

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

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EXPRESS SHUTTLE II :  
NTSB #DCA05MM002 :  
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INTERVIEW OF ROBERT MORGAN :  
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An interview in the above entitled matter was held  
on Thursday, December 2, 2004, commencing at 10:00 a.m.,  
in the Office of Marine Safety, 490 L'Enfant Plaza East,  
S.W. Washington, D.C. 20594, before:

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



1 which was aground.

2           There was another gentleman who had pulled up to  
3 the stern of the boat, and I asked him if there was anybody  
4 on board, or what was going on, and he wasn't pulled up to  
5 the boat. He was just kind of floating adrift along to the  
6 stern of it. He informed me that there were three people on  
7 board, and he didn't know where they were, and so, I pulled  
8 up to the port bow area, and there was a little opening in  
9 the gunnel there, and I was able to see several gentlemen,  
10 you know, going into the cabin area, I guess, where the  
11 people would be as they were shuttling them out.

12           They were going in and out of that area. I  
13 couldn't really make it out because of all the smoke, and I  
14 yelled to them, and asked them if they needed any help. I  
15 told them that I was in the Coast Guard, and asked them if  
16 they needed any help, and they told me that -- they kind of  
17 ignored me, and you know, at that point I saw the Coast  
18 Guard helicopter fly over.

19           So, I picked up my hand held radio and called them  
20 and told them I was down there alongside of the boat, and  
21 you know, they informed that the starboard side of the boat  
22 was fully ablaze, and that we needed to get away. So, I  
23 told the Captain, because the Captain had -- at that point,  
24 the Captain came out onto the, I guess it's the  
25 (indiscernible) area there on the left side of the -- the

1 port side of the bow, and there was a fire hose there.

2 He pulled it off the reel or it was  
3 (indiscernible) out over something there. He pulled it out,  
4 and then you know -- but he wasn't -- he never charged the  
5 line. He, like, held the line there and he was talking on  
6 his, his, maybe, Nextel or cell phone.

7 At that time, I'm assuming it was to the -- to the  
8 Casino boat company, you know, just letting them know, and  
9 you know, I told him that if he needed to get off the boat  
10 that he could -- that the Coast Guard was suggesting that  
11 they come off the boat, and that he was more than welcome to  
12 hop onto my boat.

13 At that point, the other two gentlemen, it seemed  
14 like they were just kind of standing around, you know, kind  
15 of probably out of breath, I guess, you know. They'd been  
16 going in and out of the fire there, or the smoke area, and  
17 he didn't really comprehend what I was saying, and I told  
18 him again.

19 At that point, the two crewmen came onto my boat,  
20 and the Coast Guard helicopter is still over my radio is,  
21 you know, repeatedly were telling us to get away from the  
22 boat because, you know, the starboard side was fully  
23 engulfed and you know, (indiscernible) they said if I wanted  
24 to keep my boat, I better get away, and so the Captain kind  
25 of -- he started to -- he started to come on board, or to

1 step over to the gunnel, and I reached out and I went to  
2 grab his arms to kind of help him over onto the boat, and he  
3 jerked back. He got kind of -- it really irritated him, and  
4 he kind of got a little bit of an attitude.

5           You could tell he really didn't want to leave the  
6 boat, and then, finally, the crew and I were able to coax  
7 him to get onto the boat, and we idled away and pulled over  
8 beside a sheriff's vessel a couple hundred yards astern of  
9 the boat, which is to the north, and we idled there  
10 alongside the sheriff, and called up to the helicopter, told  
11 them that everybody was okay, and you know then -- that was  
12 after I assisted all the guys.

13           One of them was having a little trouble breathing,  
14 but the Coast Guard helicopter told me that if they had any  
15 trouble or needed to go to the hospital, just to run them to  
16 shore, because it would be quicker, you know, to get them to  
17 medical attention.

18           So, we idled along, and at this time, the boat was  
19 fully ablaze, and you know, port and starboard side, and I  
20 guess that was just minutes after we backed off, and a  
21 couple, few minutes later -- well, I gave my radio to the  
22 sheriff there. His radio wasn't working, so I gave him my  
23 hand held, and one of the guys told me that you know, he was  
24 starting to -- his limbs were tingling and he was feeling  
25 light-headed, thought he might pass out, and he wanted to go

1 to the hospital.

2           So, you know, I didn't ask him a second time, I  
3 just told the -- or asked the sheriff to -- if he would call  
4 and have an ambulance wait on shore, and you know, I asked  
5 him if it was all right that I run the guys in, because you  
6 know, it's a no wake zone there, and he said it was fine.

