

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD CFV *

THREE GIRLS IN THE GULF OF MAINE *

Accident No.: DCA24FM056

OFF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE *

ON AUGUST 11, 2024 *

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Interview of: ROBERT ROBERGE, Captain

Three Girls

Monday,
August 26, 2024

APPEARANCES:

██████████ Investigator
United States Coast Guard

BRIAN YOUNG, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Robert Roberge:

By Mr. [REDACTED]

4

By Mr. Young

16

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. [REDACTED]: All right. This will be the interview with
3 Captain Rob of the *Three Girls* commercial fishing vessel that was
4 afire. I am the Coast Guard investigator. I am

5 [REDACTED]
6 CPT. ROBERGE: I'm Captain Robert Rob, R-o-b-e-r-g-e, captain
7 of the *Three Girls*.

8 MR. YOUNG: And good morning. This is Brian Young with the
9 NTSB. Y-o-u-n-g.

INTERVIEW OF ROBERT ROBERGE

10
11 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

12 Q. So I guess we'll just start out with -- from the top, I guess
13 from when you assembled the crew down in Boston, and if you could
14 just talk about what date -- like, that date that you got the crew
15 together to leave to go on this fishing trip, all the way until we
16 got back -- or you got back to the dock with the Coast Guard.

17 A. Yeah. So it actually kind of started in Portland, 'cause I
18 was in the ship yard and stuff. And we left Portland, we went to
19 Boston to fuel up and ice up and all that stuff. And then then we
20 proceeded to go fishing.

21 I had a couple -- a crew member that didn't show up on the
22 other boat, so I was looking for crew. I had picked up one crew
23 member in Boston off the, off the Boston fish pier, the girl Cici
24 (ph.). She came down and was looking for a job. I thought she
25 meant in one of the fish houses or whatever, and she said, no, I

1 go fishing, and she showed -- you know, she's like I've been up in
2 Alaska Tanner Crab fishing and all that, and showed me pictures of
3 it. And I was like, okay, it's your call.

4 And, you know, we left to go fishing, and it was totally
5 uneventful until the night -- I think it was, what, the 11th, was
6 it, or something, 12th, that the boat caught fire? It was Sunday
7 night wasn't it?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. It was a Sunday night. I believe it was the 11th or the
10 12th.

11 MR. YOUNG: Eleventh was the Sunday night.

12 CPT. ROBERGE: Yeah. So fishing as normal. Coming to the
13 end of the tow, I roused the crew for a haul back. They got up,
14 got ready to haul back. I mean, they went -- they had to have
15 gone down in the engine, the engine room or that -- there was a
16 little room that they kept all their gear in before they went down
17 into the engine room. So, I mean, they were there with no signs
18 of anything.

19 I was hauling back. And I mean, that engine room, you know,
20 where all the controls come up and stuff like that, like, I smell
21 stuff instantly, because it goes -- it's, like, a -- I don't know
22 what you call it, like a wind tunnel almost, you know, 'cause it
23 comes from down there. The heat wants to come up through. So,
24 you know, if someone walks down there with a cigarette, I smelled
25 it, you know.

1 And we started hauling back and it was almost to the doors --
2 the door marks shown, which is just like a mark a little bit
3 before the door so you don't accidentally bring them up too fast
4 or something like that. And then I smelled, I smelled the
5 burning. You know, what smelled to me like electrical stuff
6 burning. And out of the exhaust fan coming out of the engine
7 room, just this thick, black, billowing smoking just pouring out
8 of that exhaust fan.

9 At that time, I shut the winch engine down just not knowing
10 what it is, did I blow a hydraulic line down there, was it
11 electrical. And I ran -- I didn't even hit the stairs. I just
12 slid down the rails, jumped down to the, to the engine room, and
13 opened the door where I was greeted with lovely smoke that is just
14 absolutely toxic. Peaked my -- looked down into the engine room,
15 and I could see, at the head of the engine room, you know, fire
16 down there, and I mean, fire that I knew we were in trouble.
17 Like, nobody was going down there to fight it or -- you know.
18 Smoke was just way too much.

