

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of: *

*

FLOODING/HULL FAILURE & SINKING *

OF THE CARGO VESSEL CARIB *

Accident No.: DCA22FM011

TRADER II NEAR SANTO DOMINGO CAY, *

THE BAHAMAS, ON MARCH 6, 2022 *

*

* * * * *

Interview of: WESLEY R. SAPUSEK Mate

Captain Beau

Thursday,
May 19, 2022

From: [Wesley Sapusek](#)
To: [Furukawa Robert](#)
Subject: Re: Mate, Capt. Beau - Additional Questions; Carib Trader II - Flooding/Hull Failure on 3/6/2022
Date: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 6:50:20 PM

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1. no speed decrease because of water we slowed because of the sea state.
- 2.the tow bridle was custom.
- 3.i don't know if the was a specific procedure but we did what was necessary.
- 4.i was not paying attention to drafts I was more worried surviving.
5. I only entered the after part of the ship. companion way to the engine room.
- 6.i was the only one on board dewatering.

Regards wes

Sent via the Samsung Galaxy S22+ 5G, an AT&T 5G smartphone
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From: Furukawa Robert <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 5:34:41 PM
To: Wesley Sapusek <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Mate, Capt. Beau - Additional Questions; Carib Trader II - Flooding/Hull Failure on 3/6/2022

Cheers Wes,

When you can, please provide answers to these questions:

- Before the tow line parted, was there a decrease in towing speed – caused by additional water/flooding weight?
- Was the towing bridle specially designed for ocean towing?
- Does *Capt. Beau* have any procedures during tow to see if tow is taking on water?
- When you went to board the tow and noticed the bow was higher – what were the *Carib*

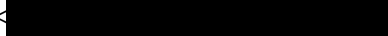

Trader II's forward & aft drafts?

- Did any other space flood other than the engineroom?
- Did any other crewmembers go with you on the dead-ship tow to control flooding?

Cheers,
Jon

Best regards,

R. Jon Furukawa  Safety Investigator  [NTSB Marine Accident Reports](#)   

From: Wesley Sapusek <
Sent: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 6:19 PM
To: Furukawa Robert <
Subject: Re: Mr. Wesley R. Sapusek, Mate, Capt. Beau – Interview Transcript, Transcript Errata, and Non-Disclosure Agreement



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ok thanks yes, I don't have any corrections or comments

Regards Wesley Sapusek

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From: Furukawa Robert <
Sent: Tuesday, January 3, 2023 4:46:35 PM
To: Wesley Sapusek <
Subject: RE: Mr. Wesley R. Sapusek, Mate, Capt. Beau – Interview Transcript, Transcript Errata, and Non-Disclosure Agreement

Wes,

I don't.

You can just respond to this email with corrections/comment OR state you have no corrections/comments & I'll use it for the Errata sheet.

APPEARANCES:

R. JON FURUKAWA, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO4 [REDACTED]
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

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I N T E R V I E W

(8:36 a.m. EDT)

1
2
3 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. And we're on. Let's see. So it's
4 Tuesday the 19th of May 2022. It is 0836. And we're here to
5 interview Captain Wesley R. Sapusek, the mate of the *Captain Beau*.

6 Let's see. Before we start, Wes, do you acknowledge that
7 this interview is being recorded?

8 MR. SAPUSEK: Yes.

9 MR. FURUKAWA: And do you acknowledge that we went over the
10 NTSB mandatory briefing items?

11 MR. SAPUSEK: Yes.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. Before we start, we'll go around and
13 state our names and organizations. This is John Furukawa with the
14 NTSB.

15 MR. SAPUSEK: I'm -- oh, sorry. Go ahead.

16 CWO4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the U.S. Coast Guard, Sector
17 Miami.

18 MR. SAPUSEK: I'm Wesley Sapusek. I'm with P&L Towing. I
19 was the mate on the *Captain Beau*.

INTERVIEW OF WESLEY R. SAPUSEK

20
21 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

22 Q. Okay. So, Wes, before we start -- or let's see -- or for the
23 beginning, can we get some background information from you? How
24 old are you?

25 A. Thirty-seven.

1 Q. Okay. And your license?

2 A. I have a 200 master (indiscernible) tow oceans and GMDSS
3 ARPA. Obviously, that's TCW and you know all the stuff that comes
4 with it -- *Carib Trader II*

5 Q. Okay. Let's see. How long have you been working for P&L
6 Towing?

7 A. P&L I think it was September or October of last year is when
8 I joined.

9 Q. Okay. How many years of towing experience do you have?

10 A. I've been working on towing vessels since I was 21, but I've
11 been in the last seven years I've been in the wheelhouse. So,
12 yeah, 16 years, or so, working on towing vessels.

13 Q. Okay. Seven years in the wheelhouse?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay. So next question was how much time do you have in the
16 maritime industry? I guess that's 16 years?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Since I've been holding a license.

20 Q. So you've been holding a license since you were 21?

21 A. Well, I had my -- let's see -- I think I got my -- I
22 originally took my 100-ton right out of high school at 19, but I
23 didn't know how to use it or anything, so it was -- I ended up
24 going, you know, coming up the (indiscernible) pipe. I got my AB
25 and stuff, and then I went back and took it. I think I was 22 or

1 -3 when I actually got my 100-ton.

2 Q. Okay. So let's see. So you know, [REDACTED] and were doing the --
3 you know, gathering the facts of the investigation, and all that,
4 and we weren't there. You were. So, you know, it's our jobs to
5 listen to you and your job to just go ahead and, you know, tell us
6 about, I guess, the -- let's start from where you I guess were on
7 board the *Carib Trader II*, you know, peer side --

8 A. Well, we went in and rigged it, Jeff and the two deckhands
9 that were there, Justin and Malvin, and went and got -- we had
10 Spectra bridles -- I don't know the specs on them, but we had
11 Spectra bridles, and we used -- I don't know -- it was 1 1/2-inch
12 wire or something, and used those coming off the bitts forward.

13 And then we went to chain. Jeff suggested using chain to go
14 over the side for chafing gear, where it came through the bow of
15 the tug. And then we went to Spectra bridles over the side so
16 that we could reach him and had those all set up like that, and it
17 was all secure. And we were up there. And you know, I even
18 looked over the chains that were holding up the anchor, and there
19 were straps on it, as well, and I, you know, I didn't think twice
20 that it would give way or anything. So we thought it was --
21 looked all good.

22 And I very briefly walked down in the engine room to look to
23 make sure the wheels were chained or somehow secured so that they
24 wouldn't spin as we were towing it. And you know, obviously,
25 there was no lighting in there or anything. I was walking around

1 with my phone light. And then I'm trying to remember his name off
2 the top of my head -- the guy that does the, you know, that --

3 Q. Manuel, Manuel (ph.)?

4 A. Munir, yeah, yeah. He told us that they had secured it, so
5 we took his word for it that the shafts were made secure. And
6 then we rigged in the lights, and the next step was towing it
7 offshore.

8 Q. Okay. You rigged some lights on it?

9 A. (Indiscernible) running lights.

10 Q. Okay. Running lights. Okay. Then go on.

11 A. And we had -- I'm forgetting all these guys' names, but that
12 company, whoever towed it through the canal and the turning basin,
13 then we made tow up there. I was actually on the ship and one of
14 the assist boats picked me up, put me on the ship, and then I
15 climbed up there, and I threw the lines over and made sure that it
16 was all, you know, squared away for when we towed it offshore, and
17 I rode it out to the -- not quite the -- the jetties, or whatever.

18 And everything seemed to be, you know, towing pretty good,
19 maybe more so on one leg than the other, but didn't seem like an
20 issue to me. We thought it could be possibly current, or
21 whatever, is what was setting it over and just pulling on one leg,
22 or whatever. But then we towed offshore.

23 And I don't know the exact dates of the -- you know, we -- I
24 think once or twice we slowed down and, you know, let the ship
25 come to us when we were offshore, and looked at it, and everything

1 seemed to be normal. And got -- I forget the exact day, but
2 the -- we -- I woke up in the morning, got on watch. It was about
3 12:30 or so. I know I heard a bang, and the speed increased, so I
4 realized that we had probably parted the tow.

