

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

In the Matter of:	*	
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ACCIDENT OF THE LADY D	*	
ON MARCH 6, 2004	*	Docket No. DCA 04 MM015
in Baltimore, Maryland	*	
	*	

Wednesday,
March 10, 2004

INTERVIEW OF:

WILLIAM E. THOMPSON, III

PRESENT:

MORGAN J. TURRELL, NTSB
TOM ROTH-ROFFY
MARK HAMMOND
ED NARIZZANO

P R O C E E D I N G S

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MR. TURRELL: Good morning. It is 11 a.m. on Wednesday, March 10. NTSB is conducting interview with a Seaport Taxi employee.

My name is Morgan Turrell, I am the Operations Group Chairman. And to my right?

LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Lieutenant Commander Mark Hammond, Coast Guard Sector, Baltimore.

MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Tom Roth-Roffy, National Transportation Safety Board.

MR. NARIZZANO: Ed Narizzano, Director of Seaport Taxi.

MR. TURRELL: Sir, if you would just say your name and spell it, please.

MR. THOMPSON: William E. Thompson, III. Thompson is T-H-O-M-P-S-O-N.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And how old are you, sir?

MR. THOMPSON: I am 60.

MR. TURRELL: Okay. And what is your position with Seaport Taxi?

MR. THOMPSON: I am the Fort McHenry dock coordinator.

MR. TURRELL: And what are your duties as the Fort McHenry dock coordinator?

1 MR. THOMPSON: I, well, there are several
2 duties. The first is I am responsible for counting the
3 people that get off the boat and get on the boat, or
4 boats. I am responsible for keeping a record of the
5 number of people, you know, that we have had that day
6 at the Fort. With the situation we have now, since
7 our dock got washed away, the duties are a little
8 different than they would be when we had a regular
9 dock. I am in communication with the captain of the
10 Fort boat, who let's me know when he is about to dock,
11 so, that I can go down and escort the people getting
12 off the boat in through, from the fire department side
13 to the Fort McHenry side. And then direct the people
14 from the Fort McHenry side to go down to the boat. And
15 that is when, of course, when I do my count because one
16 group comes through and then the other group goes, goes
17 through the other way.

18 I am also there to answer questions about
19 the, when the next boat is going to arrive, about the
20 company, about the Fort, about the area. I have, I
21 have lived in the area and I am a history major, so, I
22 am also kind of an information person.

23 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

24 MR. THOMPSON: I am also, need to be sure that
25 the people who go back to the boat are people who have

1 either already been on the boat or have permission from
2 the Fort rangers from the Fort to go onto the boat.
3 Because the Fort doesn't like us to take, the Fort has
4 asked not to take people from, to begin their trip at
5 the Fort. So, that people don't get back too late.

6 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

7 MR. THOMPSON: And overall duties of just
8 being sure that, you know, that people are safe and
9 that kind of thing.

10 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Can you give us a little,
11 go through your background, education?

12 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, I graduated from the
13 University of Maryland. I am, I have lived in
14 Baltimore most of my life. I live in the Canton area.
15 I work during the week for WorldCom. I am the agency
16 relations group there. And I work most weekends for
17 Seaport Taxi. I have been working for the company
18 actually since Living Classroom brought the company and
19 I worked for its predecessor which was Harbor Shuttle
20 for several years. I used to drive, we used to have a
21 couple of vans and I was a van driver for the company
22 when it was Harbor Shuttle and for the first year or
23 two when it was Seaport Taxi. When the vans were sold
24 or were no longer used, I was given the job of working
25 at Fort McHenry. Occasionally, I filled in as a mate

1 on the boats as well.

2 MR. TURRELL: What kind of training did you
3 receive when you first came to, when Seaport Taxi first
4 started, what type of training did they provide you as
5 a mate or as a dock coordinator?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Well, we have a year, well, we
7 have a yearly training. We had one about two or three
8 weeks ago. They call man overboard drill. And we are,
9 we go out in the boat with a certain number of, usually
10 with Ed, with the captains and mates, and go through a
11 drill, you know, if somebody falls overboard and what
12 we are suppose to do, using a life jacket, you know,
13 that kind of thing.

14 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

15 MR. THOMPSON: We do that every year for
16 several years now.

17 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So, Bill, could you just
18 take us back to Saturday, March 6 and tell us from your
19 perspective what happened that day?

