



## National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

Office of Marine Safety

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**Date:** January 5, 2003

**Place:** via telephone

**Person Interviewed:** Cline Family

**Interview Conducted By:** Jim Walsh  
Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

### INTRODUCTION

The Cline Family – David, Karyn, and Jennifer (11) - was interviewed in conjunction with the investigation into the sinking of the Small Passenger Vessel *Panther*. The text that follows is not a verbatim record of the conversation. It has been developed from my handwritten notes of the conversation and is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge and recollection.

### INTERVIEW

The Clines purchased three tickets for the Panther, boarded and took three seats in the second row from the back of the boat's left hand side. As the boat got underway the boat captain gave a brief safety talk basically stating where the life jackets were stored.

This was not their first time on boats and they did note the location of the lifejackets. The Panther made her way to the main channel where the speed was increased. The captain was looking for dolphins and spotted some swimming ahead of them. The boat made one pass creating a wake to attract the dolphins. After the first turn of 300 yards there was some water entering the back of the boat.

The Panther made another wide turn as the Manatee II passed through the channel. The captain stated that more people in back would help create a larger wake. By this time the water in the back of the boat was ankle deep. The Panther made a third turn and more water entered the back of the boat. The captain stopped the boat and turned on the bilge pumps. The captain asked those standing to move to the middle of the boat.

Within minutes of stopping, the Panther's captain called to a passing crab boat, approximately 50 yards away to come and help. As the crab boat came alongside, the wave from her bow pushed over the Panther and the Panther sank within three seconds. The Clines all swam to the crab boat and were pulled aboard by the fisherman. The Captain of the Panther stayed with at the Panther exposed rails with a couple that couldn't swim.

The Clines were subsequently transferred from the crab boat to the Panther II and returned to the NPS pier. On the return trip aboard the Panther II another route was taken to the NPS dock. The Clines do recall a helicopter flying overhead.

The Clines did not feel that the rescue effort was coordinated nor well organized.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Jim Walsh