

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

Portland, Maine

Tuesday,
October 29, 2024

APPEARANCES:

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

BRIAN YOUNG, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

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By Unidentified Investigator(s)

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I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF ROBERT ROBERGE

1
2
3 CPT. ROBERGE: Yeah. So there's that, that filter box that
4 was up there, and, I mean, it was once that it blew the little --
5 'cause it was, like, an inspection hatch on it or whatever, and
6 there was rubber around it. And I, and I replaced that. But I
7 also noticed, when I was using the hydraulics and stuff, the, the
8 -- that box would bulge out, you know what I mean, a little bit.
9 But I fixed it. I, I used to only have a two-inch pipe coming out
10 of it, and I put a four-inch pipe so that the flow was a lot more
11 to it. You know, and that, and that was what was in it when I
12 bought the boat and stuff, and that was just me noticing, like,
13 jeez, that's a low pressure, and that thing shouldn't be moving
14 like that, you know.

15 So we went from, from a two-inch pipe to a four-inch pipe,
16 which stopped all that. You know, it wasn't moving like it was.
17 But I don't know, you know -- I'm just trying to think of stuff
18 that, you know -- 'cause it blows my mind.

19 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Yeah.

20 CPT. ROBERGE: Could it have already stressed it out and, and
21 caused something down the road later, but, but, yeah, that's the
22 -- that's a lot of it.

23 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

24 Q. And that hydraulic box that had the four filters in it, what
25 type of pressure -- do you have any idea what type of pressure

1 might've been in it?

2 A. So it's only a return, so it's -- I think the returns are
3 only, like, 100 PSI or 200 PSI. It's not a lot.

4 Q. And then that --

5 A. I mean, it can get pressure. I mean, that's the bad part of
6 it. If it's not at that, then it's got an issue, you know.

7 Q. Right, right.

8 A. So --

9 Q. So but typically, that -- the return side, and then that
10 returns back to the suction side of the pump off the winch engine,
11 right?

12 A. (Indiscernible) it returns to the tank.

13 Q. Oh, to the tank?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So that right there is exactly where you got it. It comes
17 out of there and goes back into the hydraulic tank.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. My shore engineer (indiscernible) -- 'cause I was telling
20 Reed (ph.) about it, and he said, that tank, you know, could there
21 have been any damage done to it that we really didn't know, stress
22 cracks in it or something from it moving like that? And I mean, I
23 guess it's a possibility, you know.

24 Q. And the tank you said that had been kind of stressed
25 (indiscernible) is that hydraulic -- the box?

1 A. Yeah, yeah, the box.

2 Q. (Indiscernible)?

3 A. Which, you know, that was all original when I got there, and
4 I, and I did change it because I noticed it was moving, and I was
5 like, how can you have one, two, three -- how can you have four,
6 five inches of pressurized stuff going into it and only two going
7 out of it, you know.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. So that's when I put that bigger pipe on it. And I mean,
10 that box had been in there for many years, I'm sure, before I got
11 the boat. So, you know --

12 Q. And then you switching to that four-inch (indiscernible) was
13 about how long ago?

14 A. Two years ago. Yeah, so it'd been a couple years that it'd
15 been in there. But you know, like I said, you know, my shore
16 engineer was the one that was like -- he's probably down there
17 ripping it apart now looking at it to see if there's any cracks in
18 it actually, so --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. 'Cause we're still baffled by it. But, you know, that is --
21 and then, I mean, I guess it could've just blown a hydraulic line
22 somewhere too, but --

23 Q. Because the -- on the winch engine, you have the attached
24 pump, and it looked like there were two hoses coming off each
25 side, right?

1 A. Yeah. So there would've been actually -- there would've
2 been, there would've been five, 'cause there was five pumps on it.

3 Q. Five pumps?

4 A. Yep. There was one pump -- these two pumps did the winches,
5 these two pumps did the cargos, and then there was a pump in the
6 middle that did the net reels.

7 Q. Okay. The cargo, the winches --

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. So at that time, you were using the net reel and the cargo --
10 not the cargo, but the --

11 A. We would've been on the winches.

12 Q. Winches. Winches, yeah.

13 A. Um-hum. Hauling back.

14 Q. And then these hoses went into steel pipes, right? These are
15 just flexible hoses that had connected to --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. -- steel pipes?

