

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

* * * * *

Interview of: BLAISE RUDOLPH

Mate, *Kristin Alexis*

Law Offices of Liskow & Lewis
Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Tuesday,
October 16 2018

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit

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 CWO [REDACTED] This is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
3 with the Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit, Baton Rouge. It's the
4 16th of October of 2018. We are at the office of Liskow & Lewis
5 doing an interview on -- with Blaise Rudolph, who was a deckhand
6 on the *Kristin Alexis* that had a casualty on 12 October 2018.

7 Once again, this is Chief Warrant Office [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
8 My name is [REDACTED] And we'll go around
9 the room, and everyone will introduce themselves.

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Mike Kucharski, NTSB.

11 MR. REISMAN: David Reisman, R-E-I-S-M-A-N, with Liskow &
12 Lewis. I represent Marquette Transportation Gulf Inland.

13 MR. RUDOLPH: My name is Blaise Rudolph. B-L-A-I-S-E,
14 Rudolph, R-U-D-O-L-P-H. I'm a mate on the *Kristin Alexis*.

INTERVIEW OF BLAISE RUDOLPH

15
16 BY CWO [REDACTED]

17 Q. Okay. This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] So why don't you just give
18 me a brief rundown of what you were doing and what happened a
19 little bit before and after the allision?

20 A. Yeah, sure. Well, they had the other two deckhands that was
21 on watch before. I got on at midnight. Went to go relieve them.
22 We did a -- went up to the wheelhouse and did a job safety
23 briefing right before we started our task. Captain said we were
24 going to be getting a crane, going up northbound to 175. So did
25 all the precautions for it. After it was done, it was in the

1 yellow, like a caution, because we were going to have -- it was
2 nighttime, had restricted visibility, things like that.

3 So after we did the job safety briefing, we walked out to go
4 ahead and relieve the other two deckhands that was on the other
5 watch. Set out the running lights. They explained what was going
6 on. They passed on to me that the guys on the crane, they asked
7 to move -- they had a bucket that was on like the port side.
8 Asked them to move it, and they said that they weren't going to
9 move it.

10 When we got out there, the barge was already let go. So we
11 started going northbound. They started walking back to the boat.
12 The captain asked me to stay out there to kind of talk him and
13 guide him, because they had a bunch of traffic coming southbound.

14 So after all the guidances of going northbound past the
15 traffic that was coming, he said it was okay for me to come back
16 to the boat because the river was clear; he had everything else.
17 So I walked back to the boat. Told him when I got back on the
18 boat. He said we'll be by the bridge probably in about 30
19 minutes; I'll call you back out there with my other deckhand, go
20 back out again.

21 Called us back out there. I was on the port side; my other
22 deckhand was on the starboard side. Talking him down the whole
23 way. When I walked out there to -- the captain, Eugene, told me
24 he was going to take the alternate instead of the main because
25 they had a southbound tow coming. So he told me just to keep --

1 try to keep him by the green light. As he said that, he was kind
2 of already in a green -- centered with the green light, so I just
3 kept him centered with it. Going about halfway up, probably about
4 3- to 400 feet, he started sliding to the port a little. So I was
5 telling him about how he was getting off-centered of it. Kept
6 going northbound, and he said that he had it and said he's seen
7 it. Kept talking him in, and he was good off the pillars and
8 everything. My other deckhand, he was talking to him as well on
9 the starboard side. Everything was good off -- wide-wise off the
10 pillars.

11 Starting to go underneath the bridge had about 35 to 40 feet
12 of the head of the barge is going past the bridge pillars.
13 Everything is still looking good on the port and starboard side,
14 even though he was slid over off the green light. He asked me how
15 far off; told him he's got at least 40 feet ahead of the barge is
16 clear. He goes, all right; I got the rest of it, bud, you and
17 Nick can start coming on back to the boat. Said, okay, we're
18 heading on back. We made sure the running lights are still out
19 there and everything was good before we came back.

20 Soon as we turned back around, we took a few steps, and as I
21 was looking up to try to look with my light to see if it was going
22 to clear -- from what I could see, it -- I mean, I couldn't really
23 see exactly if it was going to clear from being so low down and
24 being far up on the head of the barge. I thought it was going to
25 clear. And soon as we took a few steps, it made impact.

