

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

ALLISION OF THE *EDNA T. GATTLE* WITH *
THE UP RAILROAD BRIDGE AT KROTZ *
SPRINGS, LOUISIANA, ON THE *
ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, APRIL 24, 2019 *

* Accident No.: DCA19FM032

* * * * *

Interview of: STEVEN ADAMS
Captain

Terral River Services Facilities
Lettsworth, Louisiana

Wednesday,
May 1, 2019

APPEARANCES:

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

MARCEL MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MARYANNA SARE, Safety Manager
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KAREN KEELER, Attorney
(On behalf of Union Pacific Railroad)

FRANK THACKSON, Attorney
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I N T E R V I E W

(11:32 a.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED] All right. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] U.S.
4 Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit, Baton Rouge. It's now 11:32 on
5 May 1st, 2019. We're going to go through the room, around the
6 room, and then everybody is going to say their name and position,
7 and what they're doing here. So --

8 MR. MUISE: Marcel Muise, marine accident investigator with
9 the National Transportation Safety Board.

10 MR. ADAMS: My name is Steven Adams, captain on the *Edna T.*
11 *Gattle* for Terral River Service.

12 MR. THACKSON: Frank Thackson and Steve -- Heath Douglas. We
13 represent Terral River.

14 LT [REDACTED] Union?

15 MS. KEELER: Karen Keeler, in-house counsel for Union
16 Pacific.

17 MS. SARE: Maryanna Sare, risk management for Union Pacific.

18 LT [REDACTED] And again, just to clarify, I know we're on
19 our third interview, we're doing this for the third time, so just
20 for -- every individual has its individual transcript. So we want
21 to keep that in the record for every transcript that's made.

INTERVIEW OF THOMAS LYNCH

22
23 BY LT [REDACTED]

24 Q. So captain, can you please spell your name for me, please?

25 A. S-t-e-v-e-n.

1 Q. E-n?

2 A. Yes, sir. A-d-a-m-s.

3 Q. A-d?

4 A. A-m-s.

5 Q. A-m-s?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. All right. So captain, can you describe your experience as a
8 captain? How long have you been a captain?

9 A. I made actually captain about a year ago -- about a year and
10 half ago.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I've been with Terral altogether for coming on 11 years. I
13 went to school in 2012. I went to steersman school and got my
14 apprentice mate, my steersman's license. And then if I remember
15 right, 2014 is when I turned in for my pilot mate, where I was
16 watch-standing on my own with a master onboard. And then 2015 --
17 I have to look at the issue date on my license. I think it was
18 2015 when I turned in for my master's, either '15 or '16 when I
19 turned in for my master's, and then I made captain, you know,
20 actual captain on that date about 18 months ago.

21 Q. Eighteen months ago?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. So you've been a captain of the *Edna Gattle* for about 18
24 months?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And I've been on that boat for 6 years.

3 Q. On that same boat?

4 A. Yes, sir.

5 Q. So what did you do before?

6 A. I've come all the way from a steersman, to a pilot, to relief
7 captain, to captain.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Just all the way through the ranks.

10 Q. Okay. Six years.

11 A. And some of that time, it might be off. I'm really not good
12 with dates. I'd have to look at the actual issue dates, but it's
13 probably pretty close.

14 Q. Okay. That's all right. Like, yeah, we're just getting like
15 a little --

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Approximately how -- okay. And then before you became the
18 main captain, so were you a relief captain, too?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. At the *Edna*?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Okay. So how long did you do that, for how long?

25 A. Relief captain, I was probably around 8 months as a relief

1 captain, and then pilot was 2 years, just over 2 years, something
2 like that --

3 Q. Okay. Can you explain the difference between a relief
4 captain and a pilot at the *Edna Gattle*?

5 A. Like, a pilot is basically just a back watch, just works just
6 a back watch, and don't carry as much responsibility. And then a
7 relief captain is technically the captain for the 2 weeks when the
8 captain is off, so it carries the captain's responsibilities while
9 the captain is off the boat for them 2 weeks. You kind of get
10 like, you know, a taste of what the captain gets.

11 Q. Okay. So the pilot works different times with the relief
12 captain?

13 A. Yes, sir. Yes, sir.

14 Q. So when the actual captain is on -- like, is off, right?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. That's kind of how it goes?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. So when the captain is back, then the pilot goes off?

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. And then you guys rotate?

21 A. Rotate --

22 Q. Kind of like three people rotating?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Makes sense, makes sense. All right. All right. So you
2 went through every single position pretty much, right?

3 A. Yes, sir. Yeah.

4 Q. So, okay. All right. All right. So as the captain of the
5 *Edna*, right?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Can you describe me, like, your -- describe me your
8 responsibilities and how your workday goes by. Like, what do you
9 do on a workday?

10 A. Just a basic workday, you know, we do our watch changes, you
11 know, from 6 to 12, so 6 in the morning to 12 is my first watch.
12 And then my second watch would be from, you know, 6 in the evening
13 to midnight.

14 So, you know, my first watch, the morning watch, it's kind of
15 the more -- not busier, but more paperwork and stuff, you know,
16 kind of do our fuel readings and kind of plans for the day, and
17 whatnot. I get everything set up. And then we just, you know,
18 run the river, make our moves, and get everything set up for the
19 day.

20 And then my second watch in the evening, you know, my evening
21 watch would be from 6 to midnight. That's just -- it's a little
22 more relaxed watch, I guess, because, you know, the office is
23 closed and less busy. So it ain't usually a whole lot on that
24 watch. You're basically just running, you know, just driving the
25 boat. So not nothing real major.

1 Q. Okay. And you talked about during your watch, are you always
2 driving the boat?

3 A. We stay really busy on that boat. We stay moving a lot.
4 Sometimes like when we get on jobsites, you know, we will be
5 shutdown, just, you know, we'll spot barges on the rig, and then
6 build tows, and build our tow up, and stuff. But on that boat, we
7 do -- we run a lot. We stay pretty busy on it. But there are
8 some days when we get, you know, kind of take it a little more
9 easier than others.

10 Q. How many people you have onboard, what your crew consists of?

11 A. Regularly, our regular crew would be, you know, two wheelmen
12 and four deckhands, so usually six men onboard, two deckhands per
13 watch and one wheelman.

14 Q. Two deckhands and one wheelman?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay. One wheelman. Okay. Per watch?

17 A. Per watch, yes, sir.

18 Q. So then the whole crew, the four deckhands --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. And two wheelmen?

21 A. And two wheelmen, yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. And the relief captain, right?

23 A. Well, no, that would be a wheelman.

24 Q. That would be --

25 A. That would count as a wheelman.

1 Q. One of the wheelman would be --

2 A Yes, sir.

3 Q And that's why you --

4 A. Yes, sir. Yes.

5 Q. All right. Okay. All right. So what -- I'm going to ask
6 this. So when you're navigating, right, so what do you have the
7 deckhands do and the wheelman do? Well, he won't be on watch with
8 you. He's probably going to be sleeping and you're going to be on
9 watch, right?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. So what about the deckhands? What do they do?

12 A. While we're running?

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Well, it depends. Like, when we first start, you know, when
15 we first start our run, when we first depart, you know, they kind
16 of check out the barges and make sure everything is holding
17 together and make sure the tow is, you know, all built good and
18 everything, do inspections.

19 And then after that, they just kind of maintain, like, the
20 boat. You know, they clean a lot, paint, do needle-gunning and a
21 lot of cleaning, a lot of cleaning, and stuff. And they cook and,
22 you know, just the basic stuff. You know, they got stuff to do
23 like down in the engine room, greasing, you know, maintenance on
24 the boat, maintaining, just maintenance and basic cleaning up. It
25 ain't too bad.

1 Q. Who's in charge of the engine room area?

2 A. Well, we run like -- it's kind of like a "deckineer" type
3 thing. We have -- I mean, overall, I'm in charge of all of it,
4 but I do have a mate and a second mate, so they kind of -- I
5 entrust them with the engine room, and everything. So --

6 Q. If you have any issue with the engine, like, who fix it or
7 who does the --

8 A. It depends on the issue with it. Usually, you know, like if
9 it's something -- if it's like a minor problem, say the deckhand,
10 every hour they do a check, you know, they go down and check the
11 engine room. So if they see that we got a little water leak or
12 something, he would report it to me.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. And depending on the situation, if we need to stop or if it's
15 just like -- you know, we could stop and swap the hose out, then
16 we'll do that ourselves. If not, you know, we'll have to call
17 into the maintenance and get a, you know, mechanic or engineer to
18 come out --

19 Q. And they'll send somebody?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Anything, you know, any kind of in-depth mechanical issue, we
23 shut down and get a mechanic --

24 Q. Okay. So basic stuff, you guys just do your own house
25 maintenance and --

1 A. Yeah. As long as we're comfortable, you know?

2 Q. Right.

3 A. We're prepared to handle the situation and we can do it.

4 Q. Okay. So when you're behind the wheel, right --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So tell me what you do. You're driving the boat, you're
7 looking at things, like you talk on the radio. How -- tell me
8 how --

9 A. You know, different areas are going to be different. Of
10 course, you got, like, you know, Baton Rouge and New Orleans is
11 just nonstop. You know, your radio communication, you know,
12 having to really pay attention to your surroundings because it's
13 so congested.

14 And then, you know, you can get on some of these smaller
15 rivers, where the radios aren't as hectic, but like, you have to
16 really pay more attention to the surrounding because the river is
17 smaller, but you know, when the river is up, so I mean, you're
18 fighting -- it's smaller, so you're fighting more current with
19 less area.

20 Q. Um-hum. Yeah.

21 A. So, you know, depending on where you are, but for just a
22 basic day, you know, you do have some radio conversation. You
23 know, a lot of folks you know on your radars and your Rose Point
24 and, you know, meeting up, you know, trying to plan out where
25 you're meeting your next boat, and you know, setting up your

1 bridges, your locks, you know, just making sure everything is safe
2 and, you know, goes pretty smooth.

