

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD THE
STATEN ISLAND FERRY *SANDY GROUND*
NEAR STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
ON DECEMBER 22, 2022

Accident No.: DCA23FM010

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Interview of: TREVOR GHERARDI, Chief Engineer
Staten Island Ferry
Sandy Ground

Staten Island Ferry, St. George
Terminal

Thursday
December 29, 2022

APPEARANCES:

██████████ ██████████ Chief Warrant Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

BRYAN YOUNG, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

BARRY TORRE
Staten Island Ferries

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:15 p.m.)

1
2
3 CWO [REDACTED] All right. I'm recording. And just so for my
4 introduction on the recording here. So good afternoon. This is
5 Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm here with Chief
6 Engineer from the Staten Island Ferry Trevor --

7 MR. GHERARDI: Trevor Gherardi.

8 CWO [REDACTED] Trevor Gherardi. Time on deck is 12:15. We
9 are located at the Staten Island Ferry, Saint George Terminal, to
10 conduct an interview in regards to the *Sandy Ground* engine room
11 fire.

INTERVIEW OF TREVOR GHERARDI

12
13 BY CWO [REDACTED]

14 Q. And then before we begin, Chief, I do have your approval,
15 right, to --

16 A. Yes, you do.

17 Q. -- forward and ask you some questions?

18 A. -- forward.

19 Q. So essentially these line of questions today we wanted to go
20 over some of the events and period timeframes that happened
21 beforehand, before --

22 (Crosstalk)

23 A. (Indiscernible).

24 Q. -- to include what you were observing during your watch in
25 regards to the fuel oil system supplying the main diesel engines,

1 and also in regards to some alarms that you may have encountered
2 during that time.

3 A. A lot of alarms.

4 Q. And if you can at least start with anything that you may have
5 observed during the watch in regards to, like, your normal -- or
6 fuel system procedures.

7 A. Okay. Well, I'll start with this then. The day tanks were
8 way off balance, and we were working on adjusting it. And, like,
9 when I relieved Mark he told me, yes, they had a problem with the
10 MSD (indiscernible) New York (indiscernible) which had his
11 engineer Alex Maritz (ph.), I think it was, switch over valves to
12 put the sewage right through the sewage holding tank, and told me
13 everything else was working fine.

14 Q. What was some indications? Like, what were you thinking
15 that, you know, could be some, some things causing, you know, that
16 may be contributing to that?

17 A. To what? To the --

18 Q. Just what, yeah, what were you seeing there?

19 A. Well, the MSD is the Marine Sanitation Device. We've been
20 having problems with that not working properly. So sometimes it
21 gets more than it can handle, and it will back up. And the way we
22 fix that is we shift the valves from the MSD unit to the sewage
23 tank.

24 Q. I see.

25 A. The holding tank. Which then we pump out.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. There's a bio-reactive system, and if it isn't 100 percent
3 correct, this thing is like very touchy.

4 Q. I see. Touchy as in you mean like --

5 A. It needs to have -- everything's got to be in the correct
6 range, pH, particle size, everything's got to be working --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- for this system to work. And it's not the first time it
9 hasn't worked. We've -- that's our standard operating procedure
10 now between people on the crew. Instead of putting sewage on deck
11 we quickly put sewage in the tank. And there was one instance
12 where someone flushed jeans down the toilet --

13 Q. Oh, wow.

14 A. -- and it backed up that too. Yeah, I know (indiscernible).

15 Q. How long would you say that that has been like an issue or
16 something you had, you had to --

17 A. It's -- since the boats came it's been an issue, but it's
18 being worked on.

19 Q. Okay. And then in regards to the fuel oil system to the main
20 diesel engines, did you observe any, any --

21 A. Coming down to the boat, like I said, it wasn't our first
22 trip. Everything was running fine. There was no issues with the
23 alignment or anything that I am aware of. I do know that the one
24 tank which is on the screen it is -- the tank on this side was
25 high, and the one on this was quite a -- stands a bit lower. And

1 I am finding out, but I'm not 100 percent sure is that although
2 it's labeled the port and starboard, I think it's port and
3 starboard, okay, that the level on this tank is really the level
4 on that tank, and the level on that tank is really -- I'm not 100
5 percent sure about that, but like I said, I was assigned to a
6 different boat which wasn't running, and so they took me off that
7 boat, and put me on the other boat because the other chief was
8 out.

9 Q. Do you know the name -- what names, which vessels?

10 A. I was assigned to 2B run which I think was the *Barberi* then.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I'm not sure. I think it was supposed to be the *Barberi* on
13 that day. I'm not sure. Just --

14 Q. So from that, from that position you were shifted over now to
15 the --

16 (Crosstalk)

17 A. -- shifted over to that position. Because we don't bid the
18 boats. We bid the hours.

19 Q. I see.

20 A. So between the hours of 1:30 and 9:30, I am a chief engineer
21 on the boats. Which boat? Where they need me.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I don't agree with that personally. I like to have a crew
24 that I know that I work with all the time. I like to have a boat
25 that I'm on more than a week at a time also so I can get to know

1 what's going on. Because I've worked the *Ollis*, and I never had a
2 problem with the fuel tanks with my crew. Come on this boat, and
3 the things are different. Now is it, is it an issue? No. It's
4 not an issue. They're connected. They got (indiscernible).

5 Q. When you say different you mean what you see on the screen
6 and how they're -- how it's labeled on the --

7 A. No, no. It's all labeled the same. I'm just saying the
8 level in one tank was higher than the level in the other tank.
9 And that's what you always do. They -- part of their duties is to
10 keep the levels the same. And so I know they were talking in
11 front of the -- right before this happened they were talking in
12 front of the screen, the two oilers, Eddie and Steve, and they
13 said they were going to go check out, see what's wrong with the
14 fuel levels. I said okay, go see what's wrong.

