

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON* NEAR *

BOSTON THE SPORTS DISTRICT IN BOSTON, * Accident No.: DCA23FM022

MASSACHUSETTS ON MARCH 24, 2023 *

* * * * *

Interview of: CASSANDRA GRIFFIN, Restaurant Manager
City Cruises

via Microsoft Teams

Thursday,
July 13, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lead Investigator
United States Coast Guard

KEITH FAWCETT, Civilian Marine Accident Investigator
United States Coast Guard

LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigator
United States Coast Guard

LCDR [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Legal Counsel
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National Transportation Safety Board

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(On behalf of City Cruises)

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:00 a.m.)

1
2
3 MR. DENLEY: No, I don't have any question.

4 LCDR ██████ Thank you, sir. Thank you, ma'am. And
5 Ms. Griffin, if you could officially acknowledge that the Coast
6 Guard audio recorder has been turned on and that this interview is
7 being recorded.

8 MS. GRIFFIN: Yes, I acknowledge that.

9 LCDR ██████ Thank you. This is a -- this is a joint U.S.
10 Coast Guard/NTSB investigation and the Coast Guard is the lead
11 agency and we are conducting this interview under the applicable
12 Coast Guard regulations. The date is July 13th, 2023, and it is
13 1000 and this is an interview with Ms. Cassandra Griffin, and it
14 is being conducted via virtual Microsoft Teams.

15 At this time we're going to go around the room and --
16 virtually and introduce everybody. If you can, please say and
17 spell your last name. My name is Lieutenant Commander Thomas
18 ██████ last name is ██████.

19 MR. FAWCETT: Good morning, Ms. Griffin, my name is
20 Keith Fawcett, F-a-w-c-e-t-t. I'm a civilian marine accident
21 investigator with the U.S. Coast Guard and part of this
22 investigation team. Thanks again for being here.

23 LCDR ██████ Lieutenant Commander ██████ ██████ here for
24 legal representation, last name spelling ██████.

25 LCDR ██████ Ms. ██████

1 LCDR ██████ Lieutenant Commander ██████ ██████ it's
2 spelled ██████, and I'm part of the First Coast Guard
3 District formal investigation team.

4 LCDR ██████ Commander ██████
5 CDR ██████ Hi. Good morning, this is Commander ██████
6 ██████ ██████. I am the lead investigator for this team.
7 Thank you for joining us.

8 LCDR ██████ And Mr. Young.

9 MR. YOUNG: Good morning, this is Brian Young, I'm with the
10 National Transportation Safety Board, the last name is Y-o-u-n-g.
11 Thank you for being here again today.

12 LCDR ██████ And Ms. Griffin.

13 MS. GRIFFIN: Cassandra Griffin, last name is spelled
14 G-r-i-f-f-i-n.

15 LCDR ██████ And Ms. Griffin, are you represented by counsel
16 today?

17 MS. GRIFFIN: Yes.

18 LCDR ██████ And who would that be?

19 MS. GRIFFIN: Mr. Denley.

20 LCDR ██████ And Mr. Denley, can you please introduce
21 yourself?

22 MR. DENLEY: Sure, Eric Denley, D-e-n-l-e-y. Counsel for
23 City Cruises, a party at interest to this investigation.

24 LCDR ██████ We are conducting the interview to examine the
25 events surrounding the fire on board the excursion vessel *Spirit*

1 of Boston which occurred on March 24th, 2023 in Boston Harbor.
2 Ms. Griffin, you may change or modify anything you say in this
3 interview if you recall at a later time. You may also appeal the
4 final results of the report of investigation that may result from
5 this interview. For information regarding Coast Guard marine
6 casualty investigations, in open source, you may find the Marine
7 Safety Manual, Volume V, which details the Coast Guard's
8 investigations. If you don't have any further questions, we're
9 going to go ahead and begin the interview.

10 MR. DENLEY: I guess I do have a question, Lieutenant.
11 Obviously, this is the second time that Ms. Griffin has been
12 interviewed by the Coast Guard pursuant to this investigation and
13 so I guess maybe my question is about the scope of the interview
14 since she's already provided testimony once.

15 MR. FAWCETT: So my name is Keith Fawcett and in response,
16 Mr. Denley, when we interviewed you, Ms. Griffin, it was at one
17 point in the investigation and other information from other
18 documentary evidence and witness interviews has come to light, so
19 as a result of that, we need to talk to you about some of the
20 things that you witnessed and experienced so that we can
21 understand your role in the investigation. So that's the purpose
22 of this re-interview and we're very grateful that you're here.

23 MR. DENLEY: Thanks.

24 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you, sir.

25 MR. FAWCETT: So all of my questions, Ms. Griffin, will deal

1 with either before or up to March 24th, 2023, unless I
2 specifically say otherwise. And just for your convenience, you
3 don't have to press the space bar, you can just un-mute your
4 microphone and just leave it open the whole time because you and I
5 will just be carrying on this interview, so you don't have to
6 worry about pressing the space bar. There you go. Thank you.

