UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

Investigation of:	*
	*
COLONIAL PIPELINE ACCIDENT	*
OCTOBER 31, 2016 NEAR	* Accident No.: DCA17FP002
HELENA, ALABAMA	*
	*

Interview of: JAMES C. BENTLEY, JR.

Fairfield Inn
Oxford, Alabama

Thursday,
April 27, 2017

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I N T E R V I E W

(12:22 p.m.)

MR. EVANS: Good morning or -- excuse me -- good afternoon, I guess, by just a few minutes.

MR. BENTLEY: Good afternoon.

MR. EVANS: Today is April 27, 2017. It is now 12:22 p.m. Central Time, and my is Roger Evans. I'm the investigator in charge for this accident for the National Transportation Safety Board out of Washington, D.C. We're at the Fairfield Inn in Oxford, Alabama. This interview is being conducted as part of the investigation into the Colonial Pipeline gasoline release and fire that occurred on October 31, 2016, at Helena, Alabama. The NTSB case number for this accident is DCA17FP002.

This interview is being recorded and may be transcribed at a later date. By the way, we don't transcribe all interviews, just so you know. A copy of the transcription will be provided to the interviewee for review prior to being entered into the public docket.

You are permitted to have one person other than your counsel or whomever for today. This is a person of your choice, an attorney, a supervisor, friend, family member, or nobody at all.

Please, Jimmy Bentley, state for the record the spelling of your full name, your job title, and who you have selected to be present during this interview. And if you could include your wife as an observer. Name and spelling.

MR. BENTLEY: Okay.

MR. EVANS: Thank you.

MR. BENTLEY: James C. Bentley, J-a-m-e-s; C as for Calvin, C-a-l-v-i-n; Bentley, B-e-n-t-l-e-y, Junior.

MR. EVANS: And you have as your counsel?

MR. SHIRLEY: Well, I'm actually an attorney for the company.

MR. BENTLEY: Yeah.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MR. BENTLEY: Yeah, I don't have nobody, I mean, other than my wife.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

MR. BENTLEY: I mean --

MR. EVANS: And the spelling of your name?

MR. BENTLEY: You want her to spell it or me?

MR. EVANS: Yeah. Go ahead and spell it.

MR. BENTLEY: Oh, me? Oh --

MS. BENTLEY: Yeah, Diana, D-i-a-n-a; C. Bentley, B-e-n-t-l-e-y.

MR. EVANS: Okay. Now we're going to go around the room and do some introductions. And just, if you can -- have you state your name, as well as spelling of your name, the title, and the agency or the organization that you represent?

DR. JENNER: I'm Stephen Jenner, S-t-e-p-h-e-n, J-e-n-n-e-r, an investigator with the NTSB.

MR. TAYLOR: I'm Chris Taylor, C-h-r-i-s, T-a-y-l-o-r. I'm

an inspector USDOT, PHMSA, Southern Region in Atlanta, Georgia.

MR. LOHOFF: Drew Lohoff, D-r-e-w, L-o-h-o-f-f, Director of Compliance for Colonial Pipeline out of Alpharetta, Georgia.

MR. SHIRLEY: Sean Shirley from Balch & Bingham. I'm an attorney for L.E. Bell.

MR. CAMPBELL: Keith Campbell, K-e-i-t-h, C-a-m-p-b-e-l-l, Safety Director, L.E. Bell Construction, Heflin, Alabama.

MR. WHITEN: Charlie Whiten, C-h-a-r-l-i-e, W-h-i-t-e-n, Safety Department, L.E. Bell Construction, Heflin, Alabama.

MR. EVANS: Okay, well, thank you, Jimmy, for agreeing to talk with us today.

INTERVIEW OF JAMES C. BENTLEY, JR.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. We'd like to just begin with a little bit of background, the companies you've worked with in the past, and what your role and responsibility is with this -- with L.E. Bell. If you can just give us a, just a brief overview of your background?

A. The previous company I worked for was ACCI off of 202 here. We did most of our work at the Anniston Army Depot. I ran a small crew out there doing concrete, and just odd and end stuff. I was there for 9 years. The company I was working for before them was -- oh, man, what was the iron, the steel hanging --

MS. BENTLEY: Jacksonville Steel.

MR. BENTLEY: Jacksonville Steel. Hanging, doing AutoZone parts stores, putting iron up for them. I was there for 4 years.

And, Lord, my hobbies is fishing. Other than that, that's about it. For L.E. Bell I was a skilled labor.
Q. And when did you start with L.E. Bell?
A. 2/15/2013.
Q. And your job title there is?
A. Labor.
Q. But have you been in that position your entire time?
A. Yeah, um-hum.
Q. Okay. And just describe for us the tasks that you're required to do in your job.
A. Mainly shoveling. Getting dirt out from under the pipe. Locating the pipe. Probing for the pipe. Fueling of equipment, greasing equipment. You know, just labor work, labor work.
Q. Okay. So you do some sort of equipment maintenance type along with --
A. Yeah, just -- yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Whatever I was told to do.
Q. So we want to kind of go back to the day of the incident. We want to talk about the first dig and what your, what your role, and if you can, if you can kind of give us a thumbnail sketch of that, you know, what time you got there, who you saw, who you were taking your direction from, the equipment that was used?
A. For the day of the incident?
Q. Yeah, the first dig.