20 MR. THOMPSON: I, usually the last pickup is
21 at four o'clock at the Fort. But, this was, for the
22 first time ever, I forgot my watch that day. So, my
23 time, my times aren't as perfect as they should be. I
24 always remember my watch, for some reason or another I
25 forgot it Saturday. But, it was a little before four

1 that the boat came into the dock. Normally, the last
2 pickup is at four, but, we had, we still had a good
3 many people at the Fort. And there were about, I think
4 about 18 people waiting on the Fort side to go back on
5 the boat. Captain Frank notified me a minute or so
6 before he got to the dock that he was getting ready to
7 dock. And what he does is he notifies me shortly
8 before he gets there and then when he is actually
9 docked, he says, you know, it is safe to bring people
10 down now, or words to that effect. And so, I directed
11 the people down there. There were, then there were two
12 young men, it is funny, I can't really remember
13 anything about the people that I let down. I think
14 maybe some of the shock of --

15 (Pause.)

16 MR. THOMPSON: Anyway, there were -- there
17 were two younger men that came down a little bit after
18 that first group came, and they were, they kind of,
19 they kind of waited. They were of Spanish speaking,
20 and then I saw they were waiting for two of their
21 friends and they were waving them to come on. So, and
22 then right behind their two friends there were another
23 two couples. But, because of the count, I couldn't
24 let the two couples go through and, and so, the, the
25 four young men, well, the two additional young men went

1 on through and that was the full count. So, I
2 explained to the other two couples that they would need
3 to wait for the next boat. I gave them the time frame.
4 People are never thrilled when that happens, but, I am
5 usually pretty good at, at explaining the situation.

6 And then the, we were standing there talking
7 while I was explaining to them what was, you know, what
8 the situation would be. Shall I go on?

9 (Pause.)

10 MR. TURRELL: Please continue, sir.

11 MR. THOMPSON: Sure. And then it seemed like
12 all of a sudden there was a huge downpour. Oh, I
13 should have mentioned also, one of the things that
14 Captain Frank does normally after everybody gets on, he
15 will give me the number that got on. We will confirm
16 the number together. And so, he had done that. I
17 forgot to mention that.

18 While I was talking to the couple, to the two
19 couples, it just all of a sudden, a huge downpour came.

20 So, we ran, well, they ran first. There is an area
21 not very far away where there are coke machines sort of
22 under a cover. When we had the original dock there,
23 before it got washed away, there was a little house
24 where I would stand, but since there was no place, we
25 all kind of ran up there and stood under there. So, I

1 really couldn't see that boat at that point.

2 I did hear bits and pieces. I had heard, I
3 think it was J.G. say something about a storm or
4 weather or something, I don't, because again, I was
5 talking to the people so I didn't hear everything that
6 was being said. I do remember Kathy saying something
7 about radar, it looked like, it looked like it was
8 going to not, not the heaviest radar or something, was
9 going to hit where, you know, Baltimore. It was going
10 around Baltimore or something like that. But, again, I
11 just remember bits and pieces of that. Shortly after
12 we were under that protection, we started hearing
13 sirens, lots sirens. And I remember saying something
14 about, you know, there must have been a electric,
15 electricity with the storm and hit something or
16 something like that. And then I heard, I think it was
17 Captain Glenn call one boat and there was no answer.
18 And I, then I realized almost immediately with the
19 sirens and no answer, and with that huge sudden
20 downpour and everything just, it was just like came out
21 of nowhere. It was just huge. That something must be,
22 something might be, something might be wrong. So, I
23 ran down to the edge of the water and I saw, over where
24 the Naval Reserve Ship Wright is, I saw what looked
25 like people on a raft. In the meantime, John Glenn, I

1 think it was John was asking me what was happening.
2 And I said words to the effect, I think there is a
3 problem. And then it hit me that, even though one boat
4 shouldn't be there, one boat should be further west,
5 that that must be it. And I said, I think she has
6 tipped over or flipped over or something like that.

7 And people started, a couple of police cars
8 did come down at that point. I went over to the police,
9 they asked me immediately how many people were on the
10 boat. And I told them that it was 23 passengers and
11 two crew.

12 And do you want me to keep on going about --

13 MR. TURRELL: Which police, I am sorry,
14 which --

15 MR. THOMPSON: Baltimore City Police. There
16 were two Baltimore City Police cars that had driven up
17 after I had been down at the water and I kind of saw
18 them there and went up to them right away.

19 MR. TURRELL: All right, just continue if
20 there is any other information.

21 MR. THOMPSON: I don't know, I mean, at that
22 point, of course, I was concerned about the people,
23 Seaport Taxi people that were still there, and of
24 course, I didn't know exactly what was going on down
25 there. I was, I spoke with John Glenn and explained

1 to him that the location of the, of the people and I
2 remember mentioning the fact that it was, seemed to be
3 moving very quickly. They were, when I saw them, they
4 were at the right and almost in no time at all, they
5 were being pushed down toward the mouth, toward the
6 bridge, near the Lehigh cement thing. And then, you
7 know, I, I asked the Seaport passengers to wait there,
8 I would see about getting them back. I did go over to
9 the Fort and spoke to the Chief, briefly, about whether
10 a boat could land there or not to pick up our remaining
11 people and he said, no. In meantime, I was in contact
12 with the office, with Kathy as well as with J. G. and
13 with, by that time Ron Silver, was on his mobile and
14 responding to his questions.

