

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

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: SHARON BELL, Server Assistant  
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  
United States Coast Guard

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

ERIC DENLEY, Esq.  
(On behalf of City Cruises)

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I N T E R V I E W

(1:00 p.m.)

1 LCDR [REDACTED] : -- and that this interview is being recorded?

2  
3 MS. BELL: I acknowledge that the Coast Guard audio has been  
4 turned on and I realize it's being recorded.  
5

6 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you, ma'am. This is a joint U.S. Coast  
7 Guard/NTSB investigation and the Coast Guard is the lead agency,  
8 and we are conducting this interview under the applicable Coast  
9 Guard regulations. It is July 13th, 2023. This is the interview  
10 with Ms. Sharon Bell. The time on deck is 1300 and it is being  
11 conducted via virtual Teams.

12 At this time, we're going to go around the room and we're  
13 going to introduce everybody. If you can say your full name and  
14 spell your last name. My name is Lieutenant Commander Thomas  
15 [REDACTED] spelled [REDACTED]

16 MR. FAWCETT: Hey, Ms. Bell, nice to see you again and thank  
17 you for being here. My name is Keith Fawcett, I'm a civilian  
18 marine casualty investigator and I'm part of the *Spirit of Boston*  
19 fire investigation team. Thank you very much.

20 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm here in  
21 a legal capacity. Last name spelling, [REDACTED].

22 LCDR [REDACTED] Ms. [REDACTED]

23 LCDR [REDACTED] Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
24 [REDACTED], and I'm with the District 1 formal investigation  
25 team.

1 LCDR [REDACTED] And Mr. [REDACTED]

2 CDR [REDACTED] Hello, ma'am, Commander [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm the  
3 chief of this investigation. [REDACTED].

4 LCDR [REDACTED] And Ms. Bell.

5 MS. BELL: I am Sharon Bell, my last name is spelled B-e-l-l.

6 LCDR [REDACTED] And are you represented by counsel today?

7 MS. BELL: Eric Denley is my counsel.

8 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay. And Mr. Denley.

9 MR. DENLEY: Eric Denley, D-e-n-l-e-y, City Cruises, party-  
10 in-interest to the investigation.

11 LCDR [REDACTED] And Mr. Denley, just before we move on, are you  
12 representing Ms. Bell today or just City Cruises?

13 MR. DENLEY: Just City Cruises. I don't represent her in a  
14 personal capacity.

15 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay, great.

16 MS. BELL: Sorry.

17 LCDR [REDACTED] No, no worries, I appreciate that. Thank you.

18 MS. BELL: Um-hum.

19 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay, we are conducting the interview to  
20 examine the events surrounding the fire aboard the excursion  
21 vessel *Spirit of Boston* which occurred on March 24th, 2023 in  
22 Boston Harbor. Ms. Bell, you may modify, change anything that you  
23 say in this interview. If you recall it to be different at a  
24 later time, you just make notification to us and we can edit and  
25 make changes to that. You may also appeal the final results of

1 the report of investigation that may result from this interview.  
2 For information regarding Coast Guard marine casualty  
3 investigations, those can be found in the Marine Safety Manual,  
4 Volume V, which can be found on the Internet. At this time, I  
5 will go and kick it over to Ms. [REDACTED] to begin the interview  
6 questions. Thank you.

7 MR. DENLEY: Just before we start, I wanted to let the Coast  
8 Guard, and I guess the NTSB is not on board, but Ms. Bell has a  
9 hard stop at 1400, at 2:00 p.m. local time. Thank you.

10 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay. Ms. Bell, thank you again for being here  
11 with us. We've asked you to conduct this second interview to  
12 clear up a few things from the first interview and to ask you  
13 questions based on information that we've received with the other  
14 preliminary interviews. Some of your answers in the transcript  
15 were a little -- they were not decipherable, as well, so we just  
16 want to clear the record and ask some clarifying questions.

17 MR. DENLEY: I just want to be -- I just want to be clear,  
18 are you saying that the transcript is not decipherable or that you  
19 are -- because I would agree with you, the transcript is pretty  
20 much indecipherable, but are you -- I guess I didn't understand  
21 what your comment was.

22 LCDR [REDACTED] Sure. Just, in the transcript, some of the  
23 answers didn't come out, it was kind of like they didn't come out  
24 to transcribe them, if that makes sense.

25 LCDR [REDACTED] You're on mute.

1 MR. DENLEY: So the purpose is to kind of clarify portions of  
2 the transcript that when the transcription came through, it wasn't  
3 clear?

4 LCDR [REDACTED] Some of it, yes, then others were based on  
5 evidence and preliminary interviews that we've done since her  
6 interview.

