, there's
9 a -- the suction which goes through a bulkhead fitting, your
10 steering arms that connect to the rudder post. That's all that
11 lives down there. That's all that -- that's all it's for is to --
12 like I said, a couple dock lines, but no mess like you see a lot
13 of other boats, all kinds of crazy shit down there. You know what
14 I mean?

15 Q. That's why I asked is anything --

16 A. There was nothing. It was clean. It was fresh painted. It
17 was -- you know what I mean? Just --

18 [REDACTED] No water tanks, nothing else in that space?

19 MR. RALPH: Nothing, nothing. We kept it empty. I don't
20 like clutter on my boat. You know what I mean? It's just not
21 something we do.

22 BY CWO [REDACTED]

23 Q. And you said the engine room was bone dry?

24 A. Engine room was bone fucking dry as I was looking right down
25 there. I don't -- where does that much water come from? Like I

1 said, I've been on this boat for 7, 8 years I've been on this
2 boat, and this lazarette is always dry, always dry. If there's a
3 fucking 2 or 3 inches of water down there, it's -- you know what I
4 mean?

5 Q. Yeah. And the last time you were operating the vessel, just
6 a few hours before, everything was working?

7 A. Yeah, yeah.

8 Q. No issues with steering?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No vibration?

11 A. No. Ed told me he just --

12 Q. Nothing out of the normal?

13 A. -- pumped the boat. He had just pumped the engine room out
14 and shit 20 minutes before he frantically woke me up. So
15 everything --

16 Q. So that access path you said to the lazarette, is it
17 starboard side, port side?

18 A. Port side.

19 Q. Port side?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. And is it just --

22 A. So this is, this is your stern ramp right here, right. Your
23 doors are over here. This is our work station where there's just
24 a little access panel right, you know, right there.

25 Q. Okay. So --

- 1 A. This side has nothing.
- 2 Q. -- is there an actual, is there an actual bulkhead here?
- 3 A. No.
- 4 Q. No. So there's nothing?
- 5 A. What do you mean, a bulk --
- 6 Q. Like above the deck, above the main deck, is there actual,
7 like, full walk-arounds? You know what I mean?
- 8 A. I don't follow.
- 9 Q. Like you got -- I mean, obviously --
- 10 A. This is just your back deck. There's nothing raised up off
11 of it anywhere.
- 12 Q. So you could just run straight out the back without jumping
13 over --
- 14 A. The middle? Yeah.
- 15 Q. -- the middle?
- 16 A. The middle you could, yeah.
- 17 Q. But here on the sides --
- 18 A. Oh, there's a rail. Oh, yeah, yeah. There's a rail, yeah.
- 19 Q. Okay. So there's a --
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. So this is wide open.
- 22 A. Yeah. This is -- yeah, the middle is wide open.
- 23 Q. And this -- there's a rail that goes all the way around?
- 24 A. Correct, yeah. There's a rail. There's actually a little
25 rail in this little section here.

- 1 Q. Yep.
- 2 A. And then around the back of the boat, and then it starts
3 here, boom, boom, continues all the way around to here.
- 4 Q. And then the drum for the net.
- 5 A. The net drum is right above this -- open and --
- 6 Q. Yeah, okay.
- 7 A. -- this is where we wind the net. So it's pretty much right
8 here.
- 9 Q. Okay. I was thinking that there were --
- 10 A. These are the winches.
- 11 Q. -- winches, the winches.
- 12 A. The winches --
- 13 Q. And then the drum.
- 14 A. -- that just stores -- that holds our wire.
- 15 Q. That's what picks up the net.
- 16 A. The door is back here, right. So we set the net out, wind
17 the net out --
- 18 Q. Got you.
- 19 A. -- right, with the ground cables. We get to the end. We
20 get to the end, so we take this cable. You hook it to this door.
21 Grab this cable, hook it to this door. There's a way with the two
22 cables, you know, it comes tight on one, you can release the other
23 cable. There's a way to transfer it from the net drum to the
24 doors.
- 25 Q. Yep.

