

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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ROGER BLOUGH CASUALTY *

IN STURGEON BAY, WISCONSIN, * Accident No.: DCA21FM015

ON FEBRUARY 1, 2021 *

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Interview of: ISAAC JOHNSON, Shipkeeper

Roger Blough

Bay Shipbuilding Conference Room
Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

Thursday,
February 4, 2021



APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigator
United States Coast Guard

ROBERT R. TERBRACK, Esq.
Gallagher Sharp, LLP
(On behalf of Key Lakes)

ROBERT HARSHMAN, Fire Investigator
Key Lakes

DEREK STARR, S.E.A.
Fincantieri Bay Shipbuilding

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. This is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]
3 [REDACTED], lead investigating officer for the fire aboard the *Roger*
4 *Blough* on February 1. We are conducting a joint interview. This
5 is the second time Isaac has been interviewed.

6 I'm going to go around the room; we have several parties in
7 attendance. I would ask that you introduce yourself, who you
8 represent and whether or not we have your permission to record the
9 interview today, starting with my left.

10 MR. JOHNSON: Isaac Johnson, Key Lakes, you have my
11 permission to record.

12 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

13 MR. TERBRACK: This is Bob Terbrack, counsel for the vessel
14 owner and I also do not object to the recording.

15 MR. HARSHMAN: This Robert Harshman, I'm the fire
16 investigator representing the ship owners and I have no objection
17 to recording.

18 MR. STARR: This is Derek Starr with S.E.A., I'm here on
19 behalf of Bay Shipbuilders and I have no objection to the
20 recording.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay, thanks everybody. It's February 4th, we're
22 in the safety training room at Bay Ship. We have a table that
23 we're all sitting around, it's a rectangular configuration. There
24 are two doors to the room, one directly behind me to my right and
25 one directly to Isaac's left.

1 Just so everyone knows this is voluntary to be here. If at
2 any time you're uncomfortable or you need to take a break, grab
3 something to drink. Isaac there's water in the back there, I
4 think you can help yourself to. I think there might be coffee, it
5 may be cold. Does anybody want to hit the head before we get
6 started? Get comfortable, grab whatever you need, please.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'm going to get a water. Do you want
8 a water?

9 MR. HARSHMAN: Where is the restroom from here? I'm all
10 right, it won't take that long.

11 CWO [REDACTED]: Are you sure?

12 MR. HARSHMAN: Yeah.

13 CWO [REDACTED]: By all means, the restaurant's [sic] right out
14 here.

15 MR. HARSHMAN: Okay.

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah, we can break momentarily, sure.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right here (indiscernible). Down
18 here, take a right and then --

19 MR. HARSHMAN: Thank you.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And then take another right.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Donna get you the letter? The parties in
22 interest thing?

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yup.

24 CWO [REDACTED]: Great.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What is Isaac's last name, just so I

1 can --

2 CWO [REDACTED]: Johnson.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Johnson.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: Great. As far as the recording, you're going to
5 have two means to access information for that. Obviously, there's
6 only one, one conduit and that would be the FOIA but NTSB will be
7 doing all of the transcripts --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

9 CWO [REDACTED]: -- from all of the recorded interviews that get
10 sent to them. So what I would think to do as a party in interest
11 that's going to facilitate things as far as information sharing,
12 it's going to make things smoother, I believe.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Uh-huh.

14 CWO [REDACTED]: You know what I mean?

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

16 CWO [REDACTED] Because of the FOIA stuff. You're here; you're
17 present during the interviews, so this shouldn't be an issue
18 getting you this stuff in a much more timely fashion than have you
19 not be given the (indiscernible).

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Very good.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Which I recommend that it's here earlier on, it
22 just makes things smoother for sure.

23 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. So Isaac's back from the restroom.
24 We have the same parties in the room. Everyone still consent to
25 the recording at this point?

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

2 CWO [REDACTED]: Any objections?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: No, okay. Well, I'm going to defer to the
5 investigators. Who would like to start?

6 MR. STARR: I guess I'll start, Isaac. My name's Derek, nice
7 to meet you.

8 If you don't mind, do you mind just walking us through the
9 day of the fire --

10 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah.