7 MR. DENLEY: Got it, thanks.

8 LCDR [REDACTED] So due to the importance of these interviews  
9 and to make sure that we get the facts straight, Ms. Bell,  
10 Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED] is going to put you under oath.

11 LCDR [REDACTED] Ms. Bell, can you please -- can you turn your  
12 camera back on?

13 MS. BELL: I never turned it off.

14 LCDR [REDACTED] Okay. Is anybody else seeing Ms. Bell or is it  
15 just me?

16 LCDR [REDACTED] I can't see Ms. Bell, but I can't see you, as  
17 well.

18 MS. BELL: I can't see any of you. My camera is on. I just  
19 shut it off and I will turn it back on again, but --

20 MR. DENLEY: I can see her.

21 LCDR [REDACTED] There you are, okay.

22 MR. DENLEY: I can see her.

23 LCDR [REDACTED] Roger. Yes, she did come back on, sir. I'm  
24 just trying to get my camera up and going here, but --

25 MR. DENLEY: Got it.

1 LCDR [REDACTED] Yeah, we're fine. So we'll go ahead and  
2 administer the oath. Ms. Bell, can you please stand and raise  
3 your right hand for me?

4 Whereupon,

5 SHARON BELL

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

8 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you.

9 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

10 INTERVIEW OF SHARON BELL

11 BY LCDR [REDACTED]

12 Q. So Ms. Bell, all of my questions today are related to the  
13 period up to March 24th, 2023, unless I specifically ask you about  
14 a later date. First, I'd like to kind of start with training and  
15 focus on that. How do you receive notification that you need  
16 training for your position, is it like an e-mail from your  
17 supervisor or is it from -- how do you receive that notification?

18 A. An e-mail from City Cruises.

19 Q. Okay. And is that with all training that you need?

20 A. Yeah, things that are -- yeah, something that we need to be  
21 at, they'll tell us if it's -- you know, if it's mandatory,  
22 they'll tell us what boat it's on and when to be there.

23 Q. Okay. Do you ever receive e-mails specifically from the  
24 general manager, like Ms. Yelle, does she send e-mails, too, or  
25 does it come from higher in the company?



1 A. I wouldn't say higher, higher in the company. I mean, she's  
2 not usually the one that sent -- the one that sends out things for  
3 training but, I mean, I'm sure they come from her office, just not  
4 directly from her.

5 Q. Okay. Can you sort of tell me, is there like a code or a  
6 word that you use when you're on board the *Spirit of Boston*, if  
7 you saw an emergency, to notify the marine crew to not scare the  
8 passengers? Is there some kind of like secret code that you use  
9 that -- if you see something?

10 A. Not that I know of, no.

11 Q. Does the phrase Code Red mean anything to you?

12 A. No. I mean, in general, yes, but not -- I've never really  
13 heard it on the boat or heard that.

14 Q. Or you weren't trained to use it on the *Spirit of Boston* or  
15 anything like that?

16 A. No.

17 Q. You had mentioned, in your first interview, that you had  
18 received training or orientation on how to use a fire  
19 extinguisher, is that correct?

20 A. Yeah, in the beginning.

21 Q. Okay. So that was during an orientation training?

22 A. That was, yeah, very in the beginning because I've been -- I  
23 was there a year in May, so that was long ago.

24 Q. Okay. And after that orientation, there was no other  
25 training, then, about the use of a fire extinguisher that you've

1 received either in a classroom setting or on board the vessel?

2 A. Not that I attended. I can't say that there wasn't, I hadn't  
3 been in any of the trainings.

4 Q. And have you received any training on how to use a fire  
5 extinguisher since March 24th, 2023?

6 A. There have been trainings, yes.

7 Q. Okay. And what did those trainings look like?

8 A. Just a -- I want to say just a basic, I mean, it was pretty  
9 much someone standing up in front of us and showing us about  
10 pulling pins and then how it can be used.

11 Q. Okay. Was that done on board a vessel?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. And was it conducted -- was it done through the master of the  
14 vessel, the captain, or crew members?

15 A. Crew members.

16 Q. Okay. And did they kind of just gather the entire front-of-  
17 the-house and back-of-the-house staff or was it in conjunction  
18 with the marine crew?

19 A. It was a full training, it was, I mean, a full training.  
20 Every vessel, I believe, was there. I mean, it was a big group of  
21 people that received the training.

22 Q. Okay. And did that training only happen once or you  
23 mentioned several times or --

24 A. You're saying since March 24th, I've been to --

25 Q. Since March.

1 A. I've been to one.

2 Q. Okay. When you go to these trainings, the orientation  
3 training and this training that you just described on board the  
4 vessel, is there some kind of sign-in sheet that you have to sign  
5 to say you were present?