7 So when I speak also, when I'm talking about City Cruises, I
8 may use the term "company" and I'm talking the company that you
9 work for. So these interviews are important and I'm going to ask
10 -- I'm going to put you under oath for your testimony, so if you
11 will stand up and just back up a little bit and raise your right
12 hand, Lieutenant [REDACTED] will swear you in. So just step back
13 about a foot or two and raise your right hand, please.

14 LCDR [REDACTED] Ms. Griffin, please stand and raise your right
15 hand.

16 Whereupon,

17 CASSANDRA GRIFFIN

18 the Witness herein, having been first duly sworn, was examined and
19 testified as follows:

20 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

21 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you, you may be seated.

22 INTERVIEW OF CASSANDRA GRIFFIN

23 BY MR. FAWCETT:

24 Q. So as of today, are you an employee of City Cruises?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And at the time of the accident, were you classed as a full-
2 time employee?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So there's a document that the company provides called the
5 "Shipmate Guide," and it explains duties and responsibilities, and
6 it says, "Annual full-time shipmates will generally receive a
7 performance evaluation at least once a year. All annual full-time
8 shipmates will be asked to complete a self-appraisal before
9 meeting with their supervisor. These evaluations will allow you
10 and your supervisor an opportunity to assess your current
11 performance, develop future goals and objectives, and create a
12 plan to achieve them. You will also receive a copy of your
13 evaluation and a copy will be filed in your personnel records."
14 When did you receive your last performance evaluation before the
15 fire?

16 MR. DENLEY: I guess I'm going to just stop and object. I
17 thought we were here to talk about the marine casualty
18 investigation into the fire on board the *Spirit of Boston*.

19 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah, thank you, sir. We are.

20 MR. DENLEY: I mean --

21 MR. FAWCETT: We are.

22 MR. DENLEY: -- Ms. Griffin is not an HR representative and
23 she's not a corporate representative, so --

24 MR. FAWCETT: Sure. Sir, her training --

25 MR. DENLEY: I'm just --

1 MR. FAWCETT: I know. Thank you for your objection --

2 MR. DENLEY: Sorry.

3 MR. FAWCETT: -- but her training, experience, and
4 background, as it relates to her duties as the restaurant manager
5 on board for the fire are relevant to this investigation and
6 that's why we're asking. But your objection is noted.

7 MR. DENLEY: Okay. I'm just placing it on the record, thank
8 you.

9 MR. FAWCETT: Got it.

10 BY MR. FAWCETT:

11 Q. So when did you receive your last performance evaluation?

12 A. (Indiscernible) in January of this year.

13 Q. So that would be January 2023?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. And did they give you a self-appraisal form to fill out
16 before the interview?

17 A. No.

18 Q. And then did they actually sit down and do a performance
19 evaluation with you to understand your performance?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And who did that?

22 A. My supervisor, Thatcher Trombly.

23 Q. And did you sign a document, like did you sign the
24 performance evaluation?

25 A. No.

1 Q. I'd like to shift a little bit about training and talk about
2 training for a while. So I know on another vessel, they have a
3 code word to use to tell the marine crew there's an emergency
4 aboard. What would be the code word, if any, on board the *Spirit*
5 *of Boston* to let the marine crew know there's an emergency without
6 like scaring the passengers?

7 A. I'm not sure.

8 Q. And just to be clear, most of your employment was aboard the
9 *Spirit of Boston*?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And like in the years leading up to the fire, how many times
12 did you, just approximate is fine, how many times did you work on
13 the *Odyssey* or one of the other dining boats?

14 A. Odd times.

15 Q. And do you recall which of the vessels that you worked on?

16 A. *Odyssey*.

17 Q. When you were on the *Odyssey*, did they ever give you any kind
18 of -- I'll call it safety training, but did they -- did anybody
19 walk you around the boat and say here's where the fire
20 extinguishers are and here's where the safety equipment is on
21 board the *Odyssey*?

22 A. No.

23 Q. So how do you know that you have to do training? In other
24 words, does someone from the company, like Ms. Yelle or, as
25 Mr. Denley mentioned, a human resources person, tell you that you

1 have to take training as required by the company?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And do you ever get those notifications via e-mail?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. And could it also be that they come to you verbally and say
6 hey, you got to -- we're having training today?

7 A. No --

8 (Crosstalk)

9 BY MR. FAWCETT:

10 Q. Or next week. I'm sorry, I stepped on you, you said e-mail?

11 A. E-mail, yes.

12 Q. So leading up to 2023, starting in the beginning of the year,
13 I know that you're coming out of the winter and you're going into
14 the active season of the boat, were you notified of any safety
15 related training for the *Spirit of Boston*? That had to be done,
16 that you had to do.

17 A. Are you asking about a specific time?

18 Q. Yeah, I mean, do you recall any time in 2023 where you
19 received notification that you had to attend some kind of training
20 for the company?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Can you talk about what that training was?

23 A. It's mostly a general training. They hold them almost
24 weekly, everyone's required to attend once a year. It just goes
25 over a lot of the company's standards, for the most part, and

1 there's a small portion in there towards the end that the marine
2 crew conducts, so a safe mission (ph.).