5 And I went down, woke up Jeff, and we retrieved our wire and
6 got, got back -- it was -- let's see -- it was the -- it was our
7 shock cord, our shock donut, the wire to the shock donut, and then
8 it was a piece of one part of the Spectra with -- that was -- I
9 forget the length of it -- 80 or something-foot long, with half of
10 the chain on it, and then the other eye was broken. And we
11 retrieved all of that stuff. And obviously, you can imagine, it
12 was pretty rough, somewhere around 8 foot. We were all soaking
13 wet by the time we got back inside.

14 Went back, looked at the ship, and realized that there was
15 one part of the Spectra bridle hanging over the side, and the
16 anchor was down in the water. So I'm not sure how it happened,
17 but somehow the anchor, because of the heavy seas, or whatever,
18 the -- whatever was secured up there, the chains and the straps
19 parted, and that fell in the water. And I don't know if it added
20 extra strain or if it was taking on water, or all of them
21 combined, ended up breaking the tow.

22 And we went around and looked at it real good, and we didn't
23 obviously want it to wash up on a beach somewhere, so we came up
24 with a plan. Jeff, Malvin, and Jordan were all out there, and
25 Justin was sleeping. And Malvin and I went back there, and Jeff

1 backed underneath the ship. I grabbed the leg of the bridle that
2 was still hanging down with the Spectra line. I tied a bowline in
3 it, and we made it back up and just started towing it real slow in
4 the morning -- well, until the morning. I went and laid down and
5 got a couple hours of sleep. I forget the timeline exactly.

6 It was -- I don't know -- early, early morning, 3, 4,
7 something like that. I think 7:00 I got up, or something like
8 that, and Jeff asked -- said he wanted to go inspect the ship to
9 see what was going on, but by this time, he had, you know,
10 obviously been paying, you know, close attention to it because we
11 were just clutch, and I believe shorter than what we originally
12 were.

13 And you know, by then, we were all looking at it, and it
14 looked like it was -- well, I guess that night we had realized
15 that the bow was up quite a bit higher, and we were like, man,
16 there's something going on. So Jeff asked me to go on the ship
17 and look at it and see what was going on. So I grabbed my safety
18 gear and a flashlight, and Jeff nosed up to her. It was rough as
19 crap. Originally, Justin was supposed to get on there with me,
20 but there wasn't really time for him to do it.

21 And we nosed up to it. I jumped on it, went down, you know,
22 obviously was nervous, you know, because I didn't want to get
23 stuck in the thing not knowing what was going on, and it was
24 really rough. And I tied doors open. And I took the engine room
25 door -- it wasn't like a watertight door. It was just like a

1 regular door. And I ended up unscrewing it and taking it off the
2 hinges because I didn't want to get stuck inside there. And there
3 was three or four doors that I had to go through to get in there,
4 so I had them all tied open, and stuff, so I didn't, you know, get
5 stuck.

6 And I walked down in the engine room, and I got down to
7 the -- I guess -- yeah, you walked in the door, and then, you
8 know, you're on that -- the main deck. And then walked down a
9 flight of steps, and then made a U-turn, did a 180, and then
10 you're in the engine room. Had to go through a couple doors down
11 there, but they were open and secured open.

12 And immediately, there was, you know, water all -- when I
13 went down the stairs, there was water on that deck, and came into
14 the engine room, like, where the viewing deck would be, or
15 whatever, in there, to look down into the engine room, and you
16 couldn't see the engine. It was covered in water. And I
17 immediately, you know, gauged where the water was on some pipes on
18 the wall forward, and walked outside, told -- obviously, you know,
19 it's pitch black in there. There was a wave inside the engine
20 room. It was just ridiculous.

21 Walked back outside, told Jeff what was going on, and he
22 asked if, you know, there was a pump, or anything. So I walked
23 around, found a pump, and the hose, and everything, was right
24 there in what would be the galley, or something. And I drug it
25 all down there, and set it up, and started pumping it and would

1 check it every 15 minutes or so, and getting an eye on, you know,
2 if the water was, you know, keeping up, or whatever. And for a
3 while, it looked like it might.

4 And after I don't know several hours, I believe, it was --
5 obviously, when I was down in there, too, I was holding my breath,
6 and stuff. I was worried about getting asphyxiated inside there,
7 have run a gas engine in the -- you know, inside the closed space.
8 And you know, after a while, I was watching it, and those pipes I
9 had gauged it off of, the water was over it. And so I knew that
10 there was no way we were keeping up with it.

11 So I walked outside, called Jeff, and told him what was going
12 on, and he came, picked me up, and it wasn't -- I don't know, we
13 got back in front of it, and it was just like, man, we need to get
14 rid of this thing, so we just cut the wire and let it go, and it
15 wasn't very long after that that it actually sank. And that's
16 when we were calling, telling everybody, you know, the Coast Guard
17 and the office, and all that, that it was going down.

18 And that was pretty much it really. I mean it went down
19 pretty fast after I got off of it, within, you know I'd say an
20 hour and a half, or something like that. That was new to me.
21 I've never had anything sink on me. It was kind of traumatic,
22 honestly.

23 Q. Yeah. Okay. Let's see. So you said it was kind of rough.
24 Your experience getting on board the *Carib Trader II*, it was kind
25 of rough?

1 A. Yeah, it was pretty rough, yeah. I had to make the leap of
2 faith, you know, and just jumped on the -- I was standing on the
3 bow of the tug. Jeff nosed up to it, and I mean, it's --
4 obviously, the ship and the tug were going like this, and I just
5 waited, timed it, and jumped on.

6 Q. Okay. What do you think the seas were, the height of the
7 seas?

8 A. I would say somewhere in the 8-foot range.

9 Q. Okay. And the winds?

10 A. I couldn't remember. It would be, you know, whatever we had
11 in the logbook. It was blowing pretty good. I'd say somewhere
12 around 20 maybe, maybe a little more. I don't know. And it's
13 funny when you get in a situation like that time, like, kind of
14 goes really fast or, you know, seems slow. My adrenaline was
15 jacked for sure.

16 And I've had to -- we've parted tow wires, and stuff, before
17 and had to jump onto tugs. I actually, Jeff was the first captain
18 that I ever worked for as a deckhand in my early 20s. So Jeff and
19 I, you know, have been through a bunch of stuff, so I trusted him.
20 Honestly, I don't know if I would have got on that thing at all if
21 Jeff wasn't at the wheel. I knew he'd come back and get me for
22 sure, he was capable of it, you know?

23 Q. So you've known Jeff for quite a while, then?

24 A. Yeah. Yeah, we were working for Moby Marine (ph.) out of
25 Fort Pierce when I met him.

1 Q. Okay. Let's see. So you said when you go down to the engine
2 room, there was water on the deck --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- I guess before you got into the engine room?

5 A. Well, there was water on the -- obviously, you know, the
6 stern down, and I don't know what deck you would call that. It
7 was you went down the first flight of steps and then there was --
8 I don't know -- like, when you went down the steps and kind of to
9 the left, there was a generator room, where there is some
10 equipment back in there, and then those were watertight doors, but
11 they were open, if I remember right. And then there was like a
12 storage room on the starboard side. And then you would make a
13 180-degree turn off the stairs, and you'd walk into the engine
14 room.

15 And there was, like, I don't know what you'd call it, you
16 know, it was, you know, a step over -- a watertight door would be
17 in there, and then there was like a step over?

18 Q. Coaming?

19 A. That, yeah. And so that was -- all had water in it, and then
20 I stepped into the engine room, and that was dry on the
21 observation deck, but then, you know, towards the end, it was
22 starting to slop over when it was going down. That's when I got
23 out of there.

24 Q. Okay. So when you went to the door to the engine room,
25 there's another ladder that went down to the engine room?

1 A. No. It was just -- that was the same level. Once you went
2 down the steps, that was the same level that the observation deck
3 was on.

4 Q. Okay. It was just that watertight door between that and the
5 engine room?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And you said the main engines were covered by water?

8 A. Well, yeah, if I remember, I believe it was just one, but I
9 was down there for a very short period of time. So I believe
10 there was one, but yeah, you couldn't see the engines or the
11 engine, whatever was down there, at all by that time. I mean,
12 there was literally -- from the deck that I was standing on, there
13 was maybe, maybe a foot and a half of -- from the water, where it
14 was, to the deck I was standing on. And yeah, it was, it was
15 super full.

16 Q. Okay. But in the engine room itself, was it half full,
17 three-quarters full of water?

18 A. I would say -- well, it's hard to -- you know, when I went
19 down there originally -- I don't know how tall is one of those
20 EMBS, I mean, 6, 6 foot tall, or something. So, I mean, maybe a
21 little taller. I don't know. But yeah, they were covered, so I
22 would say over half for sure.