6 A. No, I haven't -- no, I haven't had to sign in.

7 Q. Did you have to report to anyone or send an e-mail to anyone,  
8 like is there a way to actually verify that you were there?

9 A. I believe you respond and let them know that you are coming,  
10 I believe. I can't say for sure, but I believe you have to  
11 respond to say whether you're coming or not.

12 Q. But nothing after that you've attended?

13 A. No, no. I had to sign in for something, but I can't say it  
14 was that. I believe I only responded by e-mail.

15 Q. Okay. So open flames and the paraffin candles, votive  
16 candles that were used, oftentimes either businesses or  
17 universities, they have a specific policy for how to use them, how  
18 to dispose of them, how to keep a watch on them. Have you ever  
19 seen any policy like that prior to March 24th about the specific  
20 procedures to follow with open flames on board the *Spirit of*  
21 *Boston*?

22 A. No.

23 Q. Okay. So Ms. Friedman had mentioned, when we did an  
24 interview with her, that on a very similar vessel to the *Spirit of*  
25 *Boston* she had received pre-season safety orientation, including

1 the use of fire safety equipment. Prior to the season starting in  
2 2023, did you receive any specific vessel orientation training for  
3 the *Spirit of Boston*, like a safety orientation, like a pre-season  
4 kickoff?

5 A. No, I don't recall that. No.

6 Q. Okay. So on -- oh, yes, ma'am.

7 A. The other thing I can say is that I have a full-time job,  
8 whereas I know that this was Ms. Friedman's sole job and I don't  
9 know if it's something that I just couldn't attend or just wasn't  
10 told to attend, I can't speak to that.

11 Q. Okay. Thank you for clarifying.

12 A. Um-hum.

13 Q. We had talked in your preliminary interview, too, and  
14 mentioned the *Spirit of Norfolk* fire on June 7th, 2022. The  
15 restaurant manager and the restaurant staff had played a key role  
16 in making the announcements to passengers, moving passengers about  
17 the vessel, putting life jackets on them, they were instrumental  
18 in that. Their roles were also specifically mentioned in an  
19 emergency response plan. Have you ever seen an emergency response  
20 plan that outlines your duties during an emergency?

21 A. Perhaps in the beginning and maybe in orientation, but not on  
22 a regular.

23 Q. Okay. So do you know what your duties are? Say you're -- if  
24 you're under way with passengers on board, do you know what your  
25 duties are during an emergency?

1 A. I assume what my duties would be. I mean, I -- I mean, I  
2 don't know the -- I can't say I don't know the specifics, I know  
3 what we are -- you know, what we're told for the passengers, you  
4 know, get the passengers to where they have to be first, but we  
5 never have had a full, you know, all-out training on what to do in  
6 an emergency situation, like I said, not from -- not from past  
7 orientation.

8 Q. Okay, thank you.

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. We're going to kind of switch to when you described -- in  
11 your first testimony, you had stated that you witnessed a spark.  
12 I'm just curious, kind of trying to find out why you used the word  
13 spark as opposed to sparks. Can you kind of go into that, did you  
14 witness multiple sparks or you had mentioned one, so was it just  
15 one? Can you kind of go into that in a little more detail?

16 A. It looked like a single spark, it was underneath where we  
17 keep our cups and glasses and that sort of thing, it was on  
18 wheels, it was on something that was on wheels and so just looking  
19 underneath that, I saw a spark, is all I could see. I couldn't  
20 see where it was coming from, I just saw a spark.

21 Q. Ms. Bell, I'm going to pull up a picture for you and I'll  
22 share my screen with you and I'll explain the picture in a second.

23 A. Um-hum.

24 Q. Try to help us get an idea of where you saw the spark. Just  
25 a second. Can you see the picture up on the screen?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. This is a picture post-fire, this was taken by Coast  
3 Guard investigators, we went on board with the ATF and the NTSB  
4 and this is what you're looking at, is the wait station area.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. So to the right, if you can see my cursor --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- to the right is where the coffee station would've been and  
9 the sink --

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. -- and the window was over here. This is kind of -- we tried  
12 to place objects, based on witness testimony, where we thought  
13 that they were during the fire. From what I understand, there  
14 were more cup racks stacked, they were a lot higher than this.

15 A. Right.

16 Q. But is this a basic, general of what the layout looked like  
17 that evening with the trash can, the two carts in the wait  
18 station?

19 A. Yeah, pretty much, but the trash can might've been pushed  
20 down a little more to the left.

21 Q. Over toward the --

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. -- silverware tray, okay. When you said you saw the spark,  
24 was it near this gray -- the first rack or the second rack?

25 A. No, underneath the first rack.

1 Q. Okay. So the one spark was underneath, right, this rack?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay. Did you observe the fire, as well, or was it just a  
4 spark?