3 Q. Okay, so you did attend -- did you attend safety training
4 that the marine crew put on, on board the *Spirit of Boston*?

5 A. This training that I did this year was after the incident.

6 Q. And since you brought that up, that would've been -- the
7 training you did, would it be on another vessel?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. During that training, did they talk about the use of the fire
10 extinguisher?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And what did they tell you?

13 A. They told us the different types of fire -- or type of fire
14 extinguishers that we have on board, this was on the *Odyssey*, so
15 they showed us where the fire extinguishers were and how to use
16 one.

17 Q. And did they talk to you about the use of the fire blanket?
18 If there was one.

19 A. No.

20 Q. And did they -- during this training, did they talk to you
21 about, I'll call it safety related to like the -- because I guess
22 my first question, has the company done away with the paraffin
23 candles that go in those glass vases?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. So the Sterno remains. During this training did they talk

1 about safety with Sterno cans?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And talk to me about that training.

4 A. They just showed us like a metal container that they bought,
5 but now the Sternos are held in those containers on the buffet.

6 Q. But did they talk to you about like how to safely extinguish
7 a Sterno can? Like once it's done, did they talk about the
8 disposal of an empty Sterno can?

9 A. No.

10 Q. During the training did they say hey, we're working on a
11 policy for the use of Sterno cans and it's not finished yet and,
12 you know, when it's finished we'll get it out there to you?

13 A. They mentioned that they had a policy, but they were more so
14 saving that part to do with the kitchen staff, they're the only
15 ones that deal with the Sternos.

16 Q. So in the new hire orientation, we've heard different
17 witnesses talk about they get that kind of training on an annual
18 basis, some people have said they get it regularly. That training
19 talks about the use of a fire extinguisher and to help you
20 remember, they talk about like you can remember a code that's
21 P-A-S-S, you know, like how to use a fire extinguisher, do you
22 recall that training?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And in that training, they say that you should use an
25 extinguisher "if possible," do you recall that in the training?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And then the last time you had this training, when would that
3 have been? Before the -- we're talking about before the fire.

4 A. The last time, I believe, was in 2021.

5 Q. And as part of like this training, do they have you fill out
6 a sign-in sheet, like do they have something where you write your
7 name down that you attended that kind of training?

8 A. No.

9 Q. And how about for like -- like on the *Odyssey*, when they went
10 over the use of the fire extinguishers and the two different kinds
11 and so forth, was there a sign-in sheet for that?

12 A. There is for the hourly staff, but all management is required
13 to be there and so they don't ask us to sign in because they know
14 that we're going to be there.

15 Q. And so do you get an e-mail that tells you to be there and
16 the expectation is since you get the e-mail, you've attended it?

17 A. I get scheduled for it.

18 Q. Oh, okay, so it's part of your schedule, so if I were to ask,
19 like -- you get paid to attend?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Okay. So during your time on the *Spirit of Boston* did any of
22 the people that work for you ask you like -- like how to use a
23 fire blanket? Let's take that first.

24 A. No.

25 Q. And how about did anybody say I'd like to have a -- you know,

1 somebody show me how to use a fire extinguisher?

2 A. No.

3 Q. So vessels have a safety device aboard that are called fire
4 doors and what they're designed to do is to be closed to limit the
5 extent of a fire. Do you know where the fire doors are on the
6 *Spirit of Boston*?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Where would that be?

9 A. There's two that I know of, there's one -- they're both like
10 above a staircase going from the first to the second floor.

11 Q. And has anybody ever explained to you, in training or just
12 pointed out, how to use the fire doors, how to activate them in an
13 emergency?

14 A. No, we've been instructed not to touch them, only the marine
15 crew can.

16 Q. The *Spirit of Boston*, on the main deck, there is a circular
17 opening in the floor that's covered with carpet, it's an emergency
18 escape hatch from the engine room. Are you familiar with where
19 that is?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And is there any company policy that says that you must keep
22 this hatch clear of tables, buffets, chairs and other
23 obstructions?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And where would I find that?

1 A. We're just verbally told.

2 Q. And then if I -- before a cruise where you're going to have a
3 dinner cruise, do you get like a plan that shows where the parties
4 are going to be sitting on the different decks?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. And so that you use to set up, you use that to set up for the
7 vessel, correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Have you ever seen that plan marked like where there's a part
10 that says "emergency escape hatch, do not block," like it's marked
11 on the plan to avoid putting tables, chairs or other obstructions
12 there?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay, so it is on there?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. And how is it -- what would I see if I took a look at it?

17 A. It's just, I believe, like a square over the area where the
18 hatch is and it just says hatch.

19 Q. That's to help you prevent putting things over that, correct?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Since the fire has anybody from the company, either verbally
22 or written, told you about, like, the use of birthday candles or
23 Sterno, in -- I'm talking about a written e-mail procedure or
24 policy.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And how was that conveyed to you? In other words, how did
2 they tell you that?

3 A. Via e-mail.

4 Q. And what did it say, what did it say about birthday candles?

5 A. We're not -- candles -- on board.

6 (Audio feedback.)