A. The first dig. That was the first dig I was on that day.
Q. Right.
A. So, well, we got there, and I was on light duty for a tore rotator cuff on my shoulder, and I got elected to locate the pipe. So me and Bill Whatley, we were locating the pipe. The other guys was unloading the excavator, which was 200 Komatsu, and during the process of us locating the line is when the leak occurred.
Q. No, we're talking about the --
DR. JENNER: I'm sorry. This is Steve Jenner. You were not on the -- there were two excavations that day. Did you say you were not part of the morning excavation?
MR. BENTLEY: No, sir. Uh-uh. I was on light duty. I was -- I think I was picking up trash that day until that particular dig.
DR. JENNER: Okay.
MR. BENTLEY: Yeah. I was not on another dig that day.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. So the only dig that you were on was the dig of the incident?
A. The incident dig, yeah.
Q. And you had no involvement whatsoever with the previous dig over there that was --
A. No, sir, uh-uh.
Q. Okay. So what time did you arrive on scene?
A. I believe it was around 2:00.
Q. Okay. And curious, did you happen to see -- can you describe

for us the equipment that was on scene? Everything you can -- that you can remember.

A. Far as the tractor is just a 200 Komatsu. I mean, we had my pickup, Bill Whatley's truck, Keith Brown's truck, and Anthony Willingham's truck and the lowboy.

Q. Okay. Was there any sort of piece of equipment like a compressor with a 1-inch hose? Did you see that when you were on scene?

A. No, sir.

Q. Did you see that mounted on any sort of a flatboy?

A. No, sir.

Q. And when you arrived then on scene, where were you at? Were you over there by the lowboy, or --

A. Yeah, I was kind of parked in front of the lowboy's trailer. Like it was here, and I was here.

Q. Okay. And the task that you had, you were locating pipe?

A. Um-hum.

Q. And had you probed and -- the pipe as well that day?

A. No, sir, I hadn't. I -- like I said, I was on light duty with my hurt arm.

Q. Okay.

A. So by me locating the pipe, I could do that, you know, without physically hurting my arm.

Q. Go through the sequence of how you went about locating the pipe.

A. Well, I got the power locator out. Mr. Whatley, he put the power box next to the --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The van or the marker?

MR. BENTLEY: Yeah, marker post. Right next to the marker post like we always do. And then we started locating the pipe by marking it with paint for -- well, up to the next marker post, which was, I don't know, maybe 300 foot. And then went over to line 2, and started marking it back down the way we came, and was doing that.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Okay. So, and when you say marking the pipe, is that laying a tape over it or spray painting, or can you describe that for us?

A. Well, we locate it with a -- it was a Metrotech line locator.

Q. Right.

A. What we call it. So once it dialed in on what we was looking for, the center of the pipe, that's when we would spray the spray paint indicating the center of the pipe.

Q. Okay. And as far as the amount of -- the length of the run of the spray paint, where did -- how far -- was it 5 feet long, 10 feet long, 20 feet long?

A. It was probably 2-foot long.

Q. Two-foot long.

A. Every 10 foot.

Q. So skipped --

A. Yeah. Two-foot long paint mark every 10 foot. Roughly 10,

12 foot for 200 foot, 300 foot, ever how far the next marker post was.

Q. Okay. So that entire way you have the skipped paint running on both sides of the pipe?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. And if this is the pipe, let's just say this is the pipe right here -- and I know there's a line 1, line 2, but your -- this is going -- let's just say for the sake of discussion that this is running north-south, right?

A. Um-hum.

Q. And this is north direction. So on the east side and the west side of the pipe, you did the skip marking of the --

A. Uh-uh.

Q. No?

A. I did it on the center.

Q. On the center of the pipe?

A. Um-hum.

Q. Okay. So the entire way you have this 10-foot, 2-foot gap from one mile post to the other mile post?

A. Um-hum.

Q. And is that just regular spray paint?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Okay. And then do you actually mount tags along the way or flags?

