

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD  
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :  
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :  
:  
INTERVIEW OF :  
BILL KOLOKITHAS :  
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held  
on Thursday, November 18, 2004, commencing at 11:45 a.m.,  
in Tarpon Springs, Florida, before:

BOB FORD, NTSB  
BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB  
NANCY MCATEE, NTSB



1 Paradise I, was the vessel name.

2 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

3 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Then we left that boat -- we  
4 operated for a month, then we got the Paradise II, and we  
5 ran it for seven years I believe it was, and then we changed  
6 the company name from Paradise, the operating company, to  
7 Port Richey Casino, and Port Richey Casino now operates the  
8 vessels we have now, and that would be the Monte Carlo, and  
9 the Royal Casino I, and the, I believe it was -- it would've  
10 been four shuttle boats at the time.

11 Now there's three, and the vessels are owned by  
12 AVK, which is another company that charters the vessels to  
13 Port Richey Casino, which Paradise of Port Richey still owns  
14 the property that operates that the business operates on,  
15 and that's about it, them three names. It's Paradise, and  
16 Port Richey Casino, and AVK.

17 MR. CURTIS: The company started in what year was  
18 that?

19 MR. KOLOKITHAS: In '95.

20 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

21 MR. KOLOKITHAS: I believe it was around -- it was  
22 October actually, October of '95.

23 MR. CURTIS: I'm going to pass this along to Bob  
24 Ford now.

25 MR. FORD: How are you doing, Bill?

1 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Good, good.

2 MR. FORD: I'm not sure if I have it straight. On  
3 your business cards that you have Sun Cruz Casino -

4 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Right.

5 MR. FORD: -- and I go on a website and they have  
6 Sun Cruz Casino. You are actually the operating company,  
7 correct?

8 MR. KOLOKITHAS: We -- I don't know how to really  
9 explain it. The Sun Cruz Casino -- which website did you go  
10 to?

11 MR. FORD: Sun Cruz Casino, because I notice they  
12 have up and down the east coast of Florida they have all  
13 these Sun Cruz boats --

14 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Right.

15 MR. FORD: -- and I don't see your area mentioned.

16 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Right, when we started out back  
17 in '95, we had -- well, we have a partner, and my partner  
18 opened up the other boats throughout the east coast. We  
19 stayed in Port Richey, but we were the first Sun Cruz to  
20 open, and -- well, we actually -- before it was Sun Cruz, it  
21 was called Paradise Cruises.

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Paradise and Holiday Casino  
24 Cruises, and then Sun Cruz came along, and we adopted that  
25 name, me and the partner, and then we -- he branched out and

1 opened up the other locations, and I stayed in Port Richey.  
2 So, it's -- right now it's a -- we use Sun Cruz as our  
3 trademark on this coast.

4 MR. FORD: You're a different company, then, from  
5 Sun Cruz on the Atlantic side?

6 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yes, we are, completely  
7 different.

8 MR. FORD: Completely different, okay.

9 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah.

10 MR. FORD: That was what confused me.

11 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Right.

12 MR. FORD: Okay, as --

13 MR. KOLOKITHAS: We were -- the partner that  
14 opened up them boats, we all used the same name. We're a  
15 d/b/a Sun Cruz.

16 MR. FORD: Yes, okay, I mean this would just be  
17 a --

18 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, it's very confusing.

19 MR. FORD: Right, because my last name is Ford,  
20 and I couldn't start a company named Ford whatever --

21 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Motor company.

22 MR. FORD: -- motor company, because they've  
23 already got the rights to the name. So, I'm just a little  
24 confused how you can use the same name. You're both  
25 corporations?

1           MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, we -- actually, we are in  
2 court now litigating that fact.

3           MR. FORD: Oh, okay.

4           MR. KOLOKITHAS: So, and we actually, we won the  
5 mark in our area, the trademark mark in our area, which is  
6 the Tampa Bay area west of Tampa Road.

7           MR. FORD: Okay.

8           MR. KOLOKITHAS: So, we're just -- that's how  
9 we're going, so.

10          MR. FORD: That resolves a big issue for me, okay.

11          MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah.

12          MR. FORD: Just specifically on the boat, I see it  
13 had another name when it was built. Did you have the boat  
14 built for you? What's the history on the Shuttle Express I?