7 BY MR. FAWCETT:

8 Q. And then the paraffin candles are gone and the Sterno, what
9 did it say in particular about Sterno cans?

10 A. They're not to be stored on board.

11 Q. And where do they store them?

12 A. I'm not sure.

13 Q. So what's changed with the -- you know, I know that the
14 galley normally handles the Sterno cans, but have you witnessed
15 like what's happening lately with the Sterno cans that the galley
16 -- how they're moving them around or where they're storing them or
17 something?

18 A. I'm not sure where they're storing them. They, as I
19 mentioned before, bought small tin containers, metal containers,
20 that fits an individual Sterno in it and they stay in those
21 containers while they're on board.

22 Q. So on the accident evening where the fire broke out, we
23 reviewed video tape footage and we saw Ms. Friedman, the server's
24 assistant, cleaning up something on the deck with a white linen,
25 as you call them, or a white rag. Were you familiar with her

1 cleaning up anything on the deck?

2 A. I wasn't paying attention to her.

3 Q. Did you hear or did she tell you or anyone else tell you that
4 she had cleaned up some type of substance on the deck with a white
5 rag?

6 A. No.

7 Q. So one of the reasons -- one of the reasons that we're
8 talking to you is that Ms. Friedman, in her interview, said that
9 she threw an empty Sterno can from the coffee station into the
10 trash receptacle in the wait station area. Did anybody tell you
11 that Ms. Friedman, including Ms. Friedman herself, that she threw
12 it in there?

13 A. No.

14 Q. And then Ms. Bell, in her testimony, also said she threw a
15 Sterno can in the trash can. Did Ms. Bell mention to you or
16 anyone else that she threw a Sterno can into the trash can?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Have you ever thrown a Sterno can in the trash can?

19 A. No.

20 Q. So then in some of your interview, your responses are marked
21 indiscernible and you're speaking very clearly today, so I want to
22 clear something up. So in June of 2022 there was a fire on board
23 the *Spirit of Norfolk* and the restaurant manager played a key role
24 in making public announcements related to passenger evacuation and
25 safety, she also jumped up on a chair or table and directed the

1 movement of passengers to safely exit the vessel, and there were
2 no injuries as a result of that. Not only her actions, but other
3 people's actions. So we had asked you, you had been on the vessel
4 six and a half years, we asked you about your familiarity with the
5 emergency response plan and in the -- this is a document that's
6 extensive, it's 70 pages long or more, it explains what your
7 duties are. And during your interview, initially, you said you
8 did not know about that document, is that correct?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. So how would you know what your role is in an emergency, as
11 restaurant manager?

12 A. I'm not sure.

13 Q. So have you ever seen any guidance about what your role is as
14 the senior company representative when no marine crew are aboard?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Have you ever received any training or guidance from the
17 company that basically said if there's an emergency aboard, your
18 first responsibility is to dial 9-1-1 and make a notification to
19 the authorities?

20 A. No.

21 Q. So your actions on that day, you started calling company
22 representatives, is that correct?

23 A. After 9-1-1 was called.

24 Q. Right. And then did you direct Mr. Kinney to call 9-1-1 or
25 did he do that on his own?

1 A. I directed him.

2 Q. To call 9-1-1?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. So on March 24th, if a member of the marine crew had still
5 been aboard the vessel, what would you have done differently?

6 A. I would have sent Mr. Kinney to get the marine crew and
7 probably call 9-1-1 myself.

8 Q. Do you feel that the marine crew person who was aboard
9 would've taken over responsibility for the safety of your
10 personnel? In other words, who would be responsible once an
11 emergency occurred and you told the marine crew person that
12 there's a fire on board?

13 A. The marine crew.

14 Q. So they would have -- in your mind, they would have taken
15 over responsibility for the safety of getting you off and whatever
16 happened next, is that correct?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. So I'm going to ask Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] to display an
19 image, you'll see it on your screen in just a moment, it's an
20 image after the fire, and what we want to do is nail down the
21 location of the fire, as you saw it, the sparks that were
22 described. So go ahead and pull that up, Ms. [REDACTED] if you can.
23 So this image is showing the after section of the wait station.
24 Can you -- Ms. [REDACTED] will move her mouse cursor. Can you tell me
25 where you saw the sparks and the fire?

1 A. I saw them --

2 MR. DENLEY: Keith, I'd like -- Keith, I'd just like to maybe
3 establish some baseline for the record. Can you maybe tell us
4 what this is, who --

5 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah.

6 MR. DENLEY: -- took the image --

7 MR. FAWCETT: Certainly.

8 MR. DENLEY: -- and who -- and who maybe put all the dish
9 racks back where they were after the fire? So this isn't really
10 an after-the-fire --

11 MR. FAWCETT: That's correct.

12 MR. DENLEY: This isn't really an after-the-fire picture,
13 this is a picture that the Coast Guard created after the fire, is
14 that correct?

15 MR. FAWCETT: Right. Thank you, that was most helpful.

16 MR. DENLEY: Okay.

17 BY MR. FAWCETT:

18 Q. So investigators for the ATF and the United States Coast
19 Guard went aboard the vessel after the fire. They positioned the
20 items, as you see here, in an attempt to recreate the way they
21 were on the -- at the time the fire broke out. You see a large,
22 tall plastic trash can that was put in that location on the after
23 section of the wait station. We are looking to port towards the
24 glass racks and other storage devices that were there. So can
25 you, looking at this recreation, which is a recreation of where

1 the implements were at the time of the fire, could you tell us
2 where you saw sparks or fire?