11 MR. STARR: -- just from the morning to the time you observed
12 the fire?

13 MR. HARSHMAN: I'm going to interject just a little bit just
14 as a matter of format. Can we start with his position on the boat
15 and --

16 MR. STARR: Absolutely, yeah.

17 MR. HARSHMAN: Your experience here and --

18 MR. STARR: Yeah.

19 MR. HARSHMAN: -- credentials and so forth?

20 MR. JOHNSON: I have a (indiscernible) ticket. I am the ship
21 keeper on the *Blough*. And what else do you know? (verbatim)

22 MR. HARSHMAN: How long have you worked there?

23 MR. JOHNSON: Oh, this time around, I think I was there for
24 four days since the 28th. But I worked with the company in the
25 past for around 10 years but I hadn't worked for them a couple --

1 except the winters. I hadn't sailed in a long time.

2 INTERVIEW OF ISAAC JOHNSON

3 BY MR. STARR:

4 Q. Prior to January 28th however you were onboard this vessel,
5 correct, for another short stint?

6 A. What's that now?

7 Q. During this layup period you were onboard previously; the
8 28th is just when you got back to the vessel. Have you been on in
9 the last --

10 A. Not since last year, no.

11 Q. Not since December last --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- this last December?

14 A. Since pretty much when COVID started last year was when I
15 left.

16 Q. Okay, all right. Thanks for clarifying that for me.

17 A. Yeah.

18 BY MR. HARSHMAN:

19 Q. And has your service been on the *Blough* or --

20 A. Mostly on the *Blough*, yeah.

21 Q. Okay. So you're familiar with the vessel?

22 A. Oh, very familiar, yeah.

23 Q. And then as ship keeper, what are your general duties?

24 A. Basically keep an eye on the boilers and bilge and basically
25 anything that could go wrong. Pretty much look around. Yeah, I

1 mean, the boiler is really the only thing running so that's pretty
2 much all I've got to keep an eye on, you know, sewer, all that
3 stuff, you know.

4 Q. Okay. And you were on the vessel at the time of the fire, is
5 that correct?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Yeah. And about what time was that?

8 A. I don't know what time it started. I went to bed probably
9 around 11:00 and it was fine. Nothing, nothing happened. I woke
10 up at around 1:20 and there was smoke in my room and I ran outside
11 and called and that was before the alarms went off.

12 Q. So that day or the day prior on the vessel, about what time
13 did you start your duties and --

14 A. I came down there at 7:00, left at 3:00 in the afternoon. I
15 was in the control room 90 percent of the day other than making
16 rounds.

17 CWO [REDACTED]: What time in the morning did you get there?

18 MR. JOHNSON: I got there around 7:00, maybe 15 minutes after
19 seven.

20 BY MR. HARSHMAN:

21 Q. And what were you doing in the control room?

22 A. I was making gaskets for the leak ops for the main engines.

23 Q. And as part of your duties, are you responsible for like
24 making sure the temperature's normal in both the living quarters
25 and the engine room?

1 A. Yeah. If something's out of whack I call somebody and then I
2 call an engineer to come help me, yes.

3 Q. Okay. Had you had any issues either that day or the days
4 prior?

5 A. Nope, nothing.

6 Q. How about with anything else, any other unexpected issues,
7 boilers or anything like that?

8 A. No.

9 Q. All right. So after you finished for the day at three did
10 you go up to your living quarters or what did you do next?

11 A. Went to living quarters, relaxed for a little bit, then I
12 went to -- I left the boat around 7:00, maybe 7:30 around there.
13 I actually ran down to the engine room and grabbed my coat and
14 then ran up and I didn't smell nothing then and then up the street
15 for around 10, 10:30.

16 Q. Say that again, around seven p.m. is when you went down to
17 the engine room?

18 A. Yep, grabbed my coat.

19 Q. Grabbed your coat?

20 A. I didn't do a round or nothing, I just ran down to get my
21 coat and then I left but there was no smoke or nothing then.

22 Q. And what part of the engine room were you in?

23 A. That would be right next to the control room, right by the
24 water fountain there.

1 CWO [REDACTED]: Could you clarify what time you got back to the
2 boat from dinner?

3 MR. JOHNSON: I think it was around 10 to 10:30 maybe, maybe
4 9:30. I didn't really look at my watch but around then, yeah.