3 Q. Okay. What do you usually use for navigation?

4 A. Well, we have a Rose Point, so we have a Rose Point to, like,
5 show us what mile board we're at. And it shows our speed, too.
6 And we have a GPS on the boat, as well, that shows our speed. So
7 we kind of, you know, back and forth on that as far as like our
8 speed goes.

9 As far as like, you know, our chart, our electronic chart,
10 it's on the Rose Point. And then we have two radars on our boat.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And that's --

13 Q. What type of radar is it?

14 A. They're Furunos.

15 Q. Are they just like repeaters or --

16 A. Yes --

17 Q. -- they work independently?

18 A. Yeah, they're independent.

19 Q. They're independent?

20 A. They're independent. I mean --

21 Q. Okay. And then you said that you can see the speed. Where
22 can you find the speed?

23 A. Well, we got our speed marked on our Rose Point and on our --
24 we got a GPS that reads it, as well.

25 Q. Oh, okay.

1 A. So got to, you know, watch both of them kind of seeing our
2 speed and stuff --

3 Q. Okay. And are they pretty close?

4 A. Yes, sir. Yeah, they're kind of --

5 Q. Like, the Rose Point --

6 A. It's kind of cool how they're usually within a 10th of each
7 other.

8 Q. Oh, really?

9 A. Yeah, pretty neat, pretty --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. And they might be synched together. I honestly don't know if
12 they are or not. And then we got a swing meter, you know, got a
13 little swing meter kind of tells the degree of the swing up ahead
14 of your tow. Not so much the movement of the boat itself, but you
15 know, as far as like the head of your tow, pick port to starboard,
16 you know, tell you, you know, you got a 2-degree swing or 3-degree
17 swing --

18 Q. So is that more like, like if you hit an eddy or something,
19 so you decide --

20 A. Yeah, well --

21 Q. Or like how the current is pushing you --

22 A. Yeah, well, it's more for like -- it's a gyro compass is what
23 it is. It's pretty neat how it works. But it's not so much like
24 a solid, you know, movement port to starboard, but it's more of
25 like when your head is swinging, you know, like when the head of

1 your tow is actually swinging. So it don't actually register, it
2 don't actually register the movement of the boat, but in most
3 cases, when you're steering on it, if you're steering your head to
4 your port, then your boat is going to the starboard naturally.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. You know, but I mean, there is cases, like if you're in a big
7 slide, you know, and everything is sliding this away, so your
8 swing meter is going to read to that side, you know?

9 Q. Right.

10 A. So you can't really depend on it for any kind of movement
11 below the head --

12 Q. More like depending on the situation you're at, then you
13 can --

14 A. Yeah, you got to --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. -- kind of adjust, you know, to your situation.

17 Q. So when do you think that like -- let's say you're reading
18 that, right? When do you think it's becoming critical to actually
19 do something with the vessel based on your readings?

20 A. It's, you know, going to depend on the situation, as well.
21 But you know a 5 or 6-degree swing, I mean, that's -- you know, if
22 you got loaded barges, that's a lot of weight moving and a lot of
23 momentum --

24 Q. Right.

25 A. So of course the more the swing, the more momentum, the more

1 it's going to take you to check it down. So, you know, in all
2 different situations -- you got, you know, 12 loaded barges
3 swinging 5 degrees to the starboard, it's going to take you a
4 minute to stop it, you know?

5 Q. Right.

6 A. If you got six empty barges at a 5-degree swing, you can stop
7 that pretty quick. So just depending on the situation you're in.

8 Q. So is it a swing meter? Is that what it's called?

9 A. Yes, sir, yes, sir. We call it a swing. I think the
10 technically name is probably a gyro compass.

11 Q. Is it a gyro compass?

12 A. Yeah. Kind of works the same as that.

13 Q. Okay. Okay. All right. And then as far as the Rose Point,
14 so it gives you speed. What else do you read on that?

15 A. It gives you the speed, and then it'll show like your meet
16 positions of other vessels to -- you know, it's not -- I wouldn't
17 pinpoint on that, but it does give you the general area of where
18 you're going to meet your next vessel. And it is, you know, an
19 electronic chart. So it shows the shape of the river and your
20 sailing line, you know, your recommended sailing line, and stuff,
21 bridge structures, lock structures, all the basic stuff, but --
22 and it's pretty close, you know, pretty closely right.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. It saves if you don't happen to have a paperback chart, you
25 know, an electric chart, so it's pretty nice. It show all the,

1 you know, nearby AIS equipped vessels, you know?

2 Q. Right. Do you use paper charts?

3 A. We don't because we have the electronic chart. We have them
4 onboard, and we reference to them.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. But we don't run with the paper charts.

7 Q. I got you. So how often do you get updates on those charts?

8 A. I don't think it's like -- I don't think it's a set, you
9 know, every 3-month-type thing, but I know every few months we've
10 done it. If I would say just a couple of times a year I know it's
11 been updated. It's not really, you know, it's not like a
12 subscription or something. It don't come, like, every couple
13 months. When the updates come up for it, you know, we do the
14 update on it when we're shutting down. It usually pops up on the
15 screen, you know --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- asks for your permission to do the update, and then it'd
18 be like -- they give you a timeframe. You know, you could
19 postpone, accept, or whatever, and update your system. So just --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I've done it twice in a month before, and you know, I've done
22 it once every 3 months before. So it's just kind of random I
23 guess.

24 Q. Okay. All right. You married?

25 A. Yeah, I was.

1 Q. Oh.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Sorry to hear that. Kids?

4 A. Yes, I got a little boy, a little 4-year-old.

5 Q. Four-year-old?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. I have a 3-year-old. I know I said I had --

8 A. A 14 --

9 Q. -- a 14 and I have a 3-year-old. I have two.

10 A. Little boy or little girl?

11 Q. Two boys.

12 A. Two boys. Stop, stop.

13 Q. Yeah. One is hard on the teenager side; the other one is

14 hard because he's all over the place.

15 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He stopped at two, because if you go

16 to three, you have to go from (indiscernible).

17 LT [REDACTED] Oh, really?

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

19 MR. ADAMS: One is plenty.

20 LT [REDACTED] You got two? Yeah?

21 BY LT [REDACTED]

22 Q. Yeah, so a 4-year-old, huh?

23 A. Yes, sir --

24 Q. They're fun, huh?

25 A. Oh, yeah.

- 1 Q. They're a lot of fun, yeah.
- 2 A. Oh, my, yes.
- 3 Q. So is that from your previous wife?
- 4 A. Yes, sir. Yeah.
- 5 Q. So he stays with her?
- 6 A. Yes, sir.
- 7 Q. Okay. Where do they live?
- 8 A. In Brookhaven, Mississippi.
- 9 Q. Mississippi?
- 10 A. Yeah.
- 11 Q. Is that where you live, too?
- 12 A. Yes, sir.
- 13 Q. So you're close to him, right? So it's --
- 14 A. Yeah, oh, yeah.
- 15 Q. So this is pretty good?
- 16 A. Yeah, works out pretty good.
- 17 Q. So you live in Mississippi. You got to see him often?
- 18 A. Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. We do 28 and 14 --
- 19 Q. You can see the smile on your face, right, like --
- 20 A. Yeah, that's my little (indiscernible) there.
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. Oh, yeah.
- 23 Q. Yeah. It's like it changes you, right? Like --
- 24 A. Yes.
- 25 Q. Like, I don't know. I don't think I was much like a kids'

1 person till I had my little boy.

2 A. I never even held a kid.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Like, I put his first diaper on, and she's like here. I've
5 never touched a baby. Like --

6 Q. Oh, yeah --

7 A. Yeah. He was the first thing I held, and everything. Like,
8 I didn't even want kids. Yeah, he's definitely -- he's the one.

9 Q. Yeah, yeah. Well, and life happens, right, but at least you
10 keep that good relationship with the kid.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Because that's good for you. So when was the last time you
13 stayed home or you saw your kid?

14 A. Well, I just came back today. What's today? Wednesday --

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Tuesday?

17 Q. Today is Wednesday.

18 A. Wednesday. Okay. So I come back 2 weeks ago. Today makes 2
19 weeks that I've been on.

20 Q. You've been on 2 weeks?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. So you're off?

23 A. I'm off for --

24 Q. You're going to be off --

25 A. Yeah. I'm off for -- well, no, we were out 28 on, so I got 2

1 weeks left. We do 28 days on the boat and then 14 days off.

2 Q. Oh, oh, you do that --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. So I'm halfway through now.

6 Q. So you do the 28 days?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. And 14. Okay. So, okay, let me understand again. So you've

9 been on, and then you're going to be off. When you start your

10 days off?

11 A. I got 2 weeks left.

12 Q. Two weeks left?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Oh, so you're, like, halfway?

15 A. Yeah, I'm halfway. Today is the halfway mark on top of the

16 hill.

17 Q. All right. So when did your hitch start?

18 A. I can't remember the date. Two weeks ago. I'd have to look

19 at the calendar.

20 Q. So about 14th, 18th, something like that?

21 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: 16th or 17th.

22 MR. ADAMS: 16th or --

23 BY LT [REDACTED]

24 Q. Something like that?

25 A. I want to say 17th, but --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. I don't have my phone.

3 Q. And what did you do before that?

4 A. I had 2 weeks off.

5 Q. You had 2 weeks off?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. You got to enjoy the relaxing --

8 A. Oh, yeah, yeah.

9 Q. All that?

10 A. Yes, I do --

11 Q. You go on vacation?

12 A. No, we played some baseball, though, play a little

13 baseball --

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. -- and a little (indiscernible).

16 Q. With the kid (indiscernible)?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Yeah, that's fun. Yeah, that's good, man. It's like they

19 re-energize you, right?