15 Q. And these fuel levels which, which fuel levels? Which like
16 tanks?

17 A. Fuel level was in the -- not the storage tanks, the service
18 tanks.

19 Q. I see.

20 A. We call them day tanks. They're called service tanks, day
21 tanks, it's the same thing. So they went out together to go look
22 at the service tanks to line up to see why one was high and one
23 was low. And Alex was out on rounds. And then I was -- I'm
24 sitting there in my corner where I can see the switchboard, and I
25 can see anything happening on the screen, and I could see people

1 coming down the stairs. Like my corner right there. And then all
2 of a sudden a couple minutes after they're gone out of the engine
3 room, the screen started flashing. Now the screens for the Marcon
4 system will (indiscernible) the alarm that's occurring, and then
5 you, go, you see what the alarm is, and you take care of it. This
6 screen was flashing. The screens were flashing like so fast. So
7 I jumped up, went over there, noticed that I had -- this is the
8 last alarm that I saw which is what I looked at because it said
9 low fuel oil pressure on the main engines. And then I noticed
10 it's all four main engines. So I called the captain on Intercom
11 103, and (indiscernible), and hit the number. I hit -- I tell the
12 captain you could be losing the plane. And then I think alarms
13 start going off everywhere, still going off. And I silence the
14 alarms. Oh, yeah, I went out to look for the oilers. I see Steve
15 Adams, and I said, double check the alignment of all the fuel
16 valves, and he ran that way. I don't know where Eddie was. And
17 then come back inside because I saw the fuel leaking from number
18 two (indiscernible) fuel filter assembly, and I looked over, and I
19 saw by three and four fuel on them. I couldn't see number one.
20 It was out of my eyesight. Go back in, call the captain, tell him
21 he's going to lose the plane, I'm going to shut down the plane.
22 Tell him to activate the Novec. I didn't, I wasn't, you know,
23 from past boats I wasn't sure that he couldn't -- I didn't know
24 that he couldn't do it from up there, but he can't. And so told
25 him to activate the Novec. Then -- no, no, not, that was not yet.

1 Told him he might lose the plane. He's going to lose the plane.
2 Then Alex came back in. Told me fuel oil is hitting the number
3 two exhaust manifold. He said got to shut down the, shut down the
4 -- we've got to shut down. So I get back on with the captain.
5 While I'm on with the captain again telling him I'm going to shut
6 down, I see embers on the computer screen above me here on one of
7 the little squares. I see embers coming, you know, things on fire
8 coming down.

9 So I go look out the window, and there's a fire. So then
10 after we realize there's a fire, Alex Wood, you know, says time to
11 evacuate. So they started to evacuate Stevie, Alex and Ed. I
12 don't know when they all came back in the engine room. I was too
13 busy (indiscernible). I tried to call the captain again to let
14 him know that we had a fire. Communications were lost. They were
15 getting out. I'm silencing alarms. I go pull the fuel shutoffs.
16 Boat goes dark. I wait a couple minutes to see if the emergency
17 came on. I didn't see -- I was down there. I didn't see any more
18 like fire, the glow of fire. So my plan was to go up the escape
19 hatch, run a hose out, and knock down any residual fire. I didn't
20 realize how big it was. But then feel my door is very hot. And
21 emergency generator goes out so I lose hose pressure. So then the
22 captain says you've got to activate the Novec from the control
23 locker. So I go -- I wanted to go back down in the engine room to
24 do it in the control room, but they wouldn't let me down there,
25 and plus it was not -- I don't think very safe to go back down

1 there. I wasn't sure about going back down there. And because
2 the flame was right outside there, right outside the window. It
3 was, yeah, it was a good size fire. So I go down to the
4 (indiscernible) room, worked my way through one watertight door.
5 Open up as much -- soon as I could fit I slid through, and close
6 it, door closes. Second door slid through. So at the second door
7 you go down a bit, make a right and the Novec locker is right
8 there. Open up the door to Novec locker, and right on this side
9 is the release for the engine room. And I know that you've got to
10 pull the valve and the control. You've got to open the valves
11 before you do the control procedure.

12 So open up the valves release, and then you open control
13 release, and I hear (indiscernible noise) seemed like forever.
14 And so then I pull the bypass and (indiscernible). Was there
15 still a fire in there? I don't know because I didn't access the
16 space. But the Novec -- I mean, we shut the fuel off which is
17 what was feeding the fire. I'm sure there was residual fire of
18 stuff, you know, can be the flagging and wiring, a lot of stuff.
19 And so then I pulled that Novec system, worked my way back out.
20 Had to pump, hand pump a couple doors to get enough pressure to
21 open the door for me to get out.

22 Walk back up, check out the area around there. Looked down
23 into the escape hatch (indiscernible). Then I figured, okay, time
24 to go up and see why I got no generator, no emergency diesel
25 generator. So I go up on the hurricane deck, work my way up, you

1 know, checking around. There's smoke on the saloon deck. There's
2 smoke on the main deck. I then go by -- around the uptakes on the
3 bridge deck. I just went up, all the way up to the top. Went
4 out. (Indiscernible) flag. From there, tried to start the EEG,
5 but on the EEG there was a lockout (indiscernible) lockout, and I
6 -- trying to think. I checked the shutdowns and everything,
7 trying to get this to go away, but it wouldn't go away. So I
8 called the captain, told him not getting any electricity back.

9 And then I went to, like, here's -- you got the EEG room, and
10 the door over it is the stack, is the access from the engine room
11 all the way up. So I just took a peek in there real quick, and
12 make sure the fire was out, and I saw a red glow on top. And so I
13 closed the door. Told the deckhand to get me a C02. So I got
14 C02, but I couldn't ground it because there are mats there. So I
15 just cracked it open, and started shooting C02 in there. And
16 because I wasn't grounded, I got shocked pretty good.

17 And then, I guess, that shock, you know, knocked some sense
18 in me because then I realized it was the exit light.

19 Q. Okay. The exit light in --

20 A. The exit light was a red glow with the smoke up there. It
21 (indiscernible) flickering. It was just the exit light. But then
22 so that's done. Go back down, and just stand by, make sure
23 nothing else catches fire outside the space. Then the Coast Guard
24 and the fire department came onboard.