19 I looked at that and I told everybody, you know, get ready,
20 we're leaving. And I went back upstairs. I was actually on
21 channel -- I think it was 68 or 72 with my other -- my -- the real
22 sister ship, the *Maria Joann* (ph.) and the *Princess Laura* (ph.) is
23 a vessel that I talk to on the radio quite a bit. I've known the
24 guy for years. I just went on the channel that we were talking on
25 and I said, you know, I'm on fire, you need to come over here and

1 pick me up. And then I went onto 16 and I started to make the
2 mayday call. You know, you're supposed to say everything three
3 times. I'm like, I ain't gonna have time for that. So I just,
4 you know, started in. By that time, the smoke had just gotten in
5 there. I mean, you can hear it in my mayday call. I'm gasping
6 for air, plus trying to see the GPS. I couldn't even see the GPS
7 because the smoke was making my eyes sting so bad.

8 And by that time, the crew had mustered together. I came out
9 of the boat, grabbed my survival suit out of my room, came out of
10 there. And at that time, I noticed that the -- you know, I hadn't
11 put the boat in neutral 'cause I still had all the gear off the
12 back of me and I didn't know what was wrong. So I didn't want to
13 foul up my prop or anything like that. So I left it in gear when
14 I ran down to check. I tried taking the boat out of gear, but the
15 fire must've -- 'cause where the fire was at the head there,
16 that's where all the cables -- control cables are and stuff, and I
17 tried to put it in neutral and the boat wouldn't go into neutral.

18 At that time, I -- Steve (ph.) had run back into the, the
19 galley to grab the rest of the survival suits, and he came out --
20 you know, he was choking. It was already pretty bad in there. I
21 was surprised he had gotten what he got. And we noticed, you
22 know, we were short a survival suit, so -- we moved the lift raft
23 from up top, 'cause my life raft is on the -- and my muster
24 station is on the port side of the boat, where we all met there
25 first. And then we went and moved everything down onto the, the

1 deck so when the fire came out it wouldn't -- it wasn't the spot
2 to be, I just knew it. And we got the life raft down onto deck
3 and I told everybody we got to, you know, hang tight, we ain't
4 going to leave until we absolutely have to. And at that moment,
5 the fire came out of the engine room door and started in -- going
6 outside over the -- under the whaleback and up towards the
7 wheelhouse and stuff. But we were still all right. I started to
8 get worried about some of the oxygen, acetylene tanks and stuff
9 like that. It hadn't made it away around there yet.

10 At that time, the boat -- 'cause it was still in gear, it was
11 still running. I'm sitting there going come on, you've got to
12 die. I mean, any other circumstance, this thing would be -- you
13 know, the engine would've choked out by now or something. But she
14 never stopped chugging. And I mean, it was just at a dead idle,
15 you know, but it was still in gear. And at that time, you know,
16 the wind or whatever, the boat had kind of made a circle around
17 where it started blowing the smoke over the deck. And I -- you
18 know, get down low. We got down low and I'm like, this sucks too,
19 so I --

20 You know, that's when I gave the order to abandon ship, you
21 know. I -- you know, I didn't have a survival suit. I knew it
22 was going to be cold. So we -- I decided to plot the life raft up
23 on deck, 'cause I knew my ramps were big enough and there was no
24 net on it. So I knew it'd fit out the ramp easy enough. And I
25 jumped into the life raft, and the -- you know, the girl was next,

1 and then I think -- I believe it was Jake (ph.) or Rich (ph.) and
2 then Steve. I just kind of put them in order on -- you know, I
3 knew Steve would pick up the tail end and not let anybody drag
4 behind him. And you know, the rest of them would go, so -- the
5 girl that goes by Cici, as we were going down the ramp, we got her
6 into the life raft and I told everyone to take -- hold onto the
7 painter line and wrap -- give a couple wraps around their wrist,
8 and we'll all go out the ramp together.