A. Uh-uh.

Q. No flags?
A. Uh-uh.
Q. Did you observe any flags that day?
A. No.
Q. No. And how long did it take you to do all that?
A. It was probably -- getting it out and everything, putting our box up, power box, maybe 35 minutes.
Q. And did you have any issues with trying to locate the pipe? I mean --
A. No.
Q. -- the equipment worked as planned and --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- no unexpected problems with any of the locating --
A. No, sir.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Jimmy, just -- you just did it that time. Make sure you answer with a yes or no instead of a uh-huh. Because when they try to transcribe it, it will be hard to understand how you answered.
MR. BENTLEY: Okay.
MR. EVANS: Thank you.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. So you didn't have any trouble with the, with the locating. Once the locating was done, what was your next task at hand?
A. Really just stand back and watch, being on light duty. Might be getting the guys water or, you know, whatever I could do on

light duty.
Q. Let's just say this is where the pipe is, and this is -- on the day of the incident, I know the trackhoe was back here someplace.
A. Um-hum.
Q. So south of where this pen is shown on the table, imaginary south, you have the trackhoe. Where did you observe other people around that scene that day?
A. Oh, me and Mr. Whatley was back here where we ended the line locating, and the rest of the guys was up here at by the stake where the digging should have begun or the digging started.
Q. I see. So you have a -- you and Mr. Whatley are back there.
A. Um-hum. Well, kind of like over this way on line 2, coming down.
Q. Okay. So you were like kind of standing right above line 2, somewhere around that area?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And were you standing near the lowboy?
A. Yeah. Yes, sir.
Q. I mean, could you reach out and touch the lowboy?
A. Probably not reach out and touch it, but I was --
Q. But you're -- matter of feet away?
A. I was probably closer to it than any other vehicle.
Q. Okay. And on the lowboy, can you tell me at that time were there -- was there any motors running?

A. Yes. The lowboy motor, it's the track -- the truck's motor, it was running.
Q. The truck itself, the engine was running?
A. Yeah.
Q. Was the jockey motor running on the --
A. No, sir. Uh-uh.
Q. It was not running? Okay. Was there any other trucks in the area that were running?
A. The best of my knowledge there wasn't.
Q. Okay. You talked about the stake. How far was that stake over from the centerline of the pipe where you said the other people were standing?
A. Shoot, I don't know. It was probably 2 or 3-foot offset. You know, they don't never put them right on top of the line. It's just maybe a 3 or 4-foot offset.
Q. And did you observe any sort of -- you know, the 2-foot rule from the side of the pipe that the procedures talk about --
A. Um-hum.
Q. -- where they want 2 foot over from the edge of the pipe. Did you observe anyone putting paint or anything down to mark those imaginary 2-foot lines?
A. No, sir.
Q. I mean, did you see any of that after any time during --
A. Uh-uh.
Q. -- the day?

A. Now once while I was down here, once it leaked, that's pretty much were I stayed.
Q. So you --
A. You know, so I -- once I went through marking the pipe and come down, I never did go back to this spot.
Q. Oh, okay, okay. So you stayed down in that part then.
A. Yeah. I mean, I was actually still marking the line 2.
Q. Okay. So you were, you were down in this area, and you were with Mr. Whatley.
A. Um-hum. Or yes, sir.
Q. So up here, up here you had the rest of the crew?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Pretty much everybody else that was on scene that day was up in this area?
A. Yes, sir.
MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have.
DR. JENNER: Okay. This is Steve Jenner. Just a few questions.
BY DR. JENNER:
Q. When you describe the center of a pipe when you're locating a pipe, and you say you try to locate the center of the pipe.
A. Um-hum.
Q. This is the pipe. Are you talking about the centerline on the pipe or a spot in the middle of the pipe?
A. Well, I guess -- it works both ways, don't it?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: If you explain that to them though.

MR. BENTLEY: Yeah, it works both ways. It indicates the center of the pipe like that.

BY DR. JENNER:

Q. So like this point right here in middle?

A. Yeah. And the center of the pipe itself.

Q. Top of --

A. What it is, you have numbers.

Q. Okay.

A. And once you're on top of that pipe, it'll read the highest number.

Q. Okay.

A. When you come off that pipe, the numbers will start decreasing.

Q. Right.

A. So --

Q. And it's still -- as the numbers are decreasing, it's still measuring a different part of the pipe?

A. Until you get completely off of it.

Q. Right.

A. Yeah.

Q. So you can get readings of the top of the pipe and the bottom of the pipe?

A. No, not the bottom.

Q. Oh, just, I guess, the farthest --

A. Yeah.
Q. -- to the side.
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And then how -- oh, I guess, the farthest to the side sort of indicates the middle --
A. Yeah.
Q. -- as well?
A. Yeah. Once you come back to the middle, the numbers will peak the highest.
Q. Okay. So when you report a number to someone, what numbers do you report?
A. It was the depth, which was 3 foot 9.
Q. And that would be the, the top? Because you -- I think you mentioned you get different readings.
A. Yeah.
Q. So which of these readings is --
A. It would give you the depth at the center of the pipe.
Q. Right here?
A. Right.
Q. Okay. Thank you for clarifying.
Some of your duties are to probe when when all --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- limbs are working well. What's the most challenging probing situation that you've had like in terms of rocky terrain where it's very difficult to probe?