5 A. It was just a spark, I did not see the spark turn into a  
6 flame until we were off the boat and that's when we saw the  
7 flames.

8 Q. Okay. And how long after you had seen the spark that  
9 Ms. Griffin came by and observed the fire, as well? Do you know  
10 how much -- estimate how much time went by?

11 A. I don't know if it was 2 minutes, I don't know, two maybe. A  
12 couple minutes, maybe, because when I went over there I saw the  
13 smoke first and the lighting, when I looked up I saw the smoke  
14 underneath. I could hear it, I could hear a spark underneath,  
15 looked under and saw the spark. I yelled for her and she came  
16 right over and, you know, off we went, trying to get control, to  
17 safety.

18 Q. Okay. You had stated that you didn't see the flame until you  
19 went off the vessel, standing from the pier, correct, looking into  
20 the window?

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. And you stated that it was kind of like a liquid, like the  
23 floor was on fire. Can you kind of go into that a little more?

24 A. Yeah, I kind of think that maybe I was thinking -- that maybe  
25 I was wrong in my thought process, but I kind of think the floor

1 might've been melting. I thought it was a liquid, but I mean, in  
2 thinking about it after the fact, the floor was -- it was kind of  
3 melting down and it looked like a liquid.

4 Q. I know we had asked you if you had smoked on board or if you  
5 were a smoker, but do you vape currently?

6 A. I do none of that.

7 Q. Okay. Do you know anyone on the staff that does vape?

8 A. I believe I do.

9 Q. Have you ever witnessed them vaping on board the *Spirit of*  
10 *Boston*?

11 A. I will say leaving, in leaving, I could see them leave. So I  
12 can't say on the boat but, you know, when we're off and everyone's  
13 about to do their -- go off their own ways.

14 Q. Okay. So they were on the vessel, but they were exiting?

15 A. When you're asking if I know people, I'm just saying I've  
16 witnessed people after work, after work, going about their way, so  
17 not even on the vessel.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Walking outside and (indiscernible).

20 Q. Okay. And have you ever noticed any vape or e-cigarettes  
21 being charged or sitting around the vessel?

22 A. Never.

23 Q. Okay. So we're going to talk about at the pier, we're going  
24 to move toward when you were on the pier after everyone evacuated  
25 the vessel.



1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. The testimony had indicated that two people ran back on board  
3 the vessel, one was Mr. Nunez, who was the disc jockey, and the  
4 other one was Mr. Mulaney. Do you recall seeing that or knowing  
5 that?

6 A. Never saw anyone run back on a vessel, no. What I saw, it  
7 looked like the last couple of people to get off, is what I  
8 thought, and I don't even know who they -- I can't be for sure who  
9 they were, but two of us had gotten off first and I never saw  
10 anyone run back.

11 Q. Okay. You never saw anyone come back with a life jacket on?

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. Do you know if there was any announcement made on the  
14 pier by the restaurant manager or anyone else that the crew was to  
15 stay on the pier together or did they kind of just let you do  
16 whatever, how was that? How were they kind of controlling the  
17 scene at the pier?

18 A. We were all right at the -- right up by there, where we  
19 exited at first and then we were told to -- they kept us pretty  
20 much together and then we were told to move down as the  
21 firefighters came. And we were just -- that's where we -- that's  
22 where I could say we saw that that spark turned into a flame,  
23 because we were able to look into the window at that point.

24 Q. Do you know where the nearest general alarm is or the fire  
25 alarm pull station is located on the *Spirit of Boston*?

1 A. The fire alarm pull station?

2 Q. Correct, to sound the alarm.

3 A. No.

4 Q. You were asked in the first interview if the marine crew told  
5 you what to do in case of a fire and you said that they don't, is  
6 that a fair response or can you clarify that?

7 A. Yeah, what -- I can just say we're told to get the marine  
8 crew for anything, so you know, the marine crew doesn't  
9 necessarily tell us. I mean, before every one of our cruises, the  
10 captain may come down and give some information, but we're always  
11 told to get the marine crew for any emergencies, any situations.

12 Q. And again, in your interview on April 4th, you were answering  
13 questions from the investigators and Mr. Denley had asked, too,  
14 about the Sterno --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- that was specifically under the coffee station and you had  
17 stated that you threw out the Sterno from the coffee station.  
18 Since then, we've learned that Ms. Friedman, your fellow server  
19 assistant, had stated that she had thrown out the Sterno. Can you  
20 kind of clarify that for us, on who exactly took care of the  
21 coffee station that evening and threw out the Sterno that was  
22 under the coffee pot?