23 Q. You think over half the engine room was full of water?

24 A. Yeah, I would say so.

25 Q. Okay. And could you estimate feet for that?

1 A. It'd be kind of hard to judge. I mean, if you guessed, if
2 you guessed how tall one of those EMBs are, which I believe was in
3 it, I don't know, I guess probably 8 foot from the deck.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And obviously, then, you know, there was a bilge underneath
6 that, so it's, you know, just depending on -- I wasn't familiar
7 with the vessel at all, so it's just a guess.

8 Q. Okay. Let's see. And you said you saw a wave in the engine
9 room?

10 A. Yeah, it was sloshing back and forth.

11 Q. And you said that you marked the spot on a pipe as a
12 reference point?

13 A. It's just as a visual reference when I walked down in there
14 just so I could, you know, gauge whether it was -- you know, I was
15 gaining or losing.

16 Q. Okay. And okay, so you started pumping the water out. And
17 when you decided that, you know, you weren't gaining anything with
18 the water, how much more water do you think came into -- in the
19 engine room?

20 A. I mean, I'd literally run down there, check on it, and hold
21 my breath, too, so I don't know, I would say, I don't know,
22 probably a couple feet, a foot and a half, maybe two. And I just,
23 you know, common sense will tell you, you know, if I'm not -- if
24 it's not going below the pipe I was looking at, you know, I'm
25 losing, so -- and then it was, you know, futile what I was doing,

1 and there was no point in me being on there any longer.

2 Q. Okay. And from that two more feet, how much -- what was the
3 distance from, you know, where the water was to the overhead of
4 the engine room, do you think?

5 A. I don't know. Probably 10 feet maybe.

6 Q. Okay. So you estimated when you first got there, the engine
7 room was maybe about half full of water?

8 A. Well, half or, you know, or three-quarters from what I would
9 guess where the deck was to where the -- I don't know -- I always
10 call it, like, an observation deck over the motor that you could
11 like walk around the engine room and see everything from above.
12 It was, you know, a foot below that, so if you called that
13 halfway, you know, so it was, yeah, somewhere, you know, yeah,
14 half-ish full.

15 Q. Okay. And the 10 feet was -- or a foot and a half, 2 feet
16 more later on, so it was --

17 A. It was, and it started to come up on that deck that I was
18 standing on and where the pump was.

19 Q. So it was going up the hatch, that hatch coaming on the deck
20 to the --

21 A. Yeah. It started to get onto that deck that I was standing
22 on. It was already, like I said, you know, in the engine -- or I
23 guess the generator room, or whatever, and you know, you could
24 imagine the whole thing is like this, too, so it's -- you know, it
25 was not a straight line in there by any means. It was, you know,

1 the stern had more towards -- more water that way.

2 And I was -- the piece of -- the pipe that I was looking at
3 was forward on the engine room. So I was kind of gauging it of
4 that. And then I realized that it was slopping up on the deck
5 that I was in, and that was another reason why I realized that it
6 was taking on more than we were pumping out.

7 Q. Okay. So when you're looking at the engine room, were you
8 looking at the engine room from forward to aft, aft to forward
9 or --

10 A. It would have been from the -- I walked through that door,
11 and I was on the aft side of it gauging the water on the forward
12 part of the engine room.

13 Q. Okay. And that deck right outside of the engine room, you
14 said it was about -- if you could go in the engine room, it would
15 be a couple feet down?

16 A. The water level?

17 Q. Or the deck. It wasn't straight flush? Was that separated
18 by that coaming?

19 A. Oh, yeah, it would have, it would have been, you know, when
20 it was, you know, when I was literally (indiscernible) right. It
21 would have been the same -- you know, it was just a straight walk
22 over into the engine room.

23 Q. Okay. But at some point, you have to walk down, because you
24 said that the engines were about maybe 8 feet?

25 A. Well, I'm totally guessing, because I wasn't familiar with

1 the vessel whatsoever. But I walked down the stairs, made a 180,
2 walked through where a watertight door would be that was secured
3 open, and I -- all that stuff was like that. And then I was in
4 the engine room, and obviously, I didn't want to go in there any
5 further than I had to, so that's where I set the pump up. And
6 there was just enough pump and hose to -- from the suction to the
7 pump to get it outside the doors. There was just enough to do it,
8 so that would have been the only place I could have pumped it
9 anyways.

10 Q. Okay. So that pump was from that area just outside the
11 engine room. About how many feet of hose was it from the pump
12 down to the water?

13 A. I want to say it was probably -- oh, it was -- the whole --
14 pretty much the whole hose -- I don't know. I would say it's -- I
15 don't know what a standard pick-up hose is for a trash pump, 20
16 foot, but I -- pretty much the whole, the whole pick-up was in the
17 water besides, you know, the 3 feet from the pump down to the
18 water line, maybe less. And then by the time it all ended, you
19 know, there was 2 foot.

20 And I don't know how long the hose was that I was using that
21 was there to pump it out. I guess it was, I don't know, probably
22 30 foot maybe, or something, and it was just barely long enough to
23 make it from the engine room. And I had to go straight shot from
24 the engine room and, like, just out that door and then up the
25 stairs, and then, you know, kind of weave out to where it was on

1 deck, and I just tied it off on deck so that it wouldn't shoot
2 back inside.

3 There was just enough to make it. It was lucky we even were
4 able to try that and that it was sitting there. I don't know if
5 that was part of the tow plan, or whatever, but it was all just
6 sitting right there.

7 Q. Okay. So was the pump working as -- okay?

8 A. Yeah, I mean, it took me longer to set it up than it did to
9 get it running. It was new.

10 Q. Okay. It was a new pump?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Did you have any problems setting it up?

13 A. Just besides, you know, rocking back and forth and dragging
14 it down the stairs, and stuff.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. That was the toughest part. Figuring out how to ventilate it
17 to where it, you know, would not get pinched. And I was going
18 back and forth making sure it was not getting pinched anywhere the
19 best that it -- you know, I could to where it would pump the most.

20 Q. Okay. So where was the pump stowed, I guess? Where did you
21 find it?

22 A. It was, like, in what would be like a galley area when you
23 walked in the door. You walked from the -- I came in on the
24 starboard side, walked through one door, and there was, like, a
25 storage thing to the left, and then I made a right, and then there

1 was, like, you know, an eating area, or whatever, and then I went
2 left, and right there, left, was the engine room door. So it was
3 not -- it was just outside of the flight of stairs that went down
4 towards the engine room.

5 Q. Okay. So it was easy to find?

6 A. Yeah, it was right there, yup.

7 Q. Okay. And you said -- let's see -- so when you went in the
8 engine room or when you went down to the engine room, there was a
9 generator room with a watertight door, but the door was open?

10 A. Yeah, it was -- all of the doors were open except for the --
11 let's see -- the -- well, actually, I don't -- that's -- no, I
12 believe when the main door going in there was closed, and I, you
13 know, undid the latches, opened that up, tied it, and then it had
14 smaller doors that were, like, wooden, just, you know, house
15 doors. And those were the ones I tied open.

16 But then I went down the stairs, and everything -- to be
17 honest with you, it happened so fast, yeah, I wasn't really paying
18 attention to that, but everything from there on that was just the
19 main watertight door is what I opened, and everything else was
20 fairly easy to get into. It was just little doors.

21 Even the engine room door itself was just a regular door, and
22 that one is the one I ended up taking off the hinges, because it
23 was impeding the flow of the water, because it was, like, pinching
24 it, or whatever. So I took that one off just to get it to pump
25 better, because it was -- and I was worried about getting stuck in

1 there, and there wasn't a good way to tie it open.

2 Q. Okay. But the door to go from the weather deck into the
3 house, was that a watertight door or was that like --

4 A. So I'm pretty sure it was a watertight door. I opened that
5 one up.

6 Q. Okay. Where was this wooden door that you ended up taking
7 off the hinges?

8 A. Well, there was -- I think there was three -- there was --
9 all right. So I went, opened the watertight door, there was a
10 door behind it that was just a wooden door, and then I went to --
11 there was a door that kept slamming back and -- all of these doors
12 were slamming back and forth. But there was, like, a storage door
13 to the left, that that was swinging around. So I ended up tying
14 that one to the engine room door, which was -- and that just
15 wasn't working out at all, so I ended up just taking it off
16 because it was pinching the hose anyways.