9 And that worked good. We got out and got into the raft, got
10 -- you know, I got everybody in. We got sorted out. It's a tight
11 squeeze in there with everybody in a, in a suit and stuff. At
12 that time, I was soaked, starting to get cold. The boat kept
13 trucking away, and I knew that the other boats were coming. I
14 seen the lights on the horizon or whatever. But I knew they were
15 going to go to the burning boat 'cause that's -- where else would
16 you go. So that's when I touched off the first flare to let them
17 know that I wasn't with the boat, I was way over there. And, and
18 I -- we sat there waiting, and then the first thing I saw was the
19 Coast Guard plane flew over us first. And he went to the boat
20 too, I think, first, and then I touched off the flare, and then he
21 circled around to us. I mean, I don't know what their protocol is
22 and how they do it. It might've been over me, 'cause it was up
23 there.

24 And he just kept circling around. I only lit off that one
25 flare. I figured that was sufficient. And he was circling around

1 us. The other boats started coming. I didn't feel like I had to
2 touch off any more flares. I think they knew where we were. And
3 the *Princess Laura* pulled up to us first, which it had started to
4 get a chop on, and they pulled up to us, and it was kind of a --
5 not that easy. Bouncing off. They're throwing lines at us and
6 stuff. And I just looked out of the corner of my eye and I could
7 see the -- I didn't know how that cutter made it there that fast,
8 but there was a cutter there. And I just told them to back off,
9 'cause I knew that they would send over the little rib thing there
10 to come pick us up, which was going to be a lot easier than
11 crawling up onto that fishing boat. While I was -- we actually --
12 it almost tipped us over once. The thing went right up on its
13 side, and plus the birds and all that stuff. So I just ordered
14 them to back off.

15 And then the little boat came over and got us, and took a
16 ride in on a Coast Guard cutter. Yeah.

17 BY MR. [REDACTED]:

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. *Princess Laura*, that's the name of this other boat?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Not the Lauren? Laura?

23 A. It's not the Lauren, it's the Laura.

24 Q. Okay. And the other one, your sister ship, is the *Maria*
25 *Joann*?

- 1 A. Correct.
- 2 Q. They never came? They were --
- 3 A. They were -- yeah.
- 4 Q. -- (indiscernible).
- 5 A. The *Princess Laura*, the cutter, the helicopter, they all got
- 6 there, like, within five to ten minutes of each other.
- 7 Q. Gotcha.
- 8 A. All -- everyone kind of showed up at once.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. So the *Princess* -- the *Maria Joann* was there, but the
- 11 *Princess Laura* was probably a few minutes ahead of him, if not
- 12 side-by-side, but Pasquale (ph.) is an older gentleman and, you
- 13 know, I think Sam's (ph.) a younger captain and stuff, and I think
- 14 he was a little more panicked about it or whatever, so he just
- 15 told him -- you know, he just hung back, 'cause he seen all -- you
- 16 know, there was nothing he was going to do, you know. They were
- 17 already all there, so -- yeah.
- 18 Q. So just -- let's back up to the very beginning. The date
- 19 that you guys left, that was, like, the -- was it Friday night,
- 20 the 9th?
- 21 A. Yeah.
- 22 Q. When you began the trip. It was, like, the middle of the
- 23 night.
- 24 A. I can, I can look here and tell you the exact.
- 25 Q. Just to get a timeline.

- 1 A. Yeah. I'll look at my trip start. Yeah. I have a trip
2 start of 8/9/24 at 2:46, but that's Greenwich Mean Time, the
3 universal time or whatever for -- on the VMS. 'Cause it doesn't
4 go by the real time.
- 5 Q. Right.
- 6 A. It's Greenwich Mean Time is what it -- whatever that -- I
7 think that's a universal time or something like that. So I think
8 it's always four hours ahead. So that would've been -- oh, wait a
9 second. Hold on.
- 10 Q. 10:46 p.m.?
- 11 A. Yeah.
- 12 Q. So the 9th -- August 9th at 10:46 p.m.?
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. When you started steaming from --
- 15 A. That's --
- 16 Q. -- (indiscernible) to go fishing?
- 17 A. Yeah. Well, that was when I passed the demarcation line, so
18 probably an hour before that --
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. -- we started.
- 21 Q. That's when it, like, officially starts? When you pass the
22 demarcation it starts --
- 23 A. Yeah. There's --
- 24 Q. -- for the permit purposes or whatever?
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. And then all the way up until the 12th, you were just routine
4 fishing? Like, you -- how long did it take to get before you put
5 the gear in the water about?