20 A. Oh, yeah.

21 Q. Yeah, so -- okay. All right. Okay. So 25 -- all right.

22 I'm just trying not to forget anything. Okay. All right. So on

23 the day of the casualty, all right, April 25th, how were you

24 feeling that day?

25 A. I was feeling good --

1 Q. Feeling good?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Yeah? So you start your watch at 12?

4 A. No, I start mine at 6.

5 Q. You start at 6?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. And you end at 12?

8 A. Yes, sir, yeah.

9 Q. Okay. So when -- so 12 -- what time does the relief captain
10 come to the bridge?

11 A. The relief captain come up about -- he was up there before

12 11. He probably got up there at like 10:45 or so.

13 Q. Up to the bridge?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Oh, he was ready to work, huh?

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Okay. All right.

18 A. Pretty close to there, because he usually comes up early.

19 Q. Yeah. So he comes to there, like, and then what happened,
20 like, when -- like, let's talk about in a normal day when he comes
21 to relieve you, right? So it's just like, oh --

22 A. Yeah, we kind of talk about -- you know, if anything exciting
23 happened. Like, if he come up to relieve me, and if anything
24 exciting happened, or anything, I'm like, you know, this and this
25 happened, you know, you know, met this boat here, you know? We

1 just kind of talk about, like, what happened through my watch.
2 And then, you know, if anybody is coming, we kind of talk about
3 what's coming up for his watch, you know, different things that
4 might happen. You know, you're going to be here, doing here,
5 you're going to meet this boat, you know --

6 Q. Right.

7 A. -- this and that or -- you know? But we were actually
8 stopping the night that all that happened, so what we talked about
9 that night was getting through the bridge, and we were going to be
10 securing that barge off.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. So we made plans about that and everything, made, you know,
13 made our adjustments for that.

14 Q. Where were you coming from?

15 A. We were coming from our fleet here, Terral's fleet.

16 Q. Oh, so up here, right?

17 A. Yeah. We actually left here light-boat, and then we picked
18 that rig up in Simmesport just below the Simmesport Bridge, and
19 departed with it from there to Krotz Springs.

20 Q. Okay. So you came from Terral fleet, and then you pick up
21 the barge at the --

22 A. Yeah, it's there in Simmesport at --

23 Q. Okay. Simmesport?

24 A. It's a rock yard right there. It's called Moreau's, Moreau's
25 rock yard.

1 Q. Can you spell that?

2 A. Oh, M-o-r-e-a-u-s.

3 Q. U-s? Yeah, just for --

4 A. It's pretty close, yeah. It was pretty close.

5 Q. I'll have the right name later. I just wanted to have an
6 idea, like, how. So you left light-boat.

7 A. Yes, sir, we left the fleet here light-boat.

8 Q. And then you pick up the barge?

9 A. Yes, sir, at Moreau's right there in Simmesport.

10 Q. Yeah. And then you headed to where?

11 A. Headed to Krotz Springs.

12 Q. Oh, to Krotz Springs?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. All right. So to drop the barge?

15 A. Yeah, because we couldn't duck the bridge, so I didn't want
16 to -- we -- our overall plan was we needed to get five barges of
17 rock, five loaded barges of rock and that rig down to Morgan City.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. But to do that, we had to trip the rig because it wouldn't
20 fit under the -- we couldn't duck the bridges with that rig.

21 So --

22 Q. Like, all bridges?

23 A. Yeah, well, all the bridges on the Atchafalaya River --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. The Simmesport and then the Krotz Springs. So I got with

1 dispatch and just told them I would feel more comfortable just
2 running the -- because the rig couldn't duck it, I was just going
3 to duck -- you know, run it down to Krotz Springs and I'd have to
4 get an opening. And then I was going to come back up and get the
5 loads. And with the loads, I could drop my wheelhouse down on the
6 boat and run under the bridge so it wouldn't need to open up --

7 Q. Oh, I see.

8 A. Yeah, instead of coming through there with six barges, I
9 could just run the rig by itself.

10 Q. Okay. So --

11 MR. MUISE: The final destination was Amelia?

12 MR. ADAMS: Yes, sir.

13 MR. MUISE: Okay.

14 MR. ADAMS: Yes, sir, Amelia was the -- St. Mary Limestone is
15 the name of the rock yard there, Amelia.

16 BY LT [REDACTED]

17 Q. Amelia, right?

18 A. Yes, sir. Yeah, I think I called it Morgan City.

19 LT [REDACTED] (Indiscernible) I thought it was Morgan City.

20 MR. MUISE: Amelia is the other side of the --

21 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, it's the other side.

22 MR. ADAMS: I mix them up all the time.

23 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

24 MR. ADAMS: Morgan City and Amelia.

25 BY LT [REDACTED]

1 Q. So final destination. So the plan was to grab that barge.
2 So you're going to drop at the Krotz Bridge, like right past it,
3 and then --

4 A. Yes. Well, we --

5 Q. -- secure it? And then --

6 A. Yeah, we was going to go just below the bridge, and then
7 secure it all.

8 Q. Secure, yeah. Okay. And then you're going to grab five
9 other barges after you dropped the barges --

10 A. Yes, sir. We were going to light-boat back up to the fleet
11 right here and get five loads of rock and go back down.

12 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. What was the schedule do deliver
13 those rock barges?

14 A. When was the schedule?

15 Q. Yeah, when was it due to --

16 A. I think it was going to be the next day was going to be the
17 scheduled offload, because I -- yeah, because I was going to drop
18 the rig and get back. By the time I'd have got back, been
19 daylight, and it would have been that following day was going to
20 be the offload date for it.

21 Q. Okay. So how long it takes from picking up the barges all
22 the way to Amelia?

23 A. About -- we can make it from here to Amelia in about 20
24 hours.

25 Q. Twenty hours?

1 A. Yes, sir, give or take, 20 to 24 hours we'd be on location.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. You know, from here.

4 Q. So dropping off the barges as Krotz Bridge and coming back,
5 pick up, and so you'd be within the timeframe to deliver and all
6 that?

7 A. Oh, yes, sir. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. So you're not in a rush for anything, right?

9 A. Uh-uh, no. No, we were actually a little bit ahead of
10 schedule when we -- because we, you know, did the -- ran that rig
11 down and then come up light-boat, so it wasn't, you know, just
12 drop and go, drop and go. It was working out pretty good.
13 Everything was looking nice.

14 Q. Okay. All right. So as you -- so you're pushing a barge,
15 right? As you approach the highway bridge, right?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. So just tell me what did you do? Like, what is the procedure
18 when you're coming close to that bridge, you know, when you have,
19 like, the Krotz Bridge after like --

20 A. Well, usually you got up above the highway bridge, it's a
21 turn right there, that bend right there. Right above that bend,
22 you usually call -- if you have to get a opening for the bridge,
23 you know, you call the bridge operator, and tell him, you know,
24 your position and what you have in tow, and whatnot, and ask him
25 for an opening.

1 And then, you know, like that night, he said, you know, give
2 a dispatch -- had to get with dispatch. And then you come on
3 down, come on down around that -- you got to make that, you know,
4 that turn right there, that left-hand turn. And then you got a
5 pipeline. You kind of shape up on your pipeline and then shape up
6 on your highway bridge. And then once you get through your
7 highway bridge, and then, you know, depending on if you got to get
8 an opening, you know, you'll favor this side, and if you're going
9 to duck it, you go to the other side to line up on the railroad
10 bridge.

11 Q. So do you remember when did you call the bridge operator or
12 the dispatch?

13 A. I remember where I was. As far as like a time, I can't -- I
14 don't remember the exact time.

15 Q. What was the location? Like, do you know, like, the mile
16 marker or something?

17 A. Yeah, it was -- if I could look at the Rose Point, because it
18 was about half a mile or three-quarters of a mile above that bend.
19 And I think that bend was like the -- I think that's mile 40, 42,
20 somewhere around that. So probably in the -- around the 38 area,
21 I think, for the --

22 Q. Probably 37, 38, something like that?

23 A. Yeah, 37, 38 --

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. -- around that.

1 Q. Because 40 is south.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Yeah, I --

4 A. You're coming back up. I think it was around 37, 38.

5 LT [REDACTED] You have that, Frank?

6 MR. MUISE: I think he's got a printout of the Rose Point.

7 LT [REDACTED] Oh, okay.

8 MR. ADAMS: There's so many miles, I can't hardly remember
9 (indiscernible) mixed up --

10 LT [REDACTED] Right, right. No, that's okay.

11 MR. MUISE: I have them here. You want to look through.

12 LT [REDACTED] Yeah. Do you want to take a look around --

13 MR. MUISE: (Indiscernible). So this is the -- this is a
14 very poor MP file of the Rose Point. It's at 8-speed. I don't
15 have actual Rose Points. This is just a --

16 MR. ADAMS: Just (indiscernible)?

17 MR. MUISE: Yeah. So I don't know if you want to walk us
18 through what we're looking at.

19 MR. ADAMS: Okay. It was a little further.

20 LT [REDACTED] Just one second. Before that, Union Pacific,
21 we have on the computer a program -- can you explain that better?

22 MR. MUISE: Sure. This is -- it's -- we have a Rose Point,
23 which is an electronic navigation system. It shows the charts,
24 the vessel. And back in our office, they took the program and
25 made an MP4 file. So I don't have the actual raw data here.

1 We're just replaying a video of what they looked at in the office.

2 MS. KEELER: Okay. Thank you.

3 BY LT [REDACTED]

4 Q. Yeah. Just try to tell me kind of like where you made the
5 first contact with the bridge?

6 A. It's going to be -- there we go -- it's probably like around
7 the 37½. It was just above the 38.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 MR. DOUGLAS: It's the same.

10 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, it's the same thing.