25 Then helped what I could like the side doors. The fire boat

1 came around the side doors. So I opened up the side doors. Which
2 is another thing we need keys.

3 Q. For the -- for to access to open these doors?

4 A. Yeah. Well, one door -- the fire department was on the
5 Staten Island end -- portside. And couldn't get that door open.
6 Needed a key, and I didn't have a key. So it was a big box of
7 keys down in the engine room, but -- the control room. Didn't
8 have time to go back down there. But the other side was open. So
9 we brought them around, but there was nowhere for them to hook up.
10 But the fire department was on the -- the Coast Guard was onboard,
11 police was onboard.

12 And a short while after that they started taking people off,
13 and then we're back in the slip.

14 Q. Okay. Back at Saint, Saint George?

15 A. Saint George. And had to do all the fun tests.

16 Q. So, Chief, I'd like to just retrace --

17 A. Yes, please.

18 Q. -- a little back. And going back to the service tanks like
19 you mentioned.

20 A. Right.

21 Q. With the two different levels. What do you recall was that
22 difference if, if you can recall that amount or --

23 A. I don't recall. It was, it was a bigger difference than
24 usual.

25 Q. What's usual?

- 1 A. Couple hundred gallons.
- 2 Q. And these service tanks this is what's obviously supplying,
3 right, your, your --
- 4 A. My fuel to the engines --
- 5 Q. Engines.
- 6 A. -- generators.
- 7 Q. Okay.
- 8 A. Boiler. Anything that needs diesel comes from those tanks.
- 9 Q. Okay. And so usual operation would be to get supply fuel
10 from both of these tanks simultaneous?
- 11 A. Yes. Operations -- everything is lined up together cross
12 connected. The fuel (indiscernible) takes the storage tanks lets
13 it into the day tanks. Day tanks feed all the engines. The
14 engines feed back to the day -- return to the day tanks.
- 15 Normally, they have -- the Staten Island tanks return valve fully
16 open, and the return valve for the New York (indiscernible) day
17 tank they throttle to keep the tanks level. That is normal.
- 18 Q. Okay.
- 19 A. I didn't look at that when I first came down (indiscernible).
- 20 Q. And that was -- was that done during, during the watch or --
- 21 A. Yeah, it's done all the time.
- 22 Q. Okay.
- 23 A. All the time they're always monitoring the fuel levels. So I
24 don't know what happened that caused the fuel leak. What I'm
25 thinking is too much back pressure. Because somebody closed down

1 on another valve. So there was nowhere for it to go. That system
2 I have never seen a system hooked up to a positive displacement
3 pump without a relief valve. I don't know if there's a relief
4 valve in (indiscernible). In those two valves they put in to
5 regulate the flow to the tanks were put in after we received the
6 boats. They were put in by the shipyard at the request of
7 somebody. That somebody I don't know who it is.

8 Q. So just to be clear on this relief valve, Chief, you're
9 saying the -- a fuel system like what you've experienced before
10 would have a relief system to -- a relief valve or some, some --

11 A. Any high pressure system is going to have a relief valve.

12 Q. And as far as the system here on -- with the engines that you
13 have you're not sure what --

14 A. I'm not sure.

15 Q. -- was the relief --

16 A. I'm not sure. The fuel system operations procedures were
17 changed several times, and so I know those two valves I knew.

18 Q. And the two valves you're saying are the --

19 A. All --

20 (Crosstalk)

21 Q. -- these --

22 A. -- fuel returns.

23 Q. Fuel returns valves to --

24 A. -- all fuel return and all fuel returns.

25 Q. You're saying all, all?

1 A. All fuel. Now, I was on a tugboat, like a 1960s tugboat for
2 awhile --

3 Q. Who did you work with?

4 A. United Pilots (indiscernible). So not exactly the best
5 boats, and a couple of shady engineers there. Had one engineer
6 blow up my generator I just fixed. And then I had another
7 engineer close the return from the generator fuel system back to
8 the tank. I go down there, start the generator, and
9 (indiscernible) fuel -- I got my girlfriend onboard because we're
10 going to do the barges for the, for the fireworks, Fourth of July
11 fireworks, and I'm a fuel (indiscernible).

12 Q. And this is another vessel you've been -- you sat on before
13 you had this experience --

14 A. This was on a vessel I sailed on. This is a tugboat, the
15 *Dauntless*, United Pilots *Dauntless*, 671 Detroit Diesel. And so
16 this is what I've seen something like that happen before, you
17 know. So that was in the back of my mind because I've seen that
18 happen before. So because that's when I went outside, and I said
19 double check all the fuel valves because I had a feeling that that
20 was it.

21 Q. So in the situation in the incident that we had here on the
22 -- in the engine room that day you were thinking about that.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. You suspected that there may have been --

25 A. Yeah, I, I -- I don't know because I wasn't out there doing

1 the valves myself. If I was doing the valves myself, I could have
2 said, yes, I did this and this happened. But from past experience
3 where I had a person, the engineer before me, the night before
4 shut the boat down, closed the valve which, you know, there's
5 things that you never do. There's valves you leave open because
6 -- so I seen that happen before where it sprayed fuel all over me.
7 So that -- when I went outside looking for the oilers that was in
8 the back of my mind. And that's why I told the oilers double-
9 check the alignment for all fuel valves.

10 Q. And when you had told them to check the alignment of the fuel
11 valves --

12 A. I went back in. They went running that way. I went running
13 back in.

14 Q. Do you know if they were aware about that type of situation
15 or it was just a direction you told them, hey, check those? Or
16 was that something that they were --

17 A. No.

18 Q. -- aware you would think that --

19 A. No. I don't think they were aware.

20 Q. And then as far as the -- all these alarms, I know you said
21 they were sporadic happening.

22 A. The only four alarms that I was concerned with were the ones
23 I seen on the screen. Low fuel oil. And I don't know if I'm
24 seeing things, but it said low fuel oil shutdown alarm.