6 A. I think I was setting out the -- 'cause we left kind of late.
7 So I think we had, like, 12 hours after that we set the gear for
8 the first time. And yeah, I mean, we probably made 15, 10 tows.
9 You know, I'm just trying to think off the top of my head. Yeah.
10 It was totally uneventful, you know.

11 I mean, I'm always down in the engine room. I never noticed
12 anything. You know, I have -- get the younger kids on there that
13 are learning stuff, but, I mean, I'm constantly going behind just
14 to make sure stuff's all right, you know. We just did some work
15 on the boat, just came out of the shipyard. Replaced a water
16 floor (ph.), but you know, there was some wires at the head of
17 the, the engine room that we had moved, you know, so they wouldn't
18 get burned by the welding. But it was three or four inches. You
19 know, it was nothing -- it was just two clamps that held the
20 conduit on that got moved. You know, nothing -- no crazy rewiring
21 of anything or anything like that, you know.

22 I had, I had a camera system on there that crapped out on me,
23 so the day before we left or whatever, I had -- the electronics
24 man was there and we were running all the cables and he was, he
25 was short a little bit of cable. So we had ordered that, 'cause I

1 always have cameras on there. It was the one trip I didn't have
2 cameras. Both my boats have cameras in every compartment and all
3 that stuff on the boat. So -- yeah.

4 And that's it. it was just totally uneventful until then.

5 Q. So that -- in the shipyard, you said you replaced the water
6 floor.

7 A. Yeah, the water tank. If you go in the tool room space
8 that's on the -- all the way up in the forepeak of the boat,
9 there's the engine room, and then the tool room is all the way
10 upfront. The -- you know, it was just the floor that you were
11 standing on right -- you know, right there. It's --

12 Q. So that whole floor was -- like, but that's new up there.

13 A. Yeah. Yep. Just in the, just in the -- that tool room, you
14 know. Just the floor though. That, that was it, you know. It
15 was, it was no disconnect and -- you know, it was just putting
16 that floor in. I painted the bottom, put a new transducer on it
17 for the fish finder, but didn't -- you know, nothing tremendously
18 huge and major. You know, ran new -- put new zincs (ph.) on it.
19 Wasn't, like, a big two-month overhaul of the thing. Yeah.
20 That's --

21 Q. So you said you, you moved those wires -- or the -- undid the
22 little --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- two clamps --

25 A. There was two clamps that were held --

1 Q. -- (indiscernible)?

2 A. -- you know, with a bolt, and we had moved those clamps and
3 just, you know -- and the wire's not even where they welded, you
4 know. We just -- we put a -- like a four-by-four steel --
5 three-by-four, four-by-four, whatever, steel things in between
6 them just to move them out a few inches just to protect them from
7 the welding and put them back in the same spot, you know.

8 Q. And who did the work?

9 A. It was Frost Fabrication and Repair (ph.) Alui, A-l-u-i,
10 Welding Service.

11 Q. And all of this work was done --

12 A. Portland Yacht Services right here.

13 Q. Portland Yacht Services.

14 A. Um-hum.

15 Q. Did they do -- other than the floor in there, was there any
16 other -- 'cause you said zincs. You put a new transducer all the
17 way, like, underneath that floor down on the bottom of the ship
18 there?

19 A. Yeah, on the bottom of the hull. There was another
20 transducer that was there. I just swapped them out.

21 Q. Gotcha.

22 A. That's all.

23 Q. And then zincs, transducer, and then --

24 A. Up on top, my vang boom, the boom that's there, the base that
25 that sits on, that was new. But that's all still sitting there.