3 MR. DENLEY: Can we maybe start, Keith, with asking her if
4 the items that the Coast Guard placed back into position are where
5 they were when she observed -- when she observed the sparks?

6 MR. FAWCETT: Yes. That was helpful, sir. Thank you.

7 BY MR. FAWCETT:

8 Q. Ms. Griffin, does that look the way the items were there the
9 night that the fire started?

10 A. I'm just confused about the back area. I just can't tell
11 what side of the wait station I'm looking at.

12 Q. All right, so you're standing in the passageway that runs
13 fore and aft where you come off the main deck floor and you are
14 looking sort of up to the -- what would be the 2 o'clock position.
15 The coffee maker is over to the right, outside of the picture
16 image, and the warmer. So the after bulkhead, as we call it, or
17 wall, has been melted away, so all you see is the framework up
18 there. And I know there might've been a linen bag somewhere
19 there, but you're looking -- as you would walk into the wait
20 station, what you're looking at is, we believe, what would be the
21 left side. Does that help you?

22 MR. DENLEY: And Cee-Cee, you -- Cee-Cee, you don't need to
23 speculate. So if you need additional clarification or if you
24 can't really tell based on this image --

25 THE WITNESS: Yeah, just only because it's the side that --

1 if they're saying the coffee station was in that area that was
2 pointed to, then that area would be to the right of the wait
3 station, not the left.

4 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah, that's what I'm saying, Ms. Griffin,
5 where you're looking, over to the right and out of the image, you
6 can't see it, is where the coffee station was. So you're seeing
7 the left side of the wait station as you would walk into it.

8 THE WITNESS: I saw the sparks coming from behind those glass
9 racks there, there were a lot more glass racks there, stacked up
10 high.

11 BY MR. FAWCETT:

12 Q. So is that -- is that the gray object between the multi-
13 colored objects and the large vertical trash can?

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. Okay. So that's where you saw sparks and ultimately a small
16 fire, is that correct?

17 A. Yeah, I saw them higher up on the wall, not down low like
18 that. Again, there were a lot more racks there at the time, they
19 were stacked up high, almost touching the ceiling.

20 Q. And it's very helpful. So how far off the floor did you see
21 sparks? Approximate is fine.

22 A. I saw them approximately where that vertical wooden piece of
23 wood is up there, I guess.

24 Q. Okay, so what -- what we're looking at is there's a --
25 there's something that runs above the trash can and it runs

1 diagonally up to the distant part of the picture, is that how high
2 the sparks were?

3 A. Yes, I saw them in that vicinity.

4 Q. So would it be approximately 2 feet, 18 inches?

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. But did you see any sparks or flame coming out from
7 underneath the cart?

8 A. I saw flames. I saw the sparks first.

9 Q. So the flames, were they under the cart?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And then they were growing and spreading, is that correct?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And then the largest extent of the fire that you saw, how
14 large was the actual fire, if you could describe it in -- was it a
15 foot and a half, 2 feet, was it a circular pool of fire, how would
16 you describe it?

17 A. It was just mostly spreading on the floor, coming from the
18 wall out from under the racks.

19 Q. You could see the mouse, the cursor or the mouse down in
20 there, would that be approximately correct?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. All right. Ms. [REDACTED] you can take that down, thank you.
23 Now, Mr. Kinney described the sound, there was a unique sound that
24 the fire made. Could you just sit there quietly just for a minute
25 and think if you recall any sound associated with the fire of any

1 kind?

2 A. The only sound I heard was the sparks.

3 Q. And could you describe those, the sounds of the sparks?

4 A. A crackling sound.

5 Q. Mr. Kinney described a sound of like compressed gas being
6 released, you know, like you're filling your tire or a hissing
7 sound. I'm using the word hissing sound, he said it was like the
8 release of compressed air or compressed gas. Do you recall
9 hearing any hissing sound?

10 A. No.

11 Q. So electronic cigarettes, vape pens, have been the source of
12 injuries, explosions to people, explosions, in fact, in one case
13 they had an airliner that had to make an emergency landing because
14 a vape pen exploded. So do you recall any vape pens, any
15 electronic cigarettes, that you've witnessed on the *Spirit of*
16 *Boston* in any way?

17 A. No.

18 Q. So crew persons, any crew persons utilize electronic
19 cigarettes or vape pens?

20 A. Not on board.

21 Q. Have you ever seen -- you know, because you can't control
22 everything guests do, there is a no smoking policy aboard, is that
23 correct?

24 (No response.)

25 BY MR. FAWCETT:

1 Q. Can you hear me?

2 MR. DENLEY: We can't hear your audio, Keith.

3 MR. FAWCETT: So there's a no smoking policy aboard, can you
4 hear me now?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. FAWCETT: We may have to jump in and jump out. Step,
7 stop I-1 (ph.). One second.

