



## U.S. COAST GUARD INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Matter Under Investigation: ROGER BLOUGH Fire

Interview Of: Christian Benvin (2<sup>nd</sup> Interview)

Date/Time: 3FEB21 0809

Location: On board the ROGER BLOUGH in the vacant Conveyor man's room

Interviewed By: CWO4 [REDACTED]

Others Present: None

Below is a summary of the interview noted above with the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer of the ROGER BLOUGH, Mr. Christian Benvin. I asked if he would be willing to do a second interview while we were on board the vessel and he agreed. We had just gotten back from the engine room from checking on a bubbler system that the Coast Guard allowed to be installed on the port and starboard sea chests to keep them from freezing.

CWO [REDACTED]: What work was going on in the engine room in the area that we were in by the ballast?

Mr. Benvin: Nothing out of the ordinary.

CWO [REDACTED]: Tell me about how you heat your engine room.

Mr. Benvin: The winter furnace.

CWO [REDACTED]: Where is the winter furnace?

Mr. Benvin: The winter furnace is immediately next to the sea chest.

CWO [REDACTED]: How is that winter furnace fueled?

Mr. Benvin: Diesel oil.

CWO [REDACTED]: Who maintains the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: The engineers and there's a service callout every year for Tweet Garot. It's new as of last year.

CWO [REDACTED]: Tweet Garot. What's new as of last year?

Mr. Benvin: The whole thing.

CWO [REDACTED]: The whole furnace?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Tweet Garot does the service?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: When's the last time they did service?

Mr. Benvin: I don't know.

CWO [REDACTED]: Do you have copies of the reports from when they last did it?

Mr. Benvin: Yes there would have been. I think it was when I was on vacation.

CWO [REDACTED]: Which would have been?

Mr. Benvin: Sometime in December.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok so that furnace was recently serviced?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Any problems with the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Who's responsible for starting it up and monitoring it every day?

Mr. Benvin: The people on board.

CWO [REDACTED]: Which would be?

Mr. Benvin: Myself and the handyman.

CWO [REDACTED]: Isaac?

Mr. Benvin: Isaac yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did he work with the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did he touch the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did you work with the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did you touch the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: When is the last time you touched the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: I haven't. Just turn it on and make sure it's running and all is happy.

CWO [REDACTED]: We talked about, what is it, Ronco Rotisserie "set it and forget it" with that Johnston fire tube boiler, Isaac and I were joking about that. They're pretty good on the automation. Is that kind of the same sentiment with the winter furnace?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok great. How else do you heat the vessel?

Mr. Benvin: With steam.

CWO [REDACTED]: Feeding through the Johnston auxiliary boiler do you run around 35 lbs. on average?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: What are your heat lines, 15psi?

Mr. Benvin: No everything is system pressure.

CWO [REDACTED]: System pressure 35. Any issues on the automation there bud?

Mr. Benvin: Ah, no.

CWO [REDACTED]: What would you say if I told you the automation failed causing a fuel leak feeding the fire?

Mr. Benvin: That would be surprising.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok, why would that be surprising?

Mr. Benvin: Because that would have been my last guess.

CWO [REDACTED]: Any hot work going on in the engine room in the vicinity of the boiler or the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: The last work you did on the furnace, you told me before, could you relate that again?

Mr. Benvin: Me personally I hadn't done any work on the furnace.

CWO [REDACTED]: Anybody from the shipyard touch the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: From the shipyard I am not aware.

CWO [REDACTED]: Would you be aware?

Mr. Benvin: No. I wouldn't.

CWO [REDACTED]: Who would be aware?

Mr. Benvin: I can't tell you anything was done with the furnace. I mean I know there was a service call while I was on vacation. The Chief called me asking if there were spare parts. I don't know the extent of that.

CWO [REDACTED]: And the service call would have been Tweet Garot?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Can you get me their contact information moving forward?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Again I'm not saying that's the cause I'm just trying to rule things out. You said there were electric heaters elsewhere?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Where, and any concerns with those?

Mr. Benvin: They all run operationally through our operating season. So nothing out of the ordinary. There's electric heat in the galley. There is electric heat in the steering flat.

CWO [REDACTED]: What's the voltage on those?

Mr. Benvin: 480.

CWO [REDACTED]: 480. Do you have systemic type nuisance problems with those heaters?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: How about the furnace?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Has it ever gone down or had an issue with it?