1 And I looked -- deckhand, he stumbled a little bit from the
2 impact. Tried to make sure he wouldn't fall or nothing. And then
3 at the time, I'm trying to look with my light that I had to try to
4 get it up there to see exactly what it was stuck on to try to make
5 it not make no more damage as possible. And I told him to try to
6 stop as much as he could, but I mean, I know the boat don't have
7 brakes or nothing. But tried to see it, and was trying to keep
8 him from getting hit, if they had any metal or anything falling
9 down to hit us or anything like that.

10 After that, we tried to get back on the -- when we were
11 walking back, the other deckhands came off the boat and was making
12 sure we were all right, make sure no face wires popped or nothing
13 like that. Besides that, that was really about it, really.

14 Q. Okay. How long you been a deckhand?

15 A. About 4½, almost 5 years.

16 Q. How long with Marquette?

17 A. Marquette, I think about 3.

18 Q. How long on this boat?

19 A. This boat? I think a little over a year now.

20 Q. And how often have you worked -- or how much -- how long have
21 you worked with the two -- the captain and the pilot that were on
22 board?

23 A. The captain, Eugene, that was on, this was his first time
24 out, first time as a captain-wise. Like, me and him used to deck
25 together. But this was his first time on the vessel.

1 Q. About how long did you guys deckhand together?

2 A. Deckhand together? I think a few months. Like he was on a
3 different boat after, like, he -- they put him on a different
4 boat. But I'd say probably about 5 or 6 months, probably.

5 Q. Okay. Was it the captain or Eugene, the pilot, that called
6 you back out for the bridge?

7 A. It was Eugene.

8 Q. Okay. I was just -- okay.

9 A. Because when we got off -- like Desmond got off at 12 and
10 Eugene relieved him, but Desmond stayed in the wheelhouse until
11 the traffic was clear because he already was in control of the
12 sticks at the time when he faced up to the crane. So while he was
13 in motion already going through with the traffic of the
14 southbounders, he waited till after that was clear and then he
15 handed the sticks over to Eugene.

16 Q. What kind of training have you had to be a deckhand at
17 Marquette?

18 A. They had the orientation. Like whenever I got hired, they
19 wanted to see what kind of wires we knew how to lay, line
20 throwing, stuff like that. And then besides that, I mean, we do
21 safety meetings every Sunday, do drills and all that to -- if
22 anybody would fall overboard, we practiced throwing life rings.
23 Practice if there's fires up here in the galley, how to put out
24 fires. Sometimes --

25 Q. That's all shipboard training, though, right?

1 A. That's all ship --

2 Q. You got no kind of formal training on how to do the wires
3 or --

4 A. No. No, I mean, when I came with Marquette, I already had
5 some experience previous. But when I started, I was already --
6 started as an experienced hand, so I kind of already knew what I
7 was doing as -- job-wise when I came to Marquette. But, I mean,
8 they had some other mates that I was watching as well when I
9 started, that they were showing me some different things.

10 CWO [REDACTED] Do you have any questions?

11 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

12 Q. You said you were on the port side of the barge when you went
13 forward?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Where exactly on the port side were you?

16 A. I was in front of that bucket that they had. They had a big
17 bucket that was on that port side, so -- I mean, he told me that
18 he could still kind of see, but I knew whenever we left, they said
19 that that bucket was kind of blocking him. So I just wanted to
20 make sure they had both of us on each side. My other deckhand
21 that was with me, Nick, he was on the starboard side. He was
22 talking to him on that side. If he needed -- I mean, he was kind
23 of new, but I said if he needed something -- I mean, he asked me
24 if he needed something, and I'd go over there and help him, and
25 then I'd go back on the port side. Both of us just communicating

1 back and forth with him to make sure he was good.

2 Q. Now -- this is Mike Kucharski. So both of you were directing
3 him. How does a conversation go? If one's on the starboard --
4 Nick is the other deckhand?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. He's on the starboard side. You're on the port side.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. How does that go? One guy saying you got to move this way,
9 the other guy saying you have to move another way.

10 A. Basically like if he's on the bad on the port -- basically
11 we're each on each side to try to see if he's on the good on each
12 side. So if Nick's on, Nick's on the starboard side, if he was --
13 he's trying to make sure he's good on that pillar that's on the
14 starboard side and he's keeping a good distance on that side. I'm
15 trying to make sure he's on a good distance on his port side for
16 us to go in at a -- try to go in at an even rate, to have
17 distances off the pillars on both sides.