23 A. I know I blew out the Sterno. I emptied the coffee pot. I  
24 know that it was my assumption that, at some point, I might've  
25 thrown it out after it was cooled down, only because I was trying

1 to clean that wait station. So with her saying that, I can't -- I  
2 really can't say why that was said, I don't know. I mean, she was  
3 down there with me, I know she was right there with me. I don't  
4 know if there was more than one Sterno, but I know, for the  
5 coffee, I was tending to that and I did not -- couldn't find a  
6 cap. I remember blowing it out and leaving it, you know, it has  
7 to sit, it has to cool, and I remember tossing out the coffee. My  
8 assumption was I threw it out after I went back, after it had  
9 cooled down, because you can't throw out a hot Sterno. You don't  
10 even want to handle a hot Sterno, so --

11 Q. And on those same lines, I just want to clarify, you had  
12 stated that you threw it out and then the -- someone came by and  
13 took the trash out but, again, when Ms. Friedman was talking about  
14 the Sterno, it was an empty trash can, like it had already been  
15 taken out.

16 A. Yeah. And I don't recall saying that. I know that the trash  
17 was taken out right away, they always put new trash bags in. So I  
18 would think that, in my thoughts, it would've been thrown into a  
19 trash can that had already been emptied. The crew takes the trash  
20 out right away and we're cleaning long after they've taken the  
21 trash out. So we are usually putting in, putting Sterno, cool  
22 Sterno into a trash bag that doesn't have a lot in it at all.

23 Q. We had also learned from Ms. Friedman that, in watching the  
24 CCTV footage, that she was wiping up something on the floor in the  
25 wait station area prior to the discovery of the fire within a

1 couple minutes. Were you aware of that?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Did she ever mention that she was wiping up something, be  
4 careful or something spilled on the floor?

5 A. Not at all.

6 Q. Is it possible, if you threw the Sterno can in the trash can,  
7 that it possibly didn't make into the trash can? Has that ever  
8 happened before?

9 A. Not for me, not for -- I mean, not for me. I pick up  
10 whatever doesn't miss (sic) the trash can.

11 Q. So -- okay. I know you had stated that you cleaned the  
12 coffee station area. Did Ms. Friedman assist you with any of that  
13 or did she do some of it?

14 A. Not that I know of. See, the coffee, that's the coffee  
15 station where we brew it. It sits outside of that area, you know,  
16 so people can get the coffee. So it doesn't sit, you know, it  
17 doesn't sit there all night. You know, where you were showing me  
18 in the picture, you know, that's where we brew it, but it sits  
19 right around the corner from that, on a table, so that the  
20 passengers can have coffee. I don't recall Freedy (ph.) helping,  
21 I remember dumping out the coffee. I can't say she never dumped  
22 out the cream or did anything else, but I recall doing the coffee.

23 Q. After that, prior to the discovery of the fire, when was the  
24 last time you went into the wait station area?

25 A. Probably not too long before. I would say it's as

1 passengers, maybe, were coming off. I had my -- and I only say  
2 that because my cell phone was resting in there and I would check  
3 it periodically because I have a young son. So I would -- you  
4 know, I'd say maybe, I don't know, 20 minutes, half hour, I would  
5 go in and check periodically. It was not charging, it was just  
6 sitting there in the wait station.

7 Q. So about 20 minutes prior to the fire discovery?

8 A. Twenty minutes to a half hour, I would say.

9 Q. And -- okay. Sorry, I'm just trying to -- so when we  
10 reviewed the CCTV footage, during the discovery of the fire,  
11 Ms. Friedman was standing a few feet from you. Did she say  
12 anything to you when you notified Ms. Griffin of the fire, because  
13 she was standing within a few feet of the wait station, did you  
14 hear her say anything?

15 A. It just kind of got a little chaotic. I remember her calling  
16 me and her saying something like my hero or something, but that  
17 was just -- I don't recall anything else specific and that was  
18 just like I said, it started to get chaotic and we started to  
19 move, you know, get out the door. And I don't recall anything  
20 else, uh-uh.

21 Q. Maybe she didn't say anything else, do you remember her  
22 reaction when the announcement was made that there's a fire?

23 A. I just remember her -- I recall her just trying to move, you  
24 know -- you know, what about our stuff. But we, you know,  
25 couldn't get our stuff and we just got off. I remember grabbing

1 -- I grabbed a table cloth and she just -- you know, she just  
2 moved, she just moved along. I don't know if she grabbed a jacket  
3 or hat, something that was already up there, but I don't recall  
4 anything special or specific.

5 Q. Okay. After the discovery of the fire and you notified  
6 Ms. Griffin, did you or anyone around you discuss grabbing a fire  
7 extinguisher to put out the fire?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Similarly, did anyone ever discuss grabbing some water and  
10 throwing it on the fire?