A. Well, just rocky terrain.
Q. Yeah.
A. I mean, you just hit the nail on the head.
Q. Right. Can you walk me through the process like you're trying to probe, and you can barely get down, what do you do?
A. We'd break out the shovels then or whatever. If not, we'd just lightly scratch with a backhoe.
Q. Okay. When do you decide to do shovels versus backhoe?
A. Well, that ain't really -- it wasn't up to us. It was up to the operator.
Q. Okay.
A. You know.
Q. Do you know when the operator decides one versus the other?
A. When he sees us working our ass off and can't get the probe, probing rod down.
Q. Okay. But there are times -- are there times where even shoveling is impossible?
A. Well, yeah. I mean, you can manipulate it with a shovel better than you can a three-eights-inch rod. You know what I'm saying?
Q. Sure.
A. So sometimes, yeah, we break out the shovels until in a lot of cases we can, you know, go on through. But in a lot of cases we can't.
Q. So is the purpose of the scratching to -- tell me. You tell

me the purpose of the scratching in terms of probing?
A. Just to kind of break off the hard crust. Once you get, I mean, a couple inches deep, then 9 times out of 10 it goes good.
Q. Okay. You said a couple inches. Are you talking 2 inches or what --
A. Well, maybe 6 inches or whatever, just the crust depth.
Q. Right.
A. If anybody knows what I'm talking about, they know what I'm talking about. You know what I'm saying, you know?
Q. Sure. Typically would it just take one pull of the bucket to scratch successfully?
A. Very lightly, yeah. The teeth wouldn't even be sunk.
Q. Would scratching sometimes involve multiple passes of the shovel over the same spot?
A. Yeah. Yes, sir.
Q. So you're going -- if you're going 6 inches on the first pass, are you now going 12 inches on the second pass?
A. Not necessarily. Just more or less loosening it up. I mean, he ain't trying to dig it or, you know, he ain't trying to get a bucket full of dirt or whatever. He's just trying to loosen it up.
Q. Okay. Now does this scratching process typically pull enough soil and rocks away that you need to create a spoil --
A. No.
Q. -- it fills the bucket?

A. No, sir. I mean, it mostly just piles up right here.
Q. So they don't create, you know --
A. No. Not in that method, no.
Q. Have you seen scratching methods where they do fill up the bucket and create --
A. No, sir, I haven't. I mean -- no.
Q. Okay. In terms of people you interacted with that day, how did people seem? Was there any concern from anyone that you talked to about the nature of the task, this is very difficult or did they --
A. No. It was a routine procedure, you know, stuff we'd done multiple times. I mean, wasn't nothing unusual.
Q. Right. Now most of the people who you worked with in the afternoon were involved in the earlier excavation.
A. That I don't know. I mean, we was on the leak site, you know. And like I said, I was picking up garbage. I had been on garbage detail with my arm. And with the volume of people there, it was a lot of garbage.
Q. Right, right.
A. So I did my duty till -- we got told that morning that we would be going over there.
Q. Right.
A. I did what I did till it was time to go. They located me on the radio, and off we went.
Q. Right. My question there is, did you overhear any

conversation about the first excavation like, wow, that went well or, wow, that was challenging or --
A. No. No, sir.
Q. Okay. Had you run into Buckwheat at any point?
A. Not till -- well, from that morning safety meeting until the time we got over there, I hadn't.
Q. Okay. We had talked to Mr. Covey. Had you seen him on the site?
A. Covey. Who is Covey?
Q. The inspector, third-party inspector.
A. Yeah, I seen him when they was all up at the excavator.
Q. Okay. Did you have any conversation with him?
A. No, sir.
Q. Would there have been any reason for you to have talked to him?
A. Uh-uh. I mean, not unless I just went up and talked.
Q. But in terms of someone assigning you particular duties -- how did you know what to do? When you arrive on scene, how do you know your duties that day?
A. Well, being on light duty -- you know, if it wasn't for light duty, I'd have been up there with the other guys. I'd been standing there with the probing rod in my hand.
Q. Right.
A. So I went to light duty work, which is locating the pipe. The rest of the guys unloaded the backhoe or excavator, you know,

they did all the manual labor.
Q. So you knew what your responsibilities --
A. I knew what had to be done, yeah.
Q. Right.
A. I knew it needed, it had to be located before anything.
Q. Okay. So until the time of the incident, was there -- and did you hear -- was everything going normal?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. As far as you knew?
A. Yeah.
DR. JENNER: Great. Thank you.
MR. BENTLEY: You're welcome.
MR. TAYLOR: This is Chris Taylor.
BY MR. TAYLOR:
Q. When you got to the site that day, how did you get there?
A. My truck.
Q. Your truck?
A. Yeah.
Q. And when you got out, how were you aware that you were going to be locating the pipe that day? Did you -- was there anybody at the site who assigned that to you or did you just take it upon yourself to -- I mean, how did you get there?
A. I took it upon myself.
Q. The jobs like this, this was not your first job. So jobs like this or at that particular site, who was in charge?