1 Q. Yes. And then bottom paint?

2 A. Bottom paint. She was ready to go for a couple of years.

3 Q. Gotcha.

4 A. Yeah. I mean, the boat was, you know, one of the
5 best-looking ground fishing boats, you know, out there. So I put
6 a lot of work into that thing.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. Oh, yeah. Now just dealing with the aftermath of it.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 MR. [REDACTED]: What do you got, Brian?

11 BY MR. YOUNG:

12 Q. You had talked a little bit on the boat last week about the
13 history of your vessel. Can you review it so we can have it for
14 the record? She was built in '78 or 9, I think you said?

15 A. 1979 at Quality Marine, which they built a lot of vessels.
16 It was down in Theodore, Alabama, you know, Bayou La Batre,
17 Alabama. She was a southern boat down there.

18 It was the first boat that Sarah (ph.) and I had gotten. You
19 know, she was in, she was in good shape. I mean, before we bought
20 it, the owner before us, Frank Patanya (ph.), he had been in
21 business a long time. I mean, the whole galley and stuff, that
22 was all brand new. It had all -- it was all gutted out and it was
23 all beautiful, solid mahogany all through the whole boat. Yeah.
24 It was, it was a half-a-million dollars just in the interior of
25 it. It was all new wiring throughout it and stuff like that. You

1 know, that part was brand new.

2 Bought the boat, went out fishing with it. When we bought
3 it, we knew the engine was tired in it, and we said, you know,
4 we'll get a little bit and then we'll just overhaul the engine.
5 It was what we could afford, you know, at the time. You know, not
6 to say it was a bad boat, but, you know, it wasn't a \$5 million
7 boat for sure, you know. And we had Brocklin (ph.) Marine put a
8 new engine in it. So we did that. We added a hydraulic engine
9 too it. And then the -- all the deck -- all up top, all the A
10 frame, the outriggers, the gallis (ph.) frame, that's all brand
11 new.

12 Q. Since you've bought it, you put all that in?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. When did you buy it?

15 A. I bought it in April of 2019. Yeah. We had done all that.
16 We had done the water tank. Sarah was actually -- we were hoping
17 to get these grants to -- this grant to redo the fish hold. The
18 fish hold was, like, the last thing that we had to redo on it, you
19 know.

20 Q. Wow.

21 A. Oh, yeah. So -- and yeah. She was, she was pretty much
22 brand-new. New wheel, new shafts, new everything. And I
23 (indiscernible) --

24 Q. And when you bought it, it was the *Sammy Jo*; is that right?

25 A. It was. It was the *Sammy Jo*. We did have it resurveyed one

1 -- you know, after we bought the vessel. We put the new engine in
2 it. You know, fixed up the deck quite a bit more. We had the
3 boat resurveyed at that time, which brought its value up a little
4 bit. And then we did the other work, and we were, we were slated
5 to get it resurveyed again, and we didn't make it to that part, so
6 -- yeah. We're probably out a half-a-million bucks, so --

7 Q. Really?

8 A. Oh, yeah. That's probably going to be our loss. You know,
9 even after the -- you know, the insurance is -- 'cause, I mean,
10 there's still old boats and, you know, just 'cause you put money
11 into them doesn't add the value to them.

12 Q. Right, right.

13 A. You know, you just hope that, you know, that you do all this
14 stuff, that it'd be -- you know, that -- you wouldn't expect
15 something like this to happen, and it does, you know. I mean, it
16 opened my eyes to some stuff though, you know. I'm looking into
17 -- you know, I'm interested in seeing what they have to say, the
18 fire investigator people or whatever. But I've been reading
19 around. There's actually non-flammable hydraulic fluid, so -- I
20 mean, it's rather more expensive than regular hydraulic fluid,
21 but --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- if it ain't -- it ain't like the beating I'm taking right
24 now, for sure, you know. You know, I'm curious to see what -- you
25 know, if they can figure out what caused it.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. It was a piece of our family, you know.

3 Q. Sure, sure.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. When you put the new main engine in, what'd you put in?

