

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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 IN RE: :
 :
 THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF : NTSB Accident No.
 THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON : DCA16MM001
 OCTOBER 1, 2015 :
 :
 ----- :

Interview of: KARL MEKLIN & ELAINE MEKLIN

Wednesday,
 November 4, 2015

BEFORE:

BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB
 BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB
 CARRIE BELL, NTSB
 KATY CHISOM, NTSB

This transcript was produced from
 audio provided by the National Transportation
 Safety Board.

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard:

██████████ ██████████
U.S. Coast Guard

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. YOUNG: -- give you a chance to
3 review it later. Certainly, when it gets in the
4 public docket, we'll remove any personal
5 information.

6 MRS. MEKLIN: Sure.

7 MR. MEKLIN: Yes, sir.

8 MR. YOUNG: We want to listen to you
9 and not write everything and miss everything
10 you're saying. This is Brian Young with the
11 NTSB. Again, we are very, very appreciative of
12 you giving us this time. Just maybe to start
13 out, if you don't mind, could you just let us
14 know how Dylan actually got the job here? Do
15 you know if he was approached by TOTE or through
16 the union?

17 MRS. MEKLIN: It was through the
18 union. He got a call, it was probably a week
19 before he started the job, from the AMO, saying,
20 "We have a job for you," and TOTE was going to
21 be contacting him. It was that same day that --
22 it was the Friday prior that TOTE contacted him

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1 and had him send all of his information, and
2 then told him they'd be sending out his
3 itinerary to fly out of Owls Head on Monday,
4 that following Monday, so it was very quick.

5 MR. YOUNG: He had never gone down
6 for an interview or -- this is kind of out of
7 the blue, random that--

8 MRS. MEKLIN: Very.

9 MR. YOUNG: Had he been actively
10 seeking work through the union?

11 MRS. MEKLIN: He had. He had been
12 looking for work on his own, and then he decided
13 to join the union prior to that. That was the
14 first call that he got saying we found you a
15 job.

16 MR. YOUNG: Previous, since
17 graduation, had he gone to sea at all?

18 MRS. MEKLIN: No, he did an
19 internship down in Bath, (Inaudible) it's an
20 engineering firm that affiliates with Bath
21 Ironworks. He did that over the summer, went
22 through August doing that.

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1 MR. YOUNG: I do remember, too, when
2 (Inaudible) ship and the union would just call
3 and say, "Get on a plane. I got a ship for
4 you."

5 MRS. MEKLIN: It was pretty much
6 like that, yes.

7 MR. YOUNG: Same kind of thing?

8 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes.

9 MR. YOUNG: So that would've been
10 the first AMO contact (inaudible)?

11 MRS. MEKLIN: As far as I know, yes,
12 because I didn't hear him turning down any, so
13 that would've been his first one.

14 MR. YOUNG: Then he did fly out the
15 Monday before?

16 MRS. MEKLIN: He flew out Tuesday
17 because they spelled his name wrong on the
18 email, so he didn't get it.

19 MR. YOUNG: Oh, really?

20 MRS. MEKLIN: Mm-hm.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 MRS. MEKLIN: So he had to keep

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1 contacting them over the weekend, and then again
2 on Monday, to say, "I didn't get my itinerary."
3 So they said, "Oh, we sent it, but we spelled
4 your name wrong, so we're going to fly you out
5 Tuesday morning, instead."

6 MR. YOUNG: When Dylan did arrive
7 down in Jacksonville (Inaudible) join the ship,
8 had you been in touch with him after he boarded
9 the ship? I know -- I'm sure once he gets
10 there, it was a very busy time. He's got so
11 much to do and learn and everything, but had you
12 heard --

13 MRS. MEKLIN: Well, he got there so
14 late. Because he flew out of Owls Head, he
15 circled Boston so long that they missed the
16 connecting flight. They put him on another
17 flight. They debarked that plane because of
18 engine trouble, so then they put him on another
19 plane. So by the time he got down, I want to
20 say it was 5:30 at night, and the ship was
21 leaving at 8:00. So he was frantically texting
22 me -- I was in a class -- because he needed his

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1 check information for his direct deposit, and
2 the captain was trying to get that information
3 from him. He was like, "Send it to me, or send
4 it to the captain."