7           So, I picked up speed and started to you know, run them  
8 back to shore, and the Captain reaches over and pulls my  
9 throttles back and didn't want to go to shore, and this  
10 other guy was, you know, he was having some trouble  
11 breathing, you could tell. I told him, I said, look, I'll  
12 bring you right back out. I said, right now we just need to  
13 get this guy to shore, and he wasn't going to have it.

14           I wasn't going to make a big scene, so, and he  
15 wouldn't let go of my throttles, and so I pulled over  
16 alongside of a boat that was out there, you know, just a  
17 bystander, and I think they actually may have been of some  
18 relation to the Casino boat company, and I dropped him off,  
19 and the other crewmen, off on that boat, and then I ran the  
20 other guy to shore.

21           Shortly thereafter, there was -- an ambulance came  
22 and they took care of him, and I went back out. At that  
23 point, I didn't get mixed back up in it, I just kind of  
24 idled off to the side, waiting on everything to clear up so  
25 I could get out of the channel.

1           Then, later on I went out fishing. On my way back  
2 in a couple hours later, I saw the boat was getting towed  
3 out, and there was a lot of debris. Actually, during the  
4 whole thing, there was a lot of debris floating in and out  
5 of the channel there, you know, the charred remains of the  
6 boat, the entire time, you know, bumping up against people's  
7 boats and what not, but at the end, after I went out a  
8 couple hours later, came back fishing, from fishing, they  
9 were pulling the boat out at that time, and you know.

10           There were guys on board, it looked like they  
11 were -- it looked like they had (indiscernible) or whatnot  
12 trying to, you know, anything that was remaining standing,  
13 it looked like they were cutting that type of thing down,  
14 and I don't know where they took it from that point, and  
15 that's about the last time I saw the boat.

16           MR. CURTIS: Just so you know, another person  
17 walked in. Robert Ford, he's the investigator in charge of  
18 the accident. So, he'll be in the interview as well,  
19 Robert. So, you were out there just recreational fishing  
20 that day, is that correct then?

21           MR. MORGAN: Right, yeah, I was just going out to  
22 enjoy a day of boating.

23           MR. CURTIS: What type vessel is your boat?

24           MR. MORGAN: I've got a 19-foot Ranger center  
25 console (indiscernible) boat (indiscernible).

1           MR. CURTIS: The fellow that you took in for the  
2 ambulance, what was his status on the way in? He was fully  
3 conscious?

4           MR. MORGAN: Yeah, he was fully conscious, and  
5 just I think he had just suffered, you know, from smoke  
6 inhalation, and he was conscious, and you know. When we got  
7 there, we had him lie on the bough until I could get some  
8 people to help me, you know, get him up onto the dock area,  
9 and then we walked him over to the trees.

10           He kept, you know, he kept his consciousness the  
11 whole time, and the ambulance got there and they talked to  
12 him, put him on some oxygen, and then they took him, I  
13 guess, to the hospital. He also -- actually, he left a bag  
14 on the boat, but I took that to him. I don't know what kind  
15 of -- if you're interested in all of those little details,  
16 but yeah, that's pretty much it. I never saw him again  
17 either.

18           MR. CURTIS: Which dock did you take him to, do  
19 you recall?

20           MR. MORGAN: I took him to the dock there, it's  
21 beside Hooters. It's right next to the Casino boat.

22           MR. CURTIS: Okay.

23           MR. MORGAN: Also, by the way, when I pulled up  
24 there, you know, I was asking -- because I didn't -- you  
25 know, I am an EMT, and I didn't have any type of oxygen or



1 you know, anything in case something -- in case he were to  
2 lose consciousness or anything to benefit him, you know,  
3 other than being able to do CPR, but I did ask him. I know  
4 that nobody in that area had like an AED or oxygen or  
5 anything, whatsoever.

6 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

7 MR. MORGAN: That was including the -- I asked  
8 them, the Casino boat company, because they're moored up  
9 right there beside the boat ramp.

10 MR. CURTIS: Or on it, just to -- a little bit of  
11 your background, your title, and you said you're an EMT?

12 MR. MORGAN: Yeah, I'm a U.S. Coast Guard rescue  
13 swimmer, my rate is AST. I'm an E-5, so I'm an AST-2. I'm  
14 an EMT, and I guess I've been doing this since '99. I've  
15 been a swimmer since '99.