18 A. Steels pipes that came out of the tank.

19 Q. Out of the hydraulic tank?

20 A. Out of the, the big hydraulic, the reservoir tank.

21 Q. The big --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. So it'd take suction from the reservoir tank, go to the pump,
24 provide pressurized hydraulic fluid to the machinery, and return
25 back through the filter box?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Is that about right?
- 3 A. Yep.
- 4 Q. Okay.
- 5 A. Everything would go to --
- 6 Q. Back here.
- 7 A. Everything would go to there and then go back to the tank.
- 8 Q. And what kind of a capacity did -- do you remember how much
- 9 hydraulic --
- 10 A. Yeah. She held 350 gallons, 350, 400 gallons of hydraulic
- 11 fluid.
- 12 Q. Okay.
- 13 A. Yeah. That's for sure. And we, we just -- well, I mean,
- 14 it'd been about a year, but we had changed all the hydraulic fluid
- 15 in there, so -- and, I mean, I was going through stuff, changing
- 16 hoses and stuff down there over time, but, you know, there's
- 17 definitely some older hoses down there.
- 18 Q. Right.
- 19 A. For sure.
- 20 Q. Right.
- 21 A. So --
- 22 Q. And when our fire investigator was down there, this area
- 23 seemed to be -- on the portside seemed to be the area in which
- 24 there was indication that it had burned the hottest.
- 25 A. Yes.

1 Q. So that's why we're kind of leaning towards looking kind of
2 as a spray maybe out of this box.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. 'Cause the operating engine would've been the winch engine
5 and the starboard generator, right? These two (indiscernible)?

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. So there's hot points on the exhaust here and the exhaust
8 here. And this port generator wasn't running, right?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. No. So the -- it just seems -- and then also, you know, with
11 the door being open into the forward room, you can kind of see
12 some heat over here and heat over here, so it kind of led our
13 investigator into this area. So that's kind of why we were kind
14 of asking about the hydraulic flow and where the oil was coming
15 from and going to.

16 A. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, it -- I'm going to look to see,
17 and I might have some pictures of it.

18 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

19 Q. And so, like, these hoses -- from here, it fed -- like, it
20 was a straight -- like, did it branch off, like, into, like, a --
21 like, an overhead? Was there anything that broke one supply into
22 other supply? Or was it just a straight shot?

23 A. The supplies going to the pumps?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Nope. It was -- there was five lines that went to the pumps,

1 you know --

2 Q. Each, each --

3 A. Yep, for each pump.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And then it went on into the system, and then came back and
6 went to this, 'cause that's the filter system, before it returned
7 to tank. So it went in, did its machinery stuff, and then cleaned
8 it before it went back into the tank.

9 Q. Yeah, okay.

10 A. Let's see. I might have some pictures of it. Hold on a
11 second.

12 Q. And these were all up in, like, the overhead? They --

13 A. Yep.

14 Q. (Indiscernible) go down (indiscernible)?

15 A. So all the pipes -- you know, you had your pumps here, which
16 right in front of the main engine, where those lines came down
17 right there.

18 Q. Yep.

19 A. They went up and back, and then the same -- where those lines
20 were, the return lines were right next to it, came over and turned
21 and went into that tank, that big tank.

22 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

23 Q. And the return lines, were they in the center of the engine
24 room or on the portside? Do you remember that?

25 A. They were right in the center.

- 1 Q. Right in the center?
- 2 A. They were alongside it, and then right here, they turned and
3 went to that, to that tank.
- 4 Q. And that's coming back from all the deck machinery?
- 5 A. Um-hum.
- 6 Q. And then that's, like, above -- like, while we're standing
7 there in the overhead, those ones that were disconnected up there?
- 8 A. Right.
- 9 Q. That was all from machinery?
- 10 A. (Indiscernible) yep.
- 11 Q. They were just going back into this filter?
- 12 A. Right. Yep.
- 13 Q. And then where they came up here and went to the filter,
14 that's just another --
- 15 A. These -- I think these discharged up to the machinery.
- 16 Q. Okay. And then back that way?
- 17 A. Then came back this way.
- 18 Q. Gotcha. Okay, I gotcha. So five hoses that went this way
19 into the --
- 20 A. Right.
- 21 Q. -- this, used -- went to get used, came back, cleaned, back
22 into the tank.
- 23 A. Yep.
- 24 Q. In a loop like that.
- 25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. See, they went up there and then they came back. Let me see
3 if I can find a better picture of it.