15 Then the police asked me to go down to the
16 Naval Reserve building where they were bringing in
17 people and to speak to the police there. He wanted me
18 to speak to the Sergeant there. At that point, when I
19 went down there, I saw Frank, and hand him the hand
20 held so he could call into the office and let them
21 know, also especially to call his wife that he was
22 okay.

23 He was a little dazed, but he was walking
24 around. And then I made arrangements with Kathy over
25 the phone to get picked up. I thought we would have

1 passengers, but, the passengers that we had there made
2 other, the rangers told me the passengers had made
3 other, had other means of transportation and had
4 already left. So, I went back and I was picked up by
5 the Living Classroom van at the Fort.

6 MR. TURRELL: Okay. In general, what was the
7 weather like that day?

8 MR. THOMPSON: It was a, in the morning we had
9 a downpour, because I had to put my umbrella up. And
10 then it had turned, we had only started off with like
11 two people who came over. And then it had turned
12 sunny, beautiful out. And that, and we started getting
13 crowds of people. That always seem to happen once the
14 weather turns nice and people want to come out. So, it
15 wasn't until the end of the day there that it, that we
16 had that sudden cloud burst, wind and everything. Just
17 by the number of people coming, you could tell that it
18 was pretty out.

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Do you, which type of
20 radio do you monitor? Is it the UHF black box or is it
21 VHF?

22 MR. THOMPSON: VHF. I have a two way.

23 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And which channel do you
24 normally keep it on?

25 MR. THOMPSON: Seventy one.

1 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And from your standpoint,
2 before the boat arrived at the Fort, which was around
3 what time was that?

4 MR. THOMPSON: A little before four, probably
5 about 10 of four, something in that neighborhood.

6 MR. TURRELL: What was the weather conditions
7 like at that time?

8 MR. THOMPSON: It was very nice out. I mean,
9 everybody was standing around. There was no, from what
10 I remember, it was, you know, it was fine, it was
11 sunny.

12 MR. TURRELL: Was it windy?

13 MR. THOMPSON: I don't remember it being, I
14 don't remember wind until everything started up. I
15 don't remember.

16 MR. TURRELL: Okay. You mentioned that you
17 were looking across and you saw the boat near the
18 right, the vessel --

19 MR. THOMPSON: The Naval.

20 MR. TURRELL: The Naval vessel right and
21 heading down towards the cement. Where were you
22 standing when you first saw the rescue craft?

23 MR. THOMPSON: I was standing on the seawall
24 to the right of our old dock.

25 MR. TURRELL: Okay. How do you normally

1 perform the passenger count? I know you are escorting
2 people from the Fort into the fire boat area to load
3 the passengers.

4 MR. THOMPSON: No, what I, what, the mate is
5 responsible for getting them off of the boat.

6 MR. TURRELL: Right.

7 MR. THOMPSON: The mate helps them off and
8 directs them to come, to come up, to go along the
9 fireboat dock. I go, I ask the people behind the gate
10 to wait until, until I bring everybody through. I
11 explain what I have to do.

12 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

13 MR. THOMPSON: Then I go down and basically
14 meet them and then escort them back, count them as they
15 go through the gate. Then I invite the other people,
16 the people getting on the boat to then go through and
17 then I count them as they go through. Of course, at
18 this time there was nobody getting off the boat. It was
19 just people getting on the boat.

20 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

21 MR. THOMPSON: So as soon as he said that he
22 had landed, then I opened the gate and directed people
23 to go down.

24 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Do you, when you are
25 boarding passengers or escorting them through the gate

1 or letting them through the gate, do you inform the
2 captain of passenger loading of special needs, for
3 example, handicap person or children?

4 MR. THOMPSON: Well, not children normally.
5 If there is a particular problem, but normally if he
6 has brought them over, he would be aware, like someone
7 in a wheelchair. You don't get too many of them. But,
8 there really hasn't been the occasion that I can think
9 of where I had to notify them of a particular
10 situation. I mean, you always have children.

11 MR. TURRELL: Sure.

12 MR. THOMPSON: So, that is, if, I am trying to
13 think. No, I can't remember a situation where I had to
14 call where there was something special.

15 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And while the folks are
16 waiting for the boat, is there any questions the
17 passengers have about the boat, or the operation, they
18 ask you, what type of questions might they ask you?