6 A. 3512.

7 Q. 3512. And was that brand-new engine, or was it rebuilt?

8 A. It was a reconditioned engine from a place called Pan
9 American Power down in Louisiana, a big company down there. I
10 researched all that. That's another headache. I put the engine
11 in. It lasted, you know, approximately 5,000 hours, and the
12 counterbalance weight fell off the crankshaft. They had -- you
13 know, the harmonic balancer on the front of the engine?

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. I -- the old 398 that they had pulled out had a PTO on it at
16 the time. So I traded the guy the other engine for some water
17 pumps and he had -- whoever in their shop didn't line up the
18 hashmarks on it. So instead of, you know, figuring it out, they
19 ground the bolts to a tip and drove them into the crankshaft.
20 Yeah. So -- which put us down for six months. It was over five
21 months. It was, like -- it was over five months waiting for
22 cylinder packs for that engine.

23 Q. Wow.

24 A. Yeah. So the engine was rebuilt I'd say about close to a
25 year now. No, we still got a few more months. It's probably got

1 4,000 hours on it.

2 Q. That's it?

3 A. Yeah. I think it was \$240,000 to overhaul the engine.

4 Q. Wow.

5 A. So -- and it's actually -- we're in the court proceedings
6 with that right now, so, you know, my insurance companies and
7 ourselves are -- you know, are looking to, you know -- I mean, I
8 bought the -- you know, it was supposed to be a reconditions
9 (indiscernible) from my CAT guy down there or whatever, and, you
10 know, he's like, how am I responsible for this. You built that.
11 You know, there was just so many flaws to the engine, you know. I
12 just -- it pretty much just fell apart, you know.

13 Q. I mean, you had it just recently rebuilt. Was that by --

14 A. Tomes (ph.) Marine, yeah.

15 Q. So a --

16 A. Yeah. It was a, it was a mechanic, Tomes Marine, yeah.

17 Q. (Indiscernible).

18 A. That happened -- yeah, was it last year. It might've been --
19 it might not have been last summer. It might've been the summer
20 before. Was it last summer? No, it was. It wasn't last summer.
21 It was the summer before. Last summer I had put the, the
22 backstraps for the doors into the wheel, bent the wheel, and
23 hauled the boat out then. And I put a new -- the stern tube,
24 where the cutless bearing goes in. I put a new piece -- the new
25 piece on the end of it and a flange bearing and stuff, 'cause it

1 had just ones you pressed in there, and they kept -- well, I mean,
2 with the wheel being messed up, it screwed it up, and that was
3 just the best -- you know.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. Best way to do it, so --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. I had just done that last summer. There was another hundred
8 grand, so --

9 Q. Jeez.

10 A. Yeah. It was not a lack of spending money on that boat.

11 Q. I bet, I bet.

12 A. Yeah. She was, you know, around this coast, you know, a
13 beautiful boat.

14 Q. Yeah, yeah. So the main was a 3512 and then you had two
15 generators and the winch engine, right?

16 A. Correct.

17 Q. What were the generators?

18 A. The -- well, one generator was a 4045 65KW John Deere. And
19 then the other one was an original -- it was a 3304 55KW Gen Set.
20 And then the winch engine was a 3406B 380 horse, I think it was,
21 Caterpillar. That was a new engine.

22 Q. Was it new?

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. How new about?

25 A. A couple thousand hours on it maybe.

- 1 Q. That's it, huh?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. And which ones were running at the -- on the night of the
4 fire? The winch engine, right? 'Cause (indiscernible) --
- 5 A. The winch engine was running, yeah. And then the John Deere
6 generator, the 4045, that one was running. The newer one.
- 7 Q. And that's on the starboard side?
- 8 A. Yes.
- 9 Q. Okay.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. And was there -- as you're hauling back, is the generator
12 under a heavier load, or is that a pretty standard, typical load?
- 13 A. Typical load, because it has Haglans (ph.) winches on it, so
14 a charge pump to that stays going all the time, 'cause of whatever
15 those winches are, they need the hydraulic fluid even if they're
16 pinging out or coming in. So if you -- you know, you set your
17 brakes loose on the winches, so if you hang up, the winches peel
18 out instead of break.
- 19 Q. Right, right.
- 20 A. So -- and you don't dip the boat. Not that (indiscernible).
21 You know, not like the sculpers (ph.), but --
- 22 Q. So what kind of load --
- 23 A. -- it's mainly just to save, you know, on the wire so you
24 don't break it.
- 25 Q. Yeah. So what kind of electrical load would've been on that

1 generator?