4 Q. You said there was three different pumps?

5 A. Five.

6 Q. Five pumps?

7 A. Yeah. Two for the winches, two for cargo.

8 Q. And then one for the nets.

9 A. Nets, yeah. Net reel. I mean, I got hydraulic -- hydraulics
10 for days. I mean, probably what I should do is just send them all
11 to you and you can pick which ones you want.

12 Q. Yeah. Can you, can you Airdrop them?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. You got an iPhone?

15 A. I don't have an iPhone, but I can -- I got -- I can just --
16 emailing them is easier.

17 Q. Okay, that'd be great.

18 A. Yeah. 'Cause you guys never found any -- 'cause, like, even
19 me, I went back and looked, 'cause even if a hose blew out, you
20 would see, 'cause the metal would (indiscernible). Like, you
21 would see a blowout from it. You guys never found nothing on a
22 blowout on a hose or anything?

23 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: No.

24 CPT. ROBERGE: I know that, that box up there, it had
25 aluminum covers. It was, it was -- a lot of it was aluminum, you

1 know, the filter housings and stuff themselves, which I found
2 surprising. But it's not supposed to have a lot of pressure there
3 anyways.

4 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Right.

5 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

6 Q. So it's like this, tank, pumps, engine room, engine here.

7 Goes out to the end-user, back to the filter, back to tank.

8 And then all these here were the ones that -- when we were looking
9 at were all disconnected over here.

10 A. Right.

11 Q. 'Cause nothing was connected.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. And then this is where -- there was, like -- is -- was that,
14 like, where that box you change out or -- that you saw, was it,
15 like --

16 A. That filter box?

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Yep. That was up on the ceiling, yep. And then that big
19 pipe --

20 Q. Ceiling.

21 A. -- that went back into the tank, the four-inch pipe --

22 Q. Changed it to a four-inch.

23 A. Yeah. It was a two-inch, and we changed it to a four-inch.

24 Q. So then the highest-pressure hoses and pipes, obviously,
25 would've been off the discharge of the pump, and where -- what was

1 the direction that these went back? Over the center of the
2 engine?

3 A. Over the center of the main engine --

4 Q. And just went aft, right?

5 A. -- (indiscernible) just went straight.

6 Q. Straight out.

7 A. Came, came up and went -- those are the ones that are right
8 in front of the expansion tank on the main engine. It goes
9 straight up right there and --

10 Q. And straight back.

11 A. -- back they go. Yeah. And then we ended up -- let me see
12 if I can find a picture of that freaking box.

13 Q. I know. My pictures are, are --

14 A. Burnt.

15 Q. -- completely wiped. I mean, I put them on my, on my
16 computer, but I had to do an update to get my phone on the Coast
17 Guard network and it -- you had to do a full system reset.

18 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Oh, wow.

19 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: So I lost all my contacts.

20 CPT. ROBERGE: Everything, huh?

21 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Everything.

22 CPT. ROBERGE: Oh, that sucks.

23 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: I -- before -- I mean, I
24 literally went through each, each -- and I wrote all --

25 CPT. ROBERGE: Oh, my God.

1 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: -- all the numbers down, and then
2 -- because I knew it was going to wipe everything. Put all my
3 pictures back on the computer. It was a full day of
4 (indiscernible). It took me two hours to do the process to get
5 the phone. Cool. So that's (indiscernible). So --

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

7 Q. I think you said the operating pressure of the hydraulic
8 system pressurizes between 22-- and 2800 PSI; is that right?

9 A. Yes. Yeah.

10 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

11 Q. Then we have this discharge -- or not the discharge line, but
12 rather the return hose. It was four inches. You said about 100
13 to 200 PSI would be on that?

14 A. Yeah, the return lines. Yep.

15 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: This would be -- that came out of
16 the side of the box?

17 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: This was the top he said.

18 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Oh, the top?

19 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Yeah. Like, when he replaced
20 this gasket up here it was the top of the box.