17 So the one I took off the hinges was the one that I went from
18 the main deck down the flight of stairs. It was right in front of
19 the flight of stairs. And it was just a wooden door. It wasn't a
20 watertight anything. It was just a cheap just little light wooden
21 door. And I had my -- I had a Leatherman with me, so I was able
22 to unscrew the little hinge thing on top of it, and then I just
23 picked it up off the pins and (indiscernible).

24 Q. Okay. So the main deck, going from the weather to the house,
25 was a watertight door. And you go down to the next deck down,

1 let's say second deck, and you said that's where there's a wooden
2 door, the one that you took off the hinge?

3 A. No. The one that I took off the hinges was on the main deck
4 when I walked in there, and that was just the entrance door to the
5 stairway that led you to the engine room. It was at the top of
6 the stairs just outside of where the galley was, or whatever.

7 Q. Okay. So that was a wooden door. And then you went down a
8 ladder to the next deck, which would be the second deck --

9 A. It was a stairway, but yeah.

10 Q. Okay. And there you're still above the engine room or that's
11 where you --

12 A. Yeah, that's the -- where that -- where the machinery room
13 was --

14 Q. Generator room --

15 A. -- and then I turn around, and there was another door that I
16 had to walk through, a passageway, where there was -- that was
17 where the observation deck was where you're above the engine and
18 where the water was below that.

19 Q. Okay. And so that generator room, that had a watertight
20 door. But the next door where you went to see the engine room,
21 was that a wooden door or was that a watertight door?

22 A. It was open, and I wasn't really paying attention to it, but
23 I assume it was a watertight door, because it had, you know, it
24 had that, you know, the little stepover thing that it would seal
25 to, whatever -- I don't know -- I forget the terminology for those

1 at the moment, but --

2 Q. The coaming, yes.

3 A. Yeah, the coaming, yeah.

4 Q. Okay. So once the water got outside of the engine room, it
5 could get to the main deck because there's no watertight door
6 from -- that's separating outside the engine room to the main deck
7 area in the house except for the watertight door -- or the wooden
8 door?

9 A. I guess so, but there was -- you know, I wasn't -- there was
10 no way I was going to try to -- well, obviously, I had the pump, I
11 had the pump going out, too, so I wanted to let it run, but I --
12 yeah, I didn't even think about any of that stuff. It was
13 literally -- when I went down in there and it was -- you know, I
14 was just like, man, this might not work, and it ended up, but it
15 was like -- and I wasn't really paying attention to doors or
16 nothing. I'm literally holding my breath the whole time doing it,
17 so --

18 Q. Right, because it's a gasoline pump?

19 A. Yeah, yeah, I wasn't trying to get asphyxiated, so, you know,
20 the details like that, I mean, there was, there was -- I imagine
21 there was a door there, but without, you know, I'm just guessing.
22 I wasn't familiar with the vessel at all. So I was running in
23 there to try to do whatever I could to, you know, protect the --
24 trying to salvage what we had going on, and you know, obviously,
25 you know, the crew is the most important, and then the

1 environment, and then the vessel itself. And by then, I was
2 checking them all off, and it was more kind of keep myself safe
3 than anything.

4 Q. Right. Okay. I think that's it for me for now.

5 MR. FURUKAWA: [REDACTED]

6 BY CWO4 [REDACTED]

7 Q. Good morning. Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the
8 Coast Guard, Sector Miami. How you doing, Wes? Everything okay?

9 A. Yeah, everything is --

10 Q. Need a break?

11 A. Yeah, as good as it can be.

12 Q. Okay. Yeah, right? So I'll just put a small disclaimer out
13 there. As I've told the other crewmembers in all of my
14 investigations, this is not an interrogation. This is just fact-
15 finding, discussion. Some of the questions will be direct. Some
16 will be -- I will ask for your opinion, and I encourage that
17 opinion, because you are here as the experienced mariner. We take
18 that feedback, and it helps us come up with some kind of
19 hypothesis or conclusions as to why this may or may have happened
20 and how it can be prevented. So feel free to speak. It's all --
21 it's not an interrogation is my main point.

22 So I'll start with how many dead ship tows have you done,
23 say, in the past two years or year?

24 A. I haven't done many lately. I used to work for Smith
25 Maritime, and we used to tow them quite frequently. But in total,

1 I've done, I don't know, probably I'd say six dead ship tows
2 altogether in my career.

3 Q. Okay. And so you said you were on the *Carib Trader II* during
4 preparations. When was that? How many days prior?

5 A. Four maybe before it actually sank. It was -- the first day
6 we went and looked at it and figured out what we needed to put it
7 together, and then we got the stuff, and that was the next day,
8 put it on there and secured it off.

9 Q. So during those preps, what did you do exactly? What is your
10 role in that preparation?

11 A. I was -- we actually went to a yard, and I don't know the
12 name of the yard, but we went, and that's where we got the chain
13 and the wire and stuff from and came up with the idea. We were
14 trying to figure out -- you know, I was just working with Jeff and
15 talking with him about what was at the yard and what we can use
16 and came up with the plan of wire to chain to Spectra, because
17 Jeff has lots of experience with that stuff, and he was just, you
18 know, talking me through it.

19 I had never used Spectra before, but those things are
20 supposed to be, you know, just as good as wire. And the dead ship
21 tows that I did before were actually -- we used the anchor chains
22 itself to tow off of.

23 Q. So did you feel comfortable with that arrangement? I know
24 you didn't have much experience with it, but did you feel
25 comfortable with the way that was being arranged?

1 A. I mean, you know, I trust Jeff with my life, and you know, if
2 he was comfortable with it, I was, and it all, it all was as --
3 you know, looked like overkill, honestly, for what we needed to
4 do.

5 Q. So I'm just going to hold up a quick drawing of the -- that
6 was provided by, I believe, the owner of the *Carib Trader II*. So
7 if you can just tell me if you've seen this before? Was this ever
8 brought to your attention or was Jeff using this guide? Tell me
9 if you can't see it.

10 MR. FURUKAWA: Move back.

11 MR. SAPUSEK: Pull it back.

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Back and higher.

13 MR. SAPUSEK: Higher, yeah.

14 MR. FURUKAWA: There you go.

15 MR. SAPUSEK: I don't think -- I don't know who drew that,
16 but it was similar to, you know, what we were doing.

17 BY CWO4 [REDACTED]

18 Q. So you never saw this, correct?

19 A. No. We had another one drawn up, I believe. I don't know if
20 I drew it up or where it ended up, or -- but I don't think that
21 was the one that I had seen. I'm not sure where that came from.

22 Q. You're not where the one that I have come from or the one
23 that you used came from?

24 A. The one that you have, I don't know if that's the same one.
25 I mean, it looks similar, but --

1 Q. Okay. And so who would have provided that drawing, the one
2 you're speaking of or who may have done that?

3 A. I think it was -- you know, I actually probably originally
4 drew it, but we were all sitting there around the galley table
5 just talking about, you know, how we were going to do it.

6 Q. The next thing I'm going to hold up is the Sector Miami Dead
7 Ship Tow Plan, and just tell me if you've ever seen this before or
8 if anybody was using this while you were prepping?

9 A. I don't remember ever seeing it.

10 Q. Okay. Do you remember using -- I'll just show you one more
11 thing just for the record. This is from the Flag State St.
12 Vincent and Grenadine Survey from their third-party surveyor, and
13 he's just a master for the Flag State. And this is a towing
14 assessment survey from the Flag State.

15 A. No. I didn't see that. Unless I did and I didn't really pay
16 attention. But I was literally, you know, just doing what Jeff
17 asked me to do. I was going around getting parts and then setting
18 it up, and then I was, you know, brought it over there to the
19 yard, whatever. There was some of it that was brought to us, and
20 I think I had the Spectra bridles, and I brought them over there,
21 and then we just got all the parts and put it together.

22 Q. That's fine. Did you see anybody using a checklist or
23 anything like that or going over any type of --

24 A. I mean, Jeff could have been. He had his phone. I'm not
25 sure what he was using. I'm sure -- I assume he was.

1 Q. Were you aware of any type of restrictions for, like, for
2 this dead ship tow plan as far as pretty much weather, wind, seas
3 stuff like that --

4 A. No.

5 Q. Or aware of any of the maximum, you know --

6 A. I vaguely remember them talking -- or that it was mentioned
7 through phone calls, or something, with Jeff or just overhearing
8 them, but I didn't know the restrictions or anything myself, no.