2 A. The same as it, the same as it always it, you know.

3 Q. Nothing different, right?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. And is that about 50 percent of its capability or less, or
6 ballpark on what she runs at?

7 A. I would, I would say less. I would say 25 to 35 percent of
8 what it can do, because, you know, as I was looking into redoing
9 the fish hold later on, I was going to add refrigeration and all
10 that stuff, which, you know, you've got to have enough generator
11 for it. And I asked a guy down in New Bedford, Fred Hollisborn
12 (ph.), I think his name was. And he said, oh, you've got plenty
13 of generator there. You're not even using -- so -- I mean, with
14 the generator on, you know, it only ran, you know, the standard
15 stuff that we needed, you know, a couple bilge pumps. You know,
16 they're only -- the bilge pumps are 3 horse, and the deck
17 (indiscernible) are the 5 horse, but -- and a 3-horse charge pump,
18 you know. And then just the standard stuff on the boat.

19 Q. Right, right.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. So nothing out of the ordinary?

22 A. No. And I mean, that -- those -- you know, one generator was
23 original, the CAT one, and, I mean, I still ran it. You know, I'd
24 run the John Deere for a couple days, and then I'd switch over to
25 the CAT one for a day, and then I'd go back to that one for two

1 days, 'cause the John Deere was a lot newer, quieter. You know,
2 that engine had been in there since I bought it. I -- the -- I
3 did replace the alternator end of it two, three years ago. I
4 replaced the, the actual -- the generator end of it with a
5 Marathon generator thing that came from RE Mitchell. So the
6 generator end of it was brand new too, so -- and I replaced it
7 because I hosed the other one accidentally. So that's, that's why
8 that got replaced. I didn't do it on purpose, but --

9 Q. Right.

10 A. -- I wasn't paying attention (indiscernible).

11 Q. And how about the winch engine? That -- how hard would that
12 be working while you're hauling back?

13 A. The winch engine would've been -- she'd have been full --
14 she'd have been up there. She'd have been 80, 90 percent.

15 Q. No kidding.

16 A. Oh, yeah.

17 Q. What does that run? All the hydraulics for --

18 A. All the hydraulics, yeah. She would've been under -- it's --
19 and I mean, and the doors were off bottom and stuff, so she
20 would've been under her heaviest load right then. She'd have been
21 using all its power. 'Cause you just -- you run them -- not wide
22 open. They probably run around 1800 RPMs. I think they turn up
23 to 2100. But they also make them a little lower so you can have
24 the room for them.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. I mean, I got that 3406 because it's actually a little bit
2 more than you need. So you run it a little bit lower than -- but
3 I mean, the hydraulics were at their, at their full load. They
4 were -- it was coming.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. So --

7 Q. Right. And just thinking, above it, there's always a
8 potential of, you know, leaking something onto a hot engine. Are
9 there any hydraulic lines above it?

10 A. Yeah. Everything runs above all that -- the -- all the main
11 hydraulic lines run above the main engine. Yeah. All the
12 hydraulic lines -- there's the tool room, so the winch engine
13 would be right here.

14 Q. Just forward of the main engine, right?

15 A. It would be -- yeah.

16 Q. Underneath the tech?

17 A. Right there, yep.

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. And then you -- back here is all your hydraulics, you know,
20 against your wall, all your different valves and stuff. And then
21 they run forward, and over here, there's a -- the bank that's got
22 all the return filters.