21 CPT. ROBERGE: Yes. It was an inspection that happened --

22 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

23 Q. And it was panting up on the top. You could notice, like --

24 A. You could -- before, before I did the -- put the four-inch
25 pipe on it, the whole box would bulge.

1 Q. Oh, really?

2 A. Like, the whole box. That's when I was like, that ain't
3 right, you know. And it had been in the boat for God knows how
4 many years like that, you know. So I -- that's when I switched it
5 over to the -- to that --

6 Q. The four-inch hose.

7 A. -- that pipe -- yeah, yeah, yeah.

8 Q. And it was a pipe; it wasn't non-metallic? It was an actual
9 pipe?

10 A. Yeah. It's a four-inch schedule 80 pipe.

11 Q. You happen to know -- do you happen to know the plate
12 thickness of that box?

13 A. I do not know what the thickness of --

14 Q. Quarter-inch, three-eighths.

15 A. I don't even think it was that much.

16 Q. Yeah, probably not.

17 A. Eighth-inch.

18 Q. Eighth-inch probably?

19 A. Yeah.

20 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

21 Q. And was that whole box steel or aluminum?

22 A. It was steel.

23 Q. It was steel.

24 A. And then it had -- the filter housings -- the filter -- yeah,
25 the filter housings -- 'cause it was a steel box, and then it had

1 the circles cut out of it, and then the filter housings that went
2 into them were aluminum.

3 Q. Okay. So the, the -- what was aluminum?

4 A. So it looks like this. So the head of it would've looked
5 like this. It would've had one, two, three, four filter housings
6 in it that did the main thing. And then the net reels would come
7 back in off the top here. And then that inspection plate was
8 right here. I'll just go like this. And it had a couple other --
9 I think it -- yes. So off to the side here, it had another
10 hydraulic -- the control valves. You know, the hydraulic over
11 hydraulic control valves would go into there too. But -- and then
12 the net reels returned into there. But these, these housings
13 right here, they took K10s or K25 filters, Schroeder filters,
14 housings, and they went in boom, boom, boom, boom, like that. And
15 then you would take that aluminum cover off and they held two
16 filters a piece inside them, two of those K10s or K25 filters.
17 Schroeder I think is the name of the company that makes the
18 things.

19 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

20 Q. And then the top of the covers would be the connection for
21 the hose that would attach into the cover, right? Like, the
22 return hose would go into this aluminum cover?

23 A. Yes. Yeah. Yep, yep, yep. And it would -- you know, the,
24 the oil would shoot into the middle of -- you can see, the oil
25 would shoot into the middle of this and go through the filter and

1 then end up in the box and then go back to the tank.

2 Q. Okay. So it would return directly into the center of the
3 filter?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Through the aluminum housing, and the hose attached with
6 fittings into the cap?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Or cover?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. And then at the top was some sort of an inspection
11 plate that you couldn't --

12 A. Correct, yeah. I don't think you can see pictures of it.

13 Q. No, I don't have any pictures of the top of it. And then
14 these four bolts would've hold the -- held the aluminum plate on?

15 A. (Indiscernible).

16 Q. You can see that's melted, right?

17 A. Um-hum. That would've held the aluminum plate.

18 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

19 Q. So how was that -- it might be a dumb question, but how --
20 like, is this something that is, like, purchased like this, or was
21 this fabricated to serve its purpose like that?

22 A. So the, the filter -- the round parts would've been purchased
23 that way, and then that aluminum box, I'm sure, would've been
24 fabricated, I would've thought.

25 Q. And then -- I mean, is it -- they're attached in by -- is it,

1 like, bolted, or is it, like, welded, those things in there?

2 Like, is it --

3 A. The filter housings themselves?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. They're -- they were -- now you got me -- they're bolted,
6 yeah.

7 Q. Okay. So that's what these -- they're bolted in and then
8 there's a gasket --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- that it sits on?

11 A. Yeah. I never -- can I look at (indiscernible), sorry.

12 Q. Of course.

13 A. I never had them apart, so --

14 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

15 Q. So you've never gone in here to look at the condition of
16 these --

17 A. I've changed --

18 Q. -- gaskets?

19 A. -- the filters. I've changed the filters in them for sure,
20 which was just take these out. But now that there's -- I don't
21 remember how those were attached. Because they couldn't have been
22 welded unless it had a steel -- unless this was a steel -- this
23 must be a steel ring then. So yeah, they must've been welded
24 around them.