9 Q. Okay. You said you did a brief walkthrough of the engine
10 room during the preparations? What did you think of the engine
11 room when you went down there besides that it was dark?

12 A. Yeah, it was very dimly lit, and I just -- I looked with my
13 small flashlight on my phone that I had and was just looking in
14 the bilge, looking for -- to see if there was chained or how the
15 shaft was secured, and you know, I didn't see anything, but then I
16 came out, and -- Jeff had been on the phone with Munir, and they
17 said that they had secured it, so I took their word for it.

18 Q. So you obviously had no problem accessing the engine room?

19 A. As far as doors or --

20 Q. Yeah, doors. Was there any restrictions of getting in the
21 engine room?

22 A. Besides there was, like, a security guy on the thing, or
23 something, I was -- you know, we had to get permission to get on
24 the boat, but then once we were on it, you know, I could walk down
25 in there and, you know, there wasn't anybody stopping me or -- you

1 know, I just opened the doors and walked in.

2 Q. And so did you walk in -- did you go anywhere else on the
3 vessel besides I assume you went onto the bow for the towing
4 agreement?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Did you walk anywhere else?

7 A. I walked on the bow down the starboard side, on the stern to
8 put up a light, and then just down in the engine room.

9 Q. And you mentioned that there was a generator room. Is that
10 attached adjacent to the engine room or aft of the engine room?

11 A. Aft of the engine room.

12 Q. Did you pop your head in there at all?

13 A. The only time I did was when I was pumping it out I went and
14 looked in there to, you know, just see how -- where the water was,
15 and stuff, and (indiscernible) water in it, too. And then,
16 obviously, I didn't want to go any further than I had to in the
17 stupid thing.

18 Q. So but the overall condition of the *Carib Trader II*, what
19 would you say? Fair?

20 A. Yeah, it was just -- it's, you know, like an older ship, and
21 you know, I don't know if you've ever seen the Smith Maritime
22 boats, and stuff. You know, they're not -- they're, you know,
23 they're not the prettiest things in the world, but they're, you
24 know, made well, and you know, so it's hard to guess, you know?
25 I'm not a specialist on, you know, you know, what the hull is, how

1 sound it is, or anything like that, but I mean, I walked around
2 it, and it was -- you know, it didn't look horrible to me. I
3 mean, but you know, we're just -- didn't look unsafe, by any
4 means.

5 Q. Okay. So you just pretty much checked the shafts to make
6 sure they were locked and just looked in the bilge maybe, and then
7 left the engine room. So how much time would you say you spent
8 down there prior to?

9 A. Two minutes.

10 Q. Okay. So then let's fast-forward to you're underway with
11 tow. You're standing the double mid watches, correct?

12 A. Yeah, from midnight to 6 in the morning, and then from noon
13 to 6 at night.

14 Q. Okay. So you came on watch at midnight on the 6th of March,
15 or that's the date of the incident. So you usually come on a
16 midnight or you come on at, like, 11:30?

17 A. I get -- I set my alarm for 11:30 and wake up, use the head,
18 and grab something to eat, or something, and then I brush my teeth
19 and head up there. Somewhere, you know, 15 minutes before watch
20 starts, go up there, do the turnover, talk about how things are
21 going, and --

22 Q. What was that conversation like as far as pertaining to a tow
23 and anything else important you think during that conversation?
24 What do you guys usually talk about?

25 A. Just, hey, how is it going, how's everything, everything

1 going fine, and nothing out of the usual, you know? It was, you
2 know, it's still back there. We're towing it. You know, we're --
3 it's kind of rough out, and we're -- maybe just talked about the
4 speed and how much speed we were making. I don't remember the
5 RPMs at the time, but that'd be in the logbook. I don't remember.
6 We weren't towing it as hard as we could because of the sea state.
7 I do remember that.

8 Q. What would you say the sea state was when you came on watch?

9 A. It was pretty rough, somewhere about 8 foot, maybe a little
10 less.

11 Q. And the winds?

12 A. It would be in the logbook, too, but somewhere around 20
13 something.

14 Q. Is there a wind speed indicator on the bridge?

15 A. There is.

16 Q. Do you recall if it's operational or --

17 A. It's --

18 Q. -- correct or --

19 A. Yeah, it was fairly close, we thought so, from what the --
20 the weather that we had and what the indicator said.

21 Q. So 20 to 25?

22 A. Yeah, something like that. Yeah, it was blowing -- usually a
23 good rule on a tugboat is if you can hear it whistling, that's
24 about 20, so --

25 Q. All right. So you said prior to the incident, doing a dead

1 ship tow, that you slowed down once or twice to inspect the tow.

2 Is that normal to do that? Is that --

3 A. When you're doing weird stuff like that, I would -- it's
4 pretty normal to just get closer to it and put eyes on it and make
5 sure you don't see anything out of the ordinary.

6 Q. And was that a day before, two days before? Can you recall
7 when that last time you checked it?

8 A. Probably a day before.

9 Q. Day before?

10 A. Somewhere in the Old Bahama Channel. Hey, I'm going to walk
11 over here and get a coffee real quick.

12 Q. All right.

13 MR. FURUKAWA: Sure. I'll go on pause.

14 (Off the record.)

15 (On the record.)

16 MR. FURUKAWA: Okay. The time is 0929, continuing with the
17 interview with Wes.

18 Okay. Go ahead, [REDACTED]

19 BY CW04 [REDACTED]

20 Q. Good morning. Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] U.S. Coast
21 Guard. So you said at 12:30 you heard a bang?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And the vessel's speed increased, so you assume the tow
24 parted, which it did. And then you rigged -- you were able to
25 pick up the port -- I believe the port bridle because it was a

1 longer leg still left, correct?

2 A. I believe it was, yeah, I believe it was the port side that
3 was still there is what --

4 Q. Yeah, so you rigged that up -- either way, port or starboard,
5 you rigged up one of the legs, correct?

6 A. Yeah, I just tied a bowline in it, and then we tied it back
7 into our -- or shackled it back into our, our shock line.

8 Q. So if it was -- let's just say -- I believe it was the port
9 form the other interviews. But would the vessel be, if I was
10 coming at you, would the vessel be towed like that now, towards
11 more the side because you're pulling from the port side? Would it
12 be riding like that -- straight?

13 A. We were, like, clutched and just kind of basically keeping it
14 into the wind and the seas, and that's when I was -- actually had
15 gone to bed to get some rest. And Jeff stayed up. And we were --
16 I remember looking at the chart plotter when we woke up, and we
17 hadn't gone very far, so it was we were just basically keeping it
18 into the wind and seas. So it was, you know --

19 Q. So was the port almost like with a slightly port tilt to it,
20 or was it pretty much bowing --

21 A. As far as when we were towing it? Like --

22 Q. Correct. With the one leg.

23 A. I don't know. To be honest with you, I don't really --

24 Q. That's fine if you don't recall. That's fine.

25 A. I didn't notice anything different really. Maybe it was, but

1 a little bit, but it was -- we were going so slow, so it was just,
2 it was just basically keeping it into the waves and the wind. I
3 think we -- like one knot, or something like that.

4 Q. Okay. And so you went to the rack, and then you got up at
5 0700 because the master wanted you to inspect the *Carib Trader II*,
6 correct?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And the seas were still about 8 foot at that point?

9 A. Yeah, it was pretty rough, yeah.

10 Q. And so you got on board. You mentioned you had -- when you
11 saw the water, and everything, you had asked for the pump? You
12 mentioned you asked for the pump. Did the master ask for the
13 pump? Did you ask for the pump?

14 A. No, I think, I think --

15 Q. How did that --

16 A. I'm not sure if they had called somebody, or what, but Jeff
17 asked if there was a pump, and that's when I started looking
18 around, and it was right there inside that galley area.

19 Q. So did you see this pump on board on your preparation date?
20 Was there any mention of a pump, dewatering pump, the location of
21 it?

22 A. No. I just happened to see it when they asked me where it
23 was -- or if there was one is when I saw it.

24 Q. So there was no mention of a pump prior to -- hey, there's a
25 dewatering pump here if you need it, correct?

1 A. No. Not that I recall.

2 Q. And on your previous dead ship tows, would that be something
3 that would be on the dead ship tow, a dewatering pump? Is that a
4 common practice?