11 A. No, we were told to get off the boat.

12 Q. Okay. So you didn't hear any discussions from your fellow  
13 crew members discussing that?

14 A. No. There was another group upstairs, it was only a few of  
15 us downstairs, I think me, Freedy, Joel, and Cee-Cee. Maybe --  
16 yeah. And maybe one other person. The rest of the people were  
17 upstairs, re-setting upstairs.

18 Q. Did you ever have any discussions about what could've been  
19 done with the fire when you were on board, when you were on the  
20 pier after you had evacuated the vessel with your crew members  
21 that were on the main deck with you?

22 A. A few people might have said -- well, I recall maybe a couple  
23 of the guys talking, not specifically to me, but just having a  
24 conversation like, you know, maybe I could've put that out, but  
25 just kind of in a -- not in a serious mood, just kind of -- I

1 don't want to say a joking way, but you know, just kind of  
2 speaking amongst themselves. Nothing said, you know, nothing said  
3 by that guy, you know, I could have done that, I should have,  
4 nothing like that was ever said. It was more important for her to  
5 get us all off the boat.

6 LCDR ██████ Lieutenant Commander ██████ that's all the  
7 questions I have, I'll turn it over to Mr. Fawcett.

8 Thank you, Ms. Bell.

9 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

10 LCDR ██████ Mr. Fawcett.

11 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you.

12 BY MR. FAWCETT:

13 Q. Ms. Griffin (sic), Keith Fawcett with the Coast Guard, a  
14 couple of follow-ups. What did you smell on the evening of the  
15 24th related to the fire, when you were on board the vessel?

16 A. I don't recall the smell, I recall the smoke. I don't even  
17 -- I don't recall the smell.

18 Q. And the smoke, talk about that, if you would, for a moment.

19 A. That's what I noticed first, it's because as I went in, there  
20 are lights right in the wait station and as I looked up, you could  
21 see smoke billowing up.

22 Q. And then you mentioned you saw a single spark under the  
23 rolling carts. How about sound related to the fire?

24 A. I heard this fire, which made me look under there, so when I  
25 saw the smoke, I heard the noise, then I looked underneath and saw

1 the spark. It looked like a single spark to me. Like I said,  
2 there was nothing, I couldn't see anything attached to it, that's  
3 just what I saw.

4 Q. And then what about the sound, you said you heard it, what  
5 did it sound like?

6 A. Just like a nit-nit-nit, you know, that type of thing. Just  
7 like a spark jumping around. It didn't have far to go, there was  
8 only so much space between the wheels and the floor, the floor and  
9 the -- the cart that the glasses and stuff was sitting on. It was  
10 just down, it was underneath that.

11 Q. So did the spark, was it like a straight path or did it kind  
12 of ricochet underneath?

13 A. It was just, yeah, kind of bumping around underneath.

14 Q. And then would it be fair to say that the company training  
15 they gave you on fire extinguishers said that you were to use  
16 them, if possible?

17 A. No.

18 Q. And then --

19 A. I mean, I just don't recall that.

20 Q. And then, so in our interview with Ms. Griffin, her first and  
21 second interview, she said that you mentioned a fire extinguisher  
22 when you were in the vicinity of the fire, in other words you just  
23 mentioned it, would that be correct?

24 A. I mentioned a fire extinguisher when I -- I might've asked if  
25 we had one, I don't even remember that. I mean, I definitely



1 wasn't -- I might've asked if we had one, but I don't recall  
2 having a lot of conversation about it.

3 Q. So if you were in the vicinity of the fire, which you were,  
4 and Ms. Griffin wasn't around, the restaurant manager, would you  
5 have thought to use a fire extinguisher based on the training the  
6 company gave you?

7 MR. DENLEY: Objection, calls for speculation.

8 MR. FAWCETT: It's okay to answer, ma'am.

9 THE WITNESS: I don't think so. I think, you know, I don't  
10 -- I don't think so. I mean, at this point, you know, it's a fire  
11 and my first instinct is to get out of the way.

12 BY MR. FAWCETT:

13 Q. Do you --

14 A. And alarm other people of it, you know.

15 Q. Do you think the company gave you adequate training so that  
16 you would actually be comfortable using a fire extinguisher on a  
17 small fire?

18 A. I believe they could've given me adequate training, it still  
19 doesn't make me comfortable enough to do so.

20 Q. Right. So do you think they gave you the adequate training  
21 to be comfortable to use a fire extinguisher on a small fire?

22 A. And again, I'll say maybe way back when, but it doesn't make  
23 me -- I don't -- I can't say that I, personally, would be  
24 comfortable putting out a fire regardless of the training that  
25 they gave.