25 Q. 'Cause when you have steel and aluminum and you weld, I mean,

1 you've got dissimilar metals, and then dissimilar metals have a
2 tendency to --

3 A. Corrode each other.

4 Q. -- corrode quicker.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. There's a -- you know, the -- whatever the sacrificial piece
7 to that would be.

8 A. So that's what it must be. This must be steel here and they
9 welded that inside the box, and then just the covers were
10 aluminum, 'cause that would've melted away if it wouldn't have
11 been, right?

12 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: That makes sense, yeah.

13 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

14 Q. Was there any sacrificial piece, like any other dissimilar
15 metal that -- like a zinc or something that --

16 A. No.

17 Q. -- attached to that or --

18 A. No, no, no.

19 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: See what I'm getting at, Brian?
20 Like --

21 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Yes.

22 MR. ROBERGE: Yeah.

23 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Interesting.

24 MR. ROBERGE: So then I didn't even really think of that
25 until, you know, my shore engineer brought it up. I would've

1 never thought of that.

2 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: That might be part of the
3 problem.

4 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: And that was that four-inch pipe?

5 MR. ROBERGE: Yeah.

6 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

7 Q. How long is that -- do you think the boat will remain here?
8 Are you planning on scrapping it, I guess, right?

9 A. Yeah. I mean, Reed already started taking, like, some of the
10 stuff off, but it's -- I got no idea what they're doing with the
11 -- it's still over there. And actually, probably, when I leave
12 here, I'm going to go look and see.

13 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Want to go over there?

14 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Yeah.

15 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Just check that right there.

16 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: I'd like to.

17 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

18 Q. All right. And maybe at your convenience, you could, like,
19 just send a bunch of pictures that you think might be appropriate,
20 you know.

21 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

22 Q. But if you don't mind, I got just a few questions.

23 A. Can you write down --

24 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: You can text them to me there.

25 MR. ROBERGE: Yeah. Can --

1 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: I can transfer them over.

2 MR. ROBERGE: Well, it's hard -- do you got -- can you both
3 write down your email addresses? It only lets you send so many --

4 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: Yeah, exactly.

5 MR. ROBERGE: Three pictures at a time. But you can --

6 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: I'll text it to you.

7 MR. ROBERGE: Yeah.

8 UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR: You can have that. It has my
9 cell on there.

10 MR. ROBERGE: Yeah.

11 BY UNIDENTIFIED INVESTIGATOR:

12 Q. And if you don't mind, I had kind of written down a bunch of
13 stuff to try to prepare for the report. If you don't mind, I just
14 want to run a few things past you to make sure I've got the
15 information right.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. The horsepower of the main engine?

18 A. Horsepower was 850 horsepower.

19 Q. 850. And it was a 3512?

20 A. Correct.

21 Q. And the winch engine was a 3406?

22 A. Yep.

23 Q. 380 horse?

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. And then John Deere 4045 was 65 kilowatts?

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. And that was the operating generator at the time, right?
- 3 A. It was, yeah.
- 4 Q. And when all these were operating, these three engines, where
5 were you burning from? Did you burn from both fuel saddle tanks
6 at the same time or --
- 7 A. No. You would've been, you would've been using whichever one
8 -- 'cause, you know, only from one side at a time. So whichever
9 side the boat --
- 10 Q. Was leaning or listing, right.
- 11 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Just --
- 12 Q. Do you have any idea --
- 13 A. -- keep it level and --
- 14 Q. -- which one at the time?
- 15 A. I don't remember at the time, no.
- 16 Q. And if I remember right, I had it written down that I think
17 you had 4500 gallons of fuel aboard?
- 18 A. Yeah.
- 19 Q. Is that right? And on average, what do you burn a day if
20 you're steaming or fishing?
- 21 A. 600, 650 gallons a day.
- 22 Q. Really? And do you have -- I'm just trying to figure out how
23 much was left in the tanks at the time of the incident.
- 24 A. So she would've held -- she would've been around -- how many
25 days was I into the trip? Three or four days?