18 Q. Who is actually -- or is there -- either of you two, who's
19 going on centerline to see if the barge is on centerline with the
20 lights?

21 A. That was me. I was, I was on the -- whenever we were getting
22 there, I was about a center caval on the crane barge to get him --
23 to try to get an exact center with it. But as he was sliding, I
24 was letting him know while he was sliding. And he said that he
25 was good, that he got it. But I just still kept informing him,

1 you know, he was starting to slide a little bit, getting off the
2 -- he wasn't centered with the green. He was sliding off.

3 Q. Okay. And so you go on the centerline?

4 A. Yes, sir. Because after he told me he had the port, he said
5 that he could see it, I went more to the center to try to make
6 sure he was still going to be good on that center.

7 Q. He said he could see it?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Okay.

10 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] An approximate -- I
11 know it's going to be hard to guess. From the time he started
12 sliding till the time he hit -- so when he started sliding, I'm
13 assuming the center barge was lined up on the green?

14 MR. RUDOLPH: Yes, sir. About like 600 -- about 600 feet,
15 when I started talking, he was dead-center with the green.

16 CWO [REDACTED] Okay. And then when you noticed that he was
17 sliding, from the time you notified him that he started sliding
18 till the time you guys hit the bridge, about how -- what was that
19 time frame?

20 MR. RUDOLPH: That time frame? The time frame, I wasn't too
21 sure, but I know distance-wise it was probably about -- at least
22 over 300 feet like before we went underneath the bridge. So he
23 started about a little over 300 feet to like correct, to get back.

24 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

25 Q. Mike Kucharski. Were you in the wheelhouse at the changeover

1 of the watch?

2 A. Like we have to -- yes, sir. Like we have to be there at
3 least -- we have to be up in the wheelhouse 15 minutes before our
4 watch change for us to do -- like every time we get a -- we do, we
5 have to do a GAR for what our job task is.

6 So me and Nick and the captain that goes on watch, which was
7 Eugene at the time, we both have to go over what the job task is,
8 write down the safety, the -- more safety stuff for us to be aware
9 of before we step out on the barge and complete the job task. And
10 if something changes, then we have to come back and do a different
11 one. So we're -- if we had -- if we would've went through, we got
12 off the crane barge, we would've been doing like fleet work. Then
13 we would've had to change it and do -- whenever we're doing
14 something different. But we were up there whenever they were
15 doing the watch, and then they told us to go out there to relieve
16 the other two deckhands.

17 Q. Did you hear any discussion about anything? You know, the
18 operation between the captain and the pilot?

19 A. I didn't really hear any of that. I was just trying to make
20 sure that the other two deckhands were relieved at a decent time,
21 because we work 12 hours. But when I went out there, they told me
22 that they informed Desmond that was on watch with them about how
23 they weren't moving the bucket, saying -- told me that they said
24 that they had hoped that we'd hit something, and they were
25 refusing to move it.

1 Q. Who said that?

2 A. The Cooper guys that was on the crane, and -- but they were
3 supposed to --

4 CWO [REDACTED] This is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

5 MR. RUDOLPH: Yes, sir.

6 CWO [REDACTED] So you heard the Cooper guys say that?

7 MR. RUDOLPH: No. Like the deckhands that was on watch
8 before, they passed it on to me. And then they also said that
9 they were supposed to send somebody in a crew boat to come and
10 move it, to keep going, but nobody ever did.

11 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

12 Q. And your rotation, how much time on do you spend on the tug,
13 and then how much time off?

14 A. It really depends if we're working a line boat or like what
15 the job task is. If we working line boat, we're basically outside
16 a lot. I mean, usually I'll come back with them usually about
17 anywhere from every 2 or 3 hours, I'll come back and do an engine
18 room check just to make sure the engine room's okay. But if we're
19 working a line boat, we're outside a lot.