5 I'm like, "Okay, I'll do it." I did
6 talk to him about 7:00 that evening. He called
7 just to say he was on the ship and he got the
8 information, just a short conversation, oh, and
9 to tell me that he knew someone from Rockland on
10 the ship, which was Danielle. He didn't know
11 her. He heard that she was from Rockland and
12 wanted to know if I knew her.

13 MR. YOUNG: Then throughout the next
14 day at sea, there was no communication or emails
15 or texts or anything?

16 MRS. MEKLIN: No, not to me. His
17 girlfriend got a few pictures of his room, and
18 his friend, Luke Morill (Phonetic), got a
19 picture of the containers on the ship. He stood
20 on the ship and took a picture down the ship and
21 sent that to him, but those are the only
22 pictures that I know of.

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1 MR. YOUNG: We do realize that he
2 had a very short time on there, too. A lot of
3 what we do look at is maybe the safety culture
4 of the ship and what the captain is like, but we
5 do understand that he's a new engineer. I
6 remember, as an engineer, you get (Inaudible) a
7 steam plant (Inaudible). It's like a giant
8 factory with valves and steam pipes. It's a lot
9 to take in at once.

10 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, and his first
11 job, and knowing he was late getting there. He
12 felt bad that one of the kids was going to have
13 to stay on because he was late getting there.
14 One was supposed to be getting off when he got
15 on, but they kept him on for another trip down.

16 MR. YOUNG: Oh, really (Inaudible)?
17 It seemed like there was a ton of Maine Maritime
18 engineers on both the sister ship and this one,
19 as well, plus the off-duty engineers were all
20 Maine Maritime. Seemed like a very heavy Maine
21 --

22 MRS. MEKLIN: Even the captain.

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1 MR. YOUNG: Yes, they call it the
2 Maine Maritime mafia, I believe, that they're
3 all over there. But same thing, we talked to
4 the off-duty chief, first and second, and they
5 were all Maine Maritime guys. It's a good,
6 tight community. How about just before Dylan
7 did go out to sea, getting his license, did he
8 ever do any cadet shipping, do you know, other
9 than a training ship?

10 MRS. MEKLIN: He did, yes. He did
11 cadet shipping with -- help me out, the same one
12 Sam worked for this year -- name one.

13 MR. YOUNG: ARC, that's a RORO.
14 (Simultaneous speaking.)

15 MR. MEKLIN: No, they work with the
16 military, mostly.

17 (Simultaneous speaking.)

18 MR. YOUNG: MSC?

19 MR. MEKLIN: Yes.

20 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, MSC.

21 MR. YOUNG: Do you know, after he
22 did graduate, was he looking at any other

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1 companies to ship with? Had he done any job
2 interviews with shipping companies or --

3 MRS. MEKLIN: No.

4 MR. YOUNG: Nothing?

5 MRS. MEKLIN: No. Because of the
6 internship -- he was supposed to do it the prior
7 summer, but for whatever reason, he didn't do
8 his internship before he graduated, so then he
9 had to do it this summer, so that kind of tied
10 up his whole summer working for three months
11 down in Bath. So then once he finished that, he
12 started looking for full-time work.

13 MR. YOUNG: He just graduated in May
14 of '15, is that correct?

15 MRS. MEKLIN: Correct, it was a
16 five-year systems program, so he actually
17 marched in 2014, but he graduated in '15.

18 MR. YOUNG: Okay. We go up to Bath
19 from Scarborough, where I am. It's a great
20 little town. It's a fun little city.

21 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes.

22 MR. YOUNG: I know in terms of

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1 engineering wise, I'm sure there wasn't a lot
2 passed on to you about the plant or anything,
3 I'm sure. Okay, I just wanted to check.

4 MRS. MEKLIN: No.

5 MR. MEKLIN: Not at all.

6 MRS. MEKLIN: Not at all because he
7 just got there so late. He just was kind of in
8 his room and trying to get paperwork type stuff
9 done.