16 MR. CURTIS: You said you called the Coast Guard,  
17 was that VHF radio you called them on?

18 MR. MORGAN: Right, right, on channel 21.

19 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

20 MR. MORGAN: Actually, it might've been channel  
21 16, I'm not sure.

22 MR. CURTIS: You spoke with the helicopter at that  
23 point?

24 MR. MORGAN: Excuse me?

25 MR. CURTIS: You spoke with the helicopter?

1 MR. MORGAN: Right.

2 MR. CURTIS: Did you make any other calls to  
3 emergency responders?

4 MR. MORGAN: No, I just -- I fly with those guys  
5 that are in the helicopter so, I just called them up and  
6 told them I was down there, and so they would know, you  
7 know, that I was there and could probably handle whatever  
8 was going on.

9 MR. CURTIS: Did the Captain of the crew make any  
10 other comments while they were on board with you regarding  
11 the fire or the cause or any of that?

12 MR. MORGAN: I did ask him what caused the fire,  
13 and all they told me was that they didn't really know what  
14 caused the fire that they opened one of the hatches and fire  
15 or smoke just shot up, and that's about all I got out them,  
16 you know, regarding that.

17 MR. CURTIS: The color of the smoke, was it white,  
18 black, do you recall?

19 MR. MORGAN: I think it was kind of gray.

20 MR. CURTIS: Yes?

21 MR. MORGAN: It was a dark color.

22 MR. CURTIS: Okay.

23 MR. MORGAN: It wasn't black, but it was on the  
24 verge, you know, gray to black.

25 MR. CURTIS: Any explosions?

1           MR. MORGAN: I don't remember any explosions. I  
2 may have heard somebody say they heard like something pop,  
3 like maybe a propane, but I didn't hear anything. I really  
4 wasn't paying much attention to it.

5           MR. CURTIS: Okay, that's all I have. I'll pass  
6 the questioning onto Nancy McAtee, Nancy?

7           MS. MCATEE: I can't think of anything.

8           MR. CURTIS: Robert Ford?

9           MR. FORD: How are you doing? I'm sorry I came in  
10 late. One thing, can you either send us electronically or  
11 just a regular -- a photo of your boat?

12          MR. MORGAN: Sure.

13          MR. FORD: Because we use things like that in our  
14 reports and also with the board presentation. You're the  
15 first responder so they have an idea of, you know, who came  
16 out and got us. We definitely appreciate that.

17          MR. MORGAN: Well, I have a -- actually, here at  
18 work, I have a picture on my screen saver I could e-mail  
19 you.

20          MR. FORD: Perfect.

21          MR. MORGAN: The only problem with that is it's  
22 got a picture of me in it.

23          MR. FORD: That's all right.

24          MR. CURTIS: That's fine. Once we get off the  
25 recording here, I'll give you my e-mail address and you can

1 send it.

2 MR. MORGAN: Okay.

3 MR. FORD: You said Mario (phonetic sp.) Captain  
4 Mario took an attitude when he was still on the boat. What  
5 did you mean? What was he saying to you?

6 MR. MORGAN: Well, as the rest of the crew got  
7 onto the boat, the other two, the crewmen, stepped onto my  
8 boat, you know, and he was -- he didn't want to come at  
9 first. Then finally the two crewmen came on, and you know,  
10 you could tell they didn't want to be on there anymore, and  
11 then he started to step over, and I did the same thing for  
12 them, I reached up and I grabbed them by the arm, you know,  
13 just to make sure, because there's like a foot and a half,  
14 two foot step down.

15 I wanted to help them onto the boat, but when I  
16 reached up to grab his arm, and I didn't grab it firmly or I  
17 didn't -- I probably grabbed it firmly, you know, just to  
18 help him. Well, when I did that he really copped an  
19 attitude and he -- all he said, I think he goes, "Hey!" and  
20 he jerked back and he, you know, at that point I thought,  
21 well, this is great, you know, and then we had to kind of  
22 calm him down and we talked to him, and the (indiscernible).

23 He didn't say anything else to me at that point,  
24 but we were all just, come on, you know, we've got to get  
25 away from the boat, and at that point, you know, he stepped

1 down, and I didn't touch him again. I just let him come if  
2 he wanted, you know. I wasn't going to stick around.

3 MR. FORD: The excitement of the moment, maybe,  
4 just got him all wound up.

5 MR. MORGAN: Right.

6 MR. FORD: Did he try to prevent the deck hands  
7 from leaving the boat?

8 MR. MORGAN: No, he didn't try to prevent the deck  
9 hands at all. He did not.

10 MR. FORD: Could you see the flames or was it just  
11 smoke at this point?

12 MR. MORGAN: No, all I saw was smoke. On the  
13 starboard side, which would've been to the west, and I'm not  
14 sure of the wind direction that day, but really at the time  
15 the we were alongside -- the starboard side of the boat  
16 was - is where all the smoke was coming from, and it was  
17 going that direction.

