

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 * Accident No.: DCA19FM032

SPRINGS, LOUISIANA, ON THE *

ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, APRIL 24, 2019 *

* * * * *

Interview of: THOMAS LYNCH
Deckhand

Terral River Services Facilities
Lettsworth, Louisiana

Wednesday,
May 1, 2019

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
United States Coast Guard

MARCEL MUISE, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MARYANNA SARE, Safety Manager
Union Pacific Railroad
(via telephone)

KAREN KEELER, Attorney
(On behalf of Union Pacific Railroad)
(via telephone)

FRANK THACKSON, Attorney
(On behalf of Terral River Services, Inc.)

HEATH DOUGLAS, Attorney
(On behalf of Terral River Services, Inc.)

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I N T E R V I E W

(9:39 a.m.)

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2
3 LT [REDACTED] All right. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] U.S.
4 Coast Guard Marine Safety Unit, Baton Rouge. It's 0939 on May
5 1st, 2019. We're here for the marine casualty involving the
6 towing vessel *Edna T. Gattle* and the Union Pacific Railroad Bridge
7 near Krotz Springs at Atchafalaya River.

8 So please state your name and your position here at this
9 moment. We're going to start with you, please?

10 MR. LYNCH: Thomas Lynch, lead deckhand on back watch.

11 LT [REDACTED] Frank, please?

12 MR. THACKSON: Yeah, I'm Frank Thackson, and I'm here with
13 Heath Douglas. Heath and I represent Terral River Service in
14 connection with this investigation.

15 LT [REDACTED] All right. Marcel?

16 MR. MUISE: This is Marcel Muise with the National
17 Transportation Safety Board.

18 LT [REDACTED] And then we have Union Pacific
19 representatives. Please state your name.

20 MS. KEELER: Karen Keeler, of counsel for Union Pacific.

21 MS. SARE: Maryanna Sare, risk management with Union Pacific.

22 LT [REDACTED] All right. So I'm going to start the
23 interview with the lead deck hand that was onboard the vessel on
24 April 25th, 2019.

25 MR. LYNCH: Yes, sir.

INTERVIEW OF THOMAS LYNCH

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BY LT [REDACTED]

Q. So can you please say your name again, please?

A. Thomas Lynch.

Q. Thomas Lynch?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Can you spell that for me, please?

A. T-h-o-m-a-s, L-y-n-c-h.

Q. N-c-h? And you are the lead deckhand?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. All right. Mr. Lynch, how do you describe your education and training as far as your job?

A. Like how experienced am I?

Q. Yes.

A. As far as how many -- how long I've worked --

Q. How many years have you been a deckhand?

A. Eleven months.

Q. Eleven months? Okay. What did you do before that?

A. I was a operator.

Q. Operator?

A. At a grain site, yes.

Q. Okay. How long did you do that job for?

A. Two years.

Q. Okay. It was a grain site?

A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And then just for you to understand, all the questions
2 I'm asking, I'm just trying to get a little background of who you
3 are and how much experience you have, and understanding of
4 everything. And then as I keep moving forward with the questions,
5 if you know the answer, please tell me. If you don't know the
6 answer, just say you don't know.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. All right. Don't try to make anything up. Just say you
9 don't know. It's completely fine, all right?

10 All right. So you say you worked 2 years as a operator?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. All right. So after working 2 years as an operator, then you
13 start work as a deckhand?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Is that correct? Okay. How long have you been working for
16 Terral?

17 A. Eleven months.

18 Q. Eleven months? So you left this operator job --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. -- to work for Terral?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. All right. How long have you been working on this
23 specific boat?

24 A. Ever since I got hired, 11 months. That's the only boat I've
25 worked on.

1 Q. That's the only boat you work on? Okay. All right. How
2 many people were on board the vessel on that day?

3 A. Six people.

4 Q. Six people? Who were those people? Rank -- just give me the
5 position.

6 A. It was a captain, the relief mate, steersman, another
7 deckhand, and the captain.

8 Q. Okay. All right. So as a lead deckhand onboard of *Edna*
9 *Gattle*, right?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. What are your duties? How would you describe your normal
12 duties on a workday?