5 A. I don't specifically remember one, no. We would basically do
6 the same thing that we did on the *Carib Trader II*, was just make
7 sure the shafts were secure, because apparently, from what I have
8 been told, gathered from other people, you know, the wheels will
9 spin and, you know, can either -- you know, could possibly start
10 the engines or make more speed than what the tug is making, or
11 whatever, so --

12 Q. How long from the time you asked for the pump till you found
13 the pump? Approximately how long was that?

14 A. Probably five minutes. It wasn't very long. It was right
15 there.

16 Q. And then I know you said everything happened so fast on
17 there, but do you recall how long you were actually on the *Carib*
18 *Trader II*?

19 A. Actually, I actually asked because, you know, I didn't
20 have -- I didn't bring my phone or anything, because, you know, I
21 didn't know how this was going to go down. I didn't have a watch
22 on. But I asked, and they said something about two and a half,
23 three hours, I guess, is I was on there, if I recall.

24 Q. And I know you mentioned that you worked with Jeff before
25 and, you know, you're very familiar with him, you trust him. And

1 for this situation, prior to you going on board and you jumping
2 off at that time or prior to you jumping off to get on board, did
3 you agree with going on board, or were you just like, man, this is
4 not -- you know, is this a good idea? Did you second-guess going
5 on board? Did you think it was a good idea to get on board?

6 A. Not at all. Because Jeff, Jeff, what I remember Jeff saying
7 was, you know, if it's just -- it looks like it's taking on water,
8 so he said if it's in a compartment that's closed, then we can
9 probably save this or it won't be a big deal, because obviously,
10 the compartment would fill up, and it wouldn't get any worse than
11 that. Or if it's in the engine room, we got a real problem. So
12 that's why he really wanted to look to see if it was a compartment
13 taking on water or if it was the actual engine room.

14 Q. So it pretty much was the engine room, correct, when you got
15 on board?

16 A. It was.

17 Q. And so when you relayed that back to Jeff, to captain, I
18 guess during this whole time you were on there, was there good
19 communication between you two while you were on there?

20 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, I had a radio --

21 Q. So --

22 A. I was touching base with him every time I'd go down there and
23 let him know how it was progressing.

24 Q. And was he giving you instructions as far -- because you said
25 you were kind of doing -- not a lot of things, but you were

1 rigging up a pump, you know, making a mark on the pipe, and was he
2 giving you instructions to do all this or were you just kind of
3 doing what you know?

4 A. I was just doing what I know.

5 Q. Who decided that it was time to stop dewatering and get you
6 off?

7 A. I did. I was like this is not working. I was like, you
8 know, it's not keeping up whatsoever.

9 Q. While you were down --

10 A. And it started listing when I was on there, and that's when
11 it got a little bit sketchy, too, so I was like, you know --

12 Q. Which way was it listing?

13 A. I believe to the starboard.

14 Q. Did you notice any damage in the engine room? Could you tell
15 where the water was coming from?

16 A. No. The water was already so high in it that, I mean, it had
17 to have been coming from lower down in the engine room somewhere
18 that I couldn't -- it's not like you could see it flowing in
19 anywhere, or anything. It was just already so full, and it was
20 pretty violent inside there honestly already, so there was no way
21 you could, like, see where water was bubbling out, or anything.

22 Q. You said you obviously got off, and you had to let the tow
23 go. Whose decision was it to let the tow go?

24 A. Jeff's.

25 Q. And how was that done?

1 A. It was just we got out in front of it, and he was like, "We
2 need to get out from under this thing," is what he said and then
3 asked Jorden to cut it.

4 Q. And how do you cut the tow line?

5 A. With a torch.

6 Q. So this is where I'm going to ask kind of what your expertise
7 and your opinion, and it's okay to be opinionated. How do you
8 think that this could have been prevented?

9 A. I don't know if it could have been besides -- you know, it's
10 hard to speculate, because you don't know what actually caused it,
11 if it was hull weakness or if it was just too old, and you know,
12 the metal was bad. It's hard to say what actually caused it. I
13 mean, I would just totally be speculating.

14 It's, you know, I don't know if -- I wasn't the one to
15 inspect it. I was -- you know, it was -- you know, we showed up
16 to tow it, and there was -- from what we saw, it was sitting there
17 floating just fine, or you know, displacing just fine. And you
18 know, I wouldn't speculate, because I have no idea. Who knows if
19 an old pipe broke or the hull itself broke. I don't know.

20 I mean, we did everything that -- it should have worked.
21 Somewhere on that ship, it's -- something failed inside there to
22 be flooded with that much water in it.

23 Q. And during your walkthrough prior to, you didn't see any
24 influx of water or standing water in the bilge?

25 A. No, not any more that would be standard inside of a boat.

1 Q. Like a couple inches?

2 A. I'd be guessing, but yeah, just, you know -- if anything, it
3 was, you know, just slop in the bilge.

4 Q. Back to the preparations or prior to, was there any mention
5 of hooking up a strobe light into the *Carib Trader II* bridge so
6 that it could be seen (indiscernible) float switch with a strobe
7 light in the bridge of the *Carib Trader II* so that while you were
8 on the *Captain Beau*, you could see that strobe going off at
9 nighttime? Anybody mention something like that --

10 A. I remember Jordan saying something about that, because he
11 had -- I guess he had done that prior. I'm not sure how it went,
12 or I don't know why it didn't happen, but that wasn't -- I wasn't
13 really involved in the conversation. I remember somebody
14 mentioning it, and that's about it.

15 CWO4 ██████████ That's all I have for now, John. I'm going to
16 go back to you if you have anything else.

17 MR. FURUKAWA: Yes. Okay. Thank you.

18 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

19 Q. Let's see. Were you able to check any other compartments for
20 flooding?

21 A. There wasn't really any -- besides the engine room, there
22 wouldn't have been anywhere to really check, because I wasn't
23 going to go popping hatches. I didn't have the equipment to do
24 that anyways, so, yeah, it was literally I walked down in there,
25 saw where the water was, so that's where I was focused on.

1 Q. Okay. When you left the *Carib Trader II*, did you seal the
2 door to the engine room, the watertight door, or did you leave the
3 pump pumping?

4 A. I did not. I left the pump running.

5 Q. Okay. So you said on tugs, the rule of thumbs is if you hear
6 the wind whistling, it's about 20 knots?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. And so you heard the wind? The wind was whistling?

9 A. Yeah, it was.

10 Q. Let's see. You were on board the *Captain Beau* for about two
11 and a half, three hours, is what you were told?

12 A. The *Carib Trader*, yeah, yeah?

13 Q. Or *Carib Trader*. Oh, yeah, forgot. Okay. Let's see.

14 What's your normal work to vacation schedule? Do you have one?

15 A. With this company, it hasn't -- I haven't really had one. We
16 just kind of do the jobs and then go home, and when they come up
17 with another one, we'll go back. Be nice to have a schedule, but
18 doesn't generally work out like that. Not with this company.
19 Actually, for most salvage companies and small companies like
20 this, it's generally like that. It's hard to keep a girlfriend,
21 that's for sure.

22 Q. Okay. I know what you mean. I (indiscernible) for 12 years.
23 But so for this voyage, how long were you on board the *Captain*
24 *Beau*? How many days did you -- were you on the boat before you
25 guys --

1 A. Maybe -- I would have -- actually, let me see. I might have
2 it in my phone right here. I could probably tell you.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. That was on the 6th of -- let's see -- what month was that?

5 Q. March.

6 CWO4 [REDACTED] March.

7 MR. SAPUSEK: March, depart --

8 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

9 Q. It sank on the 6th of March.

10 A. 6th. I got on board the *Captain Beau* on February 26th, yeah,
11 the 26th, so I'd only been on there for a very -- I had -- I got
12 on at 1/21 and then I did -- I did, like, 28 days, and then I was
13 off from the 18th till the 26th, or I had a week off, and I got
14 back on March -- or no -- let's see. The 26th I got on. I got on
15 the 26th. That thing sank on the 6th. So I had been on for a
16 week (indiscernible).

17 Q. Okay. And how long were you off for before that?

18 A. The 28th I got off --

19 Q. The 28th of --

20 A. I did 28 -- and then I did the 18th, and then I got back on
21 the 26th. So 18 -- eight, nine days, something like that.

