

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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KRISTIN ALEXIS/BARGE MR. ERVIN *

ALLISION WITH THE SUNSHINE BRIDGE * Accident No.: DCA19FM003

DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA *

OCTOBER 12, 2018 *

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Interview of: DAVID MILLER

LA DOTD

Lamar Dixon Expo Center
Gonzales, Louisiana

Friday,
May 10, 2019

APPEARANCES:

CDR MATTHEW MESKUN, Lead Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

CWO4 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Hearing Recorder
United States Coast Guard

MICHAEL KUCHARSKI, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

SCOTT JENKINS, Esq.
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(On behalf of Cooper Consolidated)

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(On behalf of Marquette Transportation)

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(On behalf of Mr. Miller)

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of David Miller:

By Mr. Kucharski

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P R O C E E D I N G S

(2:57 p.m.)

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3 CDR MESKUN: The time is now 2:57 and we are back on the
4 record.

5 LCDR VAN DE KROLL: And Mr. Miller's coming onto the record
6 that you were previously sworn, just to let you know.

7 MR. MILLER: Okay.

8 CDR MESKUN: Thank you for joining us again today. I
9 appreciate your flexibility in your schedule.

10 MR. MILLER: Thank you.

11 CDR MESKUN: I'm going to turn the microphone over to
12 Mr. Kucharski who had a few extra questions that he wanted to ask
13 of you. Mr. Kucharski?

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you, Commander. And thank you,
15 Mr. Miller, for coming back and good afternoon and Mr. Cod, (ph.),
16 good afternoon.

17 MR. COD: Thank you.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Please look at Exhibit 117 for us.

19 THE WITNESS: And while he's looking that up, I apologize for
20 my attire. Our emergency operations center was activated today
21 because of the weather. And so, we typically dress down in those
22 type of events. Trees down and tornadoes in the north part of the
23 state. So just another day in maintenance.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: I'm jealous.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Here you go. That is the actual

1 document of the Coast Guard.

2 MR. MILLER: Oh, okay. That's what we were -- okay.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: What we were looking at before.

4 MR. MILLER: Got it.

5 (Whereupon,

6 DAVID MILLER

7 was recalled as a witness and, having being previously duly sworn,
8 was examined and testified as follows:)

9 EXAMINATION

10 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

11 Q. And have you, have you looked at this one?

12 A. Just briefly this morning, in between bridge inspectors
13 letting me know they were looking at flooded bridges this morning
14 and some other things that were going on, but yes, just briefly.

15 Q. Okay. And are you familiar with this reported incident or
16 strike of the Gramercy Bridge?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Somewhat.

20 Q. And -- somewhat? And can you tell us about your knowledge,
21 that you're allowed to, or what you know about it?

22 A. So, from what I know about it, we found out through a report
23 from the Coast Guard to -- from what I believe was our area
24 engineer, Aaron Elisar, who's actually an area engineer in this
25 area. And he subsequently notified -- bridge inspection is not

1 part of something he would do, so he notified the bridge
2 inspection team within the district. And then they notified
3 headquarters to begin to put together a team that could go look at
4 it and determine what sort of damage had occurred. And ultimately
5 what went out there was some of the bridge inspectors from the
6 district, our QA bridge inspector from headquarters, and one of
7 the load rating engineers out of bridge design. And they went out
8 there with the reach-all, the underbridge inspection equipment,
9 and looked at the damage.

10 And then after that, it was determined then that it was not
11 worthy of closing the bridge. It was, there was certainly damage
12 to the structure. The actual damage was mainly to two things.
13 There was, there's the lower cord on -- and I did bring some
14 pictures that we can utilize. Where this -- where it got hit was
15 in a tension area and the main lower cord was bent a little bit,
16 but not torn. And then underneath, as you go underneath the
17 structure, there's some cross-frames that are secondary. We call
18 them secondary members, and one of those cross-frames was bent a
19 fairly a good bit. Needs to be repaired.

20 We, after that, then had Modjeski & Masters do an evaluation
21 of what we had documented for the purposes of load rating to see
22 if the bridge needed -- we knew it didn't need to be closed, but
23 we didn't know if it was going to have an effect on the load
24 capacity of the structure. So they did a load rating and
25 determined that it didn't need to be poste, that it was still able

1 to carry to legal loads and even posted loads.