11 MR. ADAMS: So in between, definitely in between the 37½ to
12 the mile 38, yeah.

13 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

14 MR. THACKSON: I've made --

15 LT [REDACTED] A bigger copy?

16 MR. THACKSON: Yeah.

17 MR. DOUGLAS: Well, that's actually the original.

18 MR. THACKSON: You people on the phone, I have -- that I just
19 put it in front of the captain -- I have a copy from the
20 Atchafalaya, a current published river chart book. I didn't bring
21 the book with me just simply as a matter of, you know, it's a
22 book, you know?

23 But I have a copy of the chart. It's a little bit big of a
24 blow-up of what you -- of the Rose Point thing you got there.
25 It's a chart for him to refer to if he wants to, river mileages,

1 and stuff like that. So it's right out of the chart. It's chart
2 number 13 out of the Atchafalaya River chart, current.

3 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

4 MS. KEELER: Okay.

5 BY LT [REDACTED]

6 Q. So about that, it's about 37½?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Something like that?

9 A. That was the first call out, around the 37½. And he had,
10 like, interference with his radio or too far away or something --

11 Q. Who had it?

12 A. The Krotz Springs did.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. They always got little squelps on the radio, but you can
15 normally make it out, but I guess I was a little far away. So I
16 called him that first time. It was a little, you know, scratchy.
17 You can hear the interference. So I remember calling him again,
18 too, probably around the 38, right just around the 38, and then I
19 could hear him, you know, I could hear him pretty good that time.
20 And he could hear me when I was calling up there.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. But I was, like, catching every other word. So I come down a
23 little bit further, and I holler at him, and he said, all right,
24 captain, you know, I'm getting with dispatch.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Around there.

2 LT [REDACTED] So just for Union Pacific to understand, if
3 you don't know, the Atchafalaya, as it goes south, the mile
4 markers are increasing. So when he said that he made the first
5 call around 37.5 and then he made the second call around 38 or
6 38.5, that means he got closer to the bridge.

7 MS. KEELER: Okay.

8 LT [REDACTED] But it's still far away. It's still not past
9 that first highway bridge.

10 MS. KEELER: Okay.

11 BY LT [REDACTED]

12 Q. Okay. So then you made the second call?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Were you able to talk?

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Who do you talk to exactly? Do you have a name, or, like,
17 who is that? Do you know?

18 A. I just -- like, when I radio him, like, my exact words are
19 "*Edna T. Gattle to Krotz Springs River Bridge.*"

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And then that's when they reply back. So, I mean, I --

22 Q. Okay. And then what did you say to him?

23 A. Well, the way -- it sounded like he understood me, so the
24 second time I called just for me to understand him. But I just
25 told him -- like, when I talked to him, I said, you know, I'm

1 southbound. I'm pretty sure I said, "I'm southbound and I got one
2 loaded equipment barge and one loaded rig barge. I would like to
3 get an opening, please." And I think that was it. He said he had
4 to get with his dispatch.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. And pretty sure that was all that was said.

7 Q. And then what happened next?

8 A. Oh, I slowed down. I pulled back and slowed down. I'm not
9 sure of what -- honestly, I don't remember what speed I was making
10 or what I slowed down to. I know they got it, you know, but I
11 slowed down. I come around -- yeah, that's the 40, the highway.
12 Okay. So I called him. We got together. I slowed down. I come
13 around the turn a little bit right there. And then I shot down
14 through the pipeline -- there you go --

15 Q. That's the first -- oh, that's the pipeline?

16 A. Okay. So I -- yeah, that's the pipeline there.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And then that's the highway bridge. And I come through it.
19 And we hadn't gotten an opening yet. So I pulled back on the
20 engine some more and slowed down. And then I got on down in there
21 a little bit further and started backing up on it, you know, put
22 it in reverse and got it kind of checked down. And you know, it
23 kind of set me -- just set me down a little bit. It sent me
24 like -- it's hard to describe on the computer, but it set me,
25 like, to the port.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. You know, I was southbound, so it set me to my port a little
3 bit. And then I got it back to the starboard side, you know,
4 brought it back to the starboard a little bit. And we kept
5 getting closer and closer.

6 MR. MUISE: That's going to your starboard, that way, right?

7 MR. ADAMS: Yes, sir. Like, if I'm southbound, this'll be,
8 this'll be my port --

9 LT [REDACTED] Your port.

10 MR. MUISE: Right.

11 MR. ADAMS: And this'll be my starboard.

12 MR. MUISE: All right. So you're getting set to starboard?

13 MR. ADAMS: Yes, sir. When I'm just slowing down for -- and
14 it kind of set me --

15 MR. MUISE: That's what's going on here as you're moving --

16 MR. ADAMS: Yes, sir. Yes, sir. And then, you know, kind of
17 angled the boat back and put it in reverse, you know, to try to
18 kind of keep myself -- I'm trying to go back this way.

19 And I got down there kind of close, and then, you know, I
20 backed back up, backed back up, you know, the river. So I've got
21 some sternway coming back up.

22 MR. MUISE: That's all I had. That's all they had.

23 LT [REDACTED] That's all they had.

24 MR. ADAMS: Okay. But anyways, I backed back up.

25 LT [REDACTED] It's gone, yeah.

1 MR. ADAMS: I kind of got it back up towards the, you know,
2 towards the channel.

3 BY LT [REDACTED]

4 Q. So let me just interrupt you real quick.

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Just for me to understand, once you cleared that first
7 bridge, right --

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. And when you're right there between both bridges --

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. So you came in. Did you contact the bridge again or did they
12 contact you or --

13 A. I don't think so. The last -- I'm pretty sure the last
14 time -- like, we talked up there when we first, you know, talked
15 to each other. And the next conversation was --

16 Q. One second, one second.

17 MR. MUISE: So Health has volunteered to --

18 MR. DOUGLAS: We can put the Rose Point up here.

19 LT [REDACTED] This one --

20 MR. THACKSON: If you want.

21 LT [REDACTED] I don't think there is an issue, because it's
22 just that little part, and then we're done with it.

23 MR. MUISE: I have all the data backed up.

24 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, he has the data backed -- but I
25 appreciate it.

1 MR. DOUGLAS: Okay.

2 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. Yeah. I don't think I -- think we
3 need that.

4 MR. MUISE: You don't need it?

5 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, anymore, no.

6 MR. ADAMS: But the next time I talked to him was him opening
7 the bridge because I remember him saying, you know, he got --
8 which I seen him, you know, opening it --

9 BY LT [REDACTED]

10 Q. Right.

11 A. I mean, I was right there. So I remember seeing him open it.
12 I want to say I was really focusing on trying to get myself back
13 in shape. But I remember him saying that we got the bridge open,
14 and you can start making way. And then he asked if I was doing a
15 reverse maneuver or something, because I was backing up, getting
16 shaped back up. And I said, yeah, you know, I appreciate it, you
17 know, whatever, we're about to start coming that way. And he got
18 it open.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And we got it open. And once I kind of got backed up, like,
21 I backed -- I got it, you know, coming upriver in reverse. It set
22 down there pretty decent, you know, to the back side, you know,
23 which was my port side, facing southbound. So I backed up and I
24 got my sternway coming back. And I guess, like, the way that eddy
25 is on that bank -- in fact, it's --

1 Q. Yeah, we were there yesterday. Yeah, we got to see it, yeah.

2 A. It got like, you know, like, piers like this. This would be
3 what you look like. It's hard to describe it without me running
4 through --

5 MR. THACKSON: Okay. How about him drawing a diagram?

6 LT [REDACTED] I was going to ask him to do it like --

7 MR. DOUGLAS: Do you have a real chart?

8 LT [REDACTED] Yeah -- huh?

9 MR. DOUGLAS: It'd be nice if he had a chart.

10 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, I will -- I have a sketch. I have a
11 sketch paper, like -- actually, I appreciate it.

12 BY LT [REDACTED]

13 Q. If you don't mind, we can do a drawing after. I just want to
14 try to --

15 A. Describe? Yeah.

16 Q. -- describe, yeah. Try as best as you can.

17 A. Okay.

18 Q. And then we can do a little sketch on it if you can draw it.

19 A. Okay. All right.

20 Q. And then --

21 A. Well, that's kind of how -- so I come down, I come down to,
22 you know, made the highway bridge and made my approach there. And
23 then the bridge wasn't open, so I, you know, I started stopping
24 then. You know, of course I can't go through. So --

25 Q. And the bridge was still open?

1 A. No, it was -- well --

2 Q. Because when you (indiscernible) --

3 A. I backed up on my story a little bit.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. All right. I come through the highway bridge and seen that
6 the bridge was closed, so that's when I put my engines in reverse
7 to stop.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. When I started doing that, it set -- it started setting me to
10 my, you know, to my starboard side --

11 Q. Starboard side.

12 A. -- start walking me out, walking me out, walking me out.
13 So -- and I kind of let it come downriver a little bit more. And
14 you know, I got a little closer to the bridge, you know, and we
15 come on down. And then I'm pretty sure that's when he called, and
16 he said, all right, captain, you know, we're getting the bridge
17 open, you know, make your approach. He made a comment about the
18 reverse maneuver I was doing. He was like whenever you get done
19 with that, you know, you make your approach, we're swinging the
20 bridge. I said, okay, thank you.

21 So I got down there. So that's when I started backing up. I
22 backed up kind of hard on it because I was so close, I didn't want
23 to, like, lose my stern, you know what I mean, like top around in
24 the bridge.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. So I started backing up kind of hard, got some sternway
2 coming up. And you know, you got a big, a big eddy that works out
3 on this side, on the left descending shore above the bridge. So
4 when I'm backing up like this, I think that's what happened, is
5 when I started getting that sternway right there, when I kind of
6 got back where I wanted, and when I -- you know, I come out and
7 then come back ahead, you know, that set got me pushed down. And
8 by the, you know, the time I got back coming ahead, it grabbed my
9 stern again, because my deckhand was -- I had a deckhand on the
10 head of the tow.

11 Q. Right.

12 A. I forgot to say I had a deckhand on the head of the tow that
13 was, you know, out there seeing it. So his call was -- the first
14 thing my deckhand told me was 600 above, 25 wide. So that's when
15 I, you know, everything is looking good.