18 It was blowing out to sea, and from what the  
19 helicopter was telling me -- I didn't see any fire at that  
20 point, but the helicopter was telling me that - that side  
21 was where the fire was, the fire and the smoke. I just saw  
22 lots of smoke. The whole entire cabin and going from  
23 straight and then to the starboard was full of smoke.

24 MR. FORD: I'm just questioning that I'm not  
25 trying to put words in your mouth.

1 MR. MORGAN: Right.

2 MR. FORD: At the time you're trying to convince  
3 them to come on board there wasn't really any firefighting  
4 in progress, they weren't doing anything, is that correct?

5 MR. MORGAN: No, they were dashing in and out of  
6 the flames, in and out of the smoke. Later, I was told that  
7 it was because they weren't able to charge the fire lines.

8 MR. FORD: Yes.

9 MR. MORGAN: They didn't tell me that. I don't  
10 know if I should even say that, but I was just told that was  
11 why.

12 MR. FORD: Yes.

13 MR. MORGAN: Because the engines were down.

14 MR. FORD: Okay. You said you came back, you  
15 transferred the one guy in, I didn't get that straight. You  
16 transferred the one guy to another boat? The guy that went  
17 in for the hospital, or you transferred Mario?

18 MR. MORGAN: The Captain and the other crewmen. I  
19 transferred them over to another boat.

20 MR. FORD: Was it a Sun Cruise boat?

21 MR. MORGAN: No, but I was under the impression  
22 that it may have been from the Sun Cruz. It may have been  
23 somebody affiliated with the Sun Cruz. It was just another  
24 -- it was a pleasure boat, and had several guys on board,  
25 and they seemed like they knew them, and I dropped the two

1 of them off on board there.

2 MR. FORD: You said you'd already made a VHF radio  
3 call, or you already heard VHF radio call on it?

4 MR. MORGAN: For the ambulance?

5 MR. FORD: Right.

6 MR. MORGAN: I -- well, I had given the sheriff  
7 out there, you know, on the sheriff's boat, he'd asked me  
8 for my radio, because his is -- I guess is wasn't working  
9 properly.

10 MR. FORD: Okay.

11 MR. MORGAN: So, I gave him my radio, and I asked  
12 him to make a call and have an ambulance waiting on shore  
13 for us.

14 MR. FORD: I came in late, okay. So, then, did  
15 Captain Mario ask to use your radio?

16 MR. MORGAN: No, the entire time we were -- while  
17 we were drifting along beside the sheriff, and the  
18 helicopter was orbiting over, he kept -- and I was trying to  
19 assess, you know, to make sure everybody was okay, and I'd  
20 talked to the helicopter and let them know that everybody  
21 was doing okay at that point.

22 He kept telling me to call the Coast Guard and ask  
23 them, you know, what we were going to do about the boat, and  
24 what he needed to do about the boat, you know. So, he was  
25 really into what was going on, and he wanted to know what he

1 needed to do at that point, and -- but, I was -- you know, I  
2 told him, you know, we don't need to worry about that right  
3 now, and -- but he was really -- really seemed agitated when  
4 I wouldn't call and ask them what, you know, they wanted him  
5 to do with the boat.

6 MR. FORD: Okay, and the boat was still drifting  
7 at that point?

8 MR. MORGAN: No, the boat was aground.

9 MR. FORD: Okay, and were you there when the fire  
10 department showed up or had you already left?

11 MR. MORGAN: I'd left. When the fire department  
12 originally got there, I wasn't there, but I came back out,  
13 and I did see the fire department there.

14 MR. FORD: Okay, that sounds great to me. I  
15 appreciate it.

16 MR. MORGAN: Sure.

17 MR. CURTIS: Yes, I guess that's it. Do you have  
18 any questions in the anchor, Bob?

19 MR. FORD: On the what?

20 MR. CURTIS: The anchor or anything?

21 MR. FORD: No.

22 MR. CURTIS: Okay, I guess that's it, Robert. If  
23 you could just hold for a second, once we get off the tape  
24 here.

25 MR. MORGAN: Sure.



1 MR. CURTIS: I'll get you the e-mail address.

2 MR. MORGAN: Okay.

3 MR. CURTIS: That concludes the interview. It's  
4 now 10:20 a.m., and thanks a lot Robert.

5 MR. MORGAN: You're welcome.

6 MR. FORD: Thank you.

7 (Whereupon, at 10:20 a.m., the interview was  
8 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.

ROBERT MORGAN

Eve Jemison, Transcriber