20 Q. Okay. And then per contract, how long do you work on the
21 boat? How many days on and how many days off?

22 A. 28 and 14.

23 Q. And you work a 12-hour day continuously?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. 12-hour watch.

1 A. 12 hours on and 12 hours off. Yes, sir.

2 Q. And which one were you on?

3 A. I'm on front watch.

4 Q. 00 to 12?

5 A. Yes, sir. From midnight to lunchtime. Yes, sir.

6 Q. And rest, how much rest did you have at the last 4 days?

7 A. In the last --

8 CWO [REDACTED] Before the incident.

9 MR. RUDOLPH: Oh, before the incident?

10 MR. KUCHARSKI: Yeah.

11 MR. RUDOLPH: Usually I get -- I usually try to get anywhere
12 from 9 to 10 hours of sleep off.

13 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

14 Q. Per day?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. What other jobs do you perform during your 12 hours? Tell us
17 all the jobs you do.

18 A. I cook. Like right now, like my deckhand I have, he's new,
19 so I'm in the processes of training him, making sure he's aware of
20 all his safety stuff, making sure he's working safe. Take care of
21 the engine room. Painting.

22 Q. What do you do in the engine room?

23 A. Oil changes. Making sure the shafts are right. Making sure
24 that the packing won't be able to blow out, nothing like that.
25 Swapping generators. Adding oil to the mains if it needs it.

1 Daily cleanup. Like summertime, we were painting, chipping. We
2 do a pretty -- we do a pretty good bit of stuff.

3 Q. So swapping generators, you start one up and shut one down?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Put one on the line, take one off?

6 A. Yes, sir. Like each watch, we have to swap generators. Like
7 we swap generators every 12 hours to -- that way to give them a
8 break.

9 CWO [REDACTED] So this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

10 BY CWO [REDACTED]

11 Q. Where'd you get the training to learn how to do all that? Is
12 that --

13 A. I learned it from a -- like a previous mate. And whenever I
14 got on that vessel, they had somebody else that was there. And
15 the captain showed me. And then just went on and learned it from
16 the captain passing it on to me.

17 Q. So it was --

18 A. The head captain that's off right now.

19 Q. So it's like on-the-job training for being on that boat?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Was there checklists or anything that when you report to a
22 boat, familiarization of the boat and what your job duties and
23 responsibilities are, that you had to read and sign when you got
24 to the boat?

25 A. Yes, sir. Like whenever I got on a boat, the -- my first day

1 on that vessel the captain and the other lead deckhand that was on
2 there, they took me down, showed me where all the fire
3 extinguishers are at, showed me where all the -- showed -- they
4 basically showed me how to swap everything in the engine room,
5 where the emergency fire station was, how to use it. Where all --
6 where the emergency meeting area was. Basically explained all the
7 main stuff for me like on my first day on that boat.

8 MR. KUCHARSKI: This is Mike Kucharski.

9 BY MR. KUCHARSKI:

10 Q. What's the different between the lead deckhand and a mate?

11 A. I mean, basically the lead deckhand and the mate overlooks
12 the deckhands, and the captain relies on them the most. Basically
13 trying to maintain the vessel. If there is new deckhands, to
14 train them, make sure that they're working safe, and the policies
15 and procedures --

16 Q. So was this lead deckhand the same thing as the mate?

17 A. Well, there's a lead deckhand, but I'm the mate on the
18 vessel. They don't -- like we don't have another lead deckhand.
19 It's just me that's a mate on the vessel right now. They don't
20 have any other --

21 Q. And that's because you have a license, or you --

22 A. No, sir. No, sir, I don't have a license. No, sir.

23 Q. So you were called the mate on the vessel, not the lead
24 deckhand?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Did you help make up the tow? Or did you make it up?

2 A. No, sir. Like the back watch was the one that faced it up.
3 Like when I got on watch, it was already faced up and they were,
4 they were on their way.

5 MR. KUCHARSKI: Okay. You good?

6 CWO [REDACTED] I'm good.

7 So this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] It's 1600 and we're going to
8 end this interview with Blaise Rudolph.

9 (Whereupon, at 4:00 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

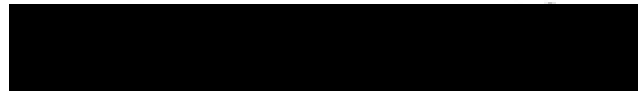
IN THE MATTER OF: *KRISTIN ALEXIS/BARGE MR. ERVIN*
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 Interview of Blaise Rudolph

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