13 A. As far as what is my job title, what I do?

14 Q. What do you do on your job?

15 A. Well, like, if the deckhand below me got any questions, I
16 help him out with it. Like, the green guy, if they don't feel
17 comfortable doing it, I take up their slack and do it for them.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. And just pretty much teach them how to do their job.

20 Q. Okay. And then what does that job consist of?

21 A. Building the tow, calling the locks, making bridges, and just
22 pretty much make sure the work gets done on the boat, on the
23 decks.

24 Q. Okay. Who do you answer to?

25 A. Junior -- Steersman Adams.

1 Q. Who is the -- that's just --

2 A. That's the captain.

3 Q. -- the captain, right? All right. All right. How long is
4 your hitch as a deckhand?

5 A. Twenty-eight days.

6 Q. Twenty-eight days?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Twenty-eight days. Okay. How many hours a day?

9 A. Twelve-hour days. It's broke down in two watches, 6 hours
10 each watch.

11 Q. Six hours each watch? So can you explain to me -- so what
12 are your hours? So what time you start, what time you stop, and
13 what time you start again?

14 A. It's 5 to 11.

15 Q. Five in the morning?

16 A. No, no, no. It's 11 at night to 5 in the morning, and then
17 you're off till 11 in the afternoon, and you come back on till 5
18 in the morning, 11 to 5.

19 Q. Eleven to 5, and then you're --

20 A. A.m. and then 11 to 5 a.m.

21 Q. And then you start the 11 a.m. --

22 A. Well --

23 Q. Eleven p.m. again?

24 A. Yeah, then till 5 a.m.

25 Q. Okay. That's your -- okay. So you do 11 p.m. to 5 a.m.,

1 right?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. And then again you pick up at 11 at night again?

4 A. Yes, yes.

5 Q. So what are you doing in between?

6 A. Resting.

7 Q. Just resting?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. When did your hitch start?

10 A. At 11:00.

11 Q. I mean, like, what date?

12 A. I can't remember how -- I know I'm due off today, so it was

13 been last month about -- no, it'd have been this month, about the

14 2nd.

15 Q. Now --

16 A. No, it'd have been last month on the 2nd, yeah, because I was

17 due off today.

18 Q. So you do 28 days. Then you have how many days off?

19 A. Two weeks.

20 Q. Two weeks off? Then you do 28 days and 2 weeks off?

21 A. (No audible response).

22 Q. Okay. So you said today is your day off, you started?

23 A. Yeah, I'm due off today, yes.

24 Q. So you started today your 2 weeks?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. So that means -- what is today -- on the 20 -- let me
2 look at my calendar real quick. So you started on what, on the
3 2nd -- on the 3rd?

4 A. Yes, sir, it'd be on the 3rd. I --

5 Q. Okay. I can get that date --

6 A. Okay.

7 Q. -- exactly later. Okay. So that means on the 25th, you were
8 about a week out from --

9 A. (Indiscernible).

10 Q. Okay. Okay. So then before you start your hitch, you were 2
11 weeks off, and then -- okay. All right. All right. So what time
12 did the accident happen, the casualty happen?

13 A. I don't know. I had no way to tell time.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I know they called me out right after watch. Our watch
16 change is about 11:15 when they called me out to go make the
17 bridge. So I don't know what time, but we had to sit there and
18 float and wait a minute before we actually went through there,
19 before they opened up. So I don't know what time --

20 Q. So you guys cleared the first bridge?

21 A. The highway bridge, yes.

22 Q. Right. And then so what were you doing then?

23 A. I was out there on the tow.

24 Q. Okay. On the barge?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. Where exactly on the barge?

2 A. I was out there on the port head.

3 Q. Port?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Port head. Okay. All right. So you probably had just
6 started your watch, right?

7 A. Yes, right.

8 Q. Okay. You started about 11, so it was about 11:15 when stood
9 on watch --

10 A. Right. Whenever he called me out there and told me to go out
11 there on tow, yes.

12 Q. Okay. 11:15. All right. How were you feeling that day?

13 A. I was feeling good.

14 Q. Feeling good?

15 A. Oh, yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Do you remember the last thing you ate before you go
17 on the watch?