10 MR. YOUNG: Direct deposit's the No.
11 1 thing.

12 MRS. MEKLIN: Right.

13 MR. YOUNG: Absolutely the most
14 important.

15 MRS. MEKLIN: It's urgent.

16 MR. YOUNG: Yes, absolutely. Do you
17 remember if he was saying -- I'm pretty sure
18 TOTE was one of the better companies to work for
19 -- if he had talked to other people (Inaudible)
20 yes, this is a good ship, or the union said
21 (Simultaneous speaking)?

22 MRS. MEKLIN: He did say two things.

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1 When TOTE was kind of interviewing him over the
2 phone, they said, "Have you ever heard of us?"
3 and he said, "No," and kind of hurt their
4 feelings, I think. When AMO did call him, they
5 said it was one of the better paying jobs that
6 they had found, so it would be a good job for
7 him.

8 MR. YOUNG: Yes, I think TOTE was
9 known to be one of the better (Inaudible).

10 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes.

11 MR. YOUNG: Do you know if it was
12 Melissa Serridge that he was talking to on the
13 phone? Does that name ring a bell?

14 MRS. MEKLIN: Melissa. I met her
15 down there. I met the girl --

16 MR. YOUNG: Melissa Clark?

17 MRS. MEKLIN: I don't believe it was
18 -- oh, yes.

19 MR. YOUNG: Melissa Clark?

20 MRS. MEKLIN: It was Clark, yes, it
21 was.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay, just so we have a

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1 name with a face.

2 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, we spent a lot of
3 time with her down in the Florida when they were
4 down there.

5 MR. YOUNG: That's pretty much the
6 engineering questions I have. Thanks, I
7 appreciate it. I'll pass. Maybe Carrie or
8 [REDACTED] have some.

9 MS. BELL: I just have a question
10 about -- you said that you did talk to him, and
11 he had mentioned that Danielle was from
12 Rockland. Did he say anything else about the
13 crew? Did he meet her, do you know?

14 MRS. MEKLIN: He did. They ended up
15 being on watch together that night. I sent him
16 a picture. He just knew her first name was
17 Danielle. She says she's from Rockland. I just
18 happened to graduate with her mother, so I sent
19 him a picture through Facebook or however I sent
20 it and said, "Is this her?" He said, "Yes,
21 that's her." Then I talked to Danielle's
22 mother, and she said, "Oh, they're going to have

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1 watch together tonight." We lived across the
2 street from each other when Dylan was born. She
3 was 11.

4 MR. YOUNG: Wow, what a small world.
5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 MRS. MEKLIN: I know. It really is,
7 yes, weird.

8 MS. BELL: Did he mention anything
9 else about just how things were going on the
10 ship? You said that you got emails? You guys
11 were emailing back and forth?

12 MRS. MEKLIN: We were texting.

13 MS. BELL: Texting?

14 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, texting. That's
15 all he basically said was can you send -- he
16 gave me the captain's email address, saying,
17 "Can you send the direct debit information to
18 him?" Then because I wasn't available, he
19 finally said, "Just send it to me." So I sent
20 it to him, and then he called me later to just
21 say he got it, and we talked a little bit about
22 Danielle. Yes, he didn't really say anything

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1 about any other crew members or anything. Said
2 he liked his room, his shower was dirty, and his
3 refrigerator had a wet towel in it. That I
4 remember.

5 (Simultaneous speaking.)

6 MRS. MEKLIN: Important stuff like
7 that.

8 MS. BELL: Anything about the
9 interview that he had with TOTE over the phone
10 that he mentioned?

11 MRS. MEKLIN: No, just that part
12 about when they asked have you ever heard of
13 TOTE, and he was like, "No." She's like,
14 "You're killing me." That would be Melissa, if
15 you know her. No, it just seems so -- very
16 quick. I'm like, "Are they not going to --
17 they're just going to fly you out? They don't
18 even know you." But he sent all the information
19 to them. He sent quite a bit of paperwork to
20 them with his credentials or whatever. It must
21 have been a short interview. Because I was home
22 that day, I think. Was I home that day?