15          MR. KOLOKITHAS: On the shuttle express, we began  
16 a charter, we found the boat in -- it was operating out of  
17 Santa Bell Island in Florida, down south here, and someone  
18 that we had chartered a boat from the previous year, told us  
19 about the boat. So, we went and talked to the guy there,  
20 and he chartered it to us, and then we came to a charter  
21 purchase agreement on the vessel, and eventually we bought  
22 the vessel from him, but it was operating as the Dolphin  
23 Watch dinner type luncheon deal down in Santa Bell Island.

24          MR. FORD: Okay.

25          MR. KOLOKITHAS: And that would've been in -- I

1 don't know the year exactly. I believe we've had that boat  
2 for like five years now.

3 MR. FORD: Do you have a chart of your structure?  
4 I mean, I don't know if you're a small shop, a large shop,  
5 but if you're CEO, and then you start breaking down, is the  
6 next person in line, is it your wife that's also --

7 MR. KOLOKITHAS: No, it would be my father.

8 MR. FORD: It would be your father?

9 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah.

10 MR. FORD: Would this be a large tree or did you  
11 just kind of right out -- this isn't just the type of thing  
12 we put in our reports --

13 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah.

14 MR. FORD: -- how the corporate structure is.

15 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Okay, on the company of -- on  
16 Paradise, let's see -- Okay, there's my family, and there's  
17 five people in my family, and we make up the corporation,  
18 which -- we make up half the corporation, which is Paradise  
19 of Port -- Paradise. Yeah, Paradise of Port Richey, okay?

20 The other half is my partner that is no longer  
21 here, and his 50 percent of the shares are owned by his  
22 estate, all right? I don't know if you can follow --

23 MR. FORD: Okay.

24 MR. KOLOKITHAS: -- me on this.

25 MR. FORD: Yes.

1 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Okay.

2 MR. FORD: We're with you.

3 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Okay, and so it would be my  
4 family as me being the President, my father being the Vice  
5 President, I believe my sister is the Secretary, and so on.  
6 There's a --it would be the five people in my family. My  
7 mom, my dad, and my two sisters, and myself.

8 MR. FORD: So, when it breaks down now, into the  
9 operations aspect --

10 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Okay.

11 MR. FORD: -- is the next person, then, beneath?  
12 You have all your corporate officers, where I'm really  
13 looking into is with the operation. Would it be, then,  
14 Captain Chris next in line? How would that break out?

15 MR. KOLOKITHAS: As far as the operations, it  
16 would probably be either my father, which takes care of the  
17 office mainly, and then it would probably be to Captain  
18 Chris, who takes care of the operations of the boats.

19 MR. FORD: And then everyone works, pretty much,  
20 in a direct line to Captain Chris? He doesn't have like a  
21 port engineer that answers to him? A port steward, or  
22 anyone else, is that correct?

23 MR. KOLOKITHAS: No, he has like head engineers on  
24 the vessels, and then he has his captains on the vessels.  
25 There's no other -- no, he is the head, right. He's got, I



1 think, seven or eight captains, and then the engineers are  
2 under that --

3 MR. FORD: Okay.

4 MR. KOLOKITHAS: -- on the vessels.

5 MR. FORD: That's good for me.

6 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, it's really hard to, you  
7 know --

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. KOLOKITHAS: -- break it down into this --

10 MR. FORD: You've almost got to be a corporate  
11 lawyer.

12 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, there's three of them. Do  
13 you want the corporate lawyer?

14 MR. FORD: No.

15 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Oh, okay. I'm thinking which one  
16 doe we get now.

17 MR. FORD: Nancy?

18 MS. MCATEE: I have no questions.

19 MR. CURTIS: I have just a couple more questions,  
20 Bill. Brian Curtis again. Do you routinely ride the vessel  
21 or is there any given frequency just to check on them?

22 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, I ride them from time to  
23 time, yeah. You know, I just rode on that boat, what, three  
24 or four days before that happened.

25 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

1           MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, I do go back and forth  
2 throughout the boats with the shuttles too.

3           MR. CURTIS: And that's just to make a rudimentary  
4 assessment of how things are going?

5           MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, and to ride out to the big  
6 boat to see how that's going out there.