8 (Pause.)

9 MR. FAWCETT: Can you hear me now?

10 MR. DENLEY: Yes.

11 MR. FAWCETT: Okay, thank you.

12 MR. DENLEY: Cee-Cee, can you hear us?

13 THE WITNESS: Yes.

14 MR. DENLEY: Okay.

15 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you for your patience.

16 (Audio feedback.)

17 MR. DENLEY: Now we have a bit of a --

18 MR. FAWCETT: I know.

19 MR. DENLEY: -- feedback.

20 MR. FAWCETT: Okay, we're -- we should have it fixed now.

21 Thank you very much for your patience.

22 MR. DENLEY: Okay, thanks.

23 BY MR. FAWCETT:

24 Q. So you know, you -- there's a policy of no smoking on the
25 vessel, no electronic cigarettes, no pipes, tobacco, you know,

1 cigars, anything like that, correct?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Have you seen any electronic cigarettes or vape pens that,
4 like, the guests might have left behind or dropped or charging on
5 the boat at any time?

6 A. No.

7 Q. So the fire occurs, everybody gets off the vessel and
8 everybody's taken -- accounted for on the dock. There were two
9 people that ran back aboard the vessel. One was the disc jockey
10 and one was a crew person. Were you aware of a crew person
11 running back aboard the vessel?

12 A. I was aware after the fact.

13 Q. And so when -- Mr. Mulvaney was the crew person who ran
14 aboard, the interview indicated that he came back --

15 MR. DENLEY: I just want the record to reflect, I think the
16 individual's name is Mulaney, is that correct?

17 MR. FAWCETT: Yeah, I believe you're correct, sir.

18 BY MR. FAWCETT:

19 Q. But he came back with a life jacket on?

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Did you ask him why he came back with a life jacket on and
22 what he was doing, going back aboard the vessel?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. And what did he say?

25 A. He just said he was just nervous and panicked and for

1 whatever reason, thought he needed a life jacket.

2 Q. Did he bring anything back off the vessel other than a life
3 jacket? Like, all of you were out there and you didn't have your
4 keys and your phones and your money, did he go recover anything
5 like that?

6 A. Not that I'm aware of.

7 Q. So one of the -- one of your persons in your group who were
8 close by mentioned using a fire extinguisher, do you -- about the
9 possibility of using a fire extinguisher, do you remember who that
10 was?

11 MR. DENLEY: Objection. Calls for speculation. What are you
12 referring -- like what -- are you talking about the night of the
13 incident or are you talking about --

14 BY MR. FAWCETT:

15 Q. Yes, during -- during the actual identification of the fire,
16 there was a person in the hospitality crew that mentioned using a
17 fire extinguisher, do you recall who that was?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. And who was that?

20 A. Sharon Bell.

21 Q. And did you respond to her when she mentioned it?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And what did you tell her?

24 A. She didn't ask about using a fire extinguisher, she just
25 asked if there was a fire extinguisher.

1 Q. And then what happened next?

2 A. I said yes and as I saw the flames continuing to spread, I --
3 that's when I directed Mr. Kinney to call 9-1-1 and just have
4 everyone get off the boat.

5 Q. So you were the senior person involved representing the
6 company on board and you ordered the evacuation of the vessel, is
7 that correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. So on the night of March 24th, 2023, were you -- were your
10 decisions and actions impaired by fatigue, had you had enough
11 rest?

12 A. Yes, I was well rested.

13 Q. [REDACTED]
14 [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED]

16 A. [REDACTED]

17 Q. [REDACTED]
18 [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED]

20 A. [REDACTED]

21 Q. [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED]

24 A. [REDACTED]

25 Q. [REDACTED]

1 [REDACTED]

2 [REDACTED]

3 A. [REDACTED]

4 Q. [REDACTED]

5 [REDACTED]

6 A. [REDACTED]

7 Q. [REDACTED]

8 [REDACTED]

9 A. [REDACTED]

10 Q. [REDACTED]

11 A. [REDACTED]

12 [REDACTED]

13 Q. [REDACTED]

14 [REDACTED]

15 [REDACTED]

16 A. [REDACTED]

17 Q. [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 A. [REDACTED]

20 Q. [REDACTED]

21 [REDACTED]

22 [REDACTED]

23 [REDACTED]

24 [REDACTED]

25 [REDACTED]

1

2

3

A. [REDACTED]

4

Q. [REDACTED]

5

A. [REDACTED]

6

Q. [REDACTED]

7

8

A. [REDACTED]

9 MR. FAWCETT: So that's all the questions I have, I'll see if
10 my colleague, Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] has any follow-on
11 questions. And thank you very much.

12

BY LCDR [REDACTED]

13

14 Q. I just have a few questions, a few follow-up questions for
15 you, Ms. Griffin. You had stated that the process with the Sterno
16 cans had changed since the fire on March 24th. Was the process
17 changed for the Sterno cans that were placed under the coffee
station, as well?

18

(Audio feedback.)

19

THE WITNESS: Yeah, they're all the same Sternos.