22 Q. You were off from 1/28 to --

23 A. I got -- I worked from January 21st to February 18th, and I
24 was off from the 18th to the 26th, so eight days, I guess.

25 Q. Okay. Okay. So for rigging the tow, you said normally you

1 use the anchor chains to tow?

2 A. Well, not -- I wouldn't say normally. It was just the
3 experience that I had that was the best situation, because the
4 anchors were already down in the water. So what we did was we
5 secured them on deck, cut them off at the water line, and then
6 chained them together, and then put a shot of chain in front of
7 it.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. That's how we did it with Smith Maritime.

10 Q. But you couldn't do that this time because?

11 A. There wasn't -- there was a single anchor.

12 Q. Right.

13 A. And yeah, that was -- we had to come up with something
14 different to make it work. Then, you know, they possibly wanted
15 to anchor, or whatever. The other ones we were towing, they
16 didn't -- they were scrapping them anyways, so it was -- you know,
17 that was just the best situation, the easiest way to make it work.

18 Q. Okay. So had you ever seen a tow like this before, the way
19 it was rigged this time?

20 A. I had never done it like that before, but it made sense, and
21 you know, like I said, I trust Jeff. I got all the faith in the
22 world in him, so --

23 Q. Okay. So Jeff came up with the scheme, the towing setup?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Let's see. So where did you get the wire, the chain and the

1 Spectra line for the tow? Was that brand-new?

2 A. The Spectra came from P&L. I don't know how -- I believe
3 that's on board -- how new they are. But they were fairly new.
4 And the wire and the chain came from there's a salvage yard
5 somewhere. I don't remember the name of it, but there's a salvage
6 yard over there that has tons of, you know, chain and marine
7 parts, and things like that, that it came from just up the Miami
8 River.

9 Q. So you guys bought that? It was brand-new?

10 A. No, I'm sure it wasn't new, but it was in good shape. That's
11 why, you know, we went there and discussed it, and Munir was
12 there, and I had Jeff on -- and was sending him pictures of what
13 we had to work with.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I remember, I remember when we were there, it was kind of --
16 it seemed like it was kind of -- they wanted us out of there. I
17 don't know who exactly was -- I know they had set it up to get out
18 of there, and then we showed up, and then it wasn't rigged, and
19 they were wanting us to get out of there. I remember it was kind
20 of like -- I think it was the Hampstead guys that were like, man,
21 we're set up to tow you guys out of here, and now it's not
22 happening.

23 And everybody was, like, kind of like, dang, man, we don't
24 have this ready yet, and we're supposed to leave. But it wasn't
25 like it was done sloppy because of that. It was just kind of, you

1 know, we just had to put something together, and we did, and it
2 all, it all looked like overkill to me, honestly, for -- I had no
3 doubts in it whatsoever that it would work.

4 Q. Okay. But the wire, the chain, Munir, he bought it or did
5 P&L buy it?

6 A. I don't know who actually purchased it.

7 Q. Okay. Well, we can ask him, get a copy of that purchase
8 order, the receipt. Okay. Okay. You said, you know, the night--
9 you know, early on at watch at, you know midnight-thirtyish, you
10 heard the bang and the speed increased. What kind of speed were
11 you doing before and what kind of speed after?

12 A. Somewhere around 4 knots, and we came up to I think 7 or 8,
13 or something like that. It was enough to be like, dang, something
14 is -- we're not towing anymore.

15 Q. Okay. And let's see. So we understood that the tow set up,
16 you know, the bridle -- so each bitt had wire, and then so the
17 chain out through the bullnose, and then the Spectra line, and
18 then the Spectra lines met up to the towing wire. You mentioned a
19 shock cord and a shock donut?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. What part was that?

22 A. That was between the Spectras and the actual tow wire. Yeah,
23 we tied Molly Hogans and wire-clamped them on the inside.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But originally, when I walked up to the bow of the ship, I

1 went to go see what actually happened, and then chain actually
2 broke on one leg is what it was.

3 Q. Okay. And that was on the starboard?

4 A. Yeah, starboard side. It was rough, too, because I remember
5 the masts on the top of the ship and on the bow, were both snapped
6 off. They were all laying on the deck.

7 Q. What was on the deck again?

8 A. The mast on top of --

9 Q. The forward mast?

10 A. Yeah, the forward mast was laying on the deck and the one aft
11 was, as well. I don't know if they were just rotten or what it
12 was, but they were both laying on the deck. Yeah, it's hard to
13 speculate what really happened, because that chain, I don't know
14 if it was just the extra water in it and the anchor giving way,
15 but I guess all of that stress or that extra weight on the, on the
16 chain is what broke it. Because it was -- it looked overkill to
17 me. I would have never thought you could break chain like that.

18 Q. Okay. That wasn't the towing chain; that was the anchor
19 chain?

20 A. No, that was the towing chain, the chain that we put on there
21 to use as chafing gear going through the hull of the boat to tow
22 it on.

23 Q. But the anchor that was still on board was which one?

24 A. Well, there was -- I believe it was the -- I think it was
25 hanging out of the -- it was in the hawsepipe on the port side if

1 I remember right.

2 Q. Okay. And you said that one, when you went on board, it
3 looked like the anchor was gone?

4 A. Well, there was one, there was one that wasn't there when we
5 showed up to rig it, and the other one was in the hawsepipe and
6 secured with chain and straps.

7 Q. Okay. So which one was gone?

8 A. I believe the starboard side was gone. The port side was
9 still there.

10 Q. Okay. And the port side anchor, you said when you were on
11 board, that part of getting underway, it was secured with --

12 A. Yeah, with straps and chain. It wasn't huge chain, but it
13 was quadrupled up, wrapped through itself a bunch of times, and
14 there were straps on there, and I had never seen the type of dog
15 they had, but it was some kind of you screwed down this dog on top
16 of the chain, or whatever, would pinch it, and it looked -- that
17 looked, you know, like it wouldn't have been an issue either.

18 Q. Okay. But then on the day when they put you on the *Carib*
19 *Trader* to investigate, so the port anchor was -- you couldn't see
20 it because --

21 A. Yeah, well, we had realized when we back to pick up that --
22 the leg of the bridle that was still there, we realized the anchor
23 had given way and fell in the water. And it's hard to say how
24 much was out, because I mean, it's, you know, probably all of it,
25 because it just freewheeled out. I don't know how many shots of

1 chain a ship has. I would imagine 10 or something, 12 maybe.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. So that's a lot of chain to be in the water and trying to tow
4 it. I'm sure it added tons of stress.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Plus the water had to have been why it broke.

7 Q. Okay. So the bridle and the towing wire, I thought they were
8 put together with 32-ton shackles?

9 A. Well, there were two different -- there's two different legs.
10 They went from the H bitts on the deck forward, and then they came
11 out of the boat separately, and was wired to chain, the chain was
12 used as the chafing gear, and then there was several feet hanging
13 outside the boat and shackles connecting -- so the wire was
14 shackled to the chain, and then the chain was shackled to the
15 bridles. The bridles were shackled into the shock cord, and then
16 the shock cord was shackled into the tow wire.

17 Q. So what is a shock cord?

18 A. It's just they -- I think what's his name had it
19 professionally made. It was -- it's two thimbles with probably 20
20 foot of -- well, I guess it'd be like 40 foot of probably 8-inch
21 or it might have been even 12-inch nylon spliced together to make
22 a donut to give that -- you know, to use as a shock cord so it
23 didn't -- you know, it had a little bit of stretch in it.

24 Q. Okay. Yup. Yeah, Jeff was talking about the thimbles.

25 Okay. Let's see.

1 A. Sir, was that ship inspected prior to us -- how does that
2 even -- I don't know how that even works, because I've always just
3 been on the towing side of it. Does it get inspected by someone,
4 or how does that work?

5 Q. It was surveyed by the Flag State.

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. St. Vincent and the Grenadines came on board in January and
8 basically told them through -- you know, gave them a list of
9 things to get fixed and then came over back in February and -- to
10 look if things are fixed, because I guess, like, the bitts on the
11 bow were both renewed, so it should --

12 A. Okay. I remember them mentioning that, because that's where
13 they wanted to tow (indiscernible).

14 Q. Did the bitts look like they were renewed?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. I mean, did it look -- okay.

17 A. Yeah, they looked strong. I believe one of them, you know,
18 was -- you could tell where they had done some welding on it, or
19 whatever, so -- those were strong. That didn't give way at all.