23 Q. Which would be kind of above the port generator, in that
24 area?

25 A. Yeah, right there. Boom. All your feeds and stuff come

1 underneath this generator and come up into the winch engine there.
2 All your lines come this way, you know, going back and forth to
3 all the stuff, and then they come up the ceiling here and go into
4 that, that --

5 Q. That distribution box, right?

6 A. -- that filter house. Yeah. Well, they just go in -- you
7 know, they're right -- they all go into that and then you can see
8 the big three-inch line that returns to the tank.

9 Q. And most of those lines, are they steel lines or hoses or --

10 A. They're all -- well, over all the -- you know, coming off the
11 pumps, there's five feet of hydraulic hose, and then it goes all
12 to steel lines. But then, you know, over here is all steel lines,
13 and then these are all hydraulic hoses going to the, the filter
14 things. And then same thing back here. They go back, and then
15 all these valves all have, like, all the different hydraulic hoses
16 and stuff on them.

17 Q. And have you had --

18 A. I mean, I do have pictures, you know. I can -- you know, I
19 can go through my phone. Obviously, I've been on vacation and
20 stuff. I mean, I had pictures of the engine room --

21 Q. Okay. Prior to?

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Have you --

24 A. I'd have to go through my stuff, but I can definitely come up
25 with a bunch of pictures of the vessel --

- 1 Q. That'd help, yeah.
- 2 A. -- condition of the vessel, all that stuff for you guys.
- 3 Q. That would help. And any issue with any of the hoses leaking
4 or have you had to replace any recently?
- 5 A. Yeah. So when we put the winch engine in, we put -- 'cause
6 there used to be a (indiscernible) the front of the main engine,
7 then we put the winch engine in here with the pumps. So it ended
8 up being a longer hose-run to, to get onto the stuff. I'm -- I
9 did have to add some things to make them a little longer, because
10 these hose, when I put the main engine in, I replaced all the
11 hoses that were in front of the engine 'cause they were just old
12 and I knew they were the high-pressure hoses. So I had replaced
13 those, and then we put the winch engine in, and I added -- they
14 needed to be just a little bit longer, so some of them I had to
15 put, you know, a two-foot shot of hose to make it to the pumps.
16 But those were, those were all brand-new hoses.
- 17 Q. How brand new? Like --
- 18 A. The, the -- I mean, four years old.
- 19 Q. Okay.
- 20 A. Yeah. Four years old, and then any of those extensions
21 would've been approximately two years old. You know, we -- yeah.
22 I mean, in the, in the -- you know, all this stuff back here, I --
23 they -- it was there when I bought the boat. I don't know, but,
24 you know, I think we can all agree it didn't start back here.
- 25 Q. Right.

1 A. It started up here somewhere.

2 Q. And when you looked down the ladder well, you saw fire in the
3 forward side of the engine room.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Was it even possible to tell if it was more port or
6 starboard, or was that not even --

7 A. No. I mean, you know, it was already a bunch of smoke.

8 Q. I see.

9 A. I looked down there. You know, I would say I seen more glow
10 'cause of the smoke than I could see actual flames flames. But I
11 knew there was no --

12 Q. No (indiscernible).

13 A. There was no going back, you know.

14 Q. Yeah, yeah.

15 A. It was, it was time to make moves, and it -- I just -- you
16 know, I thought, like, just 'cause of that smell, you know. And
17 now that I've had time to sit back and think of it, like, even if
18 it wasn't, how did it just spread so fast.

19 Q. Quickly, yeah.

20 A. You know, that, that engine room bilge --

21 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

22

23

24

25

CERTIFICATE

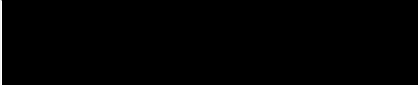
This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ENGINE ROOM FIRE ABOARD CFV
 THREE GIRLS IN THE GULF OF MAINE
 OFF PORTSMOUTH, NEW HAMPSHIRE
 ON AUGUST 11, 2024
 Interview of Robert Roberge

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24FM056

DATE: August 26, 2024

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.



Shelby Shover
Transcriber