20

BY LCDR [REDACTED]

21

22 Q. And does the galley staff now take care of that Sterno or is
23 it still the front of the house staff that takes care of the
coffee Sterno?

24

25 A. We have a new -- we got a new coffee machine that doesn't
require a Sterno.

1 Q. Okay. And that's for the *Odyssey*, currently, or do you know
2 if that goes to the other vessels, as well?

3 A. I'm not sure about the *Odyssey*, that's just for the vessel
4 that we've been using in place of the *Spirit*.

5 Q. Understood. You were talking about, when you were talking to
6 Mr. Fawcett about directing the people on board the night of the
7 fire, you had called company representatives, you stated, and you
8 directed Mr. Kinney to call 9-1-1, how did you know to do all
9 those steps?

10 A. I just assumed, I felt that that was the right thing to do.

11 Q. But there was never any policy or training on those actions
12 that you took?

13 A. No.

14 Q. With the training you received on the *Odyssey* since the fire
15 or the vessel that you're using since the fire, you had stated
16 that they showed you the location and the use of the fire
17 extinguishers. As part of that training, do they expect you to
18 put out a fire if you see one?

19 A. I think they said if possible.

20 Q. Okay. And I might have missed this, but did you ever receive
21 that type of training prior to the fire?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And was it -- was it the same or did something change after
24 the fire, specifically to the fire extinguishers?

25 A. It had changed prior to the fire, we had just been shown how

1 to use a fire extinguisher, but never instructed to use one.

2 Q. And you were instructed to use one after the fire?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. We had discussed what Mr. Mulaney said to you after he got
5 off the vessel for the second time with his life jacket on. What
6 did you say to Mr. Mulaney after he told you that he kind of
7 panicked and got the life preserver?

8 A. I believe I told him that he didn't need one and -- but he
9 just was not to go back onto the vessel.

10 Q. Throughout the interviews that we conducted with the
11 restaurant staff on board, when we've asked who was in charge or
12 responsible for the safety of the employees and the safety of the
13 vessel when no marine crew is on board, they either stated your
14 name or said the restaurant manager, do you agree with that
15 statement?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. [REDACTED]

18 [REDACTED]

19 [REDACTED]

20 [REDACTED]

21 [REDACTED]

22 A. [REDACTED]

23 Q. [REDACTED]

24 A. Yes.

25 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay. I have no further questions,

1 Mr. Fawcett.

2 LCDR ██████████ And now we'll go to Mr. Young.

3 BY MR. YOUNG:

4 Q. Thank you. Good morning, Ms. Griffin. Just a few questions,
5 thank you for your time today. You talked a little bit about some
6 changes in the use of Sternos aboard the vessel you're working on
7 now and you mentioned something about a different metal rack, can
8 you talk about that, be a little more specific?

9 A. It's not a rack, they're like -- they're individual holders
10 for each Sterno that they use and they use them on the buffets and
11 they have a cover that goes over them, over the flame, to keep
12 them covered when they're not using them.

13 Q. And the vase (ph.) that it's being held in now, is that
14 different than what the vase had been previously on board the
15 *Spirit of Boston*?

16 A. Yes, they're not being stored on board.

17 Q. And this new holder with a cover, is that for when they're in
18 use?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. Have there been any changes to reduce the number of Sternos
21 or is it still the same amount, using them for the chafing dishes
22 out on the passenger space?

23 A. It's changed in the sense that they are not storing the extra
24 Sternos on board, they're only running on the amount they need for
25 the buffet at that time.

1 Q. Okay, so would it be fair to say that the unused Sternos are
2 being stored ashore, off the vessel?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. And is there any updated disposal policies after the cruise,
5 what happens to the used Sternos?

6 A. Not that I'm aware of.

7 Q. Do you know that after the cruise that the Sternos remain on
8 board or do they leave the vessel each night?

9 A. They leave the vessel.

10 Q. And who would be conducting that transfer?

11 A. Whoever the supervisor is for the kitchen staff.

12 Q. So after the cruise is over, the passengers leave and they're
13 shutting down and cleaning up, every Sterno comes off the vessel
14 and is brought ashore?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Was there any e-mails or notifications that this is the way
17 we're doing things now?

18 A. There was an e-mail, yes.

19 Q. And what did it say?

20 A. It talked about that we were -- we were instructed to
21 immediately remove all of the candles that we were using
22 previously, we removed all of the plastic trash bins that we were
23 using, and that they were going to be no longer storing Sternos on
24 board and that they would go into further detail about the Sternos
25 with the kitchen staff.

1 Q. And what type of trash receptacles are in use now on the
2 vessel you're working on?

3 A. They're metal.

4 Q. Metal. Do they have lids?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. I know you spent some time describing what you saw the night
7 of the fire using the picture that was displayed on the computer
8 screen and just so I understand completely, I think you have
9 talked about seeing sparks and seeing flames, is it correct that
10 you saw both sparks and flames?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. And the flames, they were on the deck or on the bulkhead?
13 The deck being the floor and the bulkhead being the wall, sorry.