1 A. So now, you know, because there's no way to just unhook it
2 with all that weight. So there's a way to --

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. We transfer it from the net drum to the doors. The doors get
5 lowered into the water. I steam on them for a second while they
6 spread, and then I tell them how much wire, and we -- and they go
7 right down to the bottom of the ocean.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And they tend the bottom of the ocean. The whole time that
10 we're towing, they're on the bottom. But that's nothing to do
11 with -- my best guess is I don't fucking know.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. I don't know. I honestly wouldn't even know what to say,
14 what caused it. No idea. I wish I had an answer. You know what
15 I mean? Like, it's just a scary way to get woken up and --

16 Q. Yeah, for sure.

17 A. -- the only thing you give a shit about is getting off alive
18 and staying safe. I mean, there was no way to get back there to
19 see what the fuck happened. We don't know. Have no fucking clue.
20 You know what I mean? There was no way I was going into the -- up
21 to here in frigging water, whatever.

22 Q. Well, at that point, yeah. I mean --

23 A. There's nothing we could do.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. The only thing that we could do was turn the pumps on.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. You know what I mean? I thought about turning the boat
3 maybe. We had a little bit of a following sea, but I was scared
4 to even deviate that course. You know what I mean? If I turned,
5 it would have done --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. I mean, the way that it stood right now, we were still
8 moving, and the boat was still fucking floating. So --

9 Q. Yeah, and you --

10 A. I changed it 2 or 3 degrees to see if it made a little bit of
11 a difference to -- with the following sea, but I mean, I wasn't --
12 I was thinking about it, could I do that? Should I turn the
13 fucking boat? I just, I figured the best thing was just to let it
14 ride the way it was going while we got situated, got the Coast
15 Guard on the radio, and everybody got their fucking head right for
16 jumping in the water. I wish I had an answer for you guys. I
17 really do. I just, I don't know what to tell you.

18 Q. Well, the only -- you know, it was obviously water was coming
19 in somehow.

20 A. Right. Yeah. The water came from somewhere. I mean, the
21 rudder --

22 Q. And the --

23 A. -- post --

24 Q. -- rudder post --

25 A. The rudder post. You know what I mean? Did the rudder post

1 -- something blow out in the rudder post? I mean, where else is
2 the water going to come from?

3 Q. That's right. Yeah.

4 A. You know what I mean? Short of --

5 Q. That's what I'm looking at.

6 A. Short of it going down the hatch. But I mean, it would have
7 to be -- get to a situation where that would be possible first.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. You know what I mean? So --

10 Q. When you saw the hatch, was it underwater though?

11 A. It was -- it wasn't completely underwater, but it was taking
12 waves, right. I mean, it was full.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. There was no fucking going back there to --

15 Q. Yeah. Even if you --

16 A. You know what I mean?

17 Q. -- had been able to go back there, you wouldn't --

18 A. No.

19 Q. -- have been able to see --

20 A. It was full.

21 Q. -- where it was coming from originally.

22 A. It was full, full. Like, there was no -- the thought crossed
23 my mind, but only for, like, what would you even do?

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. What is going back there going to do? Nothing.

- 1 Q. Yep. There's water.
- 2 A. There's no -- yeah.
- 3 Q. And just because, I mean, that's the only thing we're working
4 with is that rudder post. The only other thing I can think of is
5 the steel itself.
- 6 A. Something in the steel gave out.
- 7 Q. And so --
- 8 A. I don't --
- 9 Q. -- the last, the last dry dock was an emergency haul-out a
10 year ago.
- 11 A. Right.
- 12 Q. But then 3 years ago, you took --
- 13 A. Was our --
- 14 Q. -- it out and you looked at --
- 15 A. -- scheduled haul-out.
- 16 Q. Was there anyone -- did anyone look at, like, the welds? Did
17 anyone look at --
- 18 A. Well, the boat --
- 19 Q. Was there bottom paint done?
- 20 A. Yes.
- 21 Q. Okay. So they would have grinded it down.
- 22 A. They would have sand -- yeah, all of -- any of the sand --
23 bad spots would have gotten water blasted, which will take you --
24 it takes it right down to bare steel.
- 25 Q. Yeah. And where did that work get done?