7           MR. CURTIS: Is there just one big boat?

8           MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, right now, yeah. There's  
9 two big boats. One's the Monte Carlo, which is docked.  
10 It's laid up right now. We're not using it, and then  
11 there's the Royal Casino I, which is the one we use.

12          MR. CURTIS: How many people does that  
13 accommodate?

14          MR. KOLOKITHAS: Four ten, 410.

15          MR. CURTIS: Four hundred and ten, okay.

16 Regarding Captain Chris, did you hire him?

17          MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yes, I hired him.

18          MR. FORD: How did you find him?

19          MR. KOLOKITHAS: Captain Chris worked for us as a  
20 captain on the Sun Cruz IV that we operate out of here, and  
21 he was brought on board from another captain. They were  
22 friends, and he was brought down there, and then we hired  
23 him from there.

24          MR. FORD: Okay.

25          MR. CURTIS: Any other subsidiary vessels in the

1 company, or just the ones that you mentioned that we  
2 discussed earlier?

3 MR. KOLOKITHAS: I don't know if I mentioned the  
4 Royal Casino I Express. They're the shuttles that were  
5 there dockside while you guys were there.

6 MR. CURTIS: Okay, right, yes.

7 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, there's the Royal Casino  
8 Express I, and there's the Royal Express II, and there is  
9 the Express Shuttle I.

10 MR. CURTIS: Regarding the day to day operations,  
11 if there is a problem -- like you mentioned before that you  
12 rebuilt the port engine in the Express Shuttle II a year  
13 ago, or whatever.

14 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Right.

15 MR. CURTIS: Do you recall why that was rebuilt?  
16 Was there a breakdown or was it just service hours?

17 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Boy, let's see. The boat -- it  
18 came in and it was smoking white smoke out of the exhaust --

19 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

20 MR. KOLOKITHAS: -- and the captain had low rpm's,  
21 and so when it -- Dave called Captain Chris and he had  
22 arranged for Caterpillar to show up there at the dock to  
23 troubleshoot it, and from there then they discovered that it  
24 needed to be overhauled.

25 MR. CURTIS: We've gone through the repeated fuel

1 line failures, did you ever hear about -- I don't know how  
2 involved you are in that type of the operation that - that  
3 problem was persisting in the port engine as well, or did  
4 you know anything like --

5 MR. KOLOKITHAS: I didn't know that it was a  
6 problem. I just knew that it had happened a couple times.

7 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

8 MR. KOLOKITHAS: The fuel line's had broken a  
9 couple times.

10 MR. CURTIS: But Caterpillar had never come to  
11 you, saying, you want to keep an eye on this, or anything  
12 like that --

13 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Never.

14 MR. CURTIS: -- that you're aware of?

15 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Never, and my answer -- my answer  
16 -- my answer (indiscernible) Captain Chris would be, call  
17 Caterpillar and find out why and what the problems -- you  
18 know, if there was something wrong.

19 MR. CURTIS: Switch gears a little bit, I wasn't  
20 clear on this before. Are you a member of the PBA?

21 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yes, we are.

22 MR. CURTIS: You are?

23 MR. KOLOKITHAS: And since then, we have received  
24 some video training tapes and some other paperwork that they  
25 have. I believe you were telling me about the

1 (indiscernible) maintenance and schedules like that, so.

2 MR. CURTIS: Bob had a question.

3 MR. FORD: This is Bob Ford again. Do you have  
4 any plans to replace the boat? Have you started that in the  
5 works where you're going to buy a new one?

6 MR. KOLOKITHAS: We'll probably purchase another  
7 one.

8 MR. FORD: Okay.

9 MR. KOLOKITHAS: We have a chartered one right now  
10 that we chartered since then.

11 MR. FORD: Oh.

12 MR. KOLOKITHAS: So, we're operating it.

13 MR. FORD: That brings another one, when they go  
14 out in the morning, and they take the first load of people  
15 out the three miles to the larger boat, and then the larger  
16 boat goes out nine miles. Then you have another boat that  
17 goes out, what, about an hour or two hours later? Does the  
18 other big boat come back in, or are you using the second  
19 large Casino boat?