25 Q. For?

- 1 A. For the four main engines.
- 2 Q. For the four main engines. Were there any other alarms for
3 the fuel system during your watch, like, like --
- 4 A. No.
- 5 Q. -- for tank levels or --
- 6 A. No. There is a -- there are a problem with the -- starboard
7 day tank. The starboard day tank is the starboard day tank and
8 the starboard storage tank that, you know, you get high low level
9 alarms together because they're not calibrated properly.
- 10 Q. So when you --
- 11 A. Like, I don't -- on the *Ollis*. I don't know about the *Sandy*
12 *Ground*. I don't remember. But I know that on the *Ollis* my
13 starboard fuel oil tank will be low, but I get high level alarms.
- 14 Q. Now that's -- so, so --
- 15 A. There's a couple of things like where there's an issue. Like
16 number three main engine, salt water pressure. One screen my salt
17 water pressure is good on the gauge. On the back on the screen,
18 the next screen, I got a red dot salt water pressure alarm going
19 off. So there's, there's things that got to be adjusted and
20 tweaked.
- 21 Q. And you, and you -- you're saying that that's -- that may be
22 the case with most of the fuel storage tanks as well?
- 23 A. The fuel -- those lines the fuel storage tank that -- that I
24 got actual indications of the levels in the tank, and there's
25 gauge glass. There's -- nuisance -- I call the nuisance alarms

1 because I know that the tank is not high, but I'm getting a high
2 level alarm.

3 Q. So what would be your most reliable that you're actually --

4 A. What I'm going by is the level indication in the tank itself.
5 They are really -- TLI level indicator is right.

6 Q. And then as far as like any kind of fuel oil transferring and
7 whatnot are they still reliable for fuel oil transfer?

8 A. Yeah. They use them for fuel (indiscernible) for fueling
9 though we take sounding --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- and we observe the side glasses in the -- we don't just
12 nilly-dilly fill the boat up only checking one source. We're
13 going to check a lot of sources.

14 Q. Okay. And then so something we were able to see was an alarm
15 log --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- that pulled up some alarms that -- for that day during
18 that watch. There were various alarms such as low fuel oil
19 pressure. Even a high pressure differential. We actually have a
20 list right here.

21 A. High pressure differential (indiscernible) pressure went up
22 in the system.

23 Q. And then there were some other alarms here too that talk
24 about port fuel oil D tank low --

25 A. Yeah. That's what I'm talking about. It's not low. Those

1 are those nuisance alarms. Alarms that haven't been calibrated
2 properly.

3 Q. I see.

4 A. Alarms that really aren't true.

5 Q. And then so you're saying for your more accurate means of
6 determining --

7 A. We go to --

8 (Crosstalk)

9 Q. -- is going back to the TLIs?

10 A. We go to the TLI. We see what the level is. The TLIs have
11 been --

12 (Coughing.)

13 A. That's not from the fire. That's --

14 Q. You need some water or --

15 A. I've got my coffee here.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The TLI it's our main source aside from actually looking at
18 the (indiscernible).

19 Q. Okay, which the gauge --

20 (Crosstalk)

21 A. (Indiscernible).

22 Q. Okay. So just kind of going back to -- fuel oil --
23 differential pressure high --

24 A. Never saw it because it came on, and then it was covered by
25 another alarm. So I never even had a chance to see that. They

1 were coming up. The screen was flashing, both screens.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So like I said, I didn't see a lot of the alarms. The alarm
4 that was active that I saw was a low fuel oil pressure, and to me
5 with the bundle of people on it going across the harbor losing
6 engines that's my main priority.

7 Q. With the engine stopping --

8 A. Weren't stopping it though. I told the captain, you're
9 losing the engine. Going to lose the engine. I remember we
10 discussed, you know, he asked me if we felt we can make it to the
11 slip. I said more than likely not. That's when I think he
12 started to slow down the boat and drop the anchor. And I'm not
13 exactly sure because I'm down below.

14 Q. And but you did not active any emergency stops for --

15 A. No. The engines were stopped. Because I went back to stop
16 the engines after I saw the fire, and I, I saw the fire. I looked
17 at the screen and -- the two (indiscernible) screens were all just
18 red alarms, you know, meaning they were shut down. And when I
19 went to open up the fuel release, and then, like (indiscernible)
20 got a black key, one of the black keys there, you just -- key
21 wasn't there. But I remember that there was a key on the control
22 panel. So I went back and got that key. Pulled the things. Wait
23 a little bit. Everything shut down. Went out on deck, and like I
24 said tried to get a hose out, but that didn't work. Went down to
25 the --

1 Q. Voids.

2 A. -- void (indiscernible) where the below deck lock is located.

3 Q. Also, chief, you mentioned about fuel oil procedures. Do you
4 have a standing operating procedures that outlines these --

5 A. There's nothing --

6 Q. -- return valves?

7 A. There's nothing standard, okay. This is from working the
8 boats. And that's, like, you know, when you're on a boat for
9 awhile you get to know the boat. But we're not on boats for
10 awhile. We change boats regularly which I think you already know
11 that really pisses me off, okay.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, it's a --

13 MR. GHERARDI: Yeah, I know.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- operation, and so you get on the
15 ship and --

16 BY CWO [REDACTED]

17 Q. So is there anything else that you would like to talk
18 about --

19 A. I just --

20 Q. -- before that --

21 A. -- keep on second-guessing my actions.

22 Q. And why so?

23 A. Like I'm second-guessing why I didn't pull the Novec from the
24 control room before I left. Because I could have been out -- I'm
25 second-guessing, you know, why I thought I could go up on deck and

1 use a fire hose to get into the space. But that's the normal way
2 I would have done it, this whole Novec system. So I'm second-
3 guessing not pulling the Novec from the control room. I'm second-
4 guessing going up, and getting a fire pump going. And even though
5 we had to give boundaries, fire boundaries, but still I'm thinking
6 to myself maybe if I pulled it there I would have never lost the
7 generator, the (indiscernible). I'm second-guessing. That's the
8 only issue I have.