18 A. I don't recall what I ate.

19 Q. What time do you usually eat?

20 A. 10:30.

21 Q. About 10:30?

22 A. Yeah. We get up 10:30, eat, and get woke up, and then it's
23 time to come on watch.

24 Q. Okay. All right. You're not feeling tired?

25 A. No.

1 Q. All right.

2 A. Get a cup of coffee and I'm ready to go.

3 Q. Sounds good, sounds good. All right. How many times have
4 you gone through that bridge?

5 A. A lot.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. We've made that bridge a lot.

8 Q. How many times have you gone through the bridge at that time
9 of the day, or the night?

10 A. I'd say maybe three or four times.

11 Q. Three or four times?

12 A. Now, at the turntable, we usually duck the bridge because we
13 can go up underneath it. I don't recall going through the turn
14 span of Krotz Springs, but we have went through the turn span
15 before.

16 Q. Okay. So you usually actually duck the bridge?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Why this time you went to the --

19 A. Because we had a rig barge, and it wouldn't go up underneath
20 the bridge. The spuds and the rig wouldn't clear.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. So we had to go through the turn span.

23 Q. Okay. So let me see if I understood that. Was that your
24 first time going through that span?

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. The turning one --

2 A. That I can recall, yes, sir.

3 Q. Okay. All right. All right. Okay. How was the visibility?

4 A. On my end, I could see good, and they had the lights on. And
5 I can see -- we started calling him in 600 below, and that's where
6 I usually start calling him in, and I talked him in till his head
7 clears the pilings.

8 Q. Okay. And then the bridge lights were all functioning?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. So on that night, did the captain try to duck under
11 the --

12 A. No.

13 Q. No? He was already set to --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- go to the turning span, right? Okay. All right. Okay.
16 So visibility was good. How was the current?

17 A. I really wasn't paying attention to the current.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Because I was focusing on calling him in, so --

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. So I don't know nothing about the current.

22 Q. So the ride was smooth or --

23 A. Yeah, it wasn't choppy or nothing.

24 Q. Nothing, right? Okay.

25 A. That I can tell.

1 Q. Okay. All right. Okay. So even though it was night, how
2 was the weather?

3 A. It wasn't rainy or foggy, so I guess clear.

4 Q. So clear, right? Okay. And everything just answer me with
5 the best of your knowledge.

6 A Okay.

7 Q If something goes a little off, it just -- it is what it is,
8 right? All right. Okay. See if I miss anything on here that I
9 wanted to -- okay. Okay. All right. So you're standing on the
10 port side, the port head. How did you communicate with the
11 captain?

12 A. Through radio.

13 Q. To a radio? Okay. What channel did you use?

14 A. Seventy-one.

15 Q. Okay. Was it clear?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. What did you tell the captain?

18 A. When we first walked out there, he told me get on the radio
19 and standby, waiting on the bridge to open. And he said -- I was
20 standing on the port head. He said go ahead and get on the
21 starboard side because I'm going to try to hug that piling so we
22 can clear and make it through. And he said -- we backed up and
23 started getting lined up with it. He said start calling him down.
24 I told him 600 below, 25 wide.

25 Okay. When he started closing up, I said 20 wide, 10 wide,

1 and we started heading through. He came on the radio and said
2 we're not going to make it, head back to the boat. Well, at the
3 time I started heading back to the boat is when we made the
4 collision and it started running -- tracking us sideways, and
5 didn't feel comfortable. So I took cover and rode it out.

6 Q. Okay. When you say you took cover, were you already on the
7 tug?

8 A. No. I was still on the barge.

9 Q. Still on the barge? Okay. Must have been a scary moment,
10 right?

11 A. Oh, yeah.

12 Q. Yeah. Okay. So when the vessel with the barge, right,
13 collided with the bridge, did you see it?

14 A. No.

15 Q. You didn't see anything?

16 A. No.

17 Q. You were just running back?

18 A. No. I walked back maybe 10 feet before the piling caught the
19 turn span on the barge, and I just ducked down and took cover.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I didn't know what -- how many times we hit it or what hit
22 it. All I seen was the spud and the excavator make contact.