A. I would say Keith Brown.
Q. Keith Brown. Okay. Now when you located the pipe, and I think you covered this already, does the equipment have the ability to note the pipe elevations?
A. The depth?
Q. The depth of the pipe.
A. Yeah. We go by what it says, yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. I mean.
Q. Now did you record that elevation or did anybody on -- at the scene ask you for that elevation?
A. Yeah. I told the operator.
Q. The operator?
A. I always tell the operator. You know, he gets told first.
Q. Okay. The operator, as in Buckwheat?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So he was aware of the pipe elevation?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. At what location?
A. At the stake.
Q. At the stake.
A. Yeah.
MR. TAYLOR: Okay. I have no further questions.
MR. BENTLEY: Okay.
MR. LOHOFF: Drew Lohoff, Colonial.

BY MR. LOHOFF:

Q. Did you see anyone -- I know you were off locating the line, but did you see anyone trying to probe to determine the depth of the pipe before they excavated?

A. I did not, but I did see them with the probing rods.

Q. Okay.

A. I mean, the Mexicans.

Q. Were there --

A. Spanish. Yes.

Q. Were the probe rods stuck in the ground or, you know, marking where it would be or anything?

A. The time I seen them, they hadn't got started.

Q. Okay.

A. And when they had got started, I was busy doing my thing.

MR. LOHOFF: Okay. That's all I have.

MR. BENTLEY: Thank you.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. Just a couple follow-up questions. When you do the line locating, and you have -- you talked about the -- we were showing you the cup, and you said you kind of know where this edge is elevation-wise, right?

A. Um-hum.

Q. On the pipe. And when you get a reading, do you have to calculate some sort of a number or does it just tell you what the elevation of the pipe is below grade?

A. It tells you.
Q. Okay. So do you index the piece of equipment so it knows where ground level is right then and there? Is that part of it?
A. What do you mean by that?
Q. Do you have to calibrate the instrument with the local ground level?
A. No, uh-uh. You just turn it on.
Q. So you turn it on, and does it automatically tell you what the ground level is where you are? Does it say it's X number above sea level or something?
A. No. Far as I know, it don't.
Q. So how does it register the -- I'm curious about -- might want to ask one of these gentlemen.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Just explain to him how you -- what the first numbers are, and then how you get the depth.
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Right.
MR. BENTLEY: The first numbers are zero until you get to the pipe. I mean, to the metal in the ground. And then once you zero in on the center, then you mash a button, and that'll tell you the depth.
BY MR. EVANS:
Q. And do you get that number in feet and inches or inches or millimeters, or --
A. Feet and inches.
Q. Feet and inches?

A. Um-hum.
Q. And do you take multiple readings to average the -- where the depth is at different points or do you just --
A. Well, that day I took one at the stake. Sometimes they ask you to take more than one, but that day I took one.
Q. Have you ever had an occasion when you took multiple ones and you had quite a difference in the --
A. Not quite a difference, no. I mean --
Q. Just a couple inches, or --
A. Yeah. I mean, we dig 30, 40 foot in front of the backhoe, 30 or 40 foot in front of it, you know, just before we know we're going to do. We don't walk a half a mile and --
Q. Right.
A. -- check the depth.
Q. Um-hum. Is that typical that you would do multiple readings around 30 or 40 feet away from a --
A. If the operator asks you to.
Q. Okay.
A. I mean, mainly it's right there at the stake where we're going to start, you know.
Q. Yeah. And I'm curious. When you communicate to the -- you know, to Buckwheat that day, does he automatically expect from you, that number that you give him, is the centerline of pipe, top of pipe, bottom of pipe? What does he --
A. He knows, he knows what I'm telling him.

Q. No, but, I mean, what is that? Is it the top of the pipe or the --
A. It's the center of the pipe.
Q. The center of the pipe?
A. Yeah.
Q. So that day you had a dimension of 3 foot 9 to the center of the pipe?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Okay. So was that an expected number or was that shallower than normal? Was it deeper?
A. Yeah. It was shallower than normal.
Q. What would you have expected it to be?
A. I would have expected at least 5 foot. I mean, you never know though. You never know.
Q. Right. But because it's a 36-inch pipe, you would have thought that, that -- would that be the reason why the diameter of the pipe was leading you to believe? Or is it something you just learned through time that the centerline of pipe is normally 5 feet or so below grade?
A. Yeah. It's something I've learned.
Q. That's normally 5 or so feet above --
A. Yeah, I mean --
Q. -- grade. Okay. So that day when you conveyed the message to Buckwheat that this, that this pipe was at 3 foot 9 to the centerline, did he have any comments about that or did you make

any comments like, hey, it's only 3 foot 9 or this one's a little closer to this --

A. I kind of said the pipe, man, is only 3 foot 9.

Q. And did he make any comments to that?

A. Uh-uh. Buckwheat didn't.

Q. Did he hesitate about doing anything? He just said, okay, I'll -- what was his reply when you said that?

A. Just okay. I mean, that's the way they are. The operators, you know, you tell them and --

Q. They go about their business?

A. Yeah.

Q. Okay. And just curious, had you talked to Buckwheat previous days to the accident?

A. Previous days?

Q. Yeah.

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you know if he had any plans for that day?