19 MR. THOMPSON: They most asked question is
20 when will the next boat be there. Sometimes they will
21 just want to chat. And if there are only a few people
22 there, you know, sometimes we will, you know, we will
23 just talk.

24 MR. TURRELL: What is the normal time for a
25 boat, leaving Fort McHenry to arrive at Fells Point or

1 when --

2 MR. THOMPSON: Thirty, 35 minutes.

3 MR. TURRELL: Thirty, 35.

4 MR. THOMPSON: The only exceptions come in
5 sometimes they get calls to stop in the Canton area.

6 MR. TURRELL: Recently in the last year, how
7 many times have you been asked to serve as mate on one
8 of the boats?

9 MR. THOMPSON: Over the last year? Oh, I
10 would say, well, last winter I did quite a bit.
11 Because we weren't running to the Fort as much in the
12 winter. So, I am sure I worked as a mate at least in
13 that last year, 15, 10, you know, a dozen times.

14 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And as a mate, what are
15 your duties as a mate then?

16 MR. THOMPSON: As a mate, of course, to count
17 the people that get on, to make sure that you have the
18 correct limit. On each boat, not all the boats are the
19 same, of course, you need to give the announcements
20 where the life jackets are located, to remain seated
21 when the captain is leaving or getting ready to dock,
22 you know, the, something about the, you know, how much
23 it is and are they coming around collecting the tickets
24 and that kind of thing.

25 MR. TURRELL: Okay. What is your understanding

1 as to the company policy regarding weather, weather
2 conditions suspending operation?

3 MR. THOMPSON: Well, I know if they see
4 lighting, they, they normally, if lighting is and I am
5 not a captain so I don't know the exact, but, I know if
6 it at a certain, a certain closeness, they definitely
7 have to pull over and dock the boat. And I know that
8 in certain kind of other weather conditions, visibility
9 and that kind of thing are affected, they may not even
10 take the boats out. But, that is something that is
11 really, I don't know the details on that. I just,
12 because that would be something between the captains
13 and the administration.

14 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And so, say it is summer
15 time, where, how dark does it get with these boats
16 operating, do they operate in darkness or is it
17 strictly a day time operation?

18 MR. THOMPSON: In the summer, the boats to the
19 Fort operated until eight o'clock because that is when
20 the Fort closes. The other boats, like, I know,
21 weekends, they will be like until midnight. So, they
22 certainly do work in darkness. Of course, in the
23 summer, it is light until certainly pass eight o'clock.
24 And during the winter, we have only, we have been
25 stopping the Fort at four o'clock or right around four.

1 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

2 MR. THOMPSON: And there had been a few
3 weekends this winter where we didn't go, we didn't, I
4 don't know if the boats ran, but I know I didn't, I
5 know the Fort wasn't open.

6 MR. TURRELL: Okay. I just want to go back,
7 just and sort of, like a time line of the
8 communications, particularly with regards to the
9 Kathy's transmission and Captain Glenn's transmission.
10 And how you got a sense of time, I mean, you had no
11 watch, you know it is four o'clock.

12 MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

13 MR. TURRELL: How are you determining time?

14 MR. THOMPSON: Well, I am pretty good at
15 usually determining time. It is just something that
16 some people can do and I can do that. Also, being as,
17 Frank would normally call when he was approaching and I
18 would, I have been there long enough. I have a pretty
19 good idea.

20 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

21 MR. THOMPSON: Of when they are going to get
22 there. If it seems like it was longer, there were one
23 or two times where I would call and say, let me have an
24 ETA.

25 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

1 MR. THOMPSON: And sometimes he was delayed
2 because a crew member had to use the bathroom or
3 because he had to make a stop and usually I would hear
4 he is going to make a stop in Canton, which would delay
5 him.

6 MR. TURRELL: So, to the best of your
7 recollection, when did Captain Frank notify you that he
8 was docking at the Fort?

9 MR. THOMPSON: It would have been a little,
10 somewhere probably around quarter or ten of four,
11 somewhere in that neighborhood.

12 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And when did you hear
13 either Kathy of John Glenn?

14 MR. THOMPSON: About the weather?

15 MR. TURRELL: Yes.

16 MR. THOMPSON: I honestly can't remember. I
17 think it was, I think it was soon after he left the
18 dock. But, like I said, I was talking to these people
19 and explaining, you know, about having missed it and
20 all of that, and they were talking to me, so I didn't,
21 that was like, I didn't hear everything that was being
22 said on the radio. I just remember, I remember hearing
23 Kathy saying something but I didn't --

24 MR. TURRELL: When you heard Kathy saying
25 something and to the best of your recollection, what

1 were you doing when you heard, were you handling
2 passengers or --

3 MR. THOMPSON: Oh, no, it was, I think it was
4 after they were already on the boat.

5 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So, were you standing in
6 the shelter in the rain?