5 BY MR. HARSHMAN:

6 Q. So when you returned to the boat, did you go below decks at
7 all?

8 A. Nope, galley to my room.

9 Q. Did you notice anything unusual on your return, any smoke or
10 anything?

11 A. Nope, nothing, it was A-Okay when I got back.

12 Q. So I think you said you woke up around 1:20, is that right?

13 A. Yeah, maybe a little, maybe a little later, maybe 1:25. I
14 called at; I called at 1:38 so maybe it was 1:30 when I woke up
15 so --

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I ran out pretty fast so --

18 Q. So do you mind just walking through what you observed or what
19 woke you up and then what you observed from the time you woke up
20 to the time you got up to the ship?

21 A. I woke up; there was smoke on the ceiling part. The smoke
22 alarm was going off or just had started going off, that's probably
23 what woke me up. And then I immediately ran outside, called.
24 There was a guy or two guys sitting on the barker. I told them to
25 call 9-1-1.

1 Then I called Ward at the same time. I looked up, there was
2 smoke coming out of the stack and then it stopped coming out --

3 Q. Just slow down just a little bit.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. I'm trying to catch up here.

6 A. Sorry about that.

7 Q. You said you called Ward, is that his first name?

8 A. Yes, Poppenberg, Poppen -- I don't know his last name.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. He'll be in here.

11 Q. And so you saw smoke coming from the main stack?

12 A. Yep at first and then, and then it looked like it was coming
13 from the emergency generator room. And then all of a sudden it
14 switched to the aft end of the boat was odd.

15 Q. And can you give us any timelines or timestamps in that
16 progression of where you saw smoke as to when the fire department
17 arrived, if you remember?

18 A. Yeah, they were there -- I mean, they were there pretty darn
19 quick, probably 20 minutes maybe. I -- it's hard to tell, a lot
20 was going on.

21 Q. And were you able to do anything as far as to try to suppress
22 the fire and pull anything or --

23 A. We'd close the fence on top of the EDG room; that was all we
24 could do, it was like there was nothing you could do. It was too
25 bad in there.

1 BY MR. STARR:

2 Q. And once you exited the vessel approximately 1:38 did you
3 reenter the vessel?

4 A. Yeah, I ran back in to grab my phone which was laying in the
5 hallway. I tried to grab it on the way out. Yeah, that's what I
6 grabbed.

7 Q. What time was that?

8 A. That was -- well, that was before 1:38 because I had to grab
9 my phone to call so probably 1:37.

10 Q. So you went back into your room to grab your phone?

11 A. Yeah, yeah.

12 Q. What else did you grab in there, anything else? Did you need
13 anything else out of there, did you get anything?

14 A. Just a pair of coveralls and my phone and then that's all I
15 could get.

16 Q. Ran back in to grab your phone.

17 A. Yeah.

18 MR. HARSHMAN: Did you notice anything different about the
19 smoke or -- either the amount of smoke or the color of smoke from
20 the time you left to the time you came back in?

21 MR. JOHNSON: Not really, it pretty much was the same. It
22 was pretty black, it was hard to see, I had to duck down, ran in
23 quick and grabbed it and left so --

24 MR. HARSHMAN: And the time you went back on the phone was
25 about 1:38, is that what I heard?

1 MR. JOHNSON: Yep.

2 MR. HARSHMAN: Do you keep records of or interact with anyone
3 else that happens to go on the boat during the course of the day?
4 They check in with you or anything?

5 MR. JOHNSON: Ward came in and checked in on me around 11:00,
6 I believe. He'll, he'll have the right time but, yeah, people do
7 stop in. I don't have a record of it but --

8 CWO [REDACTED]: Ward was in 11 a.m. that day?

9 MR. JOHNSON: Something like that.

10 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay.

11 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, maybe 10.

12 MR. HARSHMAN: And do you know what he was there to do
13 specifically?

14 MR. JOHNSON: I can't remember what he was there, there for
15 other than to make a round.

16 CWO [REDACTED]: What does he make a round of? What's the purpose
17 of his round?

18 MR. JOHNSON: I'm not 100 percent sure what he makes a round
19 on. I've never followed him. I'm assuming the same as me boiler,
20 bilges, tunnel, just the essentials.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Did Ward note anything of concern to you or ask
22 you to do anything?