- 1 Q. I think just two days.
- 2 A. Two days?
- 3 Q. You steamed for 12 hours --
- 4 A. I would've said she would've had about 6,000 gallons in the
5 tank.
- 6 Q. So you loaded 4500 and you had some in, so there was 3,000 in
7 each tank?
- 8 A. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. At least. Because I held so much
9 fuel that the boat -- because over -- I had to have, like, a
10 fueling procedure and stuff on that boat and stuff.
- 11 Q. Because of how much you could carry?
- 12 A. Yeah.
- 13 Q. And then after the fire and you were here in Portland, did
14 they come in and pump out a bunch of fuel?
- 15 A. They did. They -- yeah. They pumped out.
- 16 Q. It's clean, right? They got it all out from what you
17 understand?
- 18 A. From what I understand, yeah.
- 19 Q. That's what I --
- 20 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. From what I understand, Clean Harbor says
21 -- that's what we're actually waiting on for, like, the scrapping
22 of it, you know. We grabbed some stuff off of it, but -- and
23 Roger Hill (ph.) wants to get it, but Clean Harbors has to do one
24 more final clean of it before they put it -- because they don't
25 want it up over -- you know, it's still an oily mess, you know.

- 1 Q. Right.
- 2 A. So they --
- 3 Q. Do you have any idea how much Clean Harbor pumped out? Did
4 they give you a quantity?
- 5 A. Yeah. Of just straight diesel?
- 6 Q. Yeah.
- 7 A. I don't know off the diesel. I know they pulled 2700 -- I
8 mean, 27,000 gallons of the water and the diesel mix from out of
9 the --
- 10 Q. (Indiscernible)?
- 11 A. Yeah. There might be -- 'cause they must have sent it
12 somewhere where it got centrifuged and --
- 13 Q. Decanted, yeah.
- 14 A. -- stuff like that, but I didn't get any of that. I know
15 that they pulled 27,000 gallons --
- 16 Q. Of stuff.
- 17 A. -- (indiscernible) of stuff down there.
- 18 Q. From the bilge. Well, they shot it with foam and everything
19 from the fire department was there, so all that went out.
- 20 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 21 Q. And then the fuel, if -- what -- no matter what tank you were
22 burning from, it would go feed the engines? Was it all hard pipe,
23 or was there any flexible hoses that would have fed into the
24 engines?
- 25 A. It was 95 percent hard pipe. There would've only been, like,

1 some soft connections. Like, there would've been a hydraulic
2 hose-like connections that go -- so they would come out of the
3 tanks in the stern and they would come back -- there was a -- not
4 a centrifuge, but it would into, like, a day tank that the water
5 would settle out on the bottom and the fuel would come to the top,
6 you know, on the -- and then it would go on to the engines from
7 there.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. So like a settling tank almost?

10 A. Yeah. There was one back there. And then it was all hard
11 pipe going up into the main engine, (indiscernible) and then it
12 went on to the different engines, and there would only be that
13 short connection going to the engine that would be soft, because
14 it would just crack if you didn't.

15 Q. Right. With the vibration and all?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. What else?

19 Q. And do you have a value of the vessel? What was that worth?
20 Just -- because in our report, we always put damage to the vessel
21 was estimate at -- we had a million. Is that about right?

22 A. The damage to it?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Yeah. The boat was, the boat was worth, like, 1.3.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. 1.4, right around there. It was insured for a million.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. So --
- 4 Q. All right. Just fire some questions at you from the
5 information we've collected from -- were you licensed by NOAA to
6 do New England multi-fish species (indiscernible) --
- 7 A. Yeah.
- 8 Q. -- (indiscernible) on everything?
- 9 A. Yeah.
- 10 Q. And typically, you ground fished?
- 11 A. Yeah. That's all we did, yeah.
- 12 Q. And you had picked up 30 tons of ice, and 4500 gallons of
13 fuel in Boston?
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 Q. Where were all the immersion suits kept, the survival suits?
16 Were they kept in the galley?
- 17 A. Yes. When you walked in the, when you walked in the door of
18 the galley and then -- you know where the refrigerator was melted
19 right there?
- 20 Q. Yeah.
- 21 A. There was a big shelf -- there was a big thing up on top of
22 the refrigerator. There was some, there was some up there, and
23 then I think a couple of guys moved them to the state room or
24 something because we were cleaning something, because we just come
25 out of the shipyard. And we put the new refrigerator in. That's

1 what it -- that was -- that refrigerator was only a couple days
2 old.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. So we put the new refrigerator in, so they had moved them
5 from there into the state rooms, and we just hadn't moved them
6 back out to there yet, so -- and then mine was kept up in the
7 wheelhouse room with me.