A. No, sir.

Q. Was there anything at all that you had heard about, an engagement of any sort, party, anything at all?

A. No, sir.

Q. Nothing?

A. Uh-uh.

Q. Did he have grandchildren?

A. I don't know that.

Q. Oh, okay. I'm just curious if there was something that he was --
A. I don't even know if Buckwheat's got kids.
Q. Oh, okay. That's fine.
Okay. So once you told Buckwheat the dimension, right, did you write this down on a piece of paper and you give it to him or you -- it's a verbal?
A. Verbal.
Q. Okay. Does he repeat that back to you or no?
A. He didn't that day, uh-uh.
Q. Okay. So you told him 3 foot 9, and then what happened -- excuse me. Where did you go from that point?
A. Me?
Q. Yeah.
A. I went on locating, finished locating line 1, the line I was on.
Q. Okay. So the first thing you did was you located line 1. You found out the elevation. You told him what the number was.
A. Um-hum.
Q. And then you went back to the pipe, and then you continued on to just get where the centerline was or --
A. Yes.
Q. -- where the elevation was?
A. The centerline.
Q. Just the centerline. And you weren't paying attention to the

elevation because once you --
A. No, sir.
Q. -- had that you're all set. Okay.
And then after you performed this locating task, then you left and went down to the lowboy. Is that what you said earlier? Is that where you --
A. Line 2, yeah. I just crossed over, and worked my way back this way.
Q. Doing the same thing?
A. Toward the lowboy, yeah.
Q. Locating?
A. Yeah. Yes, sir.
Q. And what was the purpose of locating this line that day? Because they were --
A. Just to --
Q. -- going to do more work?
A. Well, no. Just that's a procedure we do. Just to let them know where that line is.
Q. Oh, okay, okay. And what was the distance and plan view, let's say, of -- how far from this line from the other line?
A. I think it's normally 20 foot.
Q. Okay. So the -- you're basically telling them the 20 feet thing so that he's aware that that's how close that line is, and --
A. Well, he knows. I mean, they just -- they know.

Q. So that's just a procedure that you do as far as you located this line, I'm going to locate this line, and I'll have a record of that?
A. Right. Yeah.
Q. Okay. Now once you did that, there was no more communication with Buckwheat?
A. No, sir.
Q. So the only communication with Buckwheat that day relating to this was when you told him the depth?
A. Well --
Q. Any other, any other communication?
A. Once the leak occurred, he come off the tractor --
Q. Right.
A. -- and asked me again, how deep did you say that was? And I repeated 3 foot 9, and he went back to the tractor.
Q. Okay. Was he -- did he have a surprise like --
A. Yeah.
MR. EVANS: He was surprised? Okay. That's all I have. thank you.
BY DR. JENNER:
Q. Again, just a couple. Do you find the Metrotech -- you have to do two, two means to determine the depth, and probing is typically one means, and the Metrotech is often a second; is that right?
A. Yeah, kind of sort of. The probing part comes in like -- say

they probe and hit the pipe. They come beside the -- you take two probing rods, go all the way down with one, go all the way down with one beside the pipe.

Q. Right.

A. That lets Buckwheat or the operator know on this side of them probing rods is the pipe. So he's clear to dig over here, his 2-foot width.

Q. Right.

A. But the Metrotech is to locate the pipe before anything is done.

Q. Okay. The device -- when we were -- I was describing you're getting readings earlier, what devices are you using to do that?

A. The Metrotech, the one part.

Q. That is -- okay. I guess my question was, do you find that to be accurate? Have you ever had --

A. It has been in the past, I mean, pretty much, yeah.

Q. -- any times that it's not accurate?

A. Huh?

Q. Have you experienced any time where you got false readings or improper --

A. No, sir, I hadn't. I mean, not in the 4 years I was there.

DR. JENNER: Okay, good. Thank you. That's it.

MR. TAYLOR: So you -- oh, this is Chris Taylor again.