23 MR. JOHNSON: Nope, nope.

24 BY MR. STARR:

25 Q. Anybody else on the ship that day?

1 A. Not that I seen, no.

2 Q. Okay. How about in the previous four days? any major work
3 that was going on on the ship?

4 A. Not that I was aware of. I'm assuming the engineer would
5 maybe know more about that, I don't know.

6 Q. At any point during your time on the ship at least the day of
7 the fire and the four days prior, did you adjust the temperature
8 in the engine room?

9 A. Nope, didn't touch it. I don't even know how.

10 CWO [REDACTED]: You don't know how?

11 MR. JOHNSON: Well, you can do it but it's -- I don't know
12 there's a procedure I'm sure. I don't touch that stuff.

13 CWO [REDACTED]: Why not?

14 MR. JOHNSON: Why not? I don't know. No need.

15 BY MR. STARR:

16 Q. When there's an alarm for whatever reason it is on the ship,
17 is that usually in the engine room? Do you get any notification
18 of it or only when you go for a round?

19 A. The ship's supposed to send out texts or call people when
20 stuff like that happens and it did, but that was after I had woken
21 up.

22 Q. Do you have any records of those texts, have you forwarded
23 those to anyone?

24 A. I don't, I don't get them.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Other, other people around town get them just in case there's
2 nobody on the boat when something like that happens, it calls
3 everybody so --

4 MR. STARR: Gotcha.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Maybe you could elaborate for these guys. I
6 don't know if they're familiar with the systems on these boats.
7 It's not traditional to have these vessels laid up in this fashion
8 in a lot of other parts of the world. So we call it a layup alarm
9 system; is that what you are referring to?

10 MR. JOHNSON: Yep, yep.

11 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Could you describe some of the things that
12 you would get alarms for?

13 MR. JOHNSON: It would be high temp, low temp, smoke alarm,
14 low air pressure for the sea chess (ph.). Boiler alarm would
15 probably be called. Other than that, I don't know the extent of
16 anything else.

17 BY MR. HARSHMAN:

18 Q. And these are just alarms that would call out or alarms that
19 specifically call out to you?

20 A. They would specifically call. Well, they would call
21 everybody on the list.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So it would call Dave, it would call, you know, whoever's
24 ship or the -- I don't know what to call them. But it would call
25 several people.

1 Q. All right. Are you on that list?

2 A. I'm not, no.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. No.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Were you guys on your layup alarm system not --
6 because the *Blough* does not have fixed fire detection operational
7 at all times in the engine room but I believe -- is it a layup
8 alarm, do you know?

9 MR. JOHNSON: I think it's all attached to that, that call
10 system. I'm not 100 percent sure.

11 CWO [REDACTED]: I believe that you're referring to the layup
12 alarm that's an independent system outside of Coast Guard purview.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, that would a question for an engineer. I
15 don't (indiscernible).

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Dave Hunt will be able to --

17 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah.

18 CWO [REDACTED]: -- elaborate on that.

19 MR. JOHNSON: Uh-huh.

20 MR. STARR: That's about all I've got. Do you guys got
21 anything else?

22 BY MR. HARSHMAN:

23 Q. Going back to the alarms, you said that you woke up in your
24 cabin to -- well, why don't I let you say it? Specifically, what
25 made you wake up at that hour of the morning?

1 A. It could have been the smoke alarm or the smoke, probably a
2 combination of both and I think the smoke alarm just went off and
3 I woke up immediately. At that point, I don't think the smoke was
4 down to my bed yet.

5 Q. Do you know where that smoke alarm's located? Is it in your
6 room?

7 A. Yeah, yeah, it would be right between the port holes there.
8 I believe that's where that one is. Pretty much right above the
9 bed.

10 Q. Okay. So this is like an individual --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- smoke detector like you have in your house?

13 A. Yep, yeah.

14 Q. When you were leaving, did you hear the smoke alarms from any
15 of the other rooms going off?

16 A. Yeah, there was a lot of weird beeping noises going on. They
17 must have been in the rooms or the engine room, I'm not 100
18 percent sure where it was coming from, but there was alarms going
19 off.