9 Q. All right. I understand. Thank you for, you know, for
10 providing that information. At this time I'd like to open it up.
11 Brian, do you have any, any questions, anything you would want to
12 ask Mr. Gherardi?

13 MR. YOUNG: Yes, please, if you don't mind.

14 BY MR. YOUNG:

15 Q. Chief, thank you very much for your time today. Appreciate
16 you sitting down with us. Can you hear me okay?

17 A. Yeah, I hear you.

18 Q. Chief how many, if you can estimate, about how many trips
19 have you made on this -- vessel as a chief engineer?

20 A. I don't know. I don't keep track of it. Let me see if I got
21 my phone. I could tell you how many days I worked on these boats.
22 Just a second. Let me get this together here. I got my phone
23 right here with my sea time. Give me two minutes here. Sea time.
24 So we have 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 from 11/18. So
25 that's 11/2022. Actually, I got them right down at the bottom,

1 exactly how many days I worked on it. On the *Ollis* I've worked 20
2 days. On the *Sandy Ground* eight days. That's for 2020, 2022.
3 That's for 2022. And let's go back to -- I got, I got 2022 split
4 into two folders because I got to renew my license. And then we
5 add to '22, 9 days added to the *Ollis*. So 10 days on the *Sandy*
6 *Ground*, and like 30 days on the *Ollis*.

7 Q. Okay. Thank you. And prior to working on this new
8 (indiscernible) class vessel did you receive any training or any
9 sort of operational training to work on these vessels?

10 A. We had four days of training, shown around, being shown how
11 the boat operates, and how to start and stop.

12 Q. Okay. The other day while we were onboard we were able to
13 look at the logbook for the afternoon of the event. It shows the
14 daytime (indiscernible). They're showing based on the readings
15 200 gallons.

16 A. 200, which is normal.

17 Q. Is that not what you were continuing to see throughout the
18 vessel? Was that difference getting worse?

19 A. I think the difference was getting worse. Like I said, the
20 oilers were observing that, and keeping track of that.

21 Q. And in order to control that, I understand that the discharge
22 the purifier would be altered to adjust the tank levels; is that
23 correct?

24 A. That's to adjust the total tank levels of both day tanks.
25 Like, if we see both day tanks dropping, you know, you increase

1 the output of the fuel oil purifier. They call it a clarifier now
2 it's -- and I can't get over that. I still call it a fuel oil
3 purifier. They increase the output or decrease the output of the
4 fuel oil purifier depending on whether we're making fuel or losing
5 fuel in the day tanks.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. The way they control the returns from the engines is with
8 those two valves that were added to the system.

9 Q. And would that be the yellow handle ball valve?

10 A. Those are the ball valves; painted white, yellow handles.

11 Q. And they're labeled as all returns, right?

12 A. Yeah, all returns, all fuel returns, or all returns.

13 Q. So is it your understanding that that big ball valve labeled
14 all returns is adjusted to control tank level?

15 A. Normally on the Staten Island end -- I get confused with this
16 new boat. One of the valves -- I'm not sure. I'm confused about
17 port and starboard and fore and aft right now. One of the valves
18 is always wide open, and the other valve is used to adjust.

19 Q. Okay. I guess is the -- the valves labeled all returns which
20 is separate from the purifier discharge, correct?

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. Okay. In the afternoon about 4 p.m., prior to the incident,
23 the both fuel tanks seemed to indicate low on the auxiliary -- on
24 the machinery readout, and they were acknowledged in the engine
25 room, but then they -- it looks like they were either inhibited or

1 disabled; is that because they were nuisance alarms?

2 A. Nuisance alarms.

3 Q. And is that something that is able to be manually changed
4 from the control room?

5 A. I do it.

6 Q. Okay. The tank levels that were taken from the logbook of
7 1650 and 1850 is that the normal run log or does that seem long to
8 you?

9 A. No, that's normal.

10 Q. It is normal. And in order to maintain the level, the
11 purifiers would be adjusted to put --

12 A. More or less.

13 Q. Okay. And then also to maintain. Then the -- in addition it
14 would be a secondary adjustment with the big return valves?

15 A. Right.

16 Q. Have you ever noticed or ever seen any of the big ball valves
17 being closed completely to control the levels?

18 A. No.

19 Q. Have you ever heard of any problems with these valves or
20 getting stuck or people not being able to operate them freely?

21 A. No.

22 Q. You talked about previously possible mislabeling between the
23 AMS and the actual tank indicators. Is that specific to this
24 vessel that you're aware of?

25 A. I, like I said, I heard it. It would have to be looked at

1 and verified, but I think that the *Sandy Ground* is -- the tank
2 level indicators do not actually indicate the tank level of the
3 tank that is labeled.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. But that's -- I just heard that, and I'm not going to say 100
6 percent that is until it is checked out by NTSB or the Coast
7 Guard.

8 Q. Was there any communication issues between yourself and the
9 assistant engineer (indiscernible)?

10 A. No. We had no problems whatsoever me and Alex.

11 Q. Have you worked together with this team frequently?

12 A. It's not my regular team, but I know them. Alex is, you
13 know, a very good engineer. Ed (indiscernible) is a very good
14 engineer. Stevie Adams is a good engineer.

15 Q. Okay. Was there any change in the load on the engines at the
16 time of the fuel oil release? Did you hear a difference in the
17 engines or --

18 A. I didn't hear a difference in the engines. I heard the --
19 when I told the captain he might be losing the plane I heard a
20 difference in the engine. He pulled back because he probably
21 pulled back because he, you know, might need to do some kind of
22 maneuvers or is dropping anchor. I don't know why. But I did
23 hear the engines change pitch after I told the captain that he
24 might be losing the plane.