7 MR. THOMPSON: No, I think it was right before
8 the downpour that we had. I think I was still down by
9 the gate that leads to the fire department.

10 MR. TURRELL: I will turn the questioning to
11 Tom here.

12 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Tom Roth-Roffy, NTSB.

13 You say you have been working as a Fort
14 coordinator for about four years, two years, I am
15 sorry?

16 MR. THOMPSON: Probably it has been, it has
17 probably been about four years, three or four years.
18 Since I drove the van for awhile, I certainly, this is
19 probably the fourth, I think this will be the fourth
20 year that I am at the Fort. Three or four years.

21 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And about what time did you
22 arrive at the Fort and how did you get there?

23 MR. THOMPSON: I, the boat meets me at the
24 Canton Waterfront Park. And then takes me across to
25 the Fort. And so it would have been 11:30, 11:20,

1 something like that, that morning, I believe. We had,
2 I remember, since it was still kind of yucky out, there
3 were just two passengers on the boat. I think there
4 were four passengers and only two got off.

5 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Was that the first trip of
6 the day?

7 MR. THOMPSON: That was the first trip for
8 the, now the boat had already been in service. It had
9 been on the inside loop. And usually it makes one,
10 until we get people that want to go to the Fort, then
11 it, and they have enough boats on the inside, that they
12 can then let that boat go to the outside, what they
13 call the outside loop. But, I just go, I go down to
14 the park and I have my radio there, so I know when he
15 is going to get there.

16 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: In your experience with being
17 the Fort coordinator, could you tell us which boats
18 have been on that, on that outer loop run?

19 MR. THOMPSON: The most, the most regular boat
20 is, one boat has always been on that Fort run or most
21 of the time. They have, in the summer time, they also
22 use two boats and four boat on a pretty regular basis.
23 And those are boats that are often used to stop in
24 Canton. They, one summer they used five boat a lot.
25 As well as three boat. Last summer it seemed, I think

1 it was Reggie drove nine boat in the summer, one of the
2 larger, the smallest of the large boats, which I think
3 was nine, was coming out when, on a pretty regular
4 basis when we were really busy. In the middle of the
5 summer it gets, we get six or seven hundred people that
6 they come to the Fort in one, on a Saturday, say. And
7 so they were bringing, they were all, manning the big
8 boat with the smaller boats, but they were making the
9 big boat as, express run from Fells Point to the Fort.
10 And then using the smaller boats to come to the Fort,
11 but, also to handle traffic.

12 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So, it is your recollection
13 that the one boat was always on the Fort run and they
14 would be augmented by other boats as --

15 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah, particularly in bad
16 weather, because one boat is a closed boat, and you
17 don't get as many people in bad weather, so it kind of,
18 it was a practical boat to use for that.

19 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Do you recall how many
20 passengers you had on Saturday, March 6, total count?

21 MR. THOMPSON: I think I was around 66.

22 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And you mentioned that the
23 last run, around the four o'clock run, you had two
24 couples that were not able to board the boat. Do you
25 recall how many other passengers were left behind

1 besides those two couples?

2 MR. THOMPSON: I honestly don't. I honestly
3 don't.

4 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Would that be recorded on
5 your log, how many are on the Fort?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, probably. The problem
7 with the log is that some times you get people that get
8 picked up at the Fort and take, like the week before, I
9 know we had one man that came over on a bus pass and
10 took the bus back from the Fort, I just happen to know
11 that. So, it is not, you can't, there is no way to
12 determine if everybody is going to back on the boat
13 again. I, we hardly, maybe less one person, I think,
14 like a year ago, we have almost never left anybody at
15 the Fort. And usually the reason is because the Fort,
16 normally our boats leaves when the Fort closes. Now
17 during this winter, we have been leaving at four
18 o'clock instead of at five, but we haven't had a
19 problem with people being left there. So, even though
20 the count is not perfect because you do have people or
21 sometimes you will get, well, people will go another
22 means, or if they, if they, we had situations where
23 people have not done very well with their time and then
24 they need to take an airplane back, and they will just
25 take a cab back to the hotel, because the boats can't

1 get back soon enough. So, it is not a precise, the
2 only, the one thing that is precise for is making sure
3 that, that we know how many people came out that day.
4 But, it is not precise in terms of knowing exactly how
5 many we have taken back.

6 Now, it is, but I am, but we do have a method
7 for knowing exactly how many people we put on each boat
8 because I count them and the mate counts them.

9 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So you don't necessarily keep
10 track of how many people are still on the Fort?

11 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, yeah, I keep track of
12 that, too. But, it is not always exact, that is the
13 problem.