2 Also along with that, Modjeski & Masters recommended a -- I
3 would all it a pretty rough game plan for what needed to be
4 repaired. And at that time, we knew there was a -- there's a
5 repair, a rehab project coming up on the overall structure and
6 were going to put those repairs into that project. That project
7 is let yet. It's still being scoped. And so, these repairs that
8 will need to be done will get done in that project. And my guess
9 is, that project would probably let sometime in the next year.

10 Also, in this process our legal staff was notified. Jacob
11 Wilson, I think in particular, who was here yesterday, and so
12 they've got all the documentation they need to handle the legal
13 side of things.

14 Q. Thank you, Mr. Miller. When your team went to inspect, do
15 you know what date that was they went to inspect?

16 A. I don't have that with me. I can certainly find that out.
17 Well, there was actually a couple of inspections. The date on
18 this inspection, which is -- I have a couple of pictures I picked
19 out of the initial damage inspection, was 8/31. When the team
20 went out, it was a week or so later.

21 I know -- I do know that they scheduled to have the reach-all
22 go out there and they had bad weather on the day that they
23 scheduled and they had to reschedule. But I can find those exact
24 dates for you. So there were really a couple of inspections that
25 occurred.

1 Yeah, and the date -- so this was 8/31/2018, this initial
2 inspection that I have some of these photos for, and the allision
3 was on -- it was the day before, on 8/30/2018. But I can find
4 those exact dates for you.

5 Q. How do we know when that actual damage occurred?

6 A. Based on what the Coast Guard supplied to us, this form here.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. This exhibit that you have.

9 Q. And can you tell us what the tug and tow was purportedly
10 involved in this?

11 A. The name of the vessel, *Taylor Marie*.

12 Q. Okay. And the owner is Marquette Transportation; is that
13 correct?

14 A. Yes, sir. That's what it says.

15 Q. And the towing, the crane company is Associated, is it?

16 A. Associated Terminals is what it says here.

17 Q. Have you been in contact with either of those parties, or is
18 anybody at the LA?

19 A. No. We have not been in contact. My understanding from
20 talking to Jacob was that BUDWINE, which is, I think a marine
21 surveyor, has contacted him. I don't know what date of when they
22 contacted him, but they have contacted our attorney.

23 Q. And looking at the --

24 A. Yeah, and he understood them to be representing Marquette, is
25 what Jacob told me.

1 Q. I'm sorry, who was that?

2 A. Jacob Wilson, our attorney, one of our attorneys that --
3 Jacob Wilson handles a lot of our claims work for the department.

4 Q. Okay. And the area on the -- can you look at the area where
5 the damage occurred?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Can you tell us where that would be on there, on that --

8 A. Correct. So, if you -- if you're looking at that photo,
9 you've got the three-span truss part of the bridge. Where the
10 truss begins on the far-left side, if you would -- if you take
11 that red thing and keep going to your left, keep going to your
12 left, keep going -- probably right about there is where it
13 occurred.

14 Q. Have you looked at the -- this 2692 that's before you, is
15 that consistent where the captain of the barge, or the person
16 filling out this form, which I believe is the claims manager for
17 Marquette?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Down at the bottom? Okay. But where they have in there the
20 description of where he was on the channel, is that consistent
21 with where this damaged area was?

22 A. Yes. From what I remember, from what I read, yes.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: I have no further questions. Thank you.

24 CDR MESKUN: Mr. Jenkins?

25 MR. JENKINS: No questions.

1 CDR MESKUN: Mr. Miller?

2 MR. MILLER: No questions.

3 CDR MESKUN: The time is -- before I do that. Mr. Miller,
4 thank you. You are released as a witness from this formal marine
5 casualty investigation. Thank you for your testimony and
6 cooperation.

7 If I later determine that this joint investigation team needs
8 additional information from you, I will contact you through your
9 counsel. If you have any questions about the investigation, you
10 may contact Mr. [REDACTED]

11 The time is now 3:08 in the afternoon and we will recess
12 until morning. Reconvene 8 o'clock tomorrow morning. We're off
13 the record.

14 (Whereupon, at 3:08 p.m., the testimony was concluded.)

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