BY MR. TAYLOR:

Q. So you have a device that measures two things for you: the

location of the pipe centerline -- this is a question really -- and the depth of the pipe?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Is that correct?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. So is this one of the location equipment or locate equipment where you can -- you wave across the pipe, and then as the number increases --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- that indicates the centerline of the pipe?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And at that point you either put a stake or a flag or paint?
A. Paint.
Q. Paint?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay. And you continue down the pipe on, I guess, in this case on line 1 toward Pelham --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- as you walk. And at the stake, you located it, and you also took a depth elevation, correct?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. In order to do that, you don't wave it any longer; you have to place the device on the ground or how do you --
A. Yeah, we --
Q. -- pick up --

A. Once we find the center of the pipe, we just place the wand right there at the highest numbers, and then put a dot of paint. We move it, and then they'll paint along a 2-foot spray paint of paint.
Q. Okay. So but when you want the depth of the pipe, are you doing anything different with that equipment?
A. You mashing a button, another button.
Q. You're mashing a button?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. Is that machine on the ground or is it still above ground?
A. It's -- well, sometimes it's on the ground and sometimes it's barely off the ground.
Q. Okay. All right.
A. I mean, just right there at the grass, whatever, you know.
Q. Okay. I didn't know if the number would change based on that device being on the ground or being above the ground.
A. Well, I'm sure -- I ain't never tried it, but I'm sure it would if it was 4, 5 foot off the ground.
Q. Right. All right.
A. But normally you got it right there.
Q. Right there. Okay. So it's a pretty good estimate of the depth of the pipe?
A. Yeah.
Q. Okay.
A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right, off of that. Now the pink -- did you sign a pink sheet when you were on-site?
A. Best I can remember, I didn't.
Q. You did not sign the pink sheet?
A. No.
Q. Okay. If anyone -- is that procedure for anyone on the site, is it optional to sign the pink sheet, or --
A. No. I should have signed it. I just jumped out and went to work.
Q. And who would've been the person to ask you to sign the pink sheet?
A. Chris -- what's his name?
UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Covey.
MR. BENTLEY: Covey, Chris Covey.
BY MR. TAYLOR:
Q. Okay. Chris Covey is the third-party inspector?
A. Yes, sir.
Q. And he didn't ask you to sign the pink sheet?
A. Not at that point. Not, you know --
MR. TAYLOR: Okay. All right. I have no other questions. Thank you.
MR. LOHOFF: None for me. Thank you.
MR. CAMPBELL: Keith Campbell.
BY MR. CAMPBELL:
Q. When you told Buckwheat the depth, was the excavator running

at that time or was it --
A. Yeah.
Q. It was running?
A. Um-hum.
Q. How close was it to you when you told him?
A. He was sitting on it, and I was probably 8 feet away.
Q. So are you pretty confident -- are you confident that he heard, heard you?
A. Yeah. Yeah. We made eye contact. Yeah.
MR. WHITEN: Just as a review, just for informational purposes. This is Charlie Whiten.
BY MR. WHITEN:
Q. I know you've been working with us, with L.E. Bell for approximately 4 years, and just as a -- how long had you been working with Buckwheat's crew?
A. That was the first dig with Buckwheat. I had been on some backfilling with Buckwheat, but that was the first dig.
Q. Okay. And previous to that, you were with?
A. Greg Boner (ph.).
Q. Greg Boner. Okay. But you had been working with backfilling on the previous job with Buckwheat?
A. When -- not -- just on some when we was up around North Carolina, you know.
Q. Okay. All right. And one more question. When you talk about line locate, whether you're the person with the stick in

your hand, the reading device, or the person locating the box and moving along and painting, how many times in 4 years had you done that probably?

A. Probably, I don't know, a couple of dozen.

Q. But you've been part of it multiple, multiple times?

A. Yes, sir.

MR. WHITEN: Okay.

MR. EVANS: This is Roger Evans. Just a couple more questions.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. When it comes to the locating task at hand, according to your procedures, do they require that to be witnessed by anybody?

A. No, sir.

Q. So when you -- when whoever is locating and they tell, they say that number to the operator, it's just that one person that's going to see that number and communicate that to the operator.

A. Pretty much, yeah.

Q. Yeah. Had you had training on how to use that equipment in a classroom or out in a --

A. Just out in the field. Just doing what I was doing.

Q. On-the-job training kind of thing?

A. Yeah.

Q. Not a classroom?

A. Yes. No, sir.

MR. EVANS: Okay. This is to Drew Lohoff. If we haven't

asked for them -- I don't remember seeing them -- but the calibration records for that piece of equipment?

MR. LOHOFF: It would have to be to Bell.

MR. EVANS: Oh, excuse me.

MR. LOHOFF: It's their equipment.

MR. EVANS: I'm sorry.

MR. LOHOFF: Not a problem.

MR. EVANS: To Keith Campbell, calibration records for the locator and any sort of training records that you have with regard to how you train someone, and the manual. I'd like to have the manual.

MR. CAMPBELL: Okay.

MR. EVANS: A copy of the manual for sure. We're going to get asked, I know, so we got to be prepared for that one.