Mr. Benvin: No. Not while I'm here.

CWO [REDACTED] If there is a part that you need for a piece of equipment and it's not vital to propulsion or cargo unloading and you ask the company "Hey I need this", are they going to get it to you?

Mr. Benvin: Absolutely.

CWO [REDACTED]: Are they going to fight you on it?

Mr. Benvin: No never.

CWO [REDACTED] Are they going to push back?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Is there a hostile working environment...

Mr. Benvin: Absolutely not.

CWO [REDACTED] ...between you and the company?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: What's the working environment on board?

Mr. Benvin: Very good.

CWO [REDACTED] That's outstanding! Do you like everybody, do you have some friends on board?

Mr. Benvin: We all get along, yeah.

CWO [REDACTED]: That's good. And you've been sailing on board this boat for how long?

Mr. Benvin: This would have been my 3<sup>rd</sup> season.

CWO [REDACTED] It's a nice boat I really like it. It's very different that the rest of the fleet isn't it?

Mr. Benvin: Yes it is.

CWO [REDACTED]: Where do you live full time?

Mr. Benvin: Traverse City, MI.

CWO [REDACTED]: One of the Traverse City boys?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah.

CWO [REDACTED] Ha, what's the other one in Michigan that people always joke about?

Mr. Benvin: Rogers City.

CWO [REDACTED]: Rogers City. What's the animosity there, what's the joke there?

Mr. Benvin: Ha ha.

CWO [REDACTED]: Is it just that those boys are different/special?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah that's all it is.

CWO [REDACTED]: Kind of like depending on which maritime academy you graduate from?

Mr. Benvin: Exactly.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did you graduate from an academy?

Mr. Benvin: Yes I did.

CWO [REDACTED]: Which one?

Mr. Benvin: Great Lakes.

CWO [REDACTED]: How was that?

Mr. Benvin: Alright.

CWO [REDACTED]: How long were you there for?

Mr. Benvin: A year and a half.

CWO [REDACTED]: Where did you do your sailing on?

Mr. Benvin: I cadet ship'd on the McCarthy, that was the first one. And then an MSC vessel Deep Sea and then I finished up on the Clark.

CWO [REDACTED]: Did you want to end up on the Great Lakes?

Mr. Benvin: No. Not at all.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ha, well what are you doing here then?

Mr. Benvin: Ah, I met a local girl and never left.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ah jeeze I made the same mistake! I married a Wisconsin girl and well here I am. How many kids do you have?

Mr. Benvin: Two

CWO [REDACTED]: How old are they?

Mr. Benvin: [REDACTED].

CWO [REDACTED]: [REDACTED]

Mr. Benvin: Boy.

CWO [REDACTED]: Just starting to roll over and stuff yeah?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah.

CWO [REDACTED]: Going back to the company is there anyone where you've had an altercation with regarding parts or getting things fixed, is there a culture where "just make it work for right now"?

Mr. Benvin: No. They fix it right. We have probably the best engineering team that we could ask for.

CWO [REDACTED]: Who's in the engineering team?

Mr. Benvin: Stemming from Willie Keys on down, everybody is tremendous as far as fixing these boats and making them work. There is no shortage of parts. There's no shortage of labor. I can't say a bad thing about the operation.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok well I haven't heard a bad thing. Dave Hunt is a pleasure to work with as well.

Mr. Benvin: Yes he is, he's a tremendous human.

CWO [REDACTED]: He's just coming back into this from ABS and he makes life easy. I hope that's the case for you guys as well. And I know Willie Keys has been around a long time and he knows what he's doing. And I'm glad to hear that you guys are getting the support from the engineering division to do what you've got to do. Anything occurring on board that shouldn't be occurring? While you were here this winter?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Any violations or regulatory type things that you can think of?

Mr. Benvin: Not off the top of my head no.

CWO [REDACTED]: Does anybody smoke inside the vessel?

Mr. Benvin: Inside the engine spaces but I mean as far as staterooms go, no. I know that Isaac doesn't. Or could assume that Isaac doesn't.

CWO [REDACTED]: Is there a smoking policy?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah designated area. The shipyard is no tobacco.

CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah but who cares about the shipyard. Does Isaac smoke in his room?

Mr. Benvin: No..... I don't spend 24 hours a day with him.