8 Q. Which you couldn't get to because the fire was so bad?

9 A. No, I grabbed mine --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- going out of the wheelhouse and stuff. But then Steve ran
12 back into the boat to get the survival suits, and he came out and
13 he only had three of them, and he's like, I couldn't see, I
14 couldn't see. I'm like, well, fuck -- we're past that now. It's
15 -- you know --

16 Q. And you gave your suit to another crew member and you didn't
17 have a suit, right?

18 A. Yes, that's correct.

19 Q. Before you did leave the bridge, you were able to secure the
20 winch engine from above or not?

21 A. Yeah. I shut that down immediately. I was hauling back and
22 I seen the smoke, and that's the first thing I shut off.

23 Q. So you were able to have control of the engine from the
24 wheelhouse?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. And that was the only one. You couldn't control the
2 generators or the main, right?

3 A. Nope.

4 Q. Okay. And then when you did call for help over the channel
5 16, you called the Coast Guard, the *Maria Joann* and the *Princess*
6 *Laura* were nearby?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. They just heard this -- the broadcast, do you think?

9 A. Yeah. I was actually talking to them on a different channel,
10 on channel --

11 Q. 68?

12 A. -- I think it was 68 or 72 or 73. I was talking to them on
13 there just basic stuff. I work with them a lot. And I just said
14 you -- come get me, and then I switched --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- the radio channel, you know, over.

17 Q. Okay. To 16?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay, perfect. The life raft, prior to the incident, where
20 was it typically stored? On the overhead of the wheelhouse?

21 A. No. It was, it was that whaleback that comes out -- you
22 know, you walk out the wheelhouse door up top, right to the right,
23 where the mountain pads are. It was right there.

24 Q. Okay. Right by the base of the crane?

25 A. Yeah, yeah.

- 1 Q. Okay. It was right there?
- 2 A. Right there.
- 3 Q. Right outside the door?
- 4 A. Yes.
- 5 Q. And the EPIRB would've been right above you then too, right?
- 6 A. Right above the head right there, yep.
- 7 Q. Okay. And then they grabbed the life raft and sat it down on
8 the working deck, and that's where they inflated it and pushed it
9 down the ramp?
- 10 A. Yes. That's where we did it.
- 11 Q. And then you got into it, they slid you down without your
12 immersion suit, and then they all slid down the ramp to get in?
- 13 A. Yeah. We all went down together. You know, I gave them the
14 painter line, and they wrapped the painter line around their arms,
15 and we put the survival suit -- I mean, the life raft into the
16 ramp and -- because we used their force to push it out.
- 17 Q. Got it. That's -- were there any smoke detectors in the
18 engine room, or a fire detector? Anything? I know you had some
19 in your combination spaces, but --
- 20 A. Not down inside the engine room. There was the one right
21 next to the engine room door.
- 22 Q. Up top in the --
- 23 A. Yes.
- 24 Q. -- combination space?
- 25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. But outside. Okay. That's good that -- yeah, the hydraulic
2 system was the main question, you know. Like, kind of, like,
3 where were the high-pressure lines, where were they located
4 compared to kind of the area where we see the fire was burning the
5 most.

6 A. Yeah. Which is over here, right?

7 Q. Yep.

8 A. This was the main area.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Yeah. I mean, now that you guys looked at it, I almost
11 wonder --

12 Q. Something with that box. Have you noticed problems with it
13 before?

14 A. Yeah. I can't remember if we added -- we might've even put a
15 little bit of angle iron on it to stiffen it up too. I can't
16 remember. I have to ask Reed. From the, from the original --
17 when it was flexing and stuff. But like I said, it'd been in
18 there for a couple years with no issues.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. But it had already been fatigued over that many years of use
21 prior to me having it.

22 Q. Yeah, yeah.

23 A. You know, that could potentially be something.

24 Q. And I know you know a lot of details about the winch engine
25 with the pressures and all that. Do you have any idea of the

1 flow, the gallons per minute flow of the hydraulic fluid or
2 something?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Yeah?

5 A. So the winches would've been 75 to 80 gallons a minute, and
6 the cargos and the net reels were 50 to 55 gallons a minute under
7 full, full load.

8 Q. And you wouldn't -- out there, you would not have been using
9 the boom and the cargo boom. So the net reels would've been
10 operating and the deck winches, right, while hauling back?