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1 MR. MEKLIN: I was.

2 MRS. MEKLIN: You were home?

3 MR. MEKLIN: Yes, because he came
4 and said he got the call, that he was leaving
5 Monday. This was Friday afternoon. I was like,
6 "Wow." But he was excited, obviously.

7 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes.

8 MR. YOUNG: Brian Young, again, just
9 for the recording, a lot of times that union
10 will work that way. They'll just call you and
11 say, "You're leaving at 5:00 today." When I was
12 shipping during Desert Storm, they pulled us out
13 of school.

14 They said, "You, you, you, you're
15 going to this company," blah, blah, blah. There
16 was no interview, just you're going.

17 (Simultaneous speaking.) When the union needs a
18 person, they don't care. They put you right on
19 those ships. At least it seems like TOTE was
20 actively seeking out people and did a bit of an
21 interview. I worked on the cable ships out of
22 Baltimore. We never had interviews. You just

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1 showed up.

2 MRS. MEKLIN: Just went.

3 MR. YOUNG: If they didn't like you

4 --

5 MRS. MEKLIN: Got a degree?

6 MR. YOUNG: Yes, you have a license
7 and everything, you were -- if you had the right
8 paperwork, you were in.

9 MRS. MEKLIN: They did say to him --
10 I do remember this part. She had said this'll
11 be the last ten weeks on this ship, and then
12 we're bringing in a new LNG ship. Dylan was
13 like, "Thank God," because steam is not really
14 his thing.

15 MS. BELL: Do you know if he was --
16 if they were planning on putting him on the LNG
17 ships?

18 MRS. MEKLIN: I believe so. I
19 believe that was kind of the lore. It's like,
20 "Oh, we're just going to put you on this ship,
21 but then it will be a new ship."

22 MS. BELL: WAS it a permanent

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1 position?

2 MRS. MEKLIN: I took it it was ten
3 weeks on, ten weeks off, ten weeks on. I took
4 it as kind of -- did you?

5 MR. MEKLIN: I'm assuming they were
6 probably going to see how he did. We didn't
7 really speak to him, so we really don't know
8 what the -- beyond this trip, what the
9 expectation was.

10 MR. YOUNG: That's very typical of
11 how a ship will work. Either you (Simultaneous
12 speaking).

13 MR. MEKLIN: Right, I think it was
14 the same for him. He was going to feel that out
15 because it's his first job. It wasn't going to
16 be probably -- who knows? We can't speak for
17 Dylan.

18 MR. YOUNG: Not to interrupt, but do
19 you remember when he was talking about possibly
20 being on watch with Danielle, obviously she'd be
21 on the bridge, and he'd be in the engine room.
22 Did he say anything that he was going to be on

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1 watch with anybody else, or he was going to be
2 by himself?

3 MRS. MEKLIN: He didn't say. I
4 assume that the engineer that was kind of
5 showing him the ropes that they were keeping on
6 was kind of with him.

7 MR. MEKLIN: I think his name was
8 Mitch, but we could be wrong about that.

9 MR. YOUNG: Yes, we've heard that
10 name, Mitch.

11 MRS. MEKLIN: I can't say his last
12 name (inaudible) I'm not sure.

13 MS. BELL: Did he express any
14 concerns at all about just it was happening so
15 quickly and training or anything like that that
16 he brought up as --

17 MRS. MEKLIN: I know he was a little
18 nervous about the whole steam aspect of it. He
19 did say steam wasn't his thing, thinking back to
20 his steam grades at MMA. But no, really. He
21 was nervous, but he was excited. I talked to
22 his girlfriend quite a bit about how he was

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1 feeling because parents don't always hear how
2 they're feeling, but the girlfriend will. She
3 said that he was excited. He was nervous, but
4 he was excited to finally be going out and
5 making some money.

6 MS. BELL: Did she mention anything
7 about anything that he might have communicated
8 to her in the time between leaving here and
9 leaving the dock or anything like that?