16 Q. And it was still backing up when he called that?

17 A. Yes, yes. That's about -- all of that happened about the
18 same time when I was starting to want to come out of reverse to
19 come-ahead. And that's when I started coming up, you know,
20 started coming ahead of my engines.

21 But the set done grabbed it. By the time, you know, I got to
22 come-ahead, coming and everything, and I got backed up into that,
23 when I come back ahead, that's when the, you know, the stern
24 dipped down from that. I'm thinking that eddy crossed right
25 there, and by the time everything come together, it wasn't going

1 to work right.

2 So that's when -- the next thing he said was 300 above, 20
3 wide. And then I put my searchlight, you know, a little bit to my
4 starboard side, and I can, like, see the set. Like, it's got us,
5 like, it done grabbed us, and I tried to drive on through it, and
6 it just, like, it wouldn't drive through. And that's, you
7 know --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. -- our starboard stern of the barge hit that right-hand
10 piling, right-hand bridge pier, and then when it hit that, it
11 bounced to the port side. The port bow of the boat hit the port
12 bridge pier. And when that hit, that's when the spud and stuff
13 swept under the lower part of the bridge, you know, that was swung
14 out. So the spud and the excavator swept under that.

15 Q. And that's what touched the bridge?

16 A. Yes, sir. That's what hit the bridge --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. -- you know, the lower part of the bridge that was open down
19 there.

20 Q. So let's just back it up a little bit. So when you clear the
21 first bridge --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. The highway bridge, right?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. You just clear it no problem?

1 A. Yeah, yeah.

2 Q. And you came in -- once you clear that bridge, the railroad
3 bridge was closed?

4 A. Yes, sir. It was closed.

5 Q. Completely closed. So they were still waiting to open,
6 right?

7 A. Yes, sir. Yeah.

8 Q. So then you just came in, and that's when you went to the
9 starboard side a little bit --

10 A. To the starboard side, yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. And then when you noticed that you're getting too
12 close to the bridge, that's when you start backing up, right?

13 A. Yeah, yeah. Like, when I come through the highway bridge, I
14 was right -- when I come through the highway bridge, I'm still
15 lined up with everything for it to go. And I see that the bridge
16 ain't going to open in time. So that's when I start backing up.
17 When I knock it out of come-ahead to start backing up to slow
18 myself down --

19 Q. Right.

20 A. -- that's when it started setting me to the starboard side.
21 And then I kind of let it drop on downriver a little bit. That
22 way -- like, if I'd have just slammed on the brakes right there,
23 like, I would have been right in the middle of the river. So I
24 just started backing up on it a little bit. And it started
25 setting me. And then when he gave me the go ahead, I started

1 backing on it hard to try to realign, because you don't want to
2 be, like, on top of the bridge, you know, trying to line up. So I
3 dumped it real hard in reverse and backed myself on up in the
4 river, you know, pretty good and got in line where I should be at.
5 And then by the time I got back on the come-ahead, and the set and
6 everything took over --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- you know, took over from the -- because we were on the --
9 kind of like flanking -- it set us down, and we were kind of
10 trying to flank back, flank our stern back onto the, you know,
11 onto the good side of everything. And --

12 Q. Were you, at any moment, were you -- you stopped the boat at
13 any moment?

14 A. Yeah, just completely, like, stopped?

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. Well, you got to -- I mean, when we -- you know, when I
17 killed out my headway, we stopped, and then I picked up my
18 sternway. And then when I killed out that sternway, you know, I
19 was coming upriver. So I stopped again from that motion to create
20 headway to start going back to the bridge.

21 Q. Just to create the momentum for the next --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. But not -- I'm asking like --

24 A. Did I ever just, like, completely stop dead in the water?

25 Q. Just completely -- well, I mean, not dead in the water --

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Don't get me wrong. Like, I meant did you have to stop --
3 for example, like, when you were waiting for the bridge to open,
4 right --

5 A. Yes, sir. Yeah.

6 Q. You're still in control of the vessel. You were backing up
7 and tried to line up as --

8 A. Well, we were --

9 Q. Or are you just, you know, engines on, of course, all that,
10 but standing by for the bridge to open?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. I just want to understand how that part works.

13 A. Yeah. I mean, we were standing by for the opening, you know,
14 waiting on the opening. But the way that river is right there,
15 like, you're not going to just go out there and stop in one spot,
16 you know what I mean?

17 Q. Right.

18 A. Like, you're not just going to, oh, looks like a good spot,
19 and just stop and hold it right there. So once your boat and
20 barges gets below current speed, it's called -- it's a flanking
21 maneuver, but if you're below the current speed of the river, then
22 the river is going to have mercy on you. You know, it's going to
23 push you where it wants to go because it's overpowering you.

24 Q. Did you feel like you were under --

25 A. Oh, yeah, yeah. I dropped -- when it started -- like, when I

1 come through the highway bridge, everything was really pretty, and
2 then I pulled back on the throttles once I -- you know, you get to
3 a point where, you know, you get to that point where this is where
4 I got to stop or I'm going to hit it, you know?

5 Q. Right.

6 A. So that's when, you know, I got to that point. The bridge
7 ain't open, so I got to stop, you know? This is my stopping
8 point.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. And then once I knocked it out of come-ahead, you know, when
11 I knocked the engines out of forward and started coming in
12 reverse, I don't know the exact speed. I'm just guessing probably
13 4½ to 5 miles an hour. That was probably an average current
14 speed. That's was probably about when it started pushing me over,
15 you know, when I was backing up.

16 So as I, you know, as I decreased my headway, the current is
17 taking control of me and the barge. And that's when it set me
18 down. And then that's why I come, you know, hard astern on it to
19 get back upriver to get above all that to get myself realigned for
20 the bridge. And then, you know, when -- and then I come back
21 ahead on it. But it just, it just wasn't --

22 Q. So when you're backing up, now you're backed up all the way,
23 bridge is open --

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. So you're clear to go, right. And meanwhile, while the

1 bridge was opening, were you trying to set yourself right?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Like, line up with the bridge?

4 A. Yeah. I was just trying to flank it back to the port, you
5 know, back to that left descending shore.

6 Q. When did you get the call from the bridge operator saying,
7 hey --

8 A. Saying it was open?

9 Q. My question is -- let me rephrase that.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. So whenever you get the call saying, hey, you're ready to go,
12 right --

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 Q. It's open, right?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Where were you?

17 A. I was just above the bridge.

18 Q. Were you actually lined up already or not?

19 A. No. That's --

20 Q. You weren't yet --

21 A. No.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah, like, on his computer, you can see, like, when I
24 started backing up, when I started, like, catching sternway really
25 good, that's when he called me, because I was just kind of --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Like, I was just trying to maintain what I had at that
3 moment, because I didn't want to, like, I didn't want to back up
4 and get myself in a position for the bridge again and then it set
5 me back, and then back up and get position again, then it set me
6 back --

7 Q. Right.

8 A. So what I was doing was I let it, you know, I kind of just
9 let it do its own little thing, you know? I just kind of
10 maintained what I had, and then when he called for the opening,
11 that's when I backed up, you know, backed up and prepared for the,
12 you know, for the --

13 Q. Okay. So bridge was open, and when you're backed up, when
14 you felt like you were in position, right --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Then you just push forward?

17 A. Yes, sir. That's when I come ahead on the engines.

18 Q. Okay. Do you know how fast were you going?

19 A. I don't. You talking about for the sternway or the headway?

20 Q. For the headway?

21 A. I don't. Well, I remember seeing -- because I remember
22 looking once it crossed about 6 or 7 mile an hour, I quit watching
23 the speed because --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- in my mind, you know, from me backing up and all that, in

1 my mind, I was guessing around 4½ to 5 was current speed.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. So that's what -- I was trying to get above that to outrun
4 all the sets, you know, to get through the bridge. So I remember
5 glancing at the -- I want to say I looked at the Rose Point, most
6 likely, to see my speed.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And I remember it being above 5. I'm thinking it probably
9 said 6½ or 7. And --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And that just automatically registered to me "you're above
12 current speed," you know, to shape up.

13 Q. So whenever you looked to the Rose Point, right --

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And then you say approximately 6.5, 7?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Where were you?

18 A. I think he had done called the -- let me see -- I think he
19 had called out the -- I think that's about when he called out the
20 300-foot. It was in between, when he said 6 to --

21 Q. Your deckhand?

22 A. Yes, sir, yes, sir.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. My deckhand. I can't remember exactly, but I want to say he
25 had called out the 600-foot above, 25 wide. I looked at the Rose

1 Point, seen my speed, and then he said, you know, 300 above, 25
2 wide, and that's when I looked over to see what -- you know, I
3 kind of moved my light over towards the bridge to see the set,
4 because, like, the boat rolled -- like, when you hit them eddies,
5 and stuff, you know, you get on the same boat over time, like, you
6 just kind of like feel things like that, you know?

7 Q. Right.

8 A. And it was nighttime. So, like, I felt the boat kind of,
9 like, make a move, you know? It wasn't just a solid. So I threw
10 my light over to the actual bridge itself, not the part that was
11 open, like, to the actual railroad bridge, and I put that light
12 out so I could see, like, if I was -- you know, which way I was
13 setting, like, what -- you know, how my motion was moving.