BY MR. EVANS:

Q. And just a couple other questions about the locating. When you do the locating, do you, do you like -- is it trial and error? Do you kind of like do it, get a number, go back and look at it again, get a number, do it a third time, get a number? Or you just go out there and say, oh, that's the number?

A. Well, my procedure is do 10 or 12 foot or so off the -- where it's showing it's located.

Q. Right.

A. I go on over here maybe 10 or 12 foot, making sure that it just ain't picking up something out of random.

Q. Right.
A. You know, and I come back, and I do the same thing over this way, you know, each side of the pipe. I do that one time. Then once I locate -- you know, once I'm confident that that's the line --
Q. Right.
A. -- I carry on.
Q. Okay. And in the past, have you had interferences where the number you got back was not the right number?
A. No. It's pretty much dead on.
MR. EVANS: Okay. That's all I have.
MR. TAYLOR: One question. This is Chris Taylor.
BY MR. TAYLOR:
Q. Were you OQ qualified to do --
A. Yes, sir.
Q. -- that task on that day?
A. Yes.
Q. Okay. Do you recall the evaluation method required to OQ test to -- however you put it, qualify you to do that task?
A. Just out in the field. Just on-hands training.
Q. Okay. Did you have anything from, I think some groups -- NCCER, Veriforce, any courses or any online training or CBTs that cover using that equipment or locating pipelines?
A. No, sir.
MR. TAYLOR: Okay. Thank you. That's all.

MR. EVANS: Just a -- Roger Evans. I would like to -- can you do us a favor? Can you do a video of a line, and video that process for us and send us the video?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah, we actually took the OSHA lady out and located it --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did it for her.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- in front of her.

MR. EVANS: Yeah. Yeah, if you can do that for us, that would be great because that would be -- that's another thing that we're -- if this becomes a Board report, you know, and we were preparing for a Board report, then we have to be able to answer these questions. Like did you see them locate a piece of pipe or have -- how do you know that how this thing works?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Probably YouTube videos out there too that are --

MR. EVANS: Pardon me?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: There's probably YouTube videos out there that even --

MR. EVANS: Yeah. But it would be better to have, to have them. In fact, that's where I'm going to go next.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's what we did with the OSHA lady with the storm -- or storm pipe buried out in front of the shop.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Front of our safety building.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: In front of the safety building.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So we just located the storm drain.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And the nice thing about it is, you can see by the grates or the drains where it actually is. So you sort of --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Oh, so you can confirm --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We know where it's at, and so we actually did the same exact thing. We went both sides and showed her how it would pick up. As you get to the very edge, the numbers are low, but as you get towards, more towards center of the pipe, those numbers do raise up just like he said. And then you hit that button, and it's like it's -- it's like a radar bouncing off the whole pipe, and it picks up the centerline, the centerline of that pipe. And so that's what she was -- she was unclear about that, so that cleared it up for her.

MR. EVANS: Okay.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: But, yeah, we'll do that.

MR. EVANS: So if there's no other questions, it will complete the interview. Thank you very much for talking to us today.

MR. BENTLEY: You're welcome.

MR. EVANS: We appreciate you coming in.

MR. BENTLEY: Okay.

MR. EVANS: That was quite informing for us.

MR. BENTLEY: Thank you.

(Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

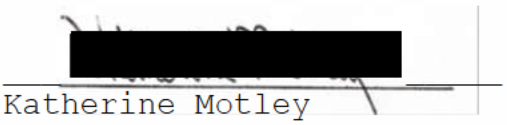
CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF:	COLONIAL PIPELINE ACCIDENT OCTOBER 31, 2016 NEAR HELENA, ALABAMA Interview of James C. Bentley, Jr.
ACCIDENT NO.:	DCA17FP002
PLACE:	Oxford, Alabama
DATE:	April 27, 2017

was held according to the record, and that this is the original, complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed to the best of my skill and ability.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber

National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594

September 28, 2017

Mr. Jimmy Bentley:

Reference: **Interview Regarding the October 31, 2016, Colonial Helena Gasoline Pipeline Release at Helena, AL -- NTSB case number DCA17FP002**

Attached is a transcript of your interview that was conducted on April 27, 2017, as a part of the on-going investigation of the above referenced accident. Please review the transcript for accuracy and make any necessary editorial changes.

You may either reference the relevant page and line number along with the suggested change or redline a copy of the document. Please initial any changes when marking up or redlining the original document.

When replying be sure and checkmark one of the three statements below, even if you have no changes.

Please submit replies to me via email no later than ***October 28, 2017***.

I have reviewed my transcript(s) from the above referenced accident and...

- [x] I have no comments to make.
- [ ] My comments are submitted herewith.
- [ ] My comments are marked on the attached copy.

Please note that these transcripts must be treated as confidential at this time. These transcripts are for your use only, and not for release outside of the investigation. If you have any questions, please contact me by phone or email.

Thank you for your assistance and cooperation,

Roger D. Evans

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