23 Q. Okay. Okay.

24 LT [REDACTED] Is that rain?

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, it's the air conditioning.

1 LT [REDACTED] Oh, it's the air conditioning?

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes --

3 LT [REDACTED] Sounds like rain, right?

4 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Did sound like rain. Thank god it's
5 not rain.

6 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

7 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't think it's rain.

8 BY LT [REDACTED]

9 Q. Let me ask you this. Are you on prescription medication?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No? Okay. Do you use any medication, like, normally --

12 A. No.

13 Q. Okay. Do you wear glasses?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay. Just going back to the actual casualty, right, so you
16 took cover, and then what happened next?

17 A. After I took cover, we finished going through the bridge. As
18 soon as we started top and around, I hopped on the vessel. The
19 face wire broke. I helped him secure the line until we can top
20 around and get tied off, and then we started replacing -- check
21 the -- we checked the voids on the barge and made sure it wasn't
22 taking on water, checked out the boat, made sure we wasn't taking
23 on water.

24 And then we started checking -- putting the face wire back on
25 the boat. And the barge was taking on some water. We put two or

1 three pumps out and had to pump out, and then we sit there and
2 waited, and tied off.

3 Q. Okay. So the barge hit the bridge?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. With the boat. And then -- and you just hit the bridge and
6 went through it?

7 A. Well, it hit the edge of the turn span, the table itself, and
8 it had just shoved off of it, and he went on through it.

9 Q. Oh, he went on through it?

10 A. Um-hum.

11 Q. Okay. It didn't got stuck on the bridge? Do you recall
12 that? I'm just asking. I don't know.

13 A. I don't know if it got stuck on the bridge. Like I said,
14 only thing I recall is it just hitting that turn span, so --

15 Q. Okay. And then you guys tied off right there?

16 A. Yeah, as soon -- well, as soon as -- when it hit it, it
17 just -- I guess the impact just slid it off to the turntable, and
18 the boat was already starting to top around, so he just went ahead
19 and finished top and around, secure it.

20 Q. Okay.

21 LT [REDACTED] You have any questions?

22 MR. MUISE: I have a few, yeah.

23 BY MR. MUISE:

24 Q. Thomas, do you mind -- the picture behind you, can you just
25 show me where everything is on the -- like where is the engine

1 room, where is the galley?

2 A. The galley is on the other side. Well, this is the rudder
3 room. That's the galley window. The door is on the other side.
4 That's going to be the engine room. These are the bunk rooms.
5 This is the deck locker.

6 Q. The deck locker? Okay. So who sleeps closest to the engine
7 room?

8 A. I always sleep -- there's another deck -- there's going to
9 be another deck room on this side over here. I sleep there.
10 There's going to be -- usually we put the deckhands in there. And
11 all this -- all right, this locker room -- on the other side of
12 the (indiscernible) there's doors for that locker room right
13 there. So that's going to be the closest room to the engine room.

14 Q. Okay. Is it easy to sleep on there, or is it a loud boat, or
15 is it quiet?

16 A. It's pretty loud, but we sleep comfortable, though.

17 Q. You slept pretty good the couple days before this?

18 A. Oh, yeah, yeah.

19 Q. Okay.

20 LT [REDACTED] Let me just --

21 MR. MUISE: Sure. Go ahead.

22 LT [REDACTED] Real quick, for the Union Pacific
23 representatives, right, we have a picture of the *Edna Gattle*, the
24 towing vessel. It's on the wall here. The question is for the
25 deckhand's -- his knowledge of locations and where things are

1 located on the vessel, just for you to have an idea what we're
2 doing.

3 MS. KEELER: Thank you.

4 LT [REDACTED] You're welcome.

5 I'm sorry. Go ahead.

6 MR. MUISE: That's all I had really. You covered --

7 LT [REDACTED] That's all you had --

8 MR. MUISE: You covered everything.

9 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Again, for the Union Pacific, do you
10 have any questions, any cross-examine questions, based on what was
11 asked the deckhand?