CWO [REDACTED]: Has the galley been operational?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: The ovens working?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Anything concerns with those?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: The ovens are electric?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: What do you guys use for cooking gas? I saw a propane storage location back aft.

Mr. Benvin: That's just for our propane grill outside.

CWO [REDACTED]: Have you guys been grilling?

Mr. Benvin: The last time would have been weeks.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok. Electrical problems, any known electrical issues on board? I'm seeing a lot of things that are concerning on board like dead ended wires in locations where they shouldn't be. That's an inspections issue. From the crew's stand point electrically speaking any red flags or anything that you're concerned with? Or some area that I should focus my investigation on?

Mr. Benvin: If I had any concern with it we would have tried to fix it. Not pleading ignorance to defend ourselves but if there had been a problem we would have dealt with it. We wouldn't have just left something that was hazardous in a bad location.

CWO [REDACTED]: What strikes me with you is that you're very proud of what you do. You have a lot of passion about this job. You want to do things right for the right reasons. I really appreciate how direct you are with the questions. We're flying through this, I ask question, I get an answer. Is there anything that we're not talking about that we should have a conversation about?

Mr. Benvin: No. I'm just scared that I did something that caused this.

CWO [REDACTED]: The Coast Guard Inspectors, we have this fear as well, what did we miss. It's a team effort, we all have responsibilities in maintaining these vessels safely. And we can't from a regulatory perspective see everything on board. And Christian it's important for you to remember as well, you can't maintain the entirety of the ship yourself.

Mr. Benvin: Yup.

CWO [REDACTED]: It's a team effort. That said is the team doing their job on board?



Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok. Anything else maintenance wise, or fire sources? I'm concerned with electrical systems specifically, and heating systems. Anything that you can think of?

Mr. Benvin: No. The only operational change that was made was the kicking on of one heater. The one in the conveyor shop. That's the only one that was turned on that was different than anything else.

CWO [REDACTED]: Are any of these heaters allowed to be on full time and be left unattended or anything like that?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah I mean that's how we run them. They're just on a local thermostat.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok. I'm trying not to make any assumptions.

Mr. Benvin: You're fine.

CWO [REDACTED]: Any electric space heaters, you know the kind that you knock over?

Mr. Benvin: The only ones that are on the boat are up forward.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok well we don't have any issues up there at this point in time. Anything illegal on board or anything that you can think of?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok. I think we've kind of covered the heaters. You see where I'm going with this?

Mr. Benvin: Yes.

CWO [REDACTED]: There are certain things that are more likely to cause a fire than anything else. With the absence of hot work and everything else, my concerns are smoking. My concerns are electrical. My concerns are heating. Take the time when we leave here today and think about things. If there is something that comes to mind let me know. I know it's hard to perceive me to be in a position trying to help with this situation. I really just want to get to the bottom of it. And I think we're moving on the right track with all the evidence and fact finding and things like that. I want to develop a time line of everything that happened and I feel I'm on pace to do that. Do you have any questions or concerns for me?

Mr. Benvin: No.

CWO [REDACTED]: Is there anything that I can say to you to help alleviate some of your concerns to help you sleep?

Mr. Benvin: Yeah you can tell me what happened! Ha ha ha. But I know you can't do that.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ah, I can't do that just yet. This stuff takes time and the second we are in a position to shed some light on what we believe occurred I'll make sure you're a party to that. Until then I ask that you just relax as much as humanly possible. Spend time talking with the family. Hit that reset button.

Don't dwell on it. There's nothing that you can do at this point in time that can fix anything. What's done is done. That said if there's anything that I can do in the interim please don't hesitate to call. I will be needing some reports from the company. If I need service reports for equipment, who...

Mr. Benvin: Dave Hunt.

CWO [REDACTED]: Ok. That's good to hear I really like Dave. Alright man that's all I got.

Mr. Benvin: Alright.

CWO [REDACTED]: You can ask me anything you want.

Mr. Benvin: I'm good.

CWO [REDACTED]: Alright.

Mr. Benvin was very cooperative just like he was during his first interview. The interview questioning was very fast paced and direct for the first few minutes. Mr. Benvin appeared comfortable with the pace of questions so we continued in that manner until about halfway through the interview where we slowed down to get into specifics where his answers were more than just yes or no. The interview lasted approximately 13 minutes. At the conclusion we departed the vessel.

2/16/2021

X [REDACTED]

CWO4 [REDACTED]

Investigator

Signed by: [REDACTED]