14 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Some people could leave and
15 you wouldn't know it and but you wouldn't necessarily
16 go looking for them.

17 MR. THOMPSON: Well, yeah, I usually, if it
18 doesn't come out, I will usually go check with one of
19 the rangers, and say, is there any, can either you make
20 an announcement because they are very nice about doing
21 that, because we are still missing people or when it is
22 five o'clock thing, the rangers normally come around
23 and send people down. But, I will usually, I will not
24 usually leave until I have checked with the rangers.

25 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Okay. Do you recall the name

1 of the ranger that was on duty that particular day?

2 MR. THOMPSON: Well, there were several
3 rangers there. Like Ben and Scott were there. There
4 is a female, I can't remember her name. She is very,
5 and then another gentleman who usually wears a pearl
6 neck and I don't know his name either. So, I know they
7 were all there that day, a number of rangers.

8 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So is there normally about
9 four rangers on duty?

10 MR. THOMPSON: Well, in the winter, there are
11 certainly fewer. But, normally, I am not up at the
12 Visitors Center to see like the rangers, unless there
13 is a reason for going up there, except until the end of
14 the day. Because I need to stay down where passengers
15 are to make sure that they don't get worried that we
16 have left them or something like that. So, normally,
17 the only time I leave, I might when I first get there,
18 I might walk around a little bit to see, you know, if
19 everything looks okay. Normally, the only time I would
20 leave is if I need to use the restrooms.

21 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Okay.

22 MR. THOMPSON: And then the restrooms are
23 close by.

24 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: And there is a gate between
25 the Fort and the fire boat, is that gate normally

1 closed or locked?

2 MR. THOMPSON: It is closed at all times,
3 except when we have people going through. Usually what
4 I have done is, something that I found after I had been
5 there for awhile, is a hook on the bottom that I can
6 use to keep it, to keep it shut. And normally people
7 won't go through. I am off and on up there. I could
8 have put a, had been given the opportunity to put a
9 lock there, but I found by latching it, that kept
10 people from going through.

11 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Is there a lock on the gate
12 that could be locked or does the Park Service lock that
13 gate in the evening?

14 MR. THOMPSON: To my knowledge, it is not
15 locked. There is a lock on there, but I think it is
16 rusted.

17 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: You mentioned that when the
18 boat arrived that nobody had come ashore.

19 MR. THOMPSON: Right, we don't pick up
20 passengers after a certain time, because they wouldn't
21 have enough time to spend time in the Fort.

22 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: So, the boat arrived with no
23 passengers onboard.

24 MR. THOMPSON: That is correct.

25 MR. ROTH-ROFFY: Okay. That is all I have.

1 MR. TURRELL: Commander Hammond?

2 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: You mentioned
3 that Captain Frank contacted you about a minute or so
4 outside of docking up.

5 MR. THOMPSON: Yes. He would usually say and
6 he did say that time, I remember that, you know, I am
7 one minute from docking.

8 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. And that
9 was approximately 15:45 to 15:50.

10 MR. THOMPSON: Approximately.

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Quarter of, ten
12 of four, okay.

13 What was the weather like at that point, when
14 he called one minute out, what was your observations?

15 MR. THOMPSON: I think I would remember if,
16 like it if was unusual, if it was bad, from what I
17 remember it was, you know, it was fine. I don't
18 remember like particular, wind or, certainly not wind
19 at that time. From what I remember it was still sunny.

20 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: You mentioned
21 at the time that you observed what looked like the
22 vessel had, you know, capsized and had some standing on
23 it over by the right, and you were by, just to the
24 right of the old dock. Where is the old dock relative
25 to where the new dock is?

1 MR. THOMPSON: Okay. Have, you have seen the
2 fire boat dock?

3 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Yes.

4 MR. THOMPSON: Okay. To the east of the fire
5 boat dock is the old dock that we used, which was the
6 stationary dock. And which got, parts of it still
7 there, but part of it got washed away. And it is, it
8 is not very far from the fence that divides the Fort
9 from the Fire Department. And so, I was, and there is
10 like a big iron gate that goes out to that dock, the
11 old dock, and I was just to the right of that iron gate
12 and on the seawall, itself.

13 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. When the
14 passengers loaded on to the Lady D to depart, did you
15 hear, did you have any conversations with Captain
16 Frank?

17 MR. THOMPSON: He would have just confirmed
18 the number that got on the boat. He does that.

19 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay.

20 MR. THOMPSON: So, I would have, he would have
21 said, I was, he would have said, you know, 23 got on
22 and I would have said copy.

23 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Did he make any
24 mention of the weather to you?