10 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, she actually was
11 the one that forwarded me a couple texts that
12 just -- it was a couple pictures of his room and
13 just a quick conversation they had about the
14 refrigerator and the shower. It was simple
15 stuff.

16 MR. YOUNG: Critical equipment, yes.

17 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes, that was it. Oh,
18 and that he had -- what did he have -- cable or
19 something. As long as he was in dock, he had
20 cable in his room. He thought that was
21 wonderful.

22 MR. YOUNG: They had a satellite TV

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1 system.

2 MRS. MEKLIN: Yes.

3 MR. YOUNG: Yes, that's a perk on a
4 ship.

5 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] with the
6 Coast Guard. Just a couple follow ups. Do you
7 recall -- he was doing the paperwork, getting
8 the check routing numbers and all that kind of
9 stuff squared away. Did he say anything about
10 or text anything about I have to go to a safety
11 orientation or anything like that?

12 MRS. MEKLIN: Not to me, no.

13 MR. [REDACTED] Just a follow up. Was
14 the internship required as part of a training
15 program for Maine Maritime?

16 MRS. MEKLIN: It was, yes. For his
17 five year, he had to do two cadet shippings, two
18 internships, right? Two on land, two on sea.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Do you know what the
20 other internship was?

21 MRS. MEKLIN: I should.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Just in general.

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1 MRS. MEKLIN: I'm trying to even
2 remember where it was. That would've been his
3 sophomore -- no, but he didn't --

4 (Simultaneous speaking.)

5 MRS. MEKLIN: No, I'm sorry. He did
6 cadet shipping his freshman year. He did his
7 military sealift his sophomore year, cadet
8 shipping his junior year, supposed to do the
9 internship his senior year, but he did it his
10 fifth year, instead, right?

11 MR. MEKLIN: That was all he did.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Then thinking back
13 about Maine Maritime, you talked about the steam
14 grades and how tough it was. Did he have any
15 LNG training that you're aware of?

16 MRS. MEKLIN: I do not know.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Any idea -- I know you
18 said that it was a short interview with Melissa
19 Clark. Do you recall any idea how long it was?

20 MR. MEKLIN: I was here, and he was
21 on the phone with her. It wasn't -- I don't
22 know. I'd be speculating, and I don't want to

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1 speculate (inaudible) but it wasn't a long
2 conversation.

3 MRS. MEKLIN: I did talk to her when
4 I was down there. We were talking about Dylan.
5 She said, "I interviewed him, and then I looked
6 at his Facebook page and I saw a picture that he
7 had posted of him and his girlfriend." She
8 said, "Yes, he's a good match. We're hiring
9 him." She said sometimes you could tell from
10 whatever is on someone's profile picture what
11 they're about. That was just something that
12 Melissa said.

13 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you.

14 MR. YOUNG: This is Brian Young with
15 the NTSB. Do you remember -- it might be a
16 tough question -- if any of the cadet shipping
17 or the MSC ships were steam ships? Does that
18 ring a bell at all?

19 MRS. MEKLIN: I don't believe they
20 were. The one Sam went on for SUNY obviously
21 was, but I don't believe Dylan's was, no.

22 MR. MEKLIN: No.

1 MRS. MEKLIN: That military sealift
2 one was brand new.

3 MR. MEKLIN: No, it was a brand-new
4 ship.

5 MR. YOUNG: Probably a diesel.

6 MR. MEKLIN: It was only about two
7 years old, yes.

8 MR. YOUNG: They are thinking of
9 updating the New York Maritime ship to a diesel,
10 too.

11 MRS. MEKLIN: Are they?

12 MR. YOUNG: Yes, they're talking
13 about building a new one (Inaudible).

14 PARTICIPANT: You have any questions
15 for us?

16 MRS. MEKLIN: I think that was --
17 the ones I asked you, I think, is all that I
18 had.

19 PARTICIPANT: If not, we'll
20 (inaudible). Thank you very much.

21 (Whereupon, the above-entitled
22 interview was concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Interview of Karl Meklin & Elaine Meklin

DATE: 11-04-15

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