1 Q. If you had a stove fire in your home or residence and, you  
2 know, you had a grease fire, what would you do?

3 A. Maybe try to throw something on it. I've not even -- we  
4 don't even have a fire extinguisher here.

5 Q. Would you maybe try to snuff it out with something to block  
6 the oxygen, like a rag or something like that or throw salt on it  
7 or something else?

8 A. Maybe try to throw something on it is what I said at first,  
9 but it's a whole other -- I mean, it would be easier to get to  
10 than that, but I mean, yeah, I'd probably try to do that. But I  
11 mean, here I am in -- you know, in a home where there's no one  
12 else to try to even help or whatever. So again, I believe I would  
13 try to throw something on it.

14 MR. FAWCETT: Thank you very much for answering my questions,  
15 it's been most helpful and we'll go ahead to Mr. Denley.

16 LCDR ██████████ Mr. Denley.

17 BY MR. DENLEY:

18 Q. Yeah, just a couple questions, Sharon. Kind of going back to  
19 the -- when you actually saw the -- I just want to be clear about  
20 your testimony about when Ms. ██████████ was kind of going through --  
21 through the process of you emptying the coffee station and kind of  
22 working on the coffee station, I just want to be sort of clear  
23 about what you have a specific recollection about --

24 A. Um-hum.

25 Q. -- versus what you kind of might have -- I think today you

1 said you assumed, you know, you assumed you could've done that or  
2 assumed you would've done that because of what you were doing. So  
3 do you have a specific recollection, as you sit here today, about  
4 -- about extinguishing the Sterno?

5 A. I do. I had to blow it out, I could not find the cap.

6 Q. And then, so do you have -- do you know, do you have a  
7 specific recollection of when that happened, when you actually  
8 extinguished the Sterno?

9 A. Fifteen, maybe 15 minutes or so before the cruise was over  
10 because again, this -- you know, everyone's getting ready to get  
11 off, there's no more coffee or any of that being -- being given  
12 out.

13 Q. And then do you have a specific recollection about emptying  
14 the coffee?

15 A. I do.

16 Q. But you do not have a specific recollection about throwing  
17 away the Sterno?

18 A. Not at the same time. Like I said, I assume I did. You  
19 know, I was working on that wait station. I --

20 Q. And then you do have -- oh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

21 A. No, no, no, I was -- I was done.

22 Q. And then you do have a specific recollection about the crew  
23 members taking that wait station trash out?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Now, do you have a specific recollection about when that

1 occurred, as it relates to when the Sterno can would've been  
2 thrown out? So it was -- first of all, was it after you  
3 extinguished the Sterno? Or do you remember?

4 A. The trash would've been taken out after I extinguished the  
5 Sterno and they take the trash out as soon as the passengers get  
6 off the boat.

7 Q. Okay. So you're assuming that if the Sterno had been thrown  
8 out, it would've been after the Sterno had been extinguished and  
9 after that trash had been thrown out?

10 A. Yes. Um-hum.

11 Q. Why?

12 A. Did you say why?

13 Q. Yeah, why?

14 A. Because, first of all, if the Sterno isn't cool -- they come  
15 and they get the trash right away. Like I said, in most cases,  
16 when we are cleaning up the deck, we're putting trash into a trash  
17 can that has already been emptied because, you know, through the  
18 night it gets filled up, they take it right out. And so when  
19 we're cleaning, we're usually throwing stuff into a trash can  
20 that's been emptied already and now we still have to get it, yeah.

21 Q. So then kind of going to when you saw the spark, I just want  
22 to be clear about your testimony, I think you've been clear, but  
23 just to be clear, the first thing you saw was smoke, correct, it  
24 wasn't a spark?

25 A. Right, I saw the smoke up by the lights as I walked in there,

1 yeah.

2 Q. And so that -- does that tell you that something's already  
3 burning at that point?

4 A. Yeah, something's going on, yeah.

5 Q. And then the spark you saw was low, it was actually  
6 underneath the dish rack, correct?

7 A. Right.

8 Q. And were there dishes on the dish rack?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And you could see where the spark was, but you could not see  
11 the origin of the spark, correct? You couldn't see what --

12 A. Right.

13 Q. -- was causing the spark.

14 A. Exactly.

15 Q. And then you said, in your first testimony, the first  
16 interview, you said that the spark looked like, I guess, a spark  
17 that would come off of a fire, I believe that's the exact words  
18 that you used, like when a --

19 A. Um-hum.

20 Q. -- like when a fire's burning and it pops and it creates a  
21 spark, is that -- is that still your testimony today?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. And I guess, finally, Mr. Fawcett asked you a question about  
24 smells. Are you -- I mean, have you smelled like electrical  
25 problems or have you smelled -- like do you know what it smells

1 like when there's something that goes wrong with an electrical  
2 system or when a system --

3 A. I can't say for sure, but I can -- I would say that I could,  
4 but I really have no recollection of the smell that night.