12 MS. KEELER: I don't have any questions.

13 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Frank?

14 MR. THACKSON: I'll be very brief.

15 BY MR. THACKSON:

16 Q. Where was the boat and the barge and the boat's tow when you
17 first went out on the barge to serve as the lookout?

18 A. We was approaching the highway bridge.

19 Q. Okay. So before the boat and the barge passed through the
20 highway bridge, were you out on the tow to serve as a lookout?

21 A. No, we was coming up on the highway bridge, and right --
22 well, I guess about when we was passing under it, right before we
23 passed under it, I was heading up on tow.

24 Q. Okay. So you were out on the tow to serve as the lookout as
25 the boat and barge passed under the highway bridge?

1 A. Right.

2 Q. Okay. And you were out to serve as a lookout continuously on
3 the barge from the time you passed under the highway bridge until
4 the time the allision occurred, right?

5 A. Right.

6 Q. Okay. Now, I know you weren't looking at a watch, and so I'm
7 not asking for specific times in my questions, but after the boat
8 passed under the highway bridge, did you notice whether you all
9 continued down towards the Krotz Springs Bridge, or did you stop,
10 or what did you do? What did the boat do, as best you could
11 notice?

12 A. Well, when we passed underneath the highway bridge, we
13 floated around, waiting on the turn span to open.

14 Q. Okay. That's my question. So when you came under the
15 highway bridge, the turn span was not open?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. And so because the turn span was not open and because you had
18 a barge with spuds on it, a spud barge that couldn't pass under
19 the bridge, you had to wait around for the turn span to open?

20 A. Right.

21 Q. And give me an estimate, if you have one, of how long you
22 guys had to wait above the Krotz Springs Bridge, waiting for the
23 bridge to open?

24 A. Like I said, I wasn't looking at the time. Best time
25 estimate that I got was 15 to 20 minutes.

1 Q. All right. And during that time, as best you -- you weren't
2 navigating the boat. I understand you weren't. And therefore,
3 you weren't paying attention, as you said, to the current or how
4 it was navigating, but tell me, from your perspective, what was
5 the boat doing as you guys were waiting 15 to 20 minutes for the
6 bridge to open?

7 A. It was -- it starts -- well, he was maneuvering it, like, so
8 he was coming back and forth, swinging back and forth like that.

9 Q. The boat was maneuvering, you say?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Maneuvering upriver from the bridge because the bridge was
12 closed?

13 A. Right.

14 Q. Okay. Waiting for the bridge --

15 LT [REDACTED] Well, Frank, a lot of the questions are a
16 little bit leading. You go to ask a question and let him answer
17 you.

18 MR. THACKSON: Okay.

19 LT [REDACTED] Because you were asking the questions and he's
20 saying yes or no.

21 MR. THACKSON: Okay.

22 LT [REDACTED] So I will not allow this here.

23 MR. THACKSON: All right. All right. I --

24 LT [REDACTED] So if you -- and if we're going to discuss
25 something that -- I know that part hasn't been discussed

1 completely yet, but if you start going a little bit too much into
2 already asked, then we have to move on.

3 MR. THACKSON: That's fine.

4 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

5 MR. THACKSON: All right.

6 BY MR. THACKSON:

7 Q. So in terms of what -- as you -- as the boat was above the
8 bridge maneuvering, what could you see about the bridge itself?
9 You said its lights was on. What else could you see about the
10 bridge?

11 A. Well, we was maybe 400 feet below it, waiting. We were just
12 sitting there waiting and swaying back and forth a little bit.

13 Q. All right. And one final question. Did you see any trains
14 on the bridge or approaching the bridge?

15 A. No.

16 MR. THACKSON: Okay. I don't have anything further.

17 LT [REDACTED] Perfect. All right. If nobody has any more
18 questions, it's 10:05, May 1st, 2009 [sic]. This concludes our
19 interview with Mr. Lynch, the lead deckhand.

20 (Whereupon, at 10:05 a.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
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Interview of Thomas Lynch

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