20 Q. So the alarm system in the vessel then, is it all individual
21 smoke detectors or do you have some or all of the detectors tied
22 to a common system that will activate and alarm the entire vessel?

23 A. I don't know that 100 percent. I think, I think all the ones
24 that are supposed to call people are all over the place connected

1 to one unit but I'm not 100 percent sure of that. I don't know
2 how it all works.

3 Q. Okay. So is that a separate system than the regular ship
4 system we're talking about, this layup system?

5 A. I think so.

6 Q. So it's something that's installed after you come into port?

7 A. You -- well, it's always there, but you just turn it on.

8 Q. It's always there, okay.

9 A. Yeah. So, as far as I know, you know. You'd have to ask
10 some of the smarter people.

11 BY MR. STARR:

12 Q. Isaac, do you remember what lights might have been on in the
13 engine room? (A) if there's emergency lights that are always on
14 and (B) if there's any lights that you may have just kept on all
15 the time?

16 A. We never shut any lights off down there, I mean, to my
17 knowledge they're always on.

18 Q. Okay. So it was fully illuminated at all times?

19 A. Yeah, yeah.

20 MR. STARR: Okay.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: I have a line of questioning as well as some
22 specific things related to an area of concern; would there be
23 objecting -- objection from anyone else to focus in on our
24 specific area?

25 MR. JOHNSON: No, that's fine with me.

1 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Rob, do you have anything on deck?

2 MR. HARSHMAN: I'm just trying to think, figure anything else
3 I want to ask here. Yeah, go ahead.

4 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. You got onboard on January 28th, correct?
5 Okay. Is it in your job description or is it an expectation of
6 your position to assist in fuel or oil transfers between the main
7 bunkers and day tanks?

8 MR. JOHNSON: No.

9 CWO [REDACTED]: You're familiar with those systems?

10 MR. JOHNSON: Yes.

11 CWO WIGHT: Okay.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We're in an interview.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I come back out in just a moment?
15 We're almost -- right about done.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah.

17 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Okay. So to your knowledge, were any fuel transfers
19 conducted between bunker tanks and day tanks?

20 A. No, not that I seen, no.

21 Q. Okay. Who's responsible for doing that?

22 A. Christian.

23 Q. Christian is?

24 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. When you're doing these rounds, is there a
2 prescription of what is expected of you on these rounds?

3 A. Just to, you know, make observations and if anything's out of
4 the ordinary, you know, call somebody.

5 Q. Do you monitor the day tanks and the fuel levels --

6 A. No.

7 Q. -- as a part of those rounds?

8 A. No. I mean, they're always up in the control room so you can
9 always see them.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. You know, digital so --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. But, yeah.

14 Q. But not your responsibility?

15 A. Not my -- I mean, yeah, they're not my responsibility, no.

16 Q. Okay. On your way to the engine room to grab your jacket
17 were you smoking?

18 A. Nope.

19 Q. Were you smoking in your room?

20 A. No.

21 Q. So if I were to enter your room there would be no -- I mean,
22 don't have cigarette butts all over the vessel as possible sources
23 of ignition?

24 A. There is cigarette butts in there but they were in there when
25 I got to the room. You can check them, they're Winstons. That

1 room was not clean when I moved it, it looked like somebody's
2 breakroom or something so --

3 Q. What room are you in?

4 A. It's the one right by the chief; it's either the boatswain or
5 the third. I can't remember the --

6 Q. Are you in between the boatswain's room and the chief's room?

7 A. That must be where it is, yeah.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah, it's right next to the chief's room so, yeah.