25 Q. Okay. Do you recall what type of engine load was on the

1 engines at the time of the issue?

2 A. Normal load going across, you know, the 100 percent pitch 670
3 rpm.

4 Q. And about what percentage of power is that on the engines?

5 A. 92 percent load.

6 Q. Okay. And that's typical steaming load?

7 A. That's typical steaming across the harbor once you, you know,
8 after you come around the castle and head into White Hall, we head
9 into Saint George, you kick it up, and you go.

10 Q. Okay. It seems like based on the alarm readings that soon
11 after the pressure alarms were received on the, on the fuel
12 filters that the engines were stopped immediately. Do you think
13 that they shut themselves down automatically or do you think
14 someone actually stopped them?

15 A. No. I think they shut down themselves. I didn't stop them.

16 Q. Okay. When you did release the Novec I think you had
17 indicated that you did see that it actually activated. Do you
18 feel that it suppressed the fire and initiated a proper response?

19 A. The Novec suppressed the fire if there was still fire because
20 I shut the fuel off. And I had every intention of fighting the
21 fire the old fashioned way.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. I lost the emergency generator so I do it the new way.

24 Q. Right.

25 A. And like I said, when I, when I was in the control room,

1 after I pulled the fuel shutoffs, lights went out, and like I
2 didn't see any flames because the flames were right by the window,
3 the window next to the control desk, you know, and then once I
4 pulled those fuel stops, black smoke, I didn't see any flames,
5 even a little bit of flickering. I don't know whether the fire
6 had moved up the stack more, and I couldn't see it, but that's
7 when I left the space.

8 Q. Understood. Thank you. When we were walking around the
9 vessel the other day we were looking at all the valves, and we
10 noticed that all the checked valves in the system were installed
11 with the arrows going the correct way. We also noticed that the
12 all returns valves on both tanks were open wide. Is that the
13 standard way that they are typically left at or are they typically
14 throttled?

15 A. No. One is always open wide; the other is throttled.

16 Q. Okay. Do you know if anyone made any changes at some point?

17 A. I told them to make sure everything is lined up. So I don't
18 know. Once I walked down, I saw the fuel, and I was looking for
19 the oilers to see what's happening with the low fuel pressure, and
20 I saw the leaks, I instructed them to go make sure everything is
21 lined up right. So they might have gone and opened the valve or I
22 don't know.

23 Q. Okay. And did anyone report to you that they did make any
24 changes --

25 A. No.

1 Q. Okay. And could you just give a quick background how long
2 have you worked for the Staten Island Ferry?

3 A. 32 years.

4 Q. 32 years. How long have you been working as a chief
5 engineer?

6 A. 10 years. I don't know.

7 Q. Okay. And your previous prior to coming to the Staten Island
8 Ferries were you enlisted -- were you working in another industry?

9 A. I was in the U.S. Navy.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I was in the U.S. Navy, then I was in CNC Machine Repair, and
12 then working on the ferries. And while working on the ferries I
13 had another job on the tugboats. Days off I'd go help on the
14 tugboats. And now I just do the ferries.

15 Q. Okay. At this time I think I discussed the questions that I
16 had written down, but thank you very much for your time today, and
17 if we do have any other follow-up questions I'm sure we will be in
18 touch with you.

19 A. No problem, Brian.

20 Q. Thank you for your time, Chief.

21 A. Have a good day, Bud.

22 Q. You too.

23 CWO [REDACTED] All right. So thank you, Brian.

24 BY CWO [REDACTED]

25 Q. So also, Chief, so in addition to the questioning we had, we

1 wanted to go through some of the footage we saw --

2 A. Yes. I want to --

3 Q. -- you can help us, you know, walk us through what was going
4 on at this time.

5 CWO [REDACTED] So I believe Barry --

6 (Crosstalk)

7 A. I want to see, you know, like five minutes before the event
8 started.

9 BY CWO [REDACTED]

10 Q. I mean it's in conjunction so we, we want to show this so
11 that way you can kind of help us --

12 A. See if it sparks anything.

13 MR. TORRE: I'm going to start at 07, and I'll fast-forward
14 through some things. That way he can explain what he sees.

15 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. Go ahead and --

16 MR. TORRE: So 1602.

17 MR. GHERARDI: Are you playing them all at once?

18 MR. TORRE: Yes.

19 MR. GHERARDI: Trying to confuse me.

20 MR. GHERARDI: No. Anyone (indiscernible).

21 (Crosstalk)

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: How many people in the engine room?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Four in the engine room; one chief,
24 one (indiscernible) two oilers.

25 CWO [REDACTED] Got you.

1 MR. GHERARDI: Eddie's checking out the fuel down there, yes,
2 or could be checking out the (indiscernible).

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So what's the (indiscernible) the
4 incident?

5 MR. GHERARDI: Fuel oil purifier, fuel oil clarifier to the
6 left over there, and then up against the bulk head.

7 (Crosstalk)

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's who?

9 MR. GHERARDI: Alex (indiscernible).

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He's oiler or he's --

11 MR. GHERARDI: He's the engineer.

12 CWO [REDACTED] Got you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And that's you in the hat, right?

14 MR. GHERARDI: I'm over there. No hat.

15 (Crosstalk)

16 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

17 Q. You guys (indiscernible) 1610, 1610 trip.

18 A. I don't know what trip it was, 1620, 1610.

19 Q. Speed up a little bit to get to the event. Eddie still back
20 there by --

21 A. -- the purifier, fuel oil purifier.

22 Q. So what would be that valve?

23 A. That wasn't the ball valve. He's probably getting fuel oil
24 to clean the lube oil purifier.

25 Q. So (indiscernible) not the return?

1 A. No. It's not the return. The return is

2 Q. -- return valve.

3 A. -- return ball valve. They get fuel out of the tanks, put it
4 in a bucket, to use to clean the lube oil purifier.

5 (Crosstalk)

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER:

7 Q. It's a clear picture. There is nothing that's going on --
8 nothing in this case.

9 A. Re-taping the pieces.

10 Q. But these levels here they're watching, just explain.

11 A. Yeah, they're watching. Those are the tank levels. They've
12 got the fuel tank levels on that screen.

13 Q. Would this be the levels you mentioned that --

14 A. Fuel --

15 (Crosstalk)

16 Q. -- the fuel --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- not being -- okay.

19 (Crosstalk)

20 Q. And then the chief's point they're doing their job. They're
21 balancing.

22 A. I 3D printed all the plates there and the (indiscernible) so
23 I would just re-tape them down with -- tape on the joysticks.