25 MR. THOMPSON: No.

1 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: At that time
2 did you let him know that there was still passengers on
3 Fort McHenry that he would have to pick up?

4 MR. THOMPSON: I think I did. I can't swear
5 that I did, but I am pretty sure, I normally would. So
6 I am pretty sure that I would have said something
7 about, there will be passengers when you come back or
8 something. I am pretty sure I did.

9 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. You said
10 it was about a 30 to 35 minute transit from the Fort to
11 Fells Point and then back. If it is four o'clock and
12 he is leaving, he is going to be hard pressed to get
13 back by five. What happens if --

14 MR. THOMPSON: Oh, no, he would be back by
15 4:30.

16 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Four thirty.

17 MR. THOMPSON: He was leaving a little before
18 four, it would be 15, I am sorry, I was maybe not very
19 good there. It is like 15 minutes from the Fort to
20 Fells Point.

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Oh, so, 30 to
22 35 is a round trip.

23 MR. THOMPSON: It is a round trip.

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. I
25 misunderstood that.

1 MR. THOMPSON: Yes. I am glad you, I am
2 sorry.

3 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. I am
4 sorry, I think I stepped out during the time you were
5 talking about the weather, but where were you standing
6 when the worse of the weather came through?

7 MR. THOMPSON: When it first, I was by the
8 gate, and as the downpour started coming, I followed
9 the passengers up to the area, the shelter, little
10 shelter is where the coke machines are.

11 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: And from that
12 point, was the water visible?

13 MR. THOMPSON: Not, you could see, yeah, but,
14 I, I brought my own chair and I was sitting so that I
15 was, that I really wasn't facing it. I was like side
16 to it because there wasn't any, I was talking to the
17 people and I wasn't, I guess I wasn't really thinking
18 about looking at the water. Because even from the
19 vantage point, when you are at the, at the gate, the
20 fire boats are really in the way, you can't really see
21 the boat when it is actually and that is why we depend
22 on the radio communication, when the boat is getting
23 ready to dock and that kind of thing.

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. How much
25 time would you estimate elapsed from the time the last

1 conversation you had with Captain Frank about
2 confirming passengers and departing from the time that
3 the heaviest portion of that weather came through?

4 MR. THOMPSON: I can't say for sure, maybe
5 five, six minutes. But, I would hate to --

6 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. And when
7 you looked out and observed the vessel by the right,
8 was the Naval Reserve vessel out there yet or the
9 vessel out there by itself?

10 MR. THOMPSON: I am trying to remember. I
11 think there was, they may have had that, one of those
12 little, those little gray boats there. See, in my
13 mind, that couldn't, our boat shouldn't have been
14 there. Our boat should have been much further west.
15 My immediate thought was, well, that is not our boat.
16 It couldn't be there. It is up that way. So, I, you
17 know, you, but I think, so it took me a minute to take
18 it in. I think there was a gray boat there. I think,
19 but I am not, I am not sure. The main thing I just
20 saw were people on top of what looked like a raft.

21 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Prior to that
22 did you observe any activity over that side of the
23 facility, over by where the Naval Reserve Center is at?

24 MR. THOMPSON: I was hearing sirens coming in.

25 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. And how

1 long would you estimate the time, from the time Captain
2 Frank pulled away from the time you got out of the
3 shelter and looked and saw that the vessel out there by
4 the right?

5 MR. THOMPSON: I would guess maybe eight or
6 nine minutes. Maybe not that much.

7 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: It was very
8 close to after the time that significant portion of the
9 weather came through then.

10 MR. THOMPSON: Yes, yeah, it was, the scenario
11 was, you know, the heavy downpour, the heavy wind,
12 shelter, and then, and then not, and then hearing them
13 call Frank and calling -- And by that third time, I
14 don't think it was, it had already stopped.

15 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Well, at the
16 point when you are leading the passengers down to
17 leave, did you observe any squall line or the weather?
18 We have heard accounts of there was a definite
19 distinction of clear skies and then some weather system
20 on the one side.

21 MR. THOMPSON: There may have been, but again,
22 my concern would be making sure that, you know, that I
23 had the count right. It is, it is a big deal that we
24 get the count right. So, I would have been
25 concentrating on counting the people, and I usually

1 recount as I see them, you know, I am really watching
2 them. I am not really observing the weather
3 especially.

4 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Did you hear
5 anybody make any comments with regards to the weather?

6 MR. THOMPSON: None of the passengers, no.

7 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Did you observe
8 any lighting during this evolution?

9 MR. THOMPSON: I thought there was, because I
10 thought there was, but, I could be wrong. I thought
11 when we were in the shelter there that there were one
12 or two lighting things. Because then that is why it
13 made sense when I heard sirens, you know, somebody got
14 hit from lighting. So, that was in my head making the
15 assumption. There are some things that I could
16 remember perfectly and some things I can't remember at
17 all.