20 MR. KOLOKITHAS: No, we only use one at a time,  
21 one. So, the big boat will stay off the nine miles.

22 MR. FORD: Yes.

23 MR. KOLOKITHAS: The second shuttle will go the  
24 nine mile run.

25 MR. FORD: So, he goes out the entire way to meet

1 him out there?

2 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yes, yeah.

3 MR. FORD: Okay.

4 MR. KOLOKITHAS: And sometimes it'll be the same  
5 shuttle that did the morning run.

6 MR. FORD: Okay.

7 MR. KOLOKITHAS: They'll come back in, get another  
8 load, and then go the long distance.

9 MR. FORD: And so then, people decide --

10 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Then he'll layover -- he'll  
11 layover out there for two hours, and pick up at 2 o'clock  
12 out there, and then come in for a 3:30 run.

13 MR. FORD: So, at the end of the day, when would  
14 the big boat come back in to be back, say, within two or  
15 three miles off the coast?

16 MR. KOLOKITHAS: At 12 o'clock midnight, it'll be  
17 three miles off the coast.

18 MR. FORD: Twelve midnight, okay.

19 MR. KOLOKITHAS: And it'll transport all the  
20 passengers off there for the run back to the dock.

21 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis again, Bill. The big  
22 boat, how often does that come into the dock for fueling or  
23 whatever? What's the schedule for the big boat?

24 MR. KOLOKITHAS: For docking.

25 MR. CURTIS: Hello?

1 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, can you hear me?

2 MR. CURTIS: Yes.

3 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Hello, okay, you hear me?

4 MR. CURTIS: Yes.

5 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, about every three weeks, it  
6 comes in for fuel.

7 MR. CURTIS: All right.

8 MR. KOLOKITHAS: There's no certain -- there's no  
9 set date for it.

10 MR. CURTIS: That comes into the same facility?

11 MR. KOLOKITHAS: No, it comes into Tarpon Springs.

12 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

13 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Actually, at our dock that we  
14 were at with the dredge company.

15 MR. CURTIS: Yes?

16 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Where the (indiscernible) was  
17 parked the first day, when you guys came?

18 MR. CURTIS: Right.

19 MR. KOLOKITHAS: That's where it comes in to fuel.

20 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

21 MR. FORD: This is Bob Ford again. I saw, in one  
22 of the newspaper articles that there's a lady where the fire  
23 was, and she said that she noticed that a lot of these boats  
24 do get caught in the mud. Are you aware of that? Has any  
25 captain ever said to you, yeah, we seem to get caught in the

1 mud quite often?

2 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Not in particular, no. We, in  
3 the wintertime, when the tides are low, back in the past, we  
4 had - had problems with the big boats. We were running big  
5 boats out of there.

6 MR. FORD: Yes?

7 MR. KOLOKITHAS: And that was really it. Nothing  
8 -- now when a -- after a cold front comes through the tide  
9 was extremely low.

10 MR. FORD: To your knowledge, were any of these  
11 incidents reported to the Coast Guard?

12 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Of the -- of what the  
13 (indiscernible) in the mud?

14 MR. FORD: Yes, if they go in the mud?

15 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah, they were pretty much,  
16 yeah. Yeah, they were reported.

17 MR. FORD: They were reported?

18 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Yeah.

19 MR. CURTIS: I don't have anymore, Bob?

20 MR. FORD: Just a couple when we go off. Just a  
21 few administrative questions.

22 MR. CURTIS: Nancy?

23 MS. MCATEE: No questions.

24 MR. CURTIS: If you just hold on, Bill, I'm just  
25 going to shut the recorder off here.



1 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Okay.

2 MR. CURTIS: The time now is 1:30 p.m., and this  
3 concludes the interview of Mr. Bill Kolokithas. Thanks a  
4 lot Bill.

5 MR. KOLOKITHAS: Thank you.

6 (Whereupon, at 1:30 p.m., the interview was  
7 concluded.)

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## C E R T I F I C A T E

DEPOSITION SERVICES, INC., hereby certifies that the attached pages represent an accurate transcript of the electronic sound recording of the proceedings of the National Transportation Safety Board Interview regarding the Express Shuttle II, NTSB #DCA05MM002.

INTERVIEW OF BILL KOLOKITHAS

CEO, SUN CRUZ

Eve Jemison, Transcriber