10 Q. Do you roll your own cigarettes?

11 A. Uh-huh.

12 Q. You do?

13 A. Some of them, yeah.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Sometimes, yeah.

16 Q. What brand of tobacco do you roll?

17 A. I know it's red. I don't know.

18 Q. Okay. You said you went to the galley when you got back to
19 the vessel, what did you make to eat?

20 A. I made a baloney sandwich.

21 Q. Okay. Did you do any cooking in the galley when you were
22 down there?

23 A. No, no.

24 Q. Okay. On your way down to get your jacket you said you were
25 smoking?

- 1 A. No, I was not.
- 2 Q. You were not smoking, okay. When you exited the vessel you
3 went back in to grab your -- what again?
- 4 A. My coveralls and my phone.
- 5 Q. And your phone. Where was your phone when you went back in?
- 6 A. On the table, I believe.
- 7 Q. What table?
- 8 A. The only table in there.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. The little desk.
- 11 Q. Do you have a little -- is there a little nightstand in there
12 or is it just a desk?
- 13 A. It's a desk.
- 14 Q. Okay. So there was a phone on the desk, you went in to grab
15 the phone?
- 16 A. Yep.
- 17 Q. Okay. Where are the break lash shutdowns for ventilation and
18 fuel systems onboard the *Blough*?
- 19 A. They're on the port side right by the entrance to the engine
20 room.
- 21 Q. Okay. Did it occur to you at any point that those should be
22 activated?
- 23 A. Absolutely not.
- 24 Q. Okay.

1 A. Like there's no way I could have got to them. I don't think
2 they were even hooked up anyways so --

3 Q. Okay. Is it something you thought about and it wasn't worth
4 going back in from a safety standpoint or --

5 A. Oh, I was not going back in there, hell no.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. (Indiscernible).

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. I just had to, had to call somebody so I had to get my phone,
10 you know.

11 Q. Okay. So you were able to go into your room and get the
12 phone?

13 A. Just barely, yeah.

14 Q. But not able to go in and hit the break glasses?

15 A. No, that was (indiscernible).

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. I would have had to -- I didn't know if that side was on fire
18 or not, you know, I didn't want to open any doors.

19 Q. So you were concerned with your safety --

20 A. Oh, absolutely.

21 Q. -- and it didn't feel worth entering? Why did you feel safe
22 then to go back into your room?

23 A. Well, I had to call somebody. I didn't know how I was going
24 to -- you know, if I didn't call anybody we wouldn't -- there
25 wouldn't be a boat left, I don't think.

1 Q. Where is the control to discharge the CO2 system for the main
2 engine room?

3 A. I think that's in that hallway right by -- or right by the
4 break glasses as well on the port side.

5 Q. You sailed on the *Blough* three, four years?

6 A. Yeah, probably more than that, yeah.

7 Q. Was that --

8 A. Like, you don't, you don't touch those unless the captain and
9 the chief does -- you know.

10 Q. I, I hear you.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. I hear you, that's pretty standard. You sailed three or four
13 years and your position for these gentlemen?

14 A. Conveyor man.

15 Q. Conveyor man?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. And as conveyor man is your primary job description to
18 manage the unloading gear?

19 A. Yep.

20 Q. And assist with on load, offload?

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. Okay. Were you acting under the authority of your license --

23 A. No.

24 Q. -- as ship keeper?

25 A. Nope.

1 Q. Is that a condition of employment as a ship keeper with Key
2 Lakes?

3 A. I don't know.

4 Q. Do you think if you had an oiler, if you didn't have that
5 oiler's ticket they would have let you come on and act as ship
6 keeper?

7 A. I don't see why not.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No.

10 Q. Do you feel that it's necessary to be an oiler, to be an
11 effective ship keeper?

12 A. I don't think so, no.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. No.

15 Q. Were you performing duties as ship keeper that relate to your
16 credential as an oiler?

17 A. No.

18 Q. No?

19 A. I mean, oilers don't really have a position on a diesel boat
20 or oilers are steamboat people so --

21 Q. Are you aware of the level of automation on the *Blough*?

22 A. I mean, to a point. I mean, I don't know everything about
23 it.

24 Q. Okay. Did you know whether or not the CO2 system was
25 operational or dismantled?

1 A. I'm pretty sure I knew it was dismantled, I heard somebody
2 say something about that.

3 Q. Okay. Would that have maybe factored into your not wanting
4 to go back in and try to discharge that or was that just off the
5 table because of concern for your safety?

6 A. That was off the table. I was not going back in there.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. No way.

9 Q. All right. Am I correct in saying that all those break glass
10 shutdowns are immediately within hands reach of the outside port
11 door to the main deck accommodations back aft on the end board
12 bulkhead?