14 And when I threw it out, like, I really started noticing the
15 set then. And it was a stern set, you know, because the head was
16 in good. He was telling me, you know, just in the average, 25 to
17 25 wide, and that was off on my starboard head. And he was
18 standing on my starboard head.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. So when he was saying all that, that's when I threw my
21 light on. So I know, like, my head was good. You know, you're
22 painting a picture in your mind when you're running a boat of all
23 this. So, like, he's telling me that. I'm looking at the speed.
24 You know, I'm gaining my speed. I should be outrunning the
25 current. He's telling me I'm that wide. So I throw my light out,

1 and like, you could see the stern, like, I'm getting set hard this
2 time.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. It's really starting to raise --

5 Q. A now your speed was above the current speed?

6 A. Yeah, when I noticed it setting me, I went ahead and gave it
7 some more, you know, some more come-ahead.

8 Q. You gave it -- on top of what you already --

9 A. Yeah, trying to get through that, trying to shove through all
10 that.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And like, just the set had done got it. Like, the set had
13 the boat. It was --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I don't think there was much else to do. I put rudder on it.
16 I put the come-ahead on it, and --

17 Q. So your stern was being set into the starboard side?

18 A. Yes, sir, being set to the starboard side.

19 Q. Okay. And that's when you gave more --

20 A. Yeah, that's when I gave her more throttle.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Because it wasn't -- you know, we were that close. There
23 ain't no stopping it.

24 Q. Right, right.

25 A. I mean, there's no way you're going to stop. If I'd have

1 backed up, it would have been terrible.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So the come-ahead was the last resort. And it -- like, that
4 eddy, man, that eddy is strong, dude. It's --

5 Q. Yeah, we were there yesterday.

6 A. It's really strong.

7 Q. We saw, yeah.

8 A. And once I, you know, once I made that -- once I initially
9 killed my headway after that highway bridge, like, I was just from
10 eddy to eddy, you know?

11 Q. Right.

12 A. And like the way, you know, them eddies work is, you know,
13 usually, like, a upper eddy or, you know, they'll shoot straight
14 out, so once you get in that, you know, in it -- you got the
15 natural flow of the river, you know, is south. So once you get in
16 that eddy and you get a quarter, you know, your boat and barge is
17 quarter on anything, you know, the eddy will push you out. Then
18 you got the natural current coming down on top of you on top of
19 that.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. And you know, them eddies ain't never the same. They change
22 so much. So, I mean, you know, it was just -- man, it was just a
23 mix-up big time, like, a bad mix-up.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But once I killed my speed, once I slowed down and killed

1 that, I got below current speed, that's when everything just
2 started blowing us all around.

3 Q. So you got below current speed after you head first --

4 A. No, no, no, when I was stopping for him to open.

5 Q. Oh, I see, I see. Okay.

6 A. Yeah, when I decreased my initial speed.

7 Q. All right.

8 A. Because my cruising speed that night was probably -- my
9 cruising speed was probably 13 or 14, you know, mile an hour.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Or it could be -- no, it's in mile an hour, so our cruising
12 speed that night down the river is probably around 13 or 14. And
13 I mean, we're just, you know, we're just zipping, we're outrunning
14 the current. I mean, one --

15 Q. So let me just see if I just understand. Like, so while
16 you're waiting for him to open the bridge --

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. -- you went under river speed?

19 A. Yeah, my speed dropped --

20 Q. Then whenever you're ready to go in, you push in the
21 throttle, and then -- but you gain the speed on the current?

22 A. I gained back --

23 Q. Some?

24 A. Yeah, but not enough.

25 Q. Not enough? Okay.

1 A. Not enough to beat, because at that time --

2 Q. How much speed do you think it would be, like, you know,
3 necessary for you to beat that?

4 A. Like, but that's what I was saying. Before -- you know,
5 above the highway bridge, when I made the pipeline, made the
6 highway bridge, I made Melville Bridge, you know, I made all them
7 bridges, we were doing a minimum of 13. Like, we were averaging
8 probably 14 miles an hour that night.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. So, I mean, I'm guessing, just me, in my experience,
11 guessing, the current speed when I was at -- I felt like it was
12 probably 5 to 6 miles an hour. I felt like if I got up to 7 or 8,
13 I would have been good. But it was just -- I mean, it was whooped
14 on, because, like I said, you got -- you don't just have an eddy,
15 you know? You're fighting the natural southbound current, but then
16 you got a eddy that crosses you and pushes you out in the
17 southbound current, so now you got that. You got that eddy
18 dropping down on you. And it's just -- and Krotz Springs is a
19 swift area anyway.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. So, you know, that's a swift area, you know, the current is
22 swifter there --

23 Q. Right.

24 A. -- you know, in that spot.

25 Q. Let me ask you this. How many times have you gone through

1 that same -- on that bridge?

2 A. I've been through that bridge several -- like a lot.

3 Q. Through the turning span?

4 A. Through that turning, that turntable, I think I've been
5 through that one three times on that span --

6 Q. And then was it a similar situation, like, with just one
7 barge or were you heavier?

8 A. No. The first time was a lot bigger, a lot heavier. It was
9 three loads. We had three loads strung out, you know, 60 to 100
10 tons per barge. The tow dimensions are, like, 600 by 70, you
11 know, not including the boat.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So, you know, through that span. And then I brought a rig
14 barge through there after that just to, you know, just a rig
15 barge, same situation as this --

16 Q. Just like same situation?

17 A. Yeah, same as this situation. And then this time now.

18 Q. So what was different between that time and this time?

19 A. The stopping. You know, I had to stop. I never had to stop
20 in between the highway bridge or the -- you know, in between the
21 highway and the railroad bridge.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. So like --

24 Q. So what happened before, the other time?

25 A. It was all, like, the same situation, that we drop down and

1 call them, they would swing the bridge, and then we would shoot
2 down through, you know, shoot down through the bridge.

3 Q. Okay. So before you came to the highway bridge, so it was
4 already open?

5 A. Yes, sir, yes, sir.

6 Q. This time, you had to wait until the --

7 A. Till he got it turned, you know, turned open.

8 Q. Okay. Why wasn't it open this time? Do you --

9 A. I don't know. I don't know what the -- he didn't give any
10 kind of excuse, and it's not normal on his --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. You know, on his end of the radio, everything sounded normal,
13 so I really don't know. I don't know what happened there.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I never seen any trains pass, or anything, so I really don't
16 know.

17 Q. Okay. So besides the bridge being opened or closed --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. -- was everything else normal? Was anything unusual besides,
20 like, the --

21 A. The river is a little high, but I've made it at this stage,
22 too. But you know, the river conditions are higher right now
23 than, you know, what a pool stage would be out there, of course.

24 Q. Right, yeah, it's been, it's been crazy --

25 A. But I have made it in these stages before, but other than

1 that, like, everything -- it was a pretty -- you know, what you
2 would call just a regular night, you know, a pretty basic night.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. It shouldn't have been no complications.

5 Q. Okay. Let me see if I have anything else here. You wear
6 glasses or no?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. No? You on any prescription medication?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. No? Okay. When you were on a watch, do you have time to
11 eat?

12 A. Yeah. Me personally, like, I don't really eat -- like, I
13 don't eat when I wake up, and then we have, like, little snacks,
14 and stuff, I guess, you know, you can eat. But the deckhand will
15 bring you food up and you can eat --

16 Q. Oh, they bring you food?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. Yeah?

19 A. I do --

20 Q. You got good food on the boat --

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Yeah? Who cooks?

23 A. Yeah, too much.

24 Q. Who cooks?

25 A. The deckhands do.

1 Q. Oh, they do?

2 A. They cook pretty good, but I do a lot of, like, the protein
3 shakes and stuff, smoothies, and junk

4 Q Right.

5 A So I do a lot of that. I usually bring me some of them up.

6 Q. Right. Okay.

7 A. But I usually mix them myself and, you know, and we got water
8 and stuff in the wheel -- in the water cooler.

9 Q. Do you have, like, any recording device on the bridge?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. No? No cameras, no radio recordings, anything like that?

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. No, nothing like that?

14 A. Uh-uh.

15 Q. Okay. I'm just trying to check over all my parts here that
16 are -- all right. So the deckhand, where was the deckhand
17 located?

18 A. On the starboard head. That was his position to call me out
19 was on the starboard head.

20 Q. Starboard head?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. And since when was he there?

23 A. Probably around the highway bridge.

24 Q. Before or like --

25 A. I think -- I want to say I called him right before. I want

1 to say I called him -- like, you got that high line, then you got
2 the highway bridge. I'm pretty sure I called him, like, maybe
3 when I was coming through the high line to give him the time to,
4 you know, get his --

5 Q. Right.

6 A. He got to get his life jacket on, radio, headlight, and all
7 that. So I want to say probably he made his way out, like, right
8 there at the highway bridge, maybe just above it.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Actually, he was probably, like, walking out as we were, you
11 know, on the highway bridge. It was right in that general area,
12 so he had plenty of time, you know, to get out, because the
13 highway bridge wasn't an issue. We were in great shape with it.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. So I just needed him out there to help with the, you know,
16 with the swing -- the river bridge.

17 Q. And what is his job over there?

18 A. He's a deckhand. He's a --

19 Q. No, I mean for that --

20 A. Oh, for that specific --

21 Q. Specific, yeah --

22 A. I got with him, I got with him before. I think I got with
23 him a little while before that, but he was -- he knew what to do.
24 He was supposed to go out to the starboard head. The natural set
25 on that bridge is from the starboard to the port on the lower end.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. So that's what I told him, was like go out there, you're
3 going to go on the starboard corner. We're going to get down in
4 the bridge, try to tighten up on your side when we get in it.
5 It's going to set us out, and we're going to drive through. He
6 was like, all right. And that's what he done. You know, he was
7 out there standing by on the starboard head, waiting, and then you
8 know, naturally, when the stern touched up, I was trying to get
9 him back to the boat, and he couldn't get back.

10 Q. Yeah, and that was kind of crazy --

11 A. You know, letting -- yeah, yeah, it's, like, bad.

12 Q. And then he was calling the distance?

13 A. Yeah, yeah, he was talking --

14 Q. How do you guys communicate?

15 A. With radio.

16 Q. Radio?

17 A. He has a handheld, yes, sir. We --

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Channel 71 is our work channel, and he'll have a, you know, a
20 handheld. I have my radio on.