20 Q. Okay. I don't think I've got anything else.

21 MR. FURUKAWA: Back to you, [REDACTED]

22 MR. SAPUSEK: As far as, like, going when they inspect
23 something like that, do they -- obviously, they must go down in
24 the hull and the engine room, and you know, look, and you know,
25 it's just like, just like me. They -- I'm not, you know, a

1 professional in inspecting anything, but I guess if they noticed
2 anything, they would have called it a no-go, I guess, so -- and it
3 was just an act of God, I guess.

4 BY CW04 [REDACTED]

5 Q. So I can elaborate a little bit on that for you, Wes.

6 A. Sure.

7 Q. Like John said, they have Flag State come and do that survey.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. And there's a few pages here, but -- and so then the Coast
10 Guard inspectors will have their own checklist that is based off
11 that survey, and they go on board. They went on board a few days
12 prior to the departure, and they just made sure that some of those
13 things on here were being addressed and/or being looked at if
14 there was concern.

15 And I would call it -- when the Coast Guard goes on board,
16 it's not a very -- it's not a thorough inspection. It's a
17 walkthrough, a little more than what you did. That's all, that's
18 all it is, though, right? So there's no dry dock. There's no
19 banging on the haul.

20 Because I did talk to the inspectors that went on board and
21 asked them a few questions, as well, what was the condition of the
22 vessel. And they said, eh, it was dark, it's a riverboat, it's a
23 riverboat, and that's -- you know, they get, they kind of get
24 (indiscernible) sometimes as not being the best vessels on the
25 river. However, that's why I asked if you had seen these surveys.

1 And in the future, you may want to ask for those, because there
2 are weather limitations on there, sea state, wind state, current
3 limitation, as well. And it will go through -- like, even the
4 survey goes through just minor things. He basically made a little
5 worklist in here and then went back and rechecked it.

6 So to answer your question, yeah, there was nothing eye-
7 opening or eye-popping, a smoking gun here. But just for future
8 reference, that's kind of how the process works. There is very
9 little requirements for dead ship tows. It's just you have to
10 have a plan, a survey, and it's more so that it can get out of
11 here safely in our waterways, right? And obviously, you want to
12 be safe when you transit, but they look at the internal picture of
13 inland waters to make sure that it's safe to be transmitted out of
14 U.S. Waters, and obviously, you want to make sure you're safe when
15 you transit, but again, nothing eye-popping or eye-opening on the
16 surveys.

17 But I guess for you as the master and as a mate, you might
18 want to ask for these documents, because they should be there.
19 And they may tell you something. They may not tell you anything,
20 but there are some information on there that could be helpful in
21 the future.

22 And so with that, I also have a couple outlier questions.
23 You said you did about six tows, dead ship tows prior, correct?

24 A. Something like that.

25 Q. And was any of those tows -- did any of them compare to the

1 weather conditions that you were in this last time?

2 A. Yeah. We were in the Gulf, and I mean, it was all, you know,
3 petty weather stuff. I wouldn't say every one of them, but it
4 was, you know, I mean, it's been years, but yeah, I mean, it
5 always some big weather. That was probably -- I'm trying -- we
6 were towing them from Texas to Southern Scrap up the river. So it
7 wasn't, it wasn't as long offshore. But when we left, it wasn't
8 that bad, and then it got worse as we went, so it was -- you know,
9 we were kind of stuck in the middle of it.

10 But comparing them, it's, you know, it was kind of totally
11 different, different animal really. We were, we were going from
12 one state to another, and here we were, you know, going, going to
13 another country, so it's hard to compare being --

14 Q. Well, as far as the wind and sea state, does it compare?

15 A. Hard to really remember because it's been several -- quite a
16 few years since I did one, but I would -- that -- I'd be -- I
17 was -- you know, we were in sixes, and stuff like that, so, I
18 mean, it wasn't like it was -- this was probably a little bit
19 rougher, I guess.

20 Q. Do you think the weather in this situation played a part with
21 the parting of the tow and the sinking of the vessel?

22 A. I don't think so at all. I'd say it was -- that thing was --
23 the thing was leaking and that anchor gave way, and all of that
24 extra stress is what -- part of it.

25 Q. Oh, you mean the anchor dragging --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Added more drag to the tow?

3 A. Yeah. Yeah, that, plus the water on it.

4 Q. Right, right.

5 A. Who knows, who knows how much, you know, actual water was on
6 it by the time I jumped on there. There's no telling. I mean,
7 tons of it. Plus, you know, I don't know what -- how much a shot
8 of chain weighs, but you figure there's another, you know, ten
9 shots of chain hanging off the bow, and we're pulling on it, and
10 there is water in the stern that added, you know, a huge amount of
11 stress to the whole bridle system that we had.

12 CWO4 ██████████ That's all I have, John.

13 Thanks, Wes.

14 MR. SAPUSEK: Yeah, thanks guys. Hopefully, we can move on.
15 I tell you I'm not sure if I want to do a dead ship tow ever again
16 in my whole life.

17 CWO4 ██████████ No, I've been on Coast Guard ships and been
18 in, you know, double the sea states and same weather, same wind
19 speed not towing anything, and you know, I was holding on for dear
20 life, but I can only imagine trying to, you know, do a tow, let
21 alone you jumping on board it in those types of conditions. So I
22 can relate to the sea state, but I can't relate to your situation,
23 but I can relate to the seas, and --

24 MR. SAPUSEK: I did everything I could to try to save that
25 thing. I promise you.

1 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

2 Q. Okay. Wes, also at the end, I like to ask you -- let's
3 see -- is there anything you'd like to add or -- anything you want
4 to add or change?

5 A. No, not really. You guys pretty well covered it. I don't, I
6 don't -- I couldn't -- I don't want to speculate on how to, you
7 know, make this not happen again, because it's hard to say if it
8 was just -- you know, there was obviously something wrong with
9 that ship for -- you know, or the combination of, you know, the
10 anchor falling in the water and -- but the biggest, the biggest
11 problem was the thing taking on water.

12 We'd have got it down there to Haiti if it wasn't taking on
13 water. We'd have figured something out. Slow-towed it until we
14 got into -- inside Haiti, and then we could have got underneath it
15 and cut the, cut the chain and got it to the dock. But whatever
16 caused it to take on water was the biggest problem. We would have
17 made it.

18 Q. Okay. So when the anchor fell, when the starboard anchor let
19 go, that --

20 A. There is a possibility that's when the tow broke. That's
21 probably when it happened would be my guess, because it was, you
22 know, pitch black, and the thing was, you know, a quarter mile
23 behind us, so it's not like we could see it. But I would imagine
24 that's when it probably broke, that extra stress on it.

25 Q. Okay. Is there any questions that we should have asked you

1 but did not?

2 A. Not that I can think of. You guys covered it pretty good.

3 Q. Okay. And then anybody else we ought to interviewed? We
4 interviewed the crew. We interviewed Munir, the owner of the
5 *Carib Trader II*. We also interviewed John, the vice president for
6 P&L.

7 A. I can't really think of anybody else that was involved, no.

8 Q. Okay. Well --

9 A. I wish we could find out what -- how it actually was taking
10 on water. It was -- because I mean it was -- nothing stood out to
11 me when I walked in the engine room, and I have no idea where it
12 came from. It was -- the hull -- who knows. The hull could have
13 got a stress crack in it because it was older, or it's hard to
14 really say, or, you know, a pipe gave way, and it's a big guessing
15 game. And that thing is in a half a mile of water now, so it's
16 just a fish house, so --

17 Q. Yeah. But how deep was the water where it sank?

18 A. I want to say 6,000 feet, or something like that. I could --
19 if you look at a chart, you can tell. I forget if it was in
20 fathoms or meters, but it was deep, very deep.

21 Q. Okay. Well, thank you very much, Wes.

22 MR. FURUKAWA: It is 10:13. We're ending the interview with
23 the mate on the *Captain Beau*.

24 (Whereupon, at 10:13 a.m. EDT, the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the


NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: FLOODING/HULL FAILURE & SINKING
OF THE CARGO VESSEL *CARIB*
TRADER II NEAR SANTO DOMINGO CAY,
THE BAHAMAS, ON MARCH 6, 2022
Interview of Wesley R. Sapusek

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM011

DATE: May 19, 2022

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



Danielle S. VanRiper
Transcriber