18 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Right. And at
19 the time that you heard the radio transmissions with
20 Kathy and John Glenn, what was the weather like at your
21 position when you heard those?

22 MR. THOMPSON: It wasn't doing anything. I
23 remember that.

24 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: And how far
25 before or how long was it before the weather came

1 through that you heard those radio transmissions?

2 MR. THOMPSON: Well, it was after the people,
3 I think it was after the people were on the boat. But,
4 you know, that is something I really can't swear to. I
5 think, my memory is it was after the people were on the
6 boat, and the boat had started out, but, like I said,
7 there are some things I can remember perfectly and
8 other things that I can't.

9 LIEUTENANT COMMANDER HAMMOND: Okay. That is
10 all I have right now. Thank you.

11 MR. TURRELL: Ed?

12 (Pause.)

13 MR. NARIZZANO: Yeah, one quick thing, sort of
14 like training, you were involved with man overboard
15 drills, were you ever involved with the orientation
16 program that, that program?

17 MR. THOMPSON: Well, we had --

18 MR. NARIZZANO: Usually on a Saturday.

19 MR. THOMPSON: We had that, we had that big
20 Saturday meeting, I think it was April of last year,
21 where we had, we had a session, you know, it was about
22 April of last year, so it was less than a year ago, we
23 had a session where we went in and, oh, yeah, we had
24 like breakfast there and then we, basically, went
25 through the routine of Seaport Taxi and then I think it

1 was after, later on that day then we went out, I think
2 onto the boat. But, I remember there was a full day
3 session.

4 MR. NARIZZANO: Do you have an overview of
5 what was covered in that?

6 MR. THOMPSON: Yes.

7 MR. NARIZZANO: Can you share that with
8 everybody?

9 MR. THOMPSON: From, we did things with knots,
10 we did things, Ed is very strong on safety, on
11 procedures for, you have various situations can come
12 up, like somebody falls in the water or you are hit by
13 another boat, or something of that, we were instructed
14 about procedures for tickets, ticketing and those kinds
15 of things.

16 MR. NARIZZANO: It was conducted, you started
17 to say it was, in classroom and then --

18 MR. THOMPSON: Yeah, we were in the Living
19 Classroom and then we went out in groups onto the boat
20 for, like one group would be doing man overboard drill,
21 another group would be doing something else. Knots and
22 that kind of thing or something with, you know, like
23 tying up the boats and things like that.

24 (Pause.)

25 MR. NARIZZANO: Fire extinguishers.

1 MR. THOMPSON: Oh, yeah, yeah, and we did
2 that, we did that as far as a man overboard, too, went
3 over how to use the fire extinguisher and that kind of
4 thing. And that, so we did that then, but, we also do
5 that as part of the man overboard thing, the other
6 week.

7 MR. NARIZZANO: That is all I have got.

8 MR. TURRELL: I just have, from your vantage
9 point at the Fort, as a coordinator, can you hear the
10 boats coming and going, their motors, can you, do you
11 know when they approaching by the sound of the boat?

12 MR. THOMPSON: Certainly not with the boat
13 coming into the fire boat dock. You, you usually, I
14 doubt if you can hear them.

15 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And just, can you
16 characterize Captain Glenn's radio transmission, to the
17 best of your ability, what he said, how he said it?

18 MR. THOMPSON: You mean about the weather or
19 when he was --

20 MR. TURRELL: About the weather.

21 MR. THOMPSON: I really, I, I can't, I
22 remember something was said, but, again, I was, I was
23 talking to the people, so I, I mean, I think for a
24 practical standpoint, if I saw something really weird
25 with the weather, I would certainly say something to a

1 captain, but, I see my job as primarily the immediate
2 safety of the people that I am with. If it is
3 children, and I am watching them go across, I am making
4 sure that parents are keeping them with them so they
5 are not getting, running towards the seawall and that
6 kind of thing. So, my emphasis is always at the, with
7 the people that I am with at the time, you know, not,
8 not other things.

9 MR. TURRELL: All right. And, and same
10 question about Kathy's transmission, can you --

11 MR. THOMPSON: I remember a little, I remember
12 her saying something about radar and it showing storm,
13 storms in the area or something, but, it looks like
14 they are, it is going around, it is going around
15 Baltimore or something like that or the main part of
16 the storm, or something like that is going around,
17 around the city, or around the harbor or something like
18 that.

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Thank you.

20 I have no other questions. Anyone else?

21 This concludes the interview, if you would
22 just acknowledge that it has been recorded, please?

23 MR. THOMPSON: I understand that the interview
24 has been recorded.

25 MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

1

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)