21 Q. All right. How clear are the communications?

22 A. It's really good.

23 Q. Yeah?

24 A. Yeah. It was only -- that barge is 200-foot, so he was only
25 200-foot out there.

1 Q. You said channel 71, right?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay, for the radio, all right. And how was he able to see
4 things? Like, was it -- how was the weather? Was it clear
5 or -- it was dark, right?

6 A. It was, yeah, it was at night, you know, of course, right
7 there at midnight. It was a dark night. It wasn't a full moon.
8 It was a dark night. But the way the lights are, you know, the
9 lights on the bridge kind of help, you know, would help him see,
10 and stuff, and then he's got his headlight. And that headlight he
11 got is super bright. But anyways, so he could have seen pretty
12 good. He should have been able to see surely --

13 Q. Right.

14 A. Like, he should have been about to distinctly tell the
15 difference between each bridge piling, you know, and where we was.
16 He shouldn't have --

17 Q. And the bridge was well-illuminated?

18 A. Yes, sir. Yeah.

19 Q. Yeah?

20 A. You know, you got -- you know, that was one of the points I
21 made. You know how you got, like, them little red lights on the,
22 you know, on the bridge pilings, and stuff, and then, you know,
23 you got the turntable that swung out. So, I mean, we could -- you
24 know, what he could see was -- it should have been fine. He
25 shouldn't have had no issues on it.

1 Q. Okay. Let's see.

2 LT [REDACTED] Do you want to?

3 MR. MUISE: Sure. I just have a few follow-up questions,
4 captain.

5 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, (indiscernible).

6 BY MR. MUISE:

7 Q. So was everything working on the boat, engines running --

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Charts?

10 A. Yes. Everything checked --

11 Q. Your AIS, was that on?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. It was turned on?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. How many GPSs are there?

16 A. I guess there's one GPS, and it may be linked to the
17 computer. We have one, one GPS, like, display screen, but I think
18 it's linked to the computer, as well.

19 Q. So the GPS on the AIS should match the Rose Point?

20 A. Yes, sir. Yes.

21 Q. Is that antenna up above you somewhere?

22 A. Yes, sir. It's on top of the -- well, we got -- we have,
23 like, a rail on top of our wheelhouse that's got all our antennas,
24 and everything on it right on top of the -- on the top of the
25 wheelhouse, but like on the stern of it, you know, on the stern of

1 the wheelhouse itself.

2 Q. Port or starboard or --

3 A. It's right in the center.

4 Q. Right on the center --

5 A. Yeah, so it's just, like, a rail about this long, and it's
6 got all the antennas mounted, you know, mounted right there on it.

7 Q. Do you change the position of the antenna and the AIS at all
8 when you're adding barges to the --

9 A. No.

10 Q. That stays the same --

11 A. Yes, sir, it stays the same.

12 Q. Okay. The swing meter, is that getting information from the
13 gyro or the GPS?

14 A. I honestly don't know how it works. I think it's -- from my
15 understanding, it's like a gyro. Like, I really don't know how to
16 break it down. I just know, like, when the head of the tow moves
17 port to starboard, it picks up a degree of the rate of turn that
18 the head is swinging.

19 Q. Okay. So if you're sitting still --

20 A. It's zero.

21 Q. -- so your GPS is not moving, but you're spinning, does it
22 show the swing?

23 A. Yeah, it would.

24 Q. So that's off the compass?

25 A. Yeah, yeah.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. It's going to show, yeah, whether you got a headway,
3 sternway. You could cut the GPS off, and that swing meter is
4 going to work.

5 Q. Okay. Engines are EMDs?

6 A. No, Caterpillars.

7 Q. Caterpillars?

8 A. Yes, sir. They're 35-12s, Caterpillar.

9 Q. Sixteen cylinder?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Is that the same as the *Marguerite* --

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Exact same thing?

14 A. Yes, sir. That might be a different tier, but they're the
15 same engines.

16 Q. Is there anything recorded on those engines like an event log
17 or RPMs that are saved somewhere --

18 A. I don't know. They might. I'd have to get them -- because I
19 know one time, like, our alarm, like, if we had alarms or
20 something, maybe they would get them, but I'm not sure what -- I
21 don't think anything recorded off of them like engine speed, RPMs,
22 anything like that. I've never heard, I've never heard anybody
23 saying it. If they are, I don't know of them --

24 Q. Okay. Do you think at any point in this time, was there any
25 danger of tripping, like, getting broadside to the current and --

1 A. Well, it's always, you know, it's always a -- that's your
2 first thought southbound, you know? There's always, there's
3 always that chance of that happening. But I felt in control until
4 I started backing up. And then once I started backing up, you
5 know, you can, like, just kind of, you know, kind of feel, like,
6 the boat is not just holding itself, you know what I mean? Like,
7 you could feel the fight of the -- you know, you're having to
8 fight, you know, the current back and forth. But I mean, it's
9 just a natural southbound, you know, issue. That's your number
10 one concern southbound is, you know, if you lose your stern,
11 you're going to set really hard to that side, you know, just
12 naturally.

13 Q. The door to the engine room, and I'm looking at the picture
14 behind you --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Does that stay open usually or --

17 A. No. It's a company policy that -- that back one is the
18 rudder room door, and then that one is the engine room door, but
19 they all stay closed.

20 Q. Okay. So there's no issues with ventilation in there?

21 A. Oh, no, sir.

22 Q. Okay. Approaching from the north, what's your last
23 opportunity -- so you're making an approach, and the bridge is not
24 opening?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. What's your last chance to top around for this current and
2 this river, I mean --

3 A. Okay. And that's coming from the north?

4 Q. Yeah, if you come -- just like you were today, what's your
5 abort point?

6 MR. THACKSON: You mean if it's northbound?

7 MR. MUISE: No.

8 BY MR. MUISE:

9 Q. It's southbound, southbound, just like you were in this, with
10 this current.

11 A. Okay.

12 Q. If the bridge is not going to open for you, what is your last
13 chance to turn around or run up on the bank?

14 A. Well, in that situation with that one barge, you could -- if
15 you needed to, safely, I would say above the highway bridge. It's
16 just one of them situations you have to get in, I guess. You
17 know, safely, of course, above the highway bridge, above the
18 pipeline, you know, that area. You can, I mean, you got, you
19 know, all the river you need to do, you know, the top.

20 Below the bridge, I think I could have done it. You know, I
21 wouldn't have went down in there with absolutely no backup plan.
22 Just that one barge, I felt confident. You know, the boat, it's
23 a, you know, outstanding boat, and one barge, I felt plenty
24 confident to go down in there.

25 So, I mean, in that situation, I feel like if, last case

1 scenario, I could have -- I probably could have topped around
2 right there in between the two, you know? If you could get
3 sternway killed out, you know, astern -- if you could get -- you
4 know, if you could get your headway killed out and get enough
5 sternway to try to top -- it would be rough to try to top it
6 because once you get sideways, you know, you're going sideways,
7 and you got to break that momentum and get your head coming back
8 upriver before you run out of room on top of the railroad bridge.

9 So as far as, like, actually topping around, I would probably
10 do it above the bridge. But like, as far as stopping to avoid a
11 collision with the bridge, you know, I did that, you know? I did
12 that on the boat that night. You know, I completely killed my
13 headway out and brought myself back upriver, you know, when I was
14 waiting for the bridge to open.

15 But once you get to a certain point, you know, 4- to 500 feet
16 above the bridge, you know, at 7, 8 mile an hour, it's just no
17 stopping it then. You know, you're in it. You're committed to
18 it. Your best, you know, your best hope is to outrun or out-steer
19 your set, you know, to be able to drop down and pick yourself back
20 up, you know, off of whatever you're coming onto.

21 Q. So with this specific bridge, was there a change in company
22 procedure or just the way the captains do run this bridge after
23 the *Marguerite* hit it 2 years ago?

24 A. No.

25 Q. Did they give you any different guidance or --

1 A. Not too much, not too much for us, I guess. But there was,
2 like, there was talk, you know, there was talk about it because,
3 like, some things changed, like, with the bridge itself. Like, he
4 won't give us, you know, how much clearance the bridge has, and
5 stuff. They don't -- I guess they don't share as much
6 information, you know, readily available.

7 As far as, like, on my boat, you know, as far as the *Edna T.*
8 *Gattle* goes, we -- it didn't really -- I guess it didn't really
9 affect us as much as it did, like, the *Marguerite*. Now, I don't
10 know that whole situation, but I mean, our bridge-making
11 procedures, you know, are, you know, the basic get your height,
12 get your clearance, know the river stage, you know, know all the
13 details you need to know about it, and you know, make your
14 approach. So I don't guess that really fooled with us a whole
15 lot.

16 Q. The new fendering that they're installing, is that going to
17 change how you run that bridge?

18 A. No, I don't think that's going to change a whole lot. I
19 guess it's kind of like maybe it would work like as a buffering.
20 And I mean, I don't know if that did anything to the water in that
21 area, you know, as far as, like, you know, like, you put in a dike
22 to, you know, redirect current or something. So I don't know,
23 like, if that has anything to do with the effect of the current,
24 like, you know, the way it comes around the piers or if it, you
25 know, redirects a set, you know, a little further below or a

1 little further above the bridge, anything, you know, as far as
2 that goes, because that, yeah, that was the first time I've made
3 it with them buffering pads up on that swing span.

4 Q. Okay. So what went well that night? Is there a piece of
5 equipment or a procedure or a piece of training you had in the
6 past that you're glad you had?

7 A. Yeah, definitely. The captain that trained me, you know, as
8 far as -- like, it is a bad situation really altogether, but I
9 promise, like, that was a really good outcome for what was
10 happening that night. You know, we -- I did try to fight the set
11 down into the bridge, you know? Once I seen it setting me down to
12 the starboard, I did put the rudder on it and tried to pick it up,
13 you know, to fight off of that starboard stern before the barge
14 hit.