11 A. Yeah. It would've been just -- all that was working at the
12 time were the winches.

13 Q. Winches.

14 A. The winches at the time. And they were under 380 horsepower
15 going. So they were under, they were under their full load. But
16 I mean, hydraulic systems, they -- that pressure is throughout the
17 whole system anyways. You now, even if you're putting that going,
18 you're still getting the same amount through the cargos and stuff
19 like that. It's still flowing.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. It has to flow, so --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. They were getting their full load at that time. Yeah.

24 Q. And since this has happened on the *Three Girls* have you done
25 any changes to the *Maria Joann* just yet? I know you talked about

1 maybe trying to do some remote stops and --

2 A. Yeah. I've actually been changing out -- I have that --
3 that's why I was late. I didn't get home until, like, 1 in the
4 morning. I've been changing out every little hydraulic line on
5 the thing. Well, on the high-pressure side of it, 'cause they've
6 been in there since probably 1986 or whatever, you know, and I see
7 the chafe and wear on them and stuff. So I've been replacing them
8 slowly. And Reed, my shore engineer, I'm sure you met him, he
9 said the -- because he's been on -- down here forever and stuff.
10 I'm going to put -- I think I'm going to put one of those Halon
11 systems in there and just (indiscernible) and it puts it out.

12 Q. Some type of suppression system?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. Because that would be a lot easier than this shit.

16 Q. Yeah. Close the doors and then you would need something to
17 seal the fan -- the dampers up, the dampers on the fans.

18 A. So what is Halon? Is that, like, a gas or --

19 Q. Yeah. They don't use that as much. They have new
20 suppression systems that have different chemicals that don't leave
21 a residue. There's one called a Novec 1230. They have CO2 that
22 they've been using.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. They have water mist. Like, there are a lot of new systems
25 out there that --

- 1 A. Yeah.
- 2 Q. -- would, you know, quickly suffocate the engine, but -- the
3 engine room, but the thing is that you have to be able to isolate
4 and seal it up, so you'd have to be able to put dampers on your
5 fans so you could stop the air flow in and out.
- 6 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 7 Q. That's important. And the doors need to be closed.
- 8 A. Yeah. Those are those little bomb things that they --
- 9 Q. That's another one too.
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. But, like, the -- some of the fixed systems have the big
12 bottles, like CO2 bottles and, like, they typically can be
13 released from outside the space.
- 14 A. Yeah.
- 15 Q. But --
- 16 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.
- 17 Q. A lot of tow boats are getting that, and we do see some
18 fishing vessels with them now too, and all the big ships have to
19 have them.
- 20 A. Oh, they have to have them?
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. No, I'm going to put some sort
23 of --
- 24 Q. Fixed system. That's what they call it.
- 25 A. Yeah. I definitely want to put something down there, because

1 that's --

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. I mean, like I said, I never -- that was, like -- that
4 fucking blew my mind, it just coming out of the shipyard and
5 stuff. Hadn't even got the bill for the shipyard yet. So -- but
6 no, I'll send off any of these pictures that I have.

7 Q. Okay. I appreciate that. That'd be great.

8 A. The boat's still over there if you want to go over and take a
9 look at it again or whatnot. You know, you guys don't have to ask
10 me. You can just go over there.

11 Q. Appreciate it.

12 A. As long as it's there, but I know they're going to want to
13 get it moved off soon. And I'm probably actually going to go over
14 there -- well, I know I'm going to go over there today and check
15 that out now that Reed mentioned that yesterday. So see if I can
16 see anything.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Because it's been stumping me on what it was.

19 Q. I'm sure, yeah.

20 A. But even, like -- you know, even after we had talked --
21 because the electrical thing, because I thought smelling that
22 burning or whatever, but there's no way the fire grew that fast
23 just being an electrical fire. Because I have smoked out a
24 generator before, you know, and you've gone down and put it out.
25 You've had time. Like, that thing, in minutes, it was already --

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. -- the whole thing engulfed in flames.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. So it had to have a fuel source.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. So -- but yeah.

7 Q. Cool. I don't have any more questions. I appreciate you
8 coming down and helping us out to solve this thing.

9 A. Yeah, absolutely.

10 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: 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

PLACE: Portland, Maine

DATE: October 29, 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