14 A. They were on the deck.

15 Q. On the deck. And the sparks were on the wall, then, behind
16 the glass cases?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. The racks. And you said the racks were pretty high, right,
19 they stack maybe five, six, seven, eight of them --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- on the rollie that has the four wheels?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. So were you able to see the sparks behind all of those racks
24 of glasses?

25 A. Yes, I could see them coming from behind the sides of the

1 racks.

2 Q. Behind the sides.

3 A. Like behind the racks they were shooting out, I could see
4 them from the side.

5 Q. They were shooting out things in the room or shooting up
6 towards the ceiling or the overhead.

7 A. Into the room.

8 Q. Into the room. So kind of leaving the wall and shooting out
9 past the glass racks?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Were the sparks big enough that they actually shot out past
12 the racks, like was it about 2 feet out, or were they -- how far
13 out did they shoot, these sparks?

14 A. Probably to the front of the racks.

15 Q. And about the height, I think you talked about maybe 2 feet
16 high, but was it up a few levels of glasses, racks, glass racks?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Can you estimate about how many racks? The racks are, you
19 know, maybe 8 inches tall or so -- but --

20 A. At least three of them.

21 Q. At least three racks high. And would you say, if you've ever
22 seen a sparkler on the Fourth of July, did they look similar to
23 that type of spark or something different?

24 A. Similar to that.

25 Q. Okay. And I know they asked you, but you didn't associate

1 any noise with the sparks, right, you didn't hear any strange
2 noises, popping, crackling, hissing?

3 A. I said I heard a crackling sound.

4 Q. Crackling. My last question is, how are you aware or made
5 aware of the smoking policy right now? How do you know that there
6 is no smoking on the vessel you're working on?

7 A. There are signs displayed throughout the vessel.

8 Q. And does that pertain to passengers or crew?

9 A. Both.

10 Q. Both. So if any crew member wanted to smoke, whether it's a
11 vape or a cigarette, how would they be able to do that under way?

12 A. They wouldn't.

13 Q. Wouldn't. And when the vessel comes alongside and people are
14 cleaning up and someone wanted to have a smoke, how could they do
15 it?

16 A. They'd have to step off the vessel.

17 Q. And do people do that, do they step ashore to have a smoke
18 and come back in?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And then clean up?

21 A. Yes.

22 MR. YOUNG: I don't have any other questions. Thank you very
23 much, appreciate it.

24 LCDR ██████ Thank you very much, Mr. Young.

25 Mr. Denley, do you have any follow-up questions?

1 MR. DENLEY: Yeah, just a couple.

2 BY MR. DENLEY:

3 Q. Thank you so much, Cee-Cee, for participating in the Coast
4 Guard's investigation again. You talked about the racks in the
5 wait station, when you saw the sparks and you saw the flames on
6 the deck. You talked about how many racks there were. Were there
7 glasses in the racks?

8 A. I'm not sure if all of them had glasses in them, some of them
9 did.

10 Q. Okay. So at least some of those glasses, at least some of
11 those racks had glasses in them.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. [REDACTED]
14 [REDACTED]
15 [REDACTED]

16 A. [REDACTED]

17 MR. DENLEY: I don't have any further questions, thank you.

18 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you, sir.

19 I'll go back to Mr. Fawcett.

20 BY MR. FAWCETT:

21 Q. [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED]
23 [REDACTED]
24 [REDACTED]

25 A. [REDACTED]

1 Q. [REDACTED]

2 A. [REDACTED]

3 Q. [REDACTED]

4 [REDACTED]

5 A. [REDACTED]

6 MR. FAWCETT: Okay, thank you. That's all I have.

7 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you, Mr. Fawcett.

8 Ms. [REDACTED] do you have any follow-up questions?

9 LCDR [REDACTED] No follow-up questions.

10 LCDR [REDACTED] And Mr. Young?

11 MR. YOUNG: No, thank you. I'm all set.

12 LCDR [REDACTED] Yes. And in the room, Ms. [REDACTED] has one
13 clarifying question.

14 LCDR [REDACTED] Mr. Denley, also for the record, I just wanted to
15 clarify, you're representing both, in an individual capacity,
16 Ms. Griffin, as well as the company?

17 MR. DENLEY: I do not represent Ms. Griffin individually.

18 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay, thank you.

19 MR. DENLEY: I represent the company.

20 LCDR [REDACTED] And Mr. Denley, did you have any follow-up
21 questions?

22 MR. DENLEY: Let me think, just give me a minute.

23 LCDR [REDACTED] Absolutely, sir.

24 (Pause.)

25 MR. DENLEY: No, I don't, thanks.

1 LCDR ██████ Thank you. With that, Ms. Griffin, once again,
2 thank you so much for your time and your cooperation in the
3 investigation. That will complete our interview and we are going
4 to be signing off. Thank you, again, Ms. Griffin. Thank you,
5 everybody, for joining.

6 MS. GRIFFIN: Thank you.

7 MR. DENLEY: Thank you.

8 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you, Ms. Griffin.

9 (Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m., the interview concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*
NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT
IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS
ON MARCH 24, 2023
Interview of Cassandra Griffin

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM022

PLACE: via Microsoft Teams

DATE: July 13, 2023

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



Karen D. Martini
Transcriber