24 That's what I was doing right there before this.

25 Q. Do you remember what they were talking about here?

1 A. Tank levels. They're going -- looking at the tank levels
2 trying to figure out why it's so far apart.

3 Q. Speed up --

4 A. Start here, right, you're right. They're talking about this
5 tank and that tank pointing at the ends talking about the fuel
6 tanks, the day tanks.

7 Q. Who is the more senior out of those two?

8 A. I'm not sure.

9 Q. So this would be the process you mentioned about trying to
10 level --

11 A. Keep the tanks --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yes. So Eddie went out that way. Can you maximize that one.
14 Can't really see what he's doing, but I would assume he is
15 adjusting the return.

16 Q. Return for?

17 A. They're all fuel returns.

18 Q. Over there is the fuel oil purifier?

19 A. That's the purifier (indiscernible).

20 Q. So at this point what would he be actively --

21 A. Adjusting the fuel oil purifier. That's what it is the fuel
22 oil purifier.

23 Q. That's two adjustments, adjusting the oil return valve and
24 then adjusting the --

25 A. Well, we don't know if he adjusted anything because I can't

1 see, but (indiscernible) flow valve. He can adjust the flow on
2 the fuel oil purifier. At the bottom at this point that's the oil
3 fuel return. There is oil valve.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. And --

6 (Crosstalk)

7 A. That's probably the -- that's probably to get fuel to clean
8 the purifier.

9 Q. So from the --

10 A. Yeah, just a spigot. I'm not sure looking from this angle.
11 He's tracing the system trying to see what's wrong. Let's go back
12 to the (indiscernible) and see what speed he's doing. See if he's
13 still (indiscernible) is that the same time again?

14 Q. It's all the same time. I think (indiscernible) high
15 pressure differential is 46, and then the low pressure is
16 (indiscernible).

17 (Crosstalk)

18 Q. This is so helpful to the investigation (indiscernible).

19 Let's go speed up one notch for a second.

20 A. You see me (indiscernible).

21 Q. Not yet.

22 (Crosstalk)

23 A. Got the day tank transfer valve, the day tank fill valve, the
24 suction to the engines. You've got --

25 Q. (Indiscernible) glass --

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. So he's (indiscernible). See he's watching the gauge. Still
3 have that fuel tank level's up?
- 4 A. Yeah. He's still watching the gauges. What time we at?
- 5 Q. 42.
- 6 A. Okay. Steve wasn't there. Steve wasn't there when
7 (indiscernible) yeah, he's standing by.
- 8 Q. Good memory.
- 9 A. I wish it was better.
- 10 Q. Eddie left --
- 11 A. I want to see if Stevie (indiscernible).
- 12 Q. What's he doing here?
- 13 A. Probably tapping the gauge to make sure it's not stuck, you
14 know, make sure it's correct level. Get dirty fuel in there
15 sometimes it gets dirty, you know, it will hang up. So he's
16 looking.
- 17 Q. Has there been any issues before with those -- tank level
18 gauges?
- 19 A. The TLI has not been an issue. They came back up to the
20 door, but they didn't come in --
- 21 (Crosstalk)
- 22 Q. We see them go in. Where would they be at that point?
- 23 A. There's another door right there behind where I'm sitting
24 right behind back there there's a, there's a double door.
- 25 Q. Okay. So like a --

1 A. Stevie came back in, and he came back in, okay. This is when
2 they're discussing how again that there's a problem.

3 Q. Do you recall what they were talking about?

4 A. They were talking about the fuel tanks. I remember they were
5 talking about the fuel tank levels, went to see what's going on,
6 and then they walk out again.

7 Q. There seem to be like a discussion there between
8 (indiscernible) a disagreement, but there seemed to be, like,
9 Eddie -- is that Eddie there, right? Eddie buried his head, it's
10 kind of, like, that's what I got out of that --

11 A. I'm not sure because I didn't --

12 Q. Yeah. You weren't there. I just, you know, you --

13 A. Yeah, I don't know. But now they're going to go back down I
14 think.

15 Q. We don't have the, the alarms yet do we?

16 A. No, not yet.

17 Q. You'll see --

18 A. Soon as they walk out --

19 (Crosstalk)

20 A. Well, I see the screens flash even before the alarms go off.
21 My crew thinks I got some psychic abilities -- get the alarm
22 before it even goes off.

23 Q. -- just not doing anything here. The other valves we don't
24 really have a good view of, but it's down in this general
25 direction just it's off-camera, right, on the other side of number

1 one against --

2 A. Yeah, the other side of number one.

3 Q. That's number one (indiscernible) just the generator --

4 looking down --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- past the (indiscernible) and that bulkhead is

7 (indiscernible).

8 A. There go the screens.

9 Q. So you just got -- the alarms?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. He's at the console looking at the alarms.

12 We don't know what -- where Steve is? We don't.

13 A. Where are the engines? Am I (indiscernible) engines already?

14 They should be.

15 (Crosstalk)

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. You know you have a low fuel pressure on all four main

18 engines.

19 A. I'm looking further now.

20 Q. You haven't told them yet to check the valves?

21 A. No. They're out there doing something.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. You'll see me walk out. You might see me on the camera where

24 you saw the fuel by number two main engine. Now I'm going over

25 there to look for him and see.