5 Q. So you didn't recall any kind of electrical smells or any --

6 A. I don't.

7 Q. -- anything that stood out to you?

8 A. No.

9 MR. DENLEY: Thank you, I don't have any further questions.  
10 I appreciate you participating and cooperating with the Coast  
11 Guard again, thanks.

12 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

13 LCDR [REDACTED] Thank you, sir.

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

15 LCDR [REDACTED] I don't have any follow-up questions.

16 LCDR [REDACTED] And Mr. Fawcett.

17 BY MR. FAWCETT:

18 Q. Yes, thank you for your patience. I have two. Mr. Denley  
19 mentioned the spark in relation to a dish rack. Was it in  
20 relation to the dish racks or the glass racks?

21 A. It's the glass racks, the gray rack that you showed me. I  
22 apologize, that's what it is, that's what it was in the picture  
23 that Ms. [REDACTED] showed, on that gray desk where we keep our  
24 glasses and it was under that.

25 Q. Okay. And then, you know, you talked about blowing out the

1 Sterno and I want to be clear, prior to the accident evening of  
2 March 24th, did anyone from the company tell you about safe use of  
3 Sterno or the paraffin candles or birthday candles?

4 A. Sternos, I know if you have the cap, you know, we put the cap  
5 on it to put it out. I did not have the cap and I know that, you  
6 know, blowing it out is not the best way but again, I got the fire  
7 out, I just -- I wanted it to be out so it could cool and, you  
8 know, I wasn't near anything, it was just underneath the coffee  
9 and I didn't feel like I was doing anything crazy, but I do know  
10 that if you have the cap, that's the best way to put it out.

11 Q. And you mentioned -- and so did anybody prior to March 24th,  
12 2023, tell you about the safe use of birthday candles?

13 A. Not me, because I don't use them.

14 Q. And then how about the small paraffin candles that go in the  
15 glass table candles?

16 A. Yes, I was told how to use those.

17 Q. And who told you that?

18 A. I believe it was the manager.

19 Q. And then --

20 A. Because that's something that I do, that was something, that  
21 was part of what I did.

22 Q. And then the Sterno, you know, you took the proactive step of  
23 waiting 15 minutes approximately to let the can cool, you know, so  
24 you knew it was cool. Who told you to wait a period of time until  
25 the cans cool?

1 A. I mean, it's kind of common sense, you don't put anything  
2 hot --

3 Q. Right.

4 A. And the reason, it's uncomfortable to even touch it if it's  
5 hot.

6 Q. Right. So I've been on the boat and I've seen evidence of  
7 like some handwritten diagrams that show the layout of the tables  
8 and the wait stations and all that, but is there any written  
9 document that tells you how to safely handle Sterno?

10 A. I want to say there is and I don't know if it was in  
11 paperwork that I received in the beginning, but I want to say I've  
12 seen it somewhere.

13 Q. Okay, so there is -- after the fire, you don't have paraffin  
14 candles anymore and you don't have birthday candles, have you  
15 seen, after the fire, like a written instruction on the safe use  
16 of a Sterno?

17 A. I can't say I've seen -- I can't say I've seen it, I can't  
18 say I've seen it, I'm sure it's there somewhere, though. It had  
19 -- you know, I believe it's there somewhere, but I haven't seen it  
20 because we do -- we have to use the Sterno to keep the food hot,  
21 but I'm sure it's there.

22 Q. So the company uses a device called a fleet safety alert  
23 where they convey critical information. Have you ever seen a  
24 fleet safety alert related to Sterno use or open flame on vessels?

25 A. No.



1 MR. FAWCETT: That's all I have, thank you very much.

2 THE WITNESS: Um-hum.

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

4 If there is no more questions, Ms. Bell, I want to thank you  
5 again for your time and consideration through the investigation,  
6 thank you so much and we greatly appreciate it, and everybody have  
7 a great day.

8 THE WITNESS: You too.

9 MR. DENLEY: Thank you, bye-bye.

10 (Whereupon, at 1:46 p.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

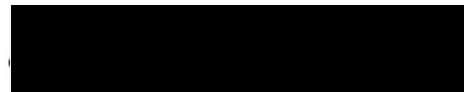
IN THE MATTER OF:            FIRE ABOARD THE *SPIRIT OF BOSTON*  
                                      NEAR THE BOSTON SPORTS DISTRICT  
                                      IN BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
                                      ON MARCH 24, 2023  
                                      Interview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

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.



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David A. Martini  
Transcriber