- 1 A. Goodison.
- 2 Q. It got done at Goodison?
- 3 A. Goodison. Yeah.
- 4 Q. And would someone at Goodison -- I mean, I would imagine if
5 they saw something, they would --
- 6 A. I want to say they x-rayed. They go around and x-ray the
7 boat.
- 8 Q. They did?
- 9 A. Every time they get -- yeah, I'm pretty sure just about every
10 boat gets that gel shit on it, and they go around and check the
11 thickness of --
- 12 Q. Okay. Part of the haul-out?
- 13 A. Yeah. I believe so. I mean, I -- it would be stupid not to.
- 14 Q. Maybe that's -- I'll ask (indiscernible).
- 15 A. Yeah. I'm sure.
- 16 Q. So the arrangement for that rudder, is it a standard rudder
17 out of the engine, and does it have a support -- like a shoe that
18 comes up to haul the supporter from the bottom, or is it just
19 suspended?
- 20 A. Out of the hull in the lazarette?
- 21 Q. No. I mean, from the lazarette. So when you get the rudder
22 post, it comes out of the lazarette. Then you have your actual
23 rudder. Is there any structural support off the hull? Is there
24 like --
- 25 A. Oh, yeah.

- 1 Q. From the bottom as well?
- 2 A. You talking about the prop?
- 3 Q. No, the actual rudder itself.
- 4 A. Or the -- yeah. So there's a tube -- there's a heavy tube
5 that's welded through. I don't know. I mean, I've seen it in the
6 yard and stuff, but I mean, I don't know the -- I have pictures of
7 it. Well, actually, everything is on my laptop on the boat.
- 8 Q. So I mean, I guess what I'm saying is, like, you've got your
9 stern here.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. You've got your props that come out, got your rudder that
12 comes down here. With this, like the cutlass bearing, was the
13 cutlass bearing like that, like a strut support on the cutlass on
14 the --
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. -- shaft?
- 17 A. No.
- 18 Q. Or was the cutlass integral to the hull?
- 19 A. The cutlass is in the hull, yes.
- 20 Q. Okay.
- 21 A. Yeah. The cutlass is down -- is in the hull.
- 22 Q. And then, like, for the rudder --
- 23 A. Is a nozzle with the rudder right in front of the nozzle.
- 24 Q. So the rudder is actually aft of the prop?
- 25 A. Yeah.

- 1 Q. If you were looking at it from the starboard side, the shaft
2 that comes out --
- 3 A. Yeah. No. It would be -- god, I can't remember.
- 4 Q. Because normally, I mean, you'd have to -- you'd normally
5 have the shaft come out almost even with the stern of the vessel.
- 6 A. Yeah. Where the prop is --
- 7 Q. And then the rudders --
- 8 A. Forward -- yeah, yeah, right.
- 9 Q. I guess what I'm getting at, is there any -- was there --
10 like, a lot of times with these arrangements, you'll see rudder
11 posts. You get the rudder comes down, and then there's some sort
12 of a support that runs back to the hull.
- 13 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Yes. Yep. There's --
- 14 Q. So that's kind of --
- 15 A. -- a big --
- 16 Q. -- bar, right?
- 17 A. -- nozzle.
- 18 Q. A lot of times there's like a -- this is actually solid
19 plate?
- 20 A. Right, yes, I believe it is. It's a -- I don't remember
21 exactly. I'd have to look at the pictures. But yeah, no. It was
22 -- yeah.
- 23 Q. Okay. That's just -- so did you say, like, this was the --
24 there's a cutlass bearing here? It's here?
- 25 A. The shaft -- so there's a cork nozzle. This is your --

- 1 there's a big cork nozzle here that --
- 2 Q. Prop's in --
- 3 A. -- the prop's in, yeah, right. And then, so --
- 4 Q. Okay. I got you.
- 5 A. Then there's the cutlass bearing, which is all, you know,
- 6 right behind the prop right in there for the --
- 7 Q. And there's a stern bearing?
- 8 A. And, then, yeah. Then there's going to be --
- 9 Q. (Indiscernible)?
- 10 A. Right, yeah. That's all the stuff from (indiscernible).
- 11 Q. So there's a cutlass bearing and there's another -- looks
- 12 like a stern bearing here?
- 13 A. Yeah. There's a mid-bearing, yes.
- 14 Q. And then the shaft?
- 15 A. Right, yeah.
- 16 Q. Does that shaft pass -- does that pass through that lazarette
- 17 space at all?
- 18 A. No.
- 19 Q. Where does that -- would it access through the net locker
- 20 or --
- 21 A. The shaft is outside the boat from the prop.
- 22 Q. Right, but --
- 23 A. It's below the --
- 24 Q. -- straight into the engine room?
- 25 A. Into like the, the fish hold.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Where you start to expose the shaft. Yeah. It doesn't --
3 you don't see any part of it in the net locker or the lazarette.

4 Q. We didn't talk about the fish hold. The fish hold, did that
5 have water in it?

6 A. No. It just got pumped out.

7 Q. So you physically saw there was no water?

8 A. He told me it just got pumped out. Yeah.

9 Q. So the net locker and laz had water because you saw the water
10 coming out?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. The fish hold, no water?

13 A. No.

14 CWO [REDACTED] I can't think of any other questions to ask you
15 right now. Definitely appreciate your time.

16 MR. RALPH: Yeah.

17 CWO [REDACTED] Under the circumstances, it's --

18 MR. RALPH: Yeah. No, I mean, we're all pretty exhausted. I
19 know something that we probably -- is the deck plates. That's
20 another thing -- would have been a cause. But, you know, he said
21 he had just pumped the fish hold out. So if that was empty, then
22 -- but, you know, that -- because I was thinking, too, like, where
23 the fuck does all this water come from? You know what I mean?

24 CWO [REDACTED] Right.

25 MR. RALPH: But all the deck plates are all brand new. All

1 the -- we just put all brand new stainless rings in. So to weigh
2 80,000 pounds is -- you know, it's a lot of weight, you know what
3 I mean? So it's (indiscernible) to take on.

4 CWO [REDACTED] Did you happen to grab your ID?

5 MR. RALPH: Yeah.

6 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. I just wanted to get just --

7 MR. RALPH: That's the only thing I got, my --

8 CWO [REDACTED] -- get the information off that and your phone
9 number in case I need to contact you.

10 MR. RALPH: [REDACTED]. My phone is in the boat, so I got
11 to go get another one, but I'll get another one today. I should
12 have one by this afternoon if you guys need to call me. Oh, I had
13 everything, fucking GoPro, my laptops, my fucking -- everything.

14 CWO [REDACTED] Sucks.

15 MR. RALPH: All my electronics, all my toys.

16 CWO [REDACTED] All your toys.

17 MR. RALPH: But whatever. We're alive.

18 [REDACTED] That's all that stuff --

19 MR. RALPH: It's all that matters. Yeah, I know. It's --

20 [REDACTED] -- and shit.

21 CWO [REDACTED] That will conclude the interview. The
22 interview participants were [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] [REDACTED], and
23 Mr. Kevin Ralph.

24 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

25

26

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: SINKING OF THE FISHING VESSEL
 REBECCA MARY SOUTH OF NANTUCKET,
 MASSACHUSETTS, ON JUNE 17, 2020
 Interview of Kevin Ralph

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA20FM021

PLACE:

DATE: June 17, 2020

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.


K
Transcriber