- 1 Q. This shows you --
- 2 A. I went out the other door there -- right there. No one's
3 there. I didn't see any fuel from there. I'm looking for the
4 guys (indiscernible). Go look for them over this way now. See me
5 -- you see my head there?
- 6 Q. (Indiscernible).
- 7 A. I saw the fuel leak, and that's when I told the guys to go
8 check the alliance, make sure it was aligned properly.
- 9 (Crosstalk)
- 10 A. Check make sure everything's lined up right.
- 11 Q. (Indiscernible) three or four -- what valve is that?
- 12 A. I'm not sure.
- 13 Q. It's hard to see here. That's a suction side (indiscernible)
14 can't see --
- 15 A. Eddie came back there and I'm over there. You can see on
16 this. The fire's already (indiscernible).
- 17 Q. You see the red flasher that's the fire alarm going --
- 18 A. Those are going to be, going to be on top of the engine
19 control panel (indiscernible).
- 20 Q. You can see how much fuel is, right, on two?
- 21 A. Yeah, that's a lot of fuel.
- 22 Q. What are you telling Eddie there at that point?
- 23 A. I don't remember. I just went out to look at stuff again,
24 over there Eddie. The gauges are still spinning. The shaft's
25 still spinning. Here comes Alex come back to tell me -- now he's

1 going to tell me fuel oil is hitting the exhaust manifold. I
2 don't think the fire started yet.

3 Q. Start up again.

4 A. Okay. There I see something happening over there. Talking
5 to the captain. I think tell him is there a fire (indiscernible).
6 I'm not sure which, which call was the fire, informed of the fire.
7 There -- I see it now.

8 Q. -- side of that engine.

9 A. Oh, boy, look at that. That's -- I think I noticed -- going
10 to call the captain again, and I noticed -- see the stuff falling
11 down on the screen there? That's what I saw in front of my eye.
12 Not even --

13 Q. That door they're going through vestibule there come out
14 right there?

15 A. Right there. Yeah. I didn't even know they were -- I didn't
16 even know they went there.

17 Q. Now you can see all the excess fuel --

18 A. Saying everybody out, everybody out.

19 Q. So at this point everyone's --

20 A. They're going out.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. They made their way out. I had already called them saying
23 there was a fire.

24 Q. Were there any pipes that you recall that were announced?

25 A. What?

- 1 Q. Any pipes announced through the all --
- 2 A. I wasn't paying attention -- was worried about the engine.
- 3 Q. Shafts are slowing down.
- 4 A. Yeah. Engines shut down.
- 5 Q. Now (indiscernible) --
- 6 A. Yeah. I think the camera melted.
- 7 Q. He does, he goes back (indiscernible). They haven't been
- 8 pulled yet.
- 9 A. I'm going to pull them shortly. Trying to tell the captain.
- 10 I don't remember doing that. I don't remember going back to the
- 11 door. I remember going back out and looking at the door. My
- 12 radio was on Channel 2 and not Channel 4.
- 13 Q. Is that the emergency channel or the --
- 14 A. No. The different crew was on different channels. I waited
- 15 that long?
- 16 Q. (Indiscernible) you're talking two minutes right now.
- 17 A. Trying to tell the captain. I was asking the captain to
- 18 release the (indiscernible). I was going outside to look.
- 19 Nothing was happening. Then I need the key. I remember the keys
- 20 over there.
- 21 Q. And those -- that's the key to --
- 22 A. Open up --
- 23 Q. -- open up the --
- 24 A. I could have broke the glass, you know, but I remembered the
- 25 key was right there. There goes lights. Emergency lights come

1 on. Looked out and see -- waiting for the generator to come on.
2 You got up by the main deck door by the engine room?

3 Q. That's all I have.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. (Indiscernible) somebody pulled off the server.

6 A. Yeah, yeah.

7 CWO ██████████ Well, you know, so I, I think for the purpose
8 of, you know, today's questioning that was the extent. We wanted
9 to just go through that to get your recollection of the event,
10 and --

11 MR. GHERARDI: Yeah, I don't remember. The only thing I
12 don't remember is going back out the second time to look at the
13 door.

14 CWO ██████████ And then so I just, you know, if there's
15 nothing else that anyone, you know, would like to add, we'll be --
16 I'll be looking to -- if I have any follow-up questions, right, I
17 can always --

18 MR. GHERARDI: You can call me.

19 CWO ██████████ Okay. And just to reaffirm with you, Chief,
20 everything that you have mentioned to us is to the best of your
21 recollection of the event?

22 MR. GHERARDI: It's all (indiscernible).

23 CWO ██████████ All right. And just to, just to recap the
24 interview you had discussed, you know, your recollection of that
25 timeframe of the incident, the time leading up to it, observing

1 the footage during that incident, and you gave us a summary of
2 that.

3 Brian, I just wanted to just check in with you if you had
4 anything else before we conclude the interview.

5 MR. YOUNG: Yeah, one last question if you don't mind.

6 BY MR. YOUNG:

7 Q. What, if you know, what type of lockout affected the
8 emergency generator from not starting?

9 A. I had an engine start lockout. Why I had that lockout I am
10 not sure.

11 Q. Okay. I'm sure it's something that we'll look into. Okay.
12 Thank you.

13 A. You got it.

14 Q. Thank you for your time today.

15 A. All right, Brian.

16 BY CWO [REDACTED]

17 Q. All right, and then is there any last thing or anything else
18 you want to add on today's --

19 A. Like I said I'm just second-guessing myself.

20 CWO [REDACTED] All right, so this, this concludes the
21 interview for today on December 29, 2022, for the Chief Engineer
22 Mr. Trevor Gherardi. Time on deck I have 1331 hours.

23 (Whereupon, at 1:31 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
24
25

CERTIFICATE

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


IN THE MATTER OF: ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD THE
 STATEN ISLAND FERRY *SANDY GROUND* NEAR
 STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK
 ON DECEMBER 22, 2022
 Interview of Trevor Gherardi

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM010

PLACE: Staten Island Ferry, St. George Terminal

DATE: December 29, 2022

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber

