

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: EUGENE PICQUET

Pilot, *Kristin Alexis*

Law Offices of Liskow & Lewis
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Tuesday,
October 16 2018

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

MICHAEL KUCHARSKI, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

DAVID REISMAN, Esq.
Liskow & Lewis
(On behalf of Marquette Transportation Gulf Inland)

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Today is October 16, 2018, and we are
3 at the law offices of --

4 MR. REISMAN: Liskow & Lewis.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- Liskow & Lewis in downtown Baton Rouge,
6 Louisiana. And we are here to investigate the allision of the
7 crane barge *Mr. Erwin* -- *Ervin*; sorry -- which was in tow by the
8 tugboat, the towboat Kirstin --

9 MR. REISMAN: *Kristin Alexis*.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- *Kristin Alexis*, and -- which happened, the
11 accident --

12 MR. REISMAN: The 12th.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: -- on the 12th of October. And I have here
14 before me Eugene Picquet.

15 MR. REISMAN: Picquet.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Picquet. And I'm going to -- he was the, I
17 believe, the pilot on the tugboat?

18 MR. PICQUET: Yes.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: On the towboat. And if -- I'd like to go
20 around the room to get the names of the other people here.

21 MR. REISMAN: Sure. My name is David Reisman. I'm an
22 attorney with Liskow & Lewis. I represent Marquette
23 Transportation Gulf Inland.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you spell your name for the record,
25 please?

1 MR. REISMAN: Certainly. Last name is Reisman, R-E-I-S-M-A-
2 N.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Thank you.

4 CWO [REDACTED] Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
5 investigating officer for Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit Baton
6 Rouge. First name is [REDACTED] Last name, [REDACTED]

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: And this is Michael Kucharski with the NTSB.
8 I think the court reporter will know how to spell my name.

9 And please?

10 MR. PICQUET: Eugene Picquet.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Could you spell your name, please?

12 MR. PICQUET: E-U-G-E-N-E. Last name Picquet, P-I-C-Q-U-E-T.

13 CWO [REDACTED] Okay, and what was your position on the boat?

14 MR. PICQUET: Pilot on the *Kristin Alexis*.

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Great. And would you like me to call
16 you Eugene, or would you like me to call you Captain, or what
17 would you prefer?

18 MR. PICQUET: You can call me Eugene.

19 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And Eugene, we're recording this. And
20 you have no problems with us recording that?

21 MR. PICQUET: No, sir.

22 MR. KUCHARSKI: All right. Okay. Great. So one thing I
23 like to mention, or maybe Mr. [REDACTED] -- this is a Coast Guard-led
24 investigation.

25 CWO [REDACTED] Yes. So this is a Coast Guard-led major marine

1 casualty that we are investigating under Subpart 4 of 46 C.F.R.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Great. And as per federal
3 regulations, the NTSB has concurrent authority to investigate
4 also. But in this accident the Coast Guard is the lead, but
5 Mr. [REDACTED] has asked that I start off with the questioning.
6 Okay?

7 MR. PICQUET: Yes, sir.

8 INTERVIEW OF EUGENE PICQUET

9 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

10 Q. So Eugene, tell us about yourself, your background, what
11 license do you hold, and your endorsement?

12 A. I hold a master of towing.

13 Q. Master of towing. Okay. And are there any endorsements
14 under the license?

15 A. I have a 100-tons license also. But I took my proper steps.
16 I had my apprentice license first, which was my license to train.
17 I did my time. I got my upgrade, which was my mate/pilot. Did my
18 time with that, and then when the time came again for my upgrade,
19 I got my master's.

20 Q. Okay. So as master, the pilot -- mate/pilot falls underneath
21 the master, correct? So the master's license --

22 A. You're talking about position-wise?

23 Q. Yes.

24 A. Yeah. Well, we all -- all two of the captains on the boat
25 have their master's of towing license. But it's just that I'm

1 running pilot on the boat. So I'm the lowest man on the totem
2 pole.

3 Q. Okay. This is a question -- on your license, have you had
4 any accidents on your license or any accidents by the Coast Guard
5 or anything on your license?

6 A. First one. Hopefully the last.

7 Q. Okay. And tell me, training-wise, to get your license and
8 then afterwards, have you gone through any maritime-type training?
9 Marquette is the towing company; is that correct?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Do they have any simulators or anything you've been through,
12 or any type of training?

13 A. I just started. I just started on October the -- September.
14 September the 26th.

15 Q. Okay. And you're -- I'm probably going to come back and ask
16 you that, so don't get angry with me, because I have a --

17 A. No, that's fine.

18 Q. -- have a list of questions, so --

19 A. It's fine. It's fine.

20 Q. How many years have you sailed, about?

21 A. I started decking in 2012.

22 Q. Okay, so --

23 A. I've been on the river since 2009.

24 Q. And what were you doing in 2009?

25 A. Washing barges. Barge washing for Turn Services.

1 Q. Okay. And so sailing, you said 2012 you started --

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. -- as a deckhand?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. And is all your experience on the rivers?

6 A. I've been in a canal also. Because most of the time, when
7 you get a mate/pilot license, you know, you have to go in a canal.
8 So I ran from New Orleans to Houston, and I went to Corpus. I've
9 been around.

10 Q. Okay, and --

11 CWO [REDACTED] Mind if I ask a quick question? How much time
12 do you have on tugboats? All that time since 2012 is all
13 tugboats?

14 MR. PICQUET: Yes, sir.

15 CWO [REDACTED] Because you mentioned you have a 100-ton, which
16 is small passenger vessels. So I was just wondering if you --

17 MR. PICQUET: Yeah. Crew boat --

18 CWO [REDACTED] -- how much time you had working under that
19 100-ton license as well.

20 MR. PICQUET: The reason why I got my 100-ton license was
21 because I was tired of decking and I figured it would be a faster
22 way for me to get off. And in the near future, you know, once I'm
23 tired of the responsibility of being a tugboat captain, it's an
24 easier job. Less stress, you know, less responsibility. So it
25 just was kind of like future thinking. But I've run crew boats

1 for Turn Services here and there on my off days, help the port
2 captain out.

3 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. This is Mike Kucharski. Remind you
4 that the person that asked that question was Warrant Officer
5 [REDACTED] so the court reporter has that.

6 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

7 Q. Okay, so now going through the positions. So as deckhand,
8 how many years did you serve as deckhand?

9 A. Four.

10 Q. Okay. And then about how many years as mate/pilot?

11 A. I want to say a year -- between 360 and 400 days, working
12 days.

13 Q. Okay, and then as master? Have you sailed as master?

14 A. Yeah, about -- I want to say 14, 15 months. Yeah, I just
15 received my master's license last year.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, I'll stop there. Any questions on his
17 background before I go into the types of vessels that he's been
18 on?

19 CWO [REDACTED] No, I feel like we got it.

20 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

21 Q. Okay. So now the types of vessels that you've worked on,
22 have you worked on besides towboats?

23 A. Crew boats. That's it.

24 Q. Crew boats. Okay. And how much time on crew boats, about?

25 A. I mean, it wasn't steady. You know, it was just on and off.

1 I figure -- I got my 100-ton license in 2016, but I just would do
2 it on my spare time. I never had a full-time job doing it.

3 Q. So a month or 2, total, in your --

4 A. Yeah, maybe 3 months, you know, say the most.

5 Q. And the rest of it has been on towboats?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. Towboats similar to the *Kristin Alexis*?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay. Were they all push boats?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Push knees on them?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Companies that you've worked for? Marine companies, towing
14 companies, let's say -- towing or the crew boat companies.

15 A. Crew boat, just Turn Services. Tugboat --

16 Q. I'm sorry. What was that?

17 A. Turn Services.

18 Q. Turn Services?

19 A. Yeah, that's for the crew boat. Tugboat, Marquette, Turn
20 Services, River Ventures, Savage Marine, Alexis Marine.

21 Q. I'm sorry?

22 A. Alexis Marine.

23 Q. Okay. At Marquette, you said you just started. When did you
24 just start with them?

25 A. September the 26th. My third time with them. You have --

1 let me see. You're missing one, I think. River Ventures. You
2 have, what -- 1, 2, 3 -- and Turn Services also.

3 Q. And Turn Services, they have towboats also?

4 A. Yes, sir. They have towboats and crew boats.

5 Q. So your total time on the *Kristin Alexis* -- when you went to
6 work for Marquette on the 26th, that was on the *Kristin Alexis*?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. So that was your first vessel? It was your first time with
9 Marquette and your -- the only vessel you worked with for
10 Marquette?

11 A. Since I started back, yeah, that's the first one.

12 MR. REISMAN: Can I, can I clarify?

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Sure, just -- who's speaking?

14 MR. REISMAN: David Reisman. Just so it's clear, he's saying
15 that he was rehired by Marquette. So on this stint of his
16 employment with Marquette, September 26 was the first time. I'm
17 not sure if that was entirely clear based on what he's told you.

18 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

19 Q. When did you first ever start working for Marquette?

20 A. 2012.

21 Q. Okay, so let's go back then. Okay, so Marquette, how much --
22 how many years have you worked with -- roughly, roughly, in your
23 -- since 2012, sum total?

24 A. On and off?

25 Q. Yeah, on and off. About. Would you say 3 months, a year, 2

1 years, 18 months? Something like that. Give me a -- give us a
2 feel for it.

3 A. I'm going to try to give you the most accurate. Let me, let
4 me think about it. Let me see. 2012, a year and a half --
5 between 2½ and 3 years.

6 Q. Okay. Thank you for clarifying that. Okay. So now on the
7 *Kristin Alexis*, how many times had you been aboard her as either
8 mate or pilot or captain?

9 A. How many -- hold on. Could you repeat the question?

10 Q. The *Kristin Alexis*. Was this your first time that you were
11 on board the vessel that you came on, on September 26th?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. So that's the first time you set foot on that vessel.

14 A. Yes. As a pilot. That's what you asked, right?

15 Q. Yeah. Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

16 A. Yeah. As a pilot, yes.

17 Q. How about deckhand? Been on her before?

18 A. I've been on it once before when it was down on the EBT.

19 Q. So for this contract or this time with -- do you work on a
20 contract system with Marquette where you go on for a certain
21 amount of time?

22 A. Yeah, I have a schedule. I have a 28/14 schedule.

23 Q. 28/14. Okay. So you came on the 26th of September?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And you would have worked --

1 A. I was supposed to get off --

2 Q. -- till the 28th?

3 A. -- on the 24th.

4 Q. Twenty-fourth. Okay. And where did you join on the 26th of
5 September?

6 A. Where did I join?

7 Q. Yeah, the --

8 A. You mean where did I get on at?

9 Q. Yeah, where'd you get on at?

10 A. I think it was -- we were at 175. Yeah. Yeah, we were 175.

11 Q. And is 175, is that a berth or is it an anchorage position?
12 Is it a dock?

13 A. Yeah, they have a dock. Yeah, it's a combination of Cooper
14 and Weber. That's why I think it's called Cooper Consolidated.

15 Q. Okay, so you -- I think you've answered one of my questions.
16 Your rotation would be 28 days on, 14 off.

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. And then your routine, daily routine, do you have a certain
19 schedule that you work and you're off every day?

20 A. Like a shift? Yeah, we work 12-hour shifts.

21 Q. So that -- is that 12 hours continuous?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. So what is your shift?

24 A. Well, when I first got on, I was working from midnight to
25 noon. And then when all this occurred, you know, I wound up

1 switching because the other captain had to get off.

2 Q. Okay, so you worked shifts from midnight to noon, and then
3 you've also worked the shift from noon to midnight?

4 A. Midnight. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Right. Okay. How many trips have you made on the river
6 between, say, mile marker 150 and 170? Let's say in the vicinity
7 of 164, mile marker 164.

8 A. Maybe about seven or eight times. I've been from mile marker
9 55 all the way to Tiger Fleet in Baton Rouge -- well, up here.

10 Q. So you say seven or eight times. Was that as pilot or
11 master?

12 A. It was as both master and pilot.

13 Q. And the Sunshine Bridge, the Highway 70 bridge, how many
14 times have you been underneath that?

15 A. About the same amount of times.

16 Q. And was that all with tows?

17 A. Some with barges, some light boat. And, I mean, once with
18 the crane.

19 Q. Have you ever towed this crane before?

20 A. No, sir.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, let me, let me just stop there for a
22 second. Sort of background information. Any questions that you
23 have follow-on at this juncture?

24 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

25 BY CWO [REDACTED]

1 Q. Have you ever pushed or towed a crane or a vessel that had a
2 high vertical clearance before?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. You had. How many times do you --

5 A. Just to throw a number out, I want to say between 10 and 20
6 times. I done towed K2 rigs. I done towed Cooper rigs. I done
7 towed Associate rigs. Kind of, you know, got a little experience
8 with all of them, you know, but the maximum height on a crane --
9 you know, the Cooper cranes are normally like 130 feet. From my
10 knowledge, that crane was about 5 or 6 feet higher.

11 Q. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. How do you know that that
12 crane was 5 or 6 foot higher than 130 feet?

13 A. After the incident.

14 Q. Okay. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. Did you -- what
15 height did you think that crane was?

16 A. Like I said, the most of them, like Cooper cranes, they're no
17 more than 130 feet high. You know, from past experience. But
18 it's a much newer crane, and when we went upriver -- well, that
19 day you guys came out, I could see the crane is like 5 or 6 feet
20 higher. You know, but I wasn't informed about anything.

21 MR. KUCHARSKI: So this is Mike Kucharski.

22 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

23 Q. So the -- you said the Cooper cranes are normally about 130
24 feet?

25 A. That's normally the maximum air draft on them.

1 Q. Was that what you believed this one was, at 130 feet?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. Tell us about the tugboat itself, okay? Is it -- does
4 it have two wheels on it?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. And are they fixed wheels? They're not controllable
7 pitch?

8 A. Fixed --

9 Q. Yeah, the pitch -- you don't change the pitch on them?

10 A. No, no, no. They're not --

11 Q. They don't have any nozzles. It's what they call an open-
12 wheel design?

13 A. You're talking about the Kort nozzles?

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. It's a -- no, it's a blade.

16 Q. So it doesn't have any Kort nozzle on it?

17 A. No, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Does it have flanking rudders?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Two engines?

21 A. Yes, sir. Cummins.

22 Q. Do you know the horsepower?

23 A. Oh, no, I'm sorry. Caterpillars. I'm sorry, man. I'm
24 sorry.

25 Q. No, that's okay. That's okay.

1 A. They're 1440. I'm sorry.

2 MR. REISMAN: That was -- he did the same thing when Tiago
3 (ph.) was on board and he corrected himself, so --

4 MR. PICQUET: Yeah. I'm sorry, man.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: No, no, no. Again, it's not to catch
6 somebody. You know, I feel bad even when somebody has to correct
7 themselves. It seems like --

8 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

9 Q. So the Cats -- 1440 Cats?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. And horsepower? Is that 1440?

12 A. It's 1440 horsepower.

13 Q. Okay. Clutches?

14 A. What'd you mean by that?

15 Q. Do they have balloon clutches, pneumatic clutches? How do
16 you go from forward to reverse?

17 A. Yeah, yeah, the throttles?

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. Electronic start throttles.

20 Q. They're electronic?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. And do you know how the engines are clutched in and
23 out if you want to go from ahead to astern?

24 A. Like the gear? The gear ratio?

25 Q. No, it's -- usually there's some way to go from -- there's

1 usually not a direct drive. You have some kind of a clutch
2 mechanism to go forward to reverse. But if you don't know that,
3 just say you don't know.

4 A. Yeah, I don't understand. I don't understand what you're
5 asking.

6 Q. Okay. How did the tug handle overall?

7 A. Oh, it's a pretty -- she pushes pretty good. I mean, far as
8 fleet-wise, I don't have any problems with it, you know?

9 Q. Okay. Navigation equipment up on the wheelhouse, okay? You
10 have, I believe --

11 A. Radar.

12 Q. You have a radar. One?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Do you know if it's 3-centimeter or 10-centimeter, X band or
15 S band?

16 A. No.

17 Q. Okay. You have a little charting system, electronic chart?

18 A. We have Rose Point. And we also have the maps, paper maps.

19 Q. The paper -- the Army Corps of Engineer maps or the NOAA
20 charts?

21 A. The navigational maps.

22 Q. Okay. VHF's?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. One? Two?

25 A. Two. AIS.

1 Q. GPS?

2 A. That's like the Rose Point.

3 Q. Okay. Do you know if it actually has GPS?

4 A. On the --

5 Q. If there are GPS receivers on board?

6 A. I mean --

7 Q. If you don't know, that's --

8 A. -- not a regular GPS. I mean, I don't know what GPS you're
9 referring to.

10 Q. Okay, if -- I can't answer the question for you. So if you
11 don't know if it has GPS, then that's okay.

12 A. No.

13 Q. Do you have, do you have --

14 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

15 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me finish.

16 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

17 Q. Is there something that gives you a position, latitude and
18 longitude, on that vessel?

19 A. Oh, yeah. The Rose Point.

20 Q. Rose Point. Do you know where Rose Point gets that
21 information from to actually put a position?

22 A. It's a software that they have installed on it.

23 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, good.

24 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I was going to ask
25 something similar, but I'm wording it different. Maybe he'll

1 understand. Besides Rose Point, is there another piece of
2 electronics that you can look at to get your position off of?

3 MR. PICQUET: Yeah, I could use the AIS and my own -- AIS --
4 what is it, what is it, what is it -- give me a sec. My compass.
5 My compass.

6 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

7 Q. Magnetic compass, is it?

8 A. It's a global compass. Like, it's not magnetic. Like the
9 regular ball compass.

10 Q. It's a regular ball compass?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Is there any rate of turn indicator on there?

13 A. What'd you say again?

14 Q. Rate of turn indicator?

15 A. Like a follow-up? No.

16 Q. No, something that tells you how fast you're turning.

17 A. Oh, yeah. Yeah, the -- oh, what is that thing called -- I
18 think it's the CPR. It has your speed and your turn.

19 Q. Okay. Towing gear on board the vessel.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: I'll let -- let me stop. Do you have any
21 follow-on questions for navigation equipment? Okay.

22 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

23 Q. I do, actually. One more. Steering gear. Is one wheel up
24 there or are there levers? How do you actually --

25 A. Sticks.

1 Q. Sticks? So there is no wheel up there?

2 A. No, sir.

3 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

4 BY CWO [REDACTED]

5 Q. Is there a redundant steering system? Is there more than one
6 steering system?

7 A. They have more than one steering pump, if that's what you're
8 asking.

9 Q. I'm asking more than one set of rudders.

10 A. I mean, you have your flanking rudders on each side, and then
11 you have your steering. So there's two on each side.

12 Q. Okay, that's what I was asking. So you have two different
13 steering systems?

14 A. Yeah. I got to try to figure out what you all are trying to
15 ask.

16 MR. REISMAN: If you don't understand, just do exactly what
17 you did. Just ask them.

18 MR. PICQUET: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

19 MR. REISMAN: And they're not trying to trick you.

20 MR. PICQUET: Well, I just want a clearer understanding.

21 Yeah.

22 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

23 BY CWO [REDACTED]

24 Q. So, you know, so we're not trying to play with you. We can't
25 load your questions, so I can't ask you if you had flanking

1 rudders.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. I have to ask you how many sets of rudders you had, you know?

4 A. I understand.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI:

6 Q. Okay. Towing gear. Are you familiar with the towing gear on
7 the boat?

8 A. Like, the rigging?

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. Can you describe what that is? How do you make up to
12 a tow?

13 A. Face wires. Face wires.

14 Q. Yeah. Yes, facing up. Yes. How do you actually connect up
15 to a barge?

16 A. I get center and I have the winches that I -- the buttons I
17 have to turn on to let in and out.

18 Q. Okay, what actually connects the tugboat to the barge?

19 A. Face wires.

20 Q. Wires.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay. Okay. I'm sorry. I didn't get that. And then you
23 run these face wires to where? From the tugboat to where on the
24 barge?

25 A. The cavals.

1 Q. Okay. And where are they located? Are they on the --

2 A. Each corner. I mean, they have one on each corner and they
3 have a center caval.

4 Q. Okay. Each corner of the barge?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. Okay. And the -- were you involved at all in the tie-
7 up of this tugboat when it initially took the barge on?

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. Okay. Okay. The bridge. Tell us what you know about the
10 bridge that you went under, the Sunshine Bridge.

11 A. I mean, I know that the center span has a clearance of 133
12 feet. That's the main span. The west span, the alternate span,
13 is listed at 132.9. And that's off of my Rose Point and my
14 charts.

15 Q. Okay. And is that a particular water level?

16 A. That's what I don't know. I don't know how they got those
17 measurements. I don't know if it's been updated since then. But
18 from my aids to navigation tools, that's what I know.

19 Q. Okay. So you don't know if it matters if you have more water
20 in the river than --

21 A. I'm more than sure it does, but like I said, I don't know how
22 they came up with that, you know, number. I don't know if they
23 measured it at a certain water level. I'm more than sure, you
24 know, when the river's up 18, 20 feet, it doesn't have the same
25 amount of clearance.

1 Q. And I'll come back to a similar type of question when we talk
2 about this particular transit, because I'm going to ask you if you
3 discussed this with the captain, you know, and -- excuse me. But
4 I just want to get a, you know, background type of the bridge,
5 what you know about the bridge. Okay? So the bridge has two
6 spans or two main channels to go under?

7 A. It has three.

8 Q. Three.

9 A. It has one main span and two alternates.

10 Q. And the alternates, are they on either side of the main span?

11 A. On the west and the east bank.

12 Q. Okay. So the tow makeup. Now I'm going to --

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Actually, let me pause here for a second.

14 Those are pretty much the background questions that I like to ask.

15 Now I'm going to go into a little bit more specific information.

16 So any background questions that we have --

17 CWO [REDACTED] Not on this area.

18 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

19 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

20 Q. So for the accident -- now we're going to concentrate more on
21 the accident voyage. And I mentioned the makeup of the tow. Did
22 you have any problems with the way it was made up?

23 A. When I came on watch, yeah, I did.

24 Q. And when you say you came on watch, what time was that?

25 A. 11:50.

1 Q. Okay. So that was -- would have been on the 11th, the
2 evening. When you say 11 -- 2350, or 11 at night?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay, okay. And so that was on the night before, hours
5 before the accident.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. And what were the problems that you had?

8 A. Well, when I came upstairs, you know, I went through my
9 normal routine. You know, I come upstairs, get ready for my
10 watch. I asked, what's going on? Well, he was outraged because
11 the bucket was blocking the port side of the barge.

12 Q. And who was he?

13 A. Desmond. The relief captain.

14 Q. The relief captain. Okay.

15 A. So, I mean, he said he asked the guy -- well, he said he
16 asked his guys to ask the crane operator to move it, because we
17 were already restricted on visibility. You know, the starboard
18 side, we couldn't face up on because the crane pier is mostly to
19 that side. So the port side was our better side of judgement, you
20 know. Well, from my knowledge, he -- his hands asked the crane
21 operator to move the bucket, and his words were, you know, I'm not
22 effing moving nothing; I don't care if they hit something or not.

23 Well, I came up -- like I said, I came upstairs and I missed
24 all that. We were already northbound. He called the dispatch and
25 asked if they could send someone out to move the bucket. This

1 been -- now I didn't hear, I didn't hear dispatch say this. I
2 just heard his response, you know. When he got off the phone, he
3 said that dispatch will send someone out, to keep going. Well, he
4 gave me the sticks about maybe a mile, mile and a half below the
5 bridge, you know. I hold my port bank, because that was the only
6 -- you know, that was the only side I could see on. You know,
7 even with the bucket blocking, I seen a little, you know.

8 Q. Okay. And maybe I should establish -- when did you actually,
9 when -- do you remember where you, were you up on when you
10 actually took the tow?

11 A. Was I up?

12 Q. Yeah, do you know when that was, when you left and where you
13 left with the tow itself?

14 A. Yeah, it was right around the -- right below the point.
15 Right below Whitehall.

16 Q. Okay, so -- and how far is that from the accident site?

17 A. Like I said, about a mile, mile and a half below the bridge.

18 Q. That's where -- so I want to be clear on this. So about a
19 mile before the bridge is when -- I'm not talking when you
20 actually took over, okay? What I'm talking about is when the
21 tugboat first got the tow.

22 A. When he first took the crane, he was at the CMT dock. I want
23 to say mile marker -- between 162 and 163.

24 Q. And what time was that, about?

25 A. Oh, I don't know what time he took it. Like I said, when I

1 came up from my watch he was already northbound.

2 Q. Okay, so you were sleeping. You were resting or something
3 like that?

4 A. Yes. I was on my off-watch.

5 Q. Okay. Were there any problems with the tugboat that you were
6 aware of?

7 A. No.

8 Q. And if you would, run us by your rest, on and off, for the --
9 as best you can for the previous 96 hours, say. So the accident
10 happened, let's say, around midnight on the 12th. So 11th, 10th,
11 9th, 8th, were you -- could you tell us about how you worked 12
12 hours a day type of thing, and how much sleep you got during that
13 -- each day?

14 A. I got between -- at least 10 to 11 hours of sleep. When I
15 get off, I don't stay up too long.

16 Q. Okay. So for the previous 4 days on there -- so the 8th,
17 9th, 10th, 11th -- you got about 11 to --

18 A. At least 40 hours of sleep or more.

19 Q. Handover of the watch. Before we actually get into -- I'm
20 going to stop and just going to let you free flow from after you
21 took over the watch and describe what happened. You know, any
22 communications you had. And I'm going to let you say it in your
23 own -- all in your own words without any -- without me stopping
24 you, okay? But before we get to that, tell us about the handover.
25 You have some kind of a handover. You talked about you do your

1 normal routine before you take over the watch. Describe that
2 normal routine, and then your discussion with the captain, what
3 information he passed on to you.

4 A. Well, we have a watch hand protocol, you know? It's supposed
5 to be in the wheelhouse. The guy that's on watch, when his relief
6 comes up, you know, they discuss about what's going on and what's
7 going to take place, you know.

8 This particular night, we didn't. I came upstairs, I asked
9 him what was going on, but like I said, he was -- I guess he was
10 so outraged, you know, behind the bucket, you know, that just went
11 over his head, you know?

12 Q. So this -- you said you normally have a process that you go
13 through. Is it something that the company -- is there a form to
14 do this, or a policy that the company says, these are the things
15 you're supposed to do?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. There is. Okay. And normally you follow that?

18 A. Yeah, every time I come upstairs, you know, like -- we got
19 our own way of communicating, you know? If I walk upstairs, you
20 know, and I say, you know, what we got? What's going on, you
21 know? That pretty much -- that's pretty much telling you, you
22 know, enlighten me on what's going on.

23 Q. So what would you discuss what was going on?

24 A. That night, like I said, when I asked him what was going on,
25 he just was outraged behind that the crane operator not moving the

1 bucket.

2 Q. Other nights or other times you relieved, how many times --
3 you've relieved this captain, Desmond?

4 A. Yeah, I think 9 days since he's been on.

5 Q. Okay, so you've relieved him -- each other before.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. So when you relieved him in the past, what did you, what --
8 in the handover, what did you talk about? What was -- what did
9 you describe?

10 A. I mean, if we were busy at the time, you know, I come
11 upstairs, you know, I say, what you got, Desmond? What's going
12 on, you know. If we're working on the tow, he'll have the
13 inbound/outbound tow diagram. He'll let me know how far he's made
14 it so far and what we have left. You know, and basically if he
15 had a specific spot that he's putting them, he'll let me know. If
16 not, because it's subject to change, you know, the lead boat -- or
17 tell you put barges in different spots, he will let me know, you
18 know, look, they got them scattered all over, they're putting them
19 in different spots; when you pull it, just get with the lead boat.

20 Q. Does he give you a course or speed or anything like that?

21 A. No.

22 Q. No. Okay. So you just take over and just look at it and
23 just take --

24 A. Yeah, I assess the situation, you know, and then I just -- I
25 mean, because my way of rigging and rearranging a tow might be

1 different from his, you know. But I mean, at least I'm still in
2 the ballpark of knowing what's going on.

3 Q. So when you say left to go, that's the distance you have to
4 go to get to where you're going to? Is that what you mean?

5 A. Come back with that, would you?

6 Q. You said he -- I think you said he mentioned that this is
7 what he's done so far and this is what you have to --

8 A. Right, that's -- like his progress, you know. How much he's
9 done, you know. Like earlier today, you know, when I came on
10 watch, he was -- well, last -- I started last night, you know. I
11 started. He came up at watch change. I had the inbound tow
12 diagram; I had the outbound tow diagram. I had all the --

13 Q. Now you say -- I'm sorry to stop you there. You said what?
14 The outbound and inbound --

15 A. Inbound and outbound tow diagram.

16 Q. What's that?

17 A. Our line boat comes in. They have the number and -- or the
18 number on the barges and the amount of barges that they come in
19 with, right? If they have drops, the outbound tow will show the
20 difference between when they're coming in and how they're leaving.

21 Q. So this -- it's a tow diagram?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay, so there's some kind of a --

24 A. Yeah, it's just --

25 Q. That's a piece of paper?

1 A. Yes, yes, yes. It's like a list, you know. Like if they got
2 35 barges, they might have seven long in each string, 5 wide.
3 Something like that, you know.

4 Q. So on that diagram, it actually shows the positions --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- of all the barges? Yeah.

7 A. Yes. And where the boat's made up.

8 Q. Okay. So was -- I hate to say I assume. Was there a tow
9 diagram for this particular --

10 A. No, it wasn't, it wasn't nothing, man. It wasn't no
11 information provided about the crane. I mean, I don't think he
12 knew the height of the crane. We found out the height of the
13 crane after the incident. When the Cooper guy came on there, he
14 threw numbers. I don't really think he was sure, you know.

15 But like I said, after we found out the crane is 130 feet
16 -- 35 foot high, I don't know what -- at what river stage, you
17 know. I don't know if that's -- because at the time, it was an
18 18-foot river stage. So you figure the air draft was 135 feet
19 with a 6-foot draft, you know, so that's like 140 feet. Like I
20 said, the center span is 133. I don't really think, you know -- I
21 don't think it was safe for me to push the barge through either
22 span, judging by those numbers.

23 Q. What was the actual draft on the barge?

24 A. Six feet.

25 Q. Okay. That's 6 foot. Do you know how much freeboard there

1 was? How much was above the water?

2 A. That's just the, that's -- yeah, that's the waterline. Like,
3 it's 6 foot from where the barge -- where the waterline meets on
4 the barge, it's 6 foot to the deck. That's why I say like 140
5 feet, because from the deck to the top of the crane is 134.

6 Q. Okay. So what -- do you know what the draft -- how deep it
7 was in the water?

8 A. Oh, no, I don't know. I don't know what the total number on
9 it is.

10 Q. Well, let me -- you sort of jumped ahead, but that's okay.
11 That's okay. So this 135 foot, you said you learned afterwards.
12 Where did you get the 135 foot again?

13 A. One of the guys off the Cooper crane.

14 Q. Do you know who the guy was? Was it the foreman? Was it
15 the --

16 A. I would think so, because he came upstairs and he asked us
17 questions, our names. So I was -- at the time, I was so busy
18 making phone calls and doing this and that, you know, what had
19 happened, I didn't really pay attention to him. When he asked me
20 my name, I just gave it to him.

21 Q. Who else was there for that conversation?

22 A. I want to say me, Desmond and Blaise.

23 Q. Blades?

24 A. Blaise. B-L-A-I-S-E.

25 Q. Blaise. And is he a deckhand?

1 A. Deckhand. Yeah, he's in there.

2 Q. Great. And let me go back again and then I'm going to stop
3 for a little bit. So you said there is a company policy on what
4 kind of information should be exchanged at each change of the
5 watch?

6 A. Yeah, watch change protocol. You know, it basically states,
7 you know, pass along information, you know, at watch change. You
8 know, like what's going on. You know, enlighten your relief on
9 what's going on; that way, he doesn't get thrown to the wolves,
10 basically. He has some kind of mind state of what's going on.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You good to keep going? You want to
12 take a break?

13 MR. PICQUET: I need to use the restroom.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

15 CWO [REDACTED] Before we use the restroom, this is [REDACTED]
16 [REDACTED] I'm going to ask one more question before he uses the
17 restroom.

18 BY CWO [REDACTED]

19 Q. You said you came on -- got on watch at 2350.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Or 11:50. How long were you and the other captain on the
22 bridge together before you took full control of the pilothouse?

23 A. How long was I up there before he handed me the sticks?

24 Q. Yes.

25 A. Like I said, I got the sticks between 12:15 and 12:30.

1 Because when I came up, he was having a conversation with the
2 dispatch, and then they had southbound traffic also. So he was
3 just like, you know, I'm going to let these three southbounds
4 clear and then I'll give it to you.

5 Q. Okay. So that -- this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] The 20 or so
6 approximate minutes, the whole time, he was just talking about
7 the --

8 A. The crane, the --

9 Q. -- the guy not moving the bucket on the crane?

10 A. Yes.

11 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: And this is Mike Kucharski.

13 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

14 Q. He was talking about that to dispatch or with you also?

15 A. He was talking about it to me. You know, he was telling me,
16 you know, what the crane operator told his deckhands. And that's
17 when he jumped on the phone and called dispatch. And, you know,
18 he told him what the guy said and asked him if they could send
19 someone out. The dispatch told him, yeah, we'll send someone out
20 in a crew boat; just keep going. And when he handed me the
21 sticks, you know, he told me dispatch said they're going to send
22 someone out, to keep going.

23 Q. And I'm a little bit confused. They're going to send someone
24 out to do what?

25 A. Move the bucket.

1 Q. Move the bucket. Okay.

2 A. But they never did.

3 Q. Okay. And dispatch said just to keep going?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. You heard that conversation?

6 A. No, I didn't hear dispatch say it. But that's what he passed
7 along to me.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. Okay, it's now about 12:43. We're
9 going to take a little bit of a break, okay?

10 (Off the record at 11:43 a.m.)

11 (On the record at 12:06 p.m.)

12 MR. KUCHARSKI: And this is Mike Kucharski with the NTSB, and
13 we're restarting our interview of Captain Eugene Picquet. And
14 just a note for the record: the times that I mentioned earlier
15 are an hour later than the actual time. I gave the times in
16 Eastern Daylight Time, and we are in Central Time. We're in Baton
17 Rouge. And so back up those times by one hour. So we're
18 restarting the interview now at about 6 minutes after 12:00
19 Central Daylight Time.

20 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

21 Q. So Eugene, the -- I want to talk a little bit about bridge
22 transits. Is there a company policy for bridge transits that
23 you've seen?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. There is. Do you know what that policy is? Does it -- what

1 does it talk about in the policy?

2 A. It's just basically, you know, saying that, make sure when
3 you're transitioning through the bridge, you know, that all
4 numbers check out, you know. That your air draft -- you have
5 enough to clear, you know. I mean, well -- how could I say this
6 -- vertical and, what, horizontal?

7 Q. Okay. And so is there any written form that you have to
8 sign, or is it just a policy that you --

9 A. No, it's just, it's just a file on the computer that we have
10 to look up, you know.

11 Q. Now let me go back to when the tow was made up. You don't
12 know exactly when it was -- the time it was made up. And prior to
13 your coming on the bridge to take your -- in the wheelhouse to
14 take your watch that evening, had you or the captain discussed the
15 transit at all going from CMT to --

16 A. No, sir.

17 Q. No. Okay.

18 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] Eugene, the policy
19 that says to verify your vertical and horizontal clearances, does
20 it in any way tell you how to verify?

21 MR. PICQUET: It's just saying make sure, you know, that all
22 your numbers are correct. Like approaching a bridge, you know, if
23 your air draft -- you know, have your air draft number. Make sure
24 that you have clearance. You know, things like that.

25 CWO [REDACTED] So does it, does it tell you where to get those

1 numbers from?

2 MR. PICQUET: No, it just states, you know, like, if you, if
3 you're pushing a barge, you know, like a crane barge or whatever,
4 just make sure that the height of the crane has enough room to,
5 you know, clear the bridge. That's what you wanted me to answer?

6 CWO [REDACTED] So since it doesn't tell you where to get it,
7 where would you get those numbers?

8 MR. PICQUET: I mean, the height of the bridge, I mean, I
9 would -- like I said, I would just check my Rose Point or my map,
10 you know. My aids to navigation tools.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. And this is Mike Kucharski back,
12 Eugene.

13 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

14 Q. So when you took the watch over, what was your actual
15 understanding? Was it written down somewhere what the air draft
16 was?

17 A. He had the draft of the boat wrote down. On the short voyage
18 plan, the -- he had the draft of the boat and the keel clearance
19 on the boat.

20 Q. On the boat. But was there any air draft for that tow on
21 the, on the towing plan?

22 A. No, the short voyage plan is like, if you're an assist
23 vessel, you know, or -- trying to think -- assist vessel. It's
24 basically, the short voyage plan is basically -- you know, I
25 looked at it and I read it and I understood it clear, because I

1 was confused at first. It says maximum air draft, you know, which
2 I'm thinking maximum meaning the highest point of whatever you're
3 pushing. But when you look at it and you understand it, it
4 actually states the boat. But there's another voyage plan that is
5 supposed to filled out prior to, you know, pushing something of
6 that sort.

7 Q. And who fills that out?

8 A. Whoever takes off with whatever they have.

9 Q. So in this case here -- you say whoever takes would --

10 A. Right, if I would have been on -- initiated taking the crane,
11 it would have been my responsibility to fill the paperwork out.

12 Q. So in this particular tow, the *Mr. Ervin*, the captain,
13 Desmond, was the one who took --

14 A. The crane.

15 Q. -- the crane. So it's your understanding that he would have
16 filled that out.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. So when you took the watch at midnight, roughly -- you took
19 the sticks, I think you said, at about 12:25.

20 A. About 12:15 or 12:30.

21 Q. There was no form with the air draft of the --

22 A. The crane.

23 Q. -- crane?

24 A. No. It was just the boat.

25 Q. How many people were on board the tugboat when you sailed,

1 when you hit the bridge, or when the --

2 A. Two, four -- six.

3 Q. Six. Okay.

4 A. Four deckhands, two captains.

5 Q. And are there deckhands -- are they assigned per watch? Do
6 they work the same schedule that you do?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Or, you know, a 12-hour shift?

9 A. Well, each captain has his own deck crew. Right.

10 Q. Each?

11 A. He has two deckhands and I have two.

12 Q. Okay. Understood. Understood. And so you had two deckhands
13 that were on watch with you.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And do you give them any instructions while they're on watch?

16 A. Yeah, well they have their normal duties, you know, like
17 housekeeping, you know, things like that. But in this particular
18 subject or coincidence, what -- I don't know. When we were
19 approaching the bridge, I had them head out, you know. I had one
20 on each side. I had one on the port side on the head; I had one
21 on the starboard. My more experienced guy was on the side
22 opposite of what I can see, because I can kind of trust his
23 judgment more.

24 Q. So would that -- what side would he, what side would he be
25 on, then?

1 A. The right side.

2 Q. The right side.

3 A. He was on the right side. My less experienced guy was on the
4 same side that I could see on, you know. But I didn't like that,
5 because like I said, I can see out of my port side with my less
6 experienced guy. So I'm fine on my starboard side. But I had
7 them out there talking me down through the bridge. And majority
8 of the ways, he said I was lined up with the green light, you
9 know. But it looks like, when I went underneath and I got stuck,
10 I was so many feet to the port.

11 Q. And you say he said you were in the green lights?

12 A. My own -- my mate.

13 Q. Your mate.

14 A. Or my lead deckhand.

15 Q. Your lead deckhand.

16 A. Yeah. I'm sorry about that.

17 Q. And that was the one on the right-hand or starboard side?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Okay. And do you give them any instructions when they go
20 forward? Do you tell them what to do?

21 A. Well, I just -- you know, I tell them head out. You know, I
22 can't see. You know, I need them to talk me down through the
23 bridge.

24 Q. So when you say "talk me down through the bridge," are they
25 guiding you horizontally to line you up down the middle? Is that

1 what they're doing?

2 A. Yeah. Yeah, they're talking me -- see, when I go through the
3 span, they have piers on both sides. So they're basically talking
4 me to where I stay clear of those piers, you know. I mean,
5 granted, they can't see up top, you know, to see. But I had made
6 it so far through and my deckhands said, you know, your head's
7 clear. And so I said, well, come on back. And when they turned
8 out, he said -- soon as he turned around, he took the few steps
9 and, boom, I got stuck.

10 Q. Let me back up a little bit, and I apologize for this. Your
11 normal duties on the tugboat in your 12-hour shift, what do you
12 do?

13 A. Follow orders from the lead boat. Whatever he needs me to
14 do, I do.

15 Q. The lead --

16 A. Boat.

17 Q. -- boat. Okay, you don't follow orders from the captain?

18 A. No. We're working for Cooper. So whatever they need us to
19 do, we do. We take instructions from, you know, either the lead
20 boat or the dispatch.

21 Q. Okay. So the captain doesn't get involved with giving --
22 telling you anything to do?

23 A. Giving orders? No.

24 Q. Okay. And what is it that you do during your 12 hours?

25 A. Like I said, if they need me at the elevator pulling empties,

1 I do that. If they need me to clear barges up -- it's just
2 regular fleet work.

3 Q. For instance, do you go out there on deck and work out on
4 deck at all?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. So when you say clearing barges out of, are you
7 talking about -- is it work just in the pilothouse, in the
8 wheelhouse that you're doing? Or are you doing anything else
9 outside of standing a watch on the bridge?

10 A. Standing the watch on the bridge? I don't --

11 Q. Well, you do 12 hours, correct?

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay. So where are those 12 hours -- where do you work those
14 12 hours?

15 A. Like I said, wherever they need me. They send me out of the
16 fleet, you know. We work from 164 to 180.

17 Q. Okay. I'm talking about on the boat itself. Where do you
18 work on the boat itself?

19 A. I'm in the wheelhouse.

20 Q. In the wheelhouse. Okay. And are you navigating the vessel
21 during that time?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. Or directing people to hook up things? Is that what
24 you're doing?

25 A. Yeah. I get my orders from the lead boat or the dispatch,

1 and I give my orders to my deckhands.

2 Q. Okay. But you're staying up in the wheelhouse, generally
3 speaking, for those 12 hours?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. And in big ships, those officers may come off the
6 wheelhouse and have collateral duties, okay? To do something else
7 besides stand their watch. But you don't do anything besides
8 standing a watch for 12 hours on the bridge?

9 A. On the bridge?

10 Q. The wheelhouse.

11 A. Oh, yeah. You confused me with the bridge.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. Like, I don't know -- yeah, that's where I stay. That's my,
14 that's my quarters.

15 Q. Okay. And did you have any communications when you took over
16 the watch with any other vessels or with VTS?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Who did you communicate with?

19 A. I had southbounders coming at me. And I mean, I made meeting
20 arrangements with them.

21 Q. Okay. So you said you took over the sticks about 12:15,
22 12:20.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. And the collision happened about --

25 A. 1:50.

1 Q. -- 1:50. Okay. So an hour and a half. During that roughly
2 hour and a half span, you talked with southbound vessels?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Meeting arrangements? Did you talk to VTS too? Vessel
5 Traffic Service?

6 A. Yeah. I mean, general traffic? Yes. You don't get with New
7 Orleans traffic until you get to the bridge. So I was in the
8 process of doing that when everything occurred. But general
9 traffic, it's, you know, like when you make bends or -- you know,
10 it's a certain point, you know, you just put your position out
11 there, you know. Like if I'm coming around the point, I'll say,
12 you know, *Kristin Alexis* northbound; got one crane barge on the
13 port, restricted on visibility. You know, *Kristin Alexis* -- you
14 know, it's just letting everyone know where I'm at and what I'm
15 dealing with, basically.

16 Q. And what channel do you make that call on?

17 A. Sixty-seven.

18 Q. Sixty-seven. Okay. Is that -- that's the VTS channel?

19 A. That's the general traffic -- I mean, channel. New Orleans
20 traffic is 5.

21 Q. Okay. Who made the decision to use the westbound channel or
22 span?

23 A. I did.

24 Q. Okay. And why did you choose to go westbound on this --

25 A. Because I had a southbounder taking the main span.

1 Q. Okay. Why didn't you use the east?

2 A. Because I would have had to cross in front of him. I just
3 stood on my side.

4 Q. Okay. So you were on that side already. Stayed on that
5 side.

6 A. Right. I'm on that side because that's the only side I could
7 see on. So at least -- I'm using my radar. At least I know I got
8 a, I got a certain amount of gap between me and the bank. So I'm
9 staying on that side to stay clear of everybody else.

10 Q. So you're using the radar to help you on the bank, your
11 distance to the bank?

12 A. Yeah. Well, you -- if you look at it over so many years, you
13 kind of could judge your distance, you know? You know, if I got
14 this amount of gap between my tow and the bank, I'm sitting at a
15 good distance.

16 Q. And what about -- are you using any other navigation tools?
17 You using Rose Point?

18 A. I'm using my Rose Point also.

19 Q. What do you use Rose Point for?

20 A. To see all the boats that's coming my way.

21 Q. Does Rose Point give you -- show you your lineup on the
22 bridge?

23 A. Yeah. I mean, it wasn't blown up at the time. But I would
24 -- like I say, I was center most of the time. And I wasn't --
25 when I got stuck, if I drifted over a lot, I mean, I don't know.

1 But I had -- mostly I kept my eyes looking out that window making
2 sure, you know, I was good on one side. At some point in time, I
3 stopped looking at my Rose Point because it's not the most
4 accurate tool that I have.

5 Q. What's the most accurate tool that you --

6 A. Most accurate tool is my radar. And at the time, by me being
7 faced up to that crane and that big pier in front of me, it
8 echoes. So you know, far as straight in front of me, it's no
9 good, you know. I can see on the side of me, you know, because
10 the block was in front of me. So everything in front of me was
11 echoing. You know, so I was kind of dead in the water, you know,
12 so -- to a certain extent, you know.

13 Q. So your plan -- I was going to get to that later, but since
14 you bring it up, your plan was to be center line on the green
15 lights on that, on that western span.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. That was the plan.

18 A. Far as him telling me. I mean, I couldn't see it.

19 Q. Were you aware of any current?

20 A. The current speed?

21 Q. Yeah, current -- or which way it was setting you, which
22 direction you were -- you're setting and the speed?

23 A. I was doing 3½ knots. Think the current speed was, like, at
24 3?

25 Q. Okay, so 3½. You were going 3½ knots. That was your speed

1 that you were making?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And there was a current of maybe 3 knots?

4 A. Three miles -- yeah, well, yeah. Three knots.

5 Q. Three miles --

6 A. Three miles an hour or something, you know.

7 Q. And do you know which way -- as you're standing on the
8 vessel, do you know if it was pushing you to the left, to the
9 right, if it was pushing you back? Do you know --

10 A. I mean, I was going against the current at the time.

11 Q. Going against the current.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Straight against the current? Was it setting you -- moving
14 you to either side?

15 A. I won't say that -- I would say it was more me, you know,
16 trust my better judgement because of my window of vision, you
17 know. So even though they were out there, you know, I trust my
18 eye better. So that -- by that bucket being in the way, I had a
19 small window. You know, so I mean, I was looking basically
20 between that pier on my port side and the side of that barge. I
21 knew I had water in between that barge and that pier. I knew I
22 was good. Now whether or not I was center, you know -- if I would
23 have had -- if that bucket wouldn't have been in the way, I could
24 have cheated more to my starboard side, because I would have had a
25 bigger window of vision, you know. I mean, I can't really use it

1 as an excuse, but just -- I don't know if you all went up there
2 and seen what I see, you know, but I think it would have been a
3 little better far as me, you know, lining up better -- further
4 over to the starboard side where the bridge was higher.

5 Q. So you mentioned about a pier. Were there, were there other
6 piers around in that area? I don't know the area as well as you
7 do. Are there other piers and terminals there? Is there a lot of
8 lighting around there? Background lights?

9 A. Yeah, yeah. That's another thing. They got, they got a
10 chemical dock right below the bridge. So the light -- you know,
11 it's lit up. It's lit up like a Christmas tree. So it was kind
12 of a glare also, you know?

13 Q. And how was -- was it good visibility?

14 A. Yeah, it was clear. I mean, you know, it wasn't cloudy or
15 anything, you know, but by me being on that crane, I was
16 restricted from visibility when I first took over.

17 Q. And would you say that the -- forget about any blockages or
18 things that are in your way. Would you say it was over 10-mile
19 visibility?

20 A. No.

21 Q. No?

22 A. No. I had about -- I want to say maybe about -- when I'm
23 straight where I was below the bridge, I could see the Carline
24 fleet. So I would say about maybe a half a mile?

25 Q. Okay, I guess -- I want to make sure I'm saying the right

1 thing. Let's say, if something were out there and there was no
2 obstruction, you could see -- without any obstruction, would you
3 say you could see, like, 10 miles, 5 miles? Was it -- was there,
4 was there -- it was good visibility?

5 A. If it wasn't there or while it was there? If the bucket
6 wasn't there or with the bucket there?

7 Q. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, without the bucket there.

8 A. Yeah, I would have, I would have had about -- I mean, from
9 the crane over, I would have had about maybe 30 feet.

10 MR. REISMAN: Listen to what he's asking you, okay?

11 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

12 Q. Yeah. What I'm asking is the visibility. Forget the crane,
13 anything there. If there was nothing in your way, anything, would
14 you be able to see 10 miles? How far --

15 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I would be able to -- yeah, yeah.

16 Q. So it was real good visibility.

17 A. You're saying if I was, like, light boat or something?

18 Q. Yeah, sure.

19 A. Yeah, yeah, yeah. It didn't have no clouds. It wasn't
20 cloudy.

21 Q. No fog or nothing out there. Okay.

22 A. No, no, no. I got you now.

23 Q. Yeah. Do you remember what the air temperature was, about?

24 A. The air temperature?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. No, I mean, it was cool. It was a little chilly, you know,
2 because my deckhand was complaining.

3 Q. Okay. Would just like to ask, before the allision, before
4 the crane hit the bridge, was there any assist -- any other assist
5 boat involved?

6 A. No, sir.

7 Q. No. And one other thing I was going to ask you about your
8 tugboat, the *Kristin Alexis*, does it have any thruster on there?

9 A. About? No.

10 Q. No. So when did you actually get a sense of that -- there
11 were problems with the -- that there was going to be a problem, or
12 there was a problem?

13 A. I don't, I don't understand what you're, what you're asking
14 me with that one.

15 Q. So did you have any sense that you were going to hit --

16 A. The bridge?

17 Q. Yeah. Before you actually hit?

18 A. No.

19 Q. So you didn't try to slow the vessel back down or change --

20 A. I mean, I was going at a safe speed. I had more throttle
21 left, you know, but I always cruise at a safe speed in case I need
22 it, you know. Because like you said, with the set, you know,
23 anything could happen. I save my throttle in case I got to try to
24 steer against and drive out.

25 Q. Did you consider at all slowing the vessel more to let the

1 southbound traffic clear and then go through the main span?

2 A. No. We went through the bridge at the same time.

3 Q. So if I asked -- understand this correctly, and I hate to put
4 words in your mouth, but up until you hit, you felt good about the
5 transit, that you were going to be okay?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me stop there, see if there are any
9 questions. Because then most of mine after this question is going
10 to be after the --

11 CWO [REDACTED] That's where I have my questions. Because it
12 would be after all the situation was.

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

14 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

15 Q. So after the crane hit the bridge, describe what happened.

16 A. After the crane hit the bridge, I hit the general alarm and
17 notified everybody to be alert, which -- everybody was still up.
18 I want to say the second thing I did was I notified traffic. I
19 got on general traffic first. I notified, you know, everybody
20 that was stalled out at the bridge. I got in contact with New
21 Orleans traffic and let them know what happened. Then I want to
22 say -- Desmond was up there by that time, so we were kind of co-
23 oping. You know, he took the wheel. I made the necessary phone
24 calls, who I had to call: Coast Guard, dispatch, you know, port
25 captain, notify everybody of the situation. And I mean, after

1 that we basically sit till everyone came.

2 Q. And was there -- can you describe what you felt when the
3 crane hit the bridge? You know, movement of the vessel? Can you
4 describe that for us?

5 A. It basically just took me to a halt. It stopped me, right?
6 When it hit, I stopped. I didn't go no further, you know.
7 Probably if I'd have been going a faster speed, I would have
8 probably tore more than what I did. But by me going that speed --
9 you know, I wasn't going too fast, you know. It stopped me.

10 Q. And just to -- you said about 3½ knots you were doing? Okay.
11 Is that correct?

12 A. Yes, sir. Yeah, I --

13 Q. Okay. You're shaking your, you're sharking your head. Just
14 want to make sure that you -- okay. And did the towboat -- did
15 you list at all to either side after you hit? Anything besides
16 just stopping? Did you feel any other motions?

17 A. It stopped me. I kind of rocked a little. And, I mean, I
18 just threw the engines out of gear. I knocked them out, you know,
19 because I didn't want to do more damage than I'd already done, you
20 know. And common things, you know -- like when you get in a bind,
21 you know, that's the best thing to do. And I kind of just
22 monitored, you know, things from there. Like I said, by that
23 time, the relief captain had then came up, because I was kind of
24 rattled, you know. So he took over the sticks, and I just, like I
25 said, I stepped to the side, you know, made the phone calls I had

1 to make and made sure everyone was fine, which everyone had come
2 to the wheelhouse by then anyway, so -- and the event, you know,
3 that it was a messed up situation that happened, you know, I still
4 followed my proper protocol and did what I had to do.

5 Q. Okay. So after the -- everybody's up on the bridge and the
6 captain took the sticks. Did an assist boat come out? Anybody
7 else come out?

8 A. Yes, yes. Once I -- again, once we notified dispatch, they
9 sent two boats up: the *Clinton Matthews* and the *Captain Whitey*.

10 Q. So that's Marquette dispatch?

11 A. No, that's Cooper dispatch. Those boats are Western Rivers
12 boats.

13 Q. Okay, so let me, let me back up a second. Sorry for doing
14 this. So when the captain, you said, had talked to dispatch
15 earlier, when you first came up on the bridge, on the wheelhouse
16 -- up on the wheelhouse, okay? And the captain was upset about
17 the placement of the buckets. You mentioned that he was -- he had
18 talked to dispatch?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. So the dispatch center he was talking to is Cooper
21 Consolidated dispatch?

22 A. Yes, they're CGB 164.

23 Q. CGB --

24 A. 164.

25 Q. And CGB is -- that's their call sign for --

1 A. That's the number -- like when you look on the Rose Point,
2 that's the name of the fleet, CGB 164.

3 Q. That's dispatch?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Fleet dispatch?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. For Cooper. So Cooper Consolidated dispatch sent out two
8 assist boats.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. And the names of them again, please?

11 A. *Clinton Matthews.*

12 Q. *Clinton --*

13 A. *Matthews.*

14 Q. *-- Matthews.*

15 A. And the *Captain Whitey*. Like I said, those are Western
16 Rivers boats, so --

17 Q. *Captain Whitey?*

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. Okay, you say they're Western Rivers boats. What does that
20 mean to me?

21 A. That's, like, Western Rivers -- that's the lead boat, so
22 that's what runs the fleet. I mean, it's a mixture of boats.
23 It's Cooper boats, it's Western Rivers boats, it's Marquette
24 boats. But that Western Rivers boat is the lead boat of that
25 fleet.

1 Q. So Western Rivers, is that a different company?

2 A. Yes. Yeah, they got, like, they got three different
3 companies that boats are in their fleet. And sometimes --

4 Q. And when you say they, are you talking about Cooper has three
5 different? Or who has three different boats?

6 A. I want to say Cooper. You know, Cooper runs the elevators
7 and everything. But Western Rivers -- the Western Rivers boats
8 are in charge of the fleet.

9 CWO [REDACTED] I'm sorry, but we're -- I'm going to have to
10 pause and run to the restroom.

11 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

12 CWO [REDACTED] Or I mean --

13 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski. We're going to hold
14 here now, and it's 12:35.

15 (Off the record at 12:35 p.m.)

16 (On the record at 12:45 p.m.)

17 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okey-doke. It's now -- let me get this
18 right. 12:45? And we're finishing up on the interview of Captain
19 Eugene Picquet.

20 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

21 Q. And so now Eugene, so you mentioned that, after the crane hit
22 the bridge, that you sounded the general alarm, people came up on
23 the bridge, and then the -- Captain Desmond, the relief captain,
24 he took over the sticks?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Did you stay up on the bridge?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. What did you do while you were up there?

4 A. Like I said, he ran the boat. And I mean, I made the
5 necessary phone calls. After that, I just -- kind of just stood
6 around. You know, smoked. Tried to clear my head, trying to
7 assess what had just happened, you know. But after that, that was
8 pretty much it, you know? Coast Guard came on. They gave us our
9 alcohol and our drug screening, you know. Normal stuff.

10 Q. So you did, you did give a urine specimen for the drug test?

11 A. Yes. They did all of us, all four of us.

12 MR. REISMAN: Just for clarification, all six crewmembers
13 were tested.

14 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, and could you -- who just said that?

15 MR. REISMAN: David Reisman.

16 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, so just understand that all six
17 crewmembers were tested?

18 MR. REISMAN: Correct.

19 MR. PICQUET: Yes.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay.

21 MR. PICQUET: Eventually.

22 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

23 Q. So shifting gears a little bit now -- it is getting towards
24 the end. So Marquette has some kind of a safety management
25 system?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Okay. And you said they have a section for bridge transits?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Do they have a navigation section also?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. Do they have a section that talks about making up tows, how
7 they should be made up?

8 A. Building and breaking tows, yeah.

9 Q. I'm sorry?

10 A. Building and breaking tows, yeah. WE have --

11 Q. A building and breaking tool?

12 A. Tow.

13 Q. Tow. Okay.

14 A. Yeah. Every day we have to do a GAR model, which kind of,
15 you know, based off of experience with those guys, you know, it
16 breaks down the different levels of the job, the seriousness of
17 the job, you know. So that's something we go over every time we
18 come on watch. You know, all depending on what we're doing, you
19 know, we -- you know, like with the guys' experience, things like
20 that and the dangers of the situation. So we actually had a GAR
21 model on pushing that crane. And I mean, it was kind of in the
22 middle, you know, in between good and bad.

23 Q. Okay. And is there a section for piloting? A separate
24 section for piloting in the safety management system?

25 A. No, it's all in the same -- you know, it's all under one

1 thing, you know.

2 Q. Do you know if there is a section or any guidance from the
3 company on a certain amount of horsepower that the tug should have
4 for a certain size of tow?

5 A. That I don't know. I mean, I'm just, I'm just getting fond
6 of everything, you know? Every day, I kind of go in there and
7 just pick something out and kind of, you know, tune myself up on
8 it, you know. But it's a lot of stuff.

9 Q. So when you came to work for Marquette, okay, as pilot or
10 captain, okay, when you -- you said you worked for them years ago
11 as a deckhand?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Yes? Okay. And when did you start sailing again as pilot
14 or --

15 A. For them or all together?

16 Q. No, for them.

17 A. September the 26th.

18 Q. September the 26th was the first time you sailed with them as
19 a --

20 A. Captain.

21 Q. -- captain. Okay. So as captain, was there any procedure
22 that they had for reading through safety information, reading
23 through the safety management system? Was there -- did you have
24 to sign anything saying that you read through these --

25 A. Yeah. I had to sign papers, you know, stating that I was

1 aware, you know, that they had policies and procedures for certain
2 things.

3 Q. Okay. Okay. And was -- so you came on the 26th. You signed
4 that a few days afterwards or --

5 A. No, I signed that before I started working.

6 Q. Okay. So you went to work on the 26th. So they gave you
7 paperwork to read, something to read?

8 A. Yeah, they gave me a packet when I came in from my interview
9 and everything.

10 Q. Understood. And this packet had navigation policies and
11 things in it?

12 A. It was just, like, briefing, you know. Letting you know to
13 be aware, you know, that they had policies and procedures. Now
14 each specific policy and procedure, it wasn't broke down like
15 that, you know. Not that I can remember. But I mean, I was aware
16 that, you know, Marquette had policies and procedures for
17 different things.

18 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Did you go -- have
19 like any period of time where you did classroom or office -- or
20 classroom type training where they go over policies and
21 procedures?

22 MR. PICQUET: No.

23 CWO [REDACTED] Or is there, like, a checklist, familiarization
24 checklist, that you're required to go through over the
25 company's --

1 MR. PICQUET: No, I didn't go through anything. I mean, when
2 I came in, like I said, the human resources lady, you know, she
3 went over my packet with me, you know. I read over different
4 things, you know, and just sign agree, you know, that I was aware
5 of it. It wasn't broke down section by section, you know, where
6 you have this policy and procedure, that policy and procedure.
7 You know, it was just stating we are, we -- you know, Marquette's
8 reputation, we have policies and procedures. You know, things
9 like that.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: So this is Mike Kucharski.

11 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

12 Q. So it was somebody from HR that went over those --

13 A. That went over all my paperwork with me.

14 Q. Was there anyone -- does Marquette have a nautical department
15 or a marine department, a separate -- like with the port captain
16 or anything like that that you work with?

17 A. I mean, a port -- yeah, port captains are assigned to
18 different boats, you know? It just, you know, which -- Harvey
19 Mabile, however you pronounce it, he's the port captain over our
20 boat.

21 Q. Harvey --

22 A. Mabile. M-A-B-I-L-E. Yeah, different port captains are
23 assigned to different boats.

24 Q. Okay. So before you came aboard the *Kristin Alexis* on the
25 26th of September, did you have any communication with Captain

1 Harvey?

2 A. I met with him once, you know, the day I went and took my
3 drug test and everything.

4 Q. Did you interview with him at all before you were offered
5 employment with the, with the company?

6 A. We talked over the phone, you know. And he just, you know,
7 he was asking me, you know, if I was still looking for work, you
8 know. Would I be able to go in this area, work this schedule, you
9 know? Kind of like briefing me up, you know, to make sure I'm
10 comfortable with where I'll be going.

11 Q. Okay. And this is -- I want to be -- ask this -- if I've --
12 I may have asked this question again, but I have to be crystal
13 clear about this, okay?

14 A. That's fine, man.

15 Q. Where the Sunshine Bridge, okay, the vertical clearance that
16 was on Rose Point or wherever you -- navigation information that
17 you got, what was it that you understood the vertical clearance
18 was?

19 A. 133 feet.

20 Q. 133. Okay.

21 A. That's the main span.

22 Q. The main span. So the west span?

23 A. Center. Center.

24 Q. The west span?

25 A. The west span is listed at 132.9.

1 Q. 132.9. Okay. And you're not sure if that's at the green
2 light or anywhere along there?

3 A. I mean, I would say the highest point.

4 Q. The highest point or the lowest point?

5 A. The highest point. I mean, because you figure, in the center
6 span, it's kind of even all the way across till you get to the
7 alternates where the pier, where the pier is. And then you start
8 to angle down. So if I had to guess, center span-wise, that 133
9 would be the highest point in that span. And just like the
10 alternate span, 132.9, that would be at the highest point.

11 Q. Okay, thank you. This is -- that's important. So you
12 mentioned that -- and showing with your hands, that on the side
13 span, the west span, it sort of angles, but -- towards the shore,
14 would you say? Angles down towards the shore?

15 A. I mean, down, yeah.

16 Q. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Okay. So it angles down towards the shore. So you would --
19 your understanding would be the highest measurement would -- or
20 that measurement, the vertical clearance, would be at the highest
21 point --

22 A. In that span. Yes.

23 Q. That span.

24 MR. KUCHARSKI: Follow-on questions?

25 CWO [REDACTED] I think I only have a couple that you didn't

1 already hit.

2 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay, Mr. [REDACTED] is going to --

3 CWO [REDACTED] So as you were -- after you evaluated the tow
4 and the configuration in the limited visibility, how comfortable
5 did you feel when you took over navigating that tow?

6 MR. PICQUET: Honestly, about -- far as me seeing-wise where
7 I was, I set myself up for my comfortability, my comfortability.
8 You know, like I said, I hugged, I hugged that west bank because
9 that was the only side that I could see down, you know. Far as
10 getting to the bridge, you know, I set my guys out, you know, to
11 talk me through. That was left and right.

12 Now I didn't know the exact number of that crane, the exact
13 clearance. But like I said, from -- judging from me pushing past
14 tows, that Cooper may have, you know, maximum 130 feet, you know.
15 So I figured at least I had, you know, 2 feet of clearance or 2.9,
16 you know, with that alternate span, not taking into consideration
17 the river stage.

18 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] still. So looking
19 back, what would you have done differently to avoid what had
20 happened, what happened?

21 MR. PICQUET: I would have got -- I would have, I would have
22 tried my best to get that air draft on that crane. That one thing
23 right there would have determined everything, you know? It wasn't
24 the bucket, you know. It wasn't, you know, stopping. You know,
25 because I mean, we have stop-work authority. But, you know, it's

1 if you feel safe stopping, you know. And in that case, I couldn't
2 see anything. I had southbound traffic, northbound traffic. If I
3 would have stopped, you know, what would that have created? My
4 most important thing would have been finding out the air draft of
5 that craft. That would have, that would have played a major part.

6 CWO [REDACTED] I don't have any more questions.

7 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski again.

8 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

9 Q. And I think I see this clearly, but I just want to be
10 absolutely sure. So when I asked you about orders, you said you
11 didn't take orders from the captain; you took them from dispatch.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. But did I get that right?

14 A. Yeah. When I'm in the fleet, yeah, right. When I'm working
15 in the fleet, you know, after I make one shift, I get with the
16 lead boat or dispatch to find out what they have next. Now it's a
17 difference between that and coming on watch. You know, coming on
18 watch, I'm getting -- you know, I'm being enlightened on what's
19 going on from him.

20 Q. "From him" being?

21 A. From the relief captain or the captain that's on watch, you
22 know? I'm kind of like third in command, you know? So I
23 basically -- on that boat, I take my orders from them. Far as
24 fleet work, I take my orders from the lead boat or dispatch.

25 Q. Okay. Understood. Clear, clear. But what was Marquette's

1 involvement -- Marquette now; not Consolidated -- did they get
2 involved with the operations of the boat?

3 A. You talking about the crane, being notified about the crane?

4 Q. No. The operation of the boat. The operation of the boat.
5 How did Marquette get involved?

6 A. Could you explain that, you know, clarify that a little more
7 for me, like --

8 Q. Did they get involved with fueling of that boat? Did
9 Marquette get involved with crewing of the boat? Who actually
10 crewed it? Was it Marquette that crewed the boat?

11 A. Yeah, Marquette crews the boat.

12 Q. Okay. And it was Marquette's safety management system that
13 you went by?

14 A. That we were going off of? Yes.

15 Q. And you got your check from Marquette.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. Paid from Marquette.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. But as far as direction, where to go, it was Cooper
20 Consolidated that told you guys where to go.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. And what tow to make up, where to bring somebody.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Okay. So when you say operating in the fleet -- okay?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You were operating for Cooper. You were talking about the
2 Cooper fleet.

3 A. Yes. Right.

4 Q. From the -- on the 26th of September when you joined the boat
5 to the collision date, did you only work for Cooper, do work for
6 Cooper?

7 A. I mean, yeah. That's their fleets, you know.

8 Q. For their fleet.

9 A. Right.

10 Q. For the Cooper fleet.

11 A. Right. Yeah, that's who we were contracted out to. Cooper.
12 And they pimp, they pimp us out to different fleets, but it's all
13 Cooper fleets.

14 Q. So you work through -- the boat worked through Cooper, okay,
15 but they could send you to do work at other fleets.

16 A. At any fleet. Yeah. I mean, they have, they have 164, they
17 have 175 and they have 180. We were back and forth between those
18 three fleets.

19 Q. And those three fleets are owned -- all owned by --

20 A. Yeah. Cooper boats all -- in all those fleets.

21 Q. Just Cooper boats, or Cooper cranes or Cooper's --

22 A. Cooper cranes. I'm guessing Cooper, you know, employees.

23 Q. Got you.

24 A. You know?

25 Q. Okay. And I think I see it clearly. Anything else that

1 you'd like to add?

2 A. Just wish I would have done things different, man. That's
3 all. That's it, man. You know? I got to say, I just went off
4 with my cards that I was dealt, you know? Should I have asked
5 more questions? Yeah. But, you know, like I said, that's
6 supposed to all get related, you know. But I guess in the midst
7 of all things, you know -- that bucket, you know, we were too
8 concerned with that bucket to even bother about any other thing,
9 you know?

10 Q. Well, thank you for -- well, that's honest -- you know, I
11 tell you, maybe -- and you're honest about it. You know, so
12 worried about the bucket and -- yeah.

13 A. I mean, when you're pushing something, man, and you can't
14 see, you know, it kind of messes with you a little bit. You can
15 control it, you know, but that's just what -- that was our focus
16 at the time, you know?

17 Q. Did you ever think of not taking the watch, or say, I'm not
18 going to do it?

19 A. It crossed my mind after. You know, just turning it down by
20 not having enough knowledge of what was going on. But I mean, who
21 could I ask, you know? He didn't -- or he -- the relief captain
22 didn't know. I'm already pushing it, you know. I don't know who
23 to call at that time of night, you know.

24 Q. Do you know if there's any policy, if there's a Cooper policy
25 of handing over? If you're not comfortable that you don't take

1 the watch?

2 A. I mean, like I said, there's a stop-work authority, you know.
3 That's a common law with every company. You know, but it also
4 says, even though there's a stop-work authority, if you feel safe
5 stopping. You know, and I mean, at the time, I didn't feel safe
6 stopping because I didn't have anywhere to stop. I can't just
7 float in the river, you know, because I can't see. I got line
8 boats up the side that I can't actually see. I have a chemical
9 dock, you know, right above that. I mean, best thing for me, like
10 you said, is just I shouldn't have took over. I shouldn't have.

11 Q. But you don't know if that's in their policy or not? In the
12 Marquette policy --

13 A. No.

14 Q. -- in their safety management system?

15 A. I would say that falls under stop-work authority, you know,
16 or refuse, if I had to -- you know, it kind of falls down the same
17 guidelines.

18 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. So you said if
19 you -- you had no place that you could stop because of the piers
20 and the fleets --

21 MR. PICQUET: And the boats.

22 CWO [REDACTED] -- and the boats. If you would have been
23 someplace on the river where you could have pushed up, do you
24 think you would have?

25 MR. PICQUET: Yeah. But see, by the river being high, you

1 know, far as me hitting the bank, you know, you got Corps of
2 Engineers. You know, you touch up on the bank, you mess up the --
3 because they have a railroad that runs along that west bank around
4 that bend where I came, you know. It's just a bunch of different
5 factors, man. Like I said, the best thing for me to do, you know,
6 is either I should have knew that air draft or I shouldn't have
7 took those sticks from him with those, you know -- or those kind
8 of possibilities in front of me.

9 CWO [REDACTED] Okay.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. We're ready to stop. Thank you, thank
11 you very much for your time. It's been enlightening for me. And
12 I'm sorry it had -- you know, this is how we have to meet. But
13 unfortunately, that's sort of part of my job, you know. It's not
14 the happiest times, you know, where you -- I can't imagine what
15 you're going through, so --

16 MR. PICQUET: Man, I didn't sleep for like 3 days, man. I
17 didn't sleep. I didn't eat. I just was stressed out, you know?
18 Because like I said, I kind of, you know, I kind of felt like I
19 just got threw to the wolves, you know.

20 MR. KUCHARSKI: Let me stop the recording at 1:06.

21 (Whereupon, at 1:06 p.m., the interview was concluded.)
22
23
24
25

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: *KRISTIN ALEXIS/BARGE MR. ERVIN*
 ALLISION WITH THE SUNSHINE BRIDGE
 DONALDSONVILLE, LOUISIANA
 OCTOBER 12, 2018
 Interview of Eugene Picquet

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19FM003

PLACE: Baton Rouge, Louisiana

DATE: October 16, 2018

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.



Eileen Gonzalez
Transcriber