13 A. Not immediately. I guess I don't know exactly where they
14 are. I know the general location of them. They were somewhere
15 between the engine room door and the, and the forward door there
16 so --

17 Q. Port side?

18 A. Yep, port side I believe.

19 Q. And your room is on starboard?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. At least the room you were staying in?

22 A. Uh-huh, on starboard, yeah.

23 Q. On starboard side?

24 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. You monitor temperatures. You said the only thing
2 running in the engine room was the boiler?

3 A. Yeah, boiler, ship tank, a couple heaters, yeah.

4 Q. What about the primary furnace in the engine room?

5 A. Oh, yeah, that too but there's nothing really to check on
6 that. There's no --

7 Q. Why not?

8 A. -- indication of, you know, if it was -- to my knowledge I
9 don't know if there's even an alarm panel on it but I don't know
10 again so --

11 Q. When's the last time you cleaned out the fuel strainers on
12 the main furnace in the engine room?

13 A. I have no idea. I didn't do it.

14 Q. Is that something that --

15 A. That would be something --

16 Q. -- the nature of your duty the first engineer would say, hey,
17 can you clean out these strainers or can you check to make sure we
18 don't have water down in that duplex strainer?

19 A. Yeah, he would probably be with me though so --

20 Q. Okay. Are you accompanied the majority of your time in the
21 engine room?

22 A. Pretty much so, you know.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. You know, if we're doing something important. If not, I'll
25 just be cleaning or whatever, you know.

1 Q. Were you cleaning in the vicinity of the main furnace for the
2 engine room?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Were you down there at all?

5 A. I made a round down there a couple times just to look around
6 to make sure --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- there was no water in the bilge and stuff like that but,
9 no, wasn't doing any work around it.

10 Q. If I found the rolling papers for your cigarettes in that
11 vicinity, how would that have gotten there? Is that --

12 A. There won't be any rolling papers down there because I didn't
13 smoke near it.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Unless it fell out of one of my pockets but I doubt that.

16 Q. So there is a possibility something could be down there in
17 that area?

18 A. I doubt it but go ahead and look.

19 Q. Okay. For the questions that I have, I'm good at this time.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. Isaac, you've been very helpful. I really appreciate you
22 taking the time to do this.

23 A. Uh-huh.

24 Q. I know it's the second interview and it's not a very pleasant
25 thing and I appreciate your time in doing this.

1 A. Uh-huh.

2 Q. Is there any questions that I have not asked that you feel
3 that you need to discuss with me?

4 A. Nope.

5 Q. Anything of concern that I have not discussed or mentioned
6 that I should be made aware of as the investigator?

7 A. No.

8 Q. As a marine inspector, are there any latent, unsafe
9 conditions which is to say are there any things that, you know,
10 we've jammed paperclips in or duct taped to try to keep it going
11 until we can get a proper pair, or anything like that?

12 A. No.

13 Q. You heard Christian talk about issues with the main furnace
14 shutting down for an unknown reason?

15 A. What's that now?

16 Q. The furnace in the engine room.

17 A. Did it shut down for no reason?

18 Q. Yeah. Have you heard of that thing being problematic or,
19 yeah, we just got that thing, it's a hunk of junk, things to that
20 nature?

21 A. Not really. I thought it was running pretty good as far as I
22 knew but like, in the -- again, I was only on the boat for a few
23 days so I don't -- didn't hear everything. So that's a question
24 for him, I don't know.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. All right. Well, if there's nothing that you feel I should
3 know at this point in time, I guess we will leave it at that.

4 A. Okay.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Does anybody else have any questions though?

6 MR. STARR: No, thank you.

7 MR. HARSHMAN: I think we covered it.

8 MR. JOHNSON: Yeah, thank you.

9 MR. STARR: Thanks.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Who do you want next?

11 CWO [REDACTED]: That concludes the interview. Isaac, thank you
12 very much.

13 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: *ROGER BLOUGH* CASUALTY
 IN STURGEON BAY, WISCONSIN
 ON FEBRUARY 1, 2021
 Interview of Isaac Johnson

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA21FM015

PLACE: Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin

DATE: February 4, 2021

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.




Transcriber