15 And man, it happened so quick. Like, it was coming in so
16 fast. It hit that side, and then, actually, you know, you're
17 going to bounce, you know, it's going to bounce off. So I did
18 have a chance to try to give it some rudder as it was coming off,
19 tried to give it some rudder back to try to slow it down on the
20 next side, but we still hit, I mean, you know, we hit it there,
21 and that's when the spud, and everything, hit.

22 But once we got to that spot, I knew then, you know, that's
23 what he always told me, just, like, stay in control, because when
24 we hit there, the face wire popped on the boat. So we did kind
25 of -- I'm not going to say, like, 100 percent in control, you

1 know, I mean, you know what happened, but we did stay pretty well
2 in control of that ordeal. I mean, we had a man on the barge, you
3 know, made it back to the boat safe.

4 We -- you know, nobody got hurt, nobody, you know? We got
5 really lucky. And for the most part, we stayed in control with
6 everything as well as we could. I did feel like the, you know,
7 the training that I've had, you know, in bridges and in setting
8 up, you know, the idea of setting up on bridges, just, you know,
9 knowing which way the set is going to be and overcompensating for
10 it, and you know, planning for that, and knowing that you need to
11 outrun current speeds, and you know, all that running in your head
12 in that little bit of time.

13 So, I mean, I do feel like I did the best that I could in
14 that situation. I don't feel like -- and I honestly don't know
15 what I would have done different. Like I said, I've made that
16 bridge, I guarantee you, several hundred times. We run that
17 river, man, nonstop. I know, like, I know that river. I know
18 that area really -- I'm really comfortable with it. I know it
19 really good. And I still don't know -- I really don't know what I
20 would have done different in that situation, you know, once I got
21 in there. I still -- I'm confident in what I've done, and I feel
22 like I made the best out of it.

23 Once I dropped my headway off, once I started backing up
24 above that bridge, it never -- you know, we got to the mercy of
25 the current. We never got it back. We never, you know, regained

1 that strength over it again. And it just wasn't much that was
2 going to happen after that.

3 MR. MUISE: I'm good.

4 LT [REDACTED] You don't have anything else?

5 BY LT [REDACTED]

6 Q. Do you have your license on you?

7 A. Yeah, I have my license --

8 Q. The merchant mariner's license.

9 A. I got them in my truck.

10 Q. Okay. I'll gather that later. I'll just need a copy of
11 that.

12 A. Okay.

13 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Union Pacific, do you have any
14 questions for the captain?

15 MS. KEELER: I do. I just have a couple of questions. The
16 lieutenant did a great job of asking all the questions I was going
17 to ask, most of them anyway. So I don't have very many.

18 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

19 BY MS. KEELER:

20 Q. I just had one follow-up. You did say that you, captain, had
21 gone through this particular bridge three times in the past, is
22 that correct?

23 A. Yes, ma'am.

24 Q. And did you always call to open the bridge at the 37-mile
25 marker or did you sometimes call earlier or later?

1 A. No. It was always been -- that's kind of like our check-in
2 point. That's kind of where we call that, 37 to 37½.

3 Q. Okay. And you had never had to wait before, is that correct?

4 A. Yes, ma'am.

5 Q. And you actually made the call to open the bridge?

6 A. Yes, ma'am. It was me personally.

7 Q. Okay. And it's my understanding that you made that on the
8 radio?

9 A. Yes, ma'am, it was a VHF radio.

10 Q. And do you know what channel you were on when you made that
11 call?

12 A. Yes, ma'am. It was channel 13. It's the river traffic
13 channel.

14 Q. Okay. And do you know who you spoke with?

15 A. I don't. I didn't get a name. I guess I should have. I
16 didn't get his name.

17 Q. No, that's fine.

18 MS. KEELER: Those are the only follow-ups I had.

19 BY MR. THACKSON:

20 Q. You made the remark a minute ago in your response to one of
21 these gentlemen's questions about setting up to run the bridges?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. Okay. As you were shaping up to run the highway bridge and
24 as you passed through the highway bridge, had the Krotz Springs
25 bridge been open, were you shaped up to run that bridge, the Krotz

1 Springs bridge if it had been open?

2 A. Yeah, oh, yeah, yeah. If they'd have been open when I come
3 through the highway bridge, yeah, I was in, yeah, I was in really
4 good shape. When I come through there, I didn't come through the
5 bridge anticipating to stop. I come through it -- like, I come
6 through the highway bridge to make the railroad bridge. But once
7 I got to a certain point where I was running -- I couldn't allow
8 him any more time to open the bridge, that's when I started
9 slowing down.

10 Q. Okay. You made the remark in response to one of counsel's
11 questions about once you got below current speed --

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. Once you got below current speed to allow the man time to
14 open the bridge, what happened to the stern of your boat?

15 A. Well, once I got down to current speed, it set the -- that's
16 when it originally started setting the stern to the starboard side
17 and, you know, it just set us all, you know, all to the starboard
18 side. And then once it give me the -- you know, it's setting me
19 down, setting me down, setting me down, setting me down. And then
20 he hollered back on 13 that, you know, they were getting the
21 bridge open. That's when we backed back up. You know, we kind of
22 tried to regroup ourself back to get in line with the, you know,
23 with the railroad bridge.

24 Q. All right. You made the remark about losing your stern?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. What caused you to lose your stern?

2 A. I want to say it was the -- like, there's a eddy that works
3 on that left descending bank, so when I -- once I slowed down from
4 the natural current speed to come down the river, that eddy, I
5 think, set my stern down. That started setting me to the
6 starboard and got me quartered, and then the natural current of
7 the river started hitting on top of it, as well, and set it down,
8 you know, to the starboard.

9 Q. Okay. One final question. What explanation, if any, was
10 provided to you by the man on the bridge about why he took so long
11 to open the bridge?

12 A. I don't think he ever said. I don't remember ever getting a
13 remark on a reason, but I mean, we don't ever question them. You
14 know, we don't ever just question the dude like, hey, why can't
15 you open the bridge, so he never, he never openly responded why,
16 and I just never asked him. I never, you know, I never concerned
17 myself with the question.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So I don't remember -- but I really don't remember him ever
20 saying anything specific, anything at all. I remember the two
21 times -- like, I called him. He answered. And I got a little
22 closer to make sure I heard him right. And when I called back, he
23 said he was getting with his dispatch. And then I come on down.

24 And the next thing he said was, you know, we're opening the
25 bridge now, captain, or we're swinging the bridge now, captain.

1 And he made a remark -- I was -- he could tell, like, I was, you
2 know, fighting with it, and he asked something about -- he said
3 something about a reverse maneuver, or something, asked, you know,
4 once I get done doing, you know, whatever, the bridge is opening,
5 to come on in. I said thank you and I appreciate it.

6 Q. I said my last question was going to be my final one. I
7 misled you. I got one more question. Give me your best estimate
8 of the length of time that you on the *Edna* were below the highway
9 bridge awaiting word from the man that he had the bridge open.
10 How much time lapsed from the time you passed the highway bridge
11 till the man told you he had the bridge open? Give me an estimate
12 of time.

13 A. It felt like probably around -- it felt like probably 20
14 minutes, but like, I was having to fight it the whole time, so I
15 mean I, like, I --

16 Q. You weren't looking at a watch, yeah.

17 A. Yeah. So it felt like around 20 minutes or so, give or take,
18 you know, that was probably pretty close. But I mean, it was, I
19 mean, it was a constant battle holding it, so I wasn't -- I can't
20 really give you an exact time, but it was probably pretty close to
21 that, around 20 minutes.

22 MR. THACKSON: All right. Well, I've exceeded everybody's
23 patience, and I don't have any further questions.

24 LT [REDACTED] Union Pacific, if you don't have any
25 questions, I'm going to conclude this interview, and --

1 MS. KEELER: No.

2 MR. MUISE: [REDACTED] I have one question for him.

3 LT [REDACTED] Oh, you have? NTSB has another question.

4 MR. MUISE: Just one.

5 BY MR. MUISE:

6 Q. Like, the -- not Port Vision -- the Rose Point that I have --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- it looks like it's about an hour off on the time.

9 A. On the --

10 Q. Like, when I pulled it up, it says midnight-20 or midnight-

11 30.

12 A. For when we hit the bridge?

13 Q. Well, what I was showing you earlier.

14 A. So it was just after midnight when we hit it.

15 Q. Is it possible that the time is off on your Rose Point?

16 A. I --

17 MR. DOUGLAS: It wasn't. We looked at it yesterday.

18 MR. MUISE: Okay. I'm just going to look at it real quick.

19 I just want to make sure we're all --

20 MR. THACKSON: We have a guy here that's familiar with all

21 that. And he may be the one to get you --

22 MR. MUISE: Okay. We'll (indiscernible).

23 MR. THACKSON: And we'll bring him here, and you can compare

24 what you've got with what we've got.

25 MR. MUISE: That's perfect. That's --

1 MR. THACKSON: -- to make sure you got what's accurate.

2 MR. MUISE: That's fine.

3 MR. ADAMS: Yeah, because it was just after midnight on --

4 MR. DOUGLAS: But I think you've got the wrong

5 (indiscernible). This is just a video --

6 MR. MUISE: This is just a video. That's all I have is a
7 video.

8 LT [REDACTED] All right. So Union, if you don't have any
9 questions, we would like to finish this interview.

10 MS. KEELER: Okay. That's fine. I don't have any further
11 questions.

12 LT [REDACTED] All right. Sounds good. So now it's -- what
13 time it is -- 12:56, May 1st, 2019. We're concluding the
14 interview with Captain Steven Adams.

15 (Whereupon, at 12:56 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: ALLISION OF THE *EDNA T. GATTLE* WITH
THE UP RAILROAD BRIDGE AT KROTZ
SPRINGS, LOUISIANA, ON THE
ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, APRIL 24, 2019
Interview of Steven Adams

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA19FM032

PLACE: Lettsworth, Louisiana

DATE: May 1, 2019

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.



Danielle VanRiper
Transcriber