

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 *
SPRING, LOUISIANA, ON THE *
ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, APRIL 24, 2019 *

* Accident No.: DCA19FM032

* * * * *

Interview of: MICKEY O'REAR
Relief 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
Union Pacific Railroad

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

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

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

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>I N D E X</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Mickey O'Rear:		
By LT [REDACTED]		5
By Mr. Muise		36
By Ms. Keeler		50
By Mr. Thackson		51

I N T E R V I E W

(10:15 a.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED] Okay. All right. So it's 10:15, May 1st,
4 2019. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED]

5 Do you want to go -- I don't want you to go through all the
6 people again.

7 MR. MUISE: Please. Because we might have a separate --
8 different transcript --

9 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

10 MR. MUISE: -- so we can recognize people's voices.

11 LT [REDACTED] So we're going to go through every single
12 person in the room again. We're going to do that for every single
13 recording, as for the transcript. So again, I'm LT [REDACTED]
14 U.S. Coast Guard, Marine Safety Unit Baton Rouge, the lead
15 investigator. I have --

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

18 LT [REDACTED] Can you please state your name, and --

19 MR. O'REAR: Mickey O'Rear, captain, Terral River Services.

20 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

21 MR. THACKSON: I'm Frank Thackson, and I'm here with Heath
22 Douglas. And we represent Terral River Services.

23 LT [REDACTED] All right. Union Pacific, please?

24 MS. KEELER: Karen Keeler, for Union Pacific.

25 MS. SARE: Maryanna Sare, Union Pacific risk management.

1 LT [REDACTED] All right. Sounds good.

2 INTERVIEW OF MICKEY O'REAR

3 BY LT [REDACTED]

4 Q. So can you please state your name for me?

5 A. Mickey.

6 Q. Can you spell it for me, please?

7 A. M-i-c-k-e-y.

8 Q. c-k-e-y.

9 A. Last name O'Rear, O-R-e-a-r.

10 Q. e-a-r.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. And what is your position?

13 A. Relief captain.

14 Q. Relief captain. Relief captain. All right. Can I call you
15 Mickey?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Yeah? That's fine. Okay. So all right, let's start with
18 this. How long have you been working with the -- for Terral?

19 A. Eight years.

20 Q. Eight years. All right. Eight years as captain?

21 A. No, sir, I worked my way up from a deck.

22 Q. From a deck?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. How long have you been working as a captain?

25 A. Since 2014.

1 Q. Since '14 -- 2014. So 4½ years --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- ish; 4½ years as a captain. Okay. Eight years with

4 Terral. How long have you been working at the *Edna Gattle*?

5 A. This is my first hitch.

6 Q. First hitch? Okay.

7 A. Since I, you know, started steering a couple years back.

8 Q. Okay. So you never been on that boat before?

9 A. A couple years back when --

10 Q. Oh, a couple years back?

11 A. -- I was steering -- yeah.

12 Q. Okay. So a couple of years you were captain on that boat?

13 A. Couple years back, no, sir. I was just filling in.

14 Q. You were just filling in?

15 A. Right.

16 Q. Okay. As captain?

17 A. No, sir. Covering --

18 Q. Or just filling in as a --

19 A. Just regular pilot.

20 Q. Just regular pilot.

21 A. Right.

22 Q. Like a trip pilot.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Okay. Okay. For how long did you do that?

25 A. Two weeks.

1 Q. Two weeks? Just one hitch?

2 A. Right.

3 Q. Okay. So about 2 years ago?

4 A. Yes. Yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay. So that was your first hitch. When did your hitch
6 start?

7 A. This time?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Last week -- 2 weeks ago.

10 Q. Two weeks ago. So April --

11 A. I got on there the 18th.

12 Q. The 18th?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Okay. When does it end?

15 A. Today.

16 Q. Today?

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Okay. So it got you off the boat. With the earlier --

19 A. I'm going to another boat.

20 Q. Oh, you're going to another boat?

21 A. Right.

22 Q. All right. So today is May 1st. May 1st. See, I thought I
23 was doing you a -- like a help, you know.

24 A. That's right.

25 Q. Help out, but it didn't work. So start in first hitch. So

1 explain to me what is -- what are the duties of a relief captain?
2 A. Same thing as a captain. Relieve each other, watch change.
3 Let each other know what's going on, where we're at and what we're
4 still doing, on -- going to location.
5 Q. Okay.
6 A. Just relieving each other. Letting us know if we come into
7 something, or just giving us the rundown before he goes to bed.
8 Q. Okay.
9 A. I continue doing what he's doing.
10 Q. So what is the main difference between a relief captain and
11 the actual captain on a tug?
12 A. Less paperwork.
13 Q. Less paperwork?
14 A. Right.
15 Q. Okay. So he is in charge of the vessel as if you are like
16 the number two?
17 A. Right.
18 Q. Is it something like that?
19 A. That's right.
20 Q. Okay. Okay. In case the captain is unable to do his job,
21 who takes over?
22 A. I do.
23 Q. You take over.
24 A. Right.
25 Q. Do you have a merchant mariner's license.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Do you have that on you?

3 A. In the room. Yeah.

4 Q. In the room. Okay. Would you mind to get it real quick for
5 me, please?

6 A. Okay.

7 LT [REDACTED] So the relief captain went to get his merchant
8 mariner license, as I requested. For Union Pacific, I'm taking a
9 look at his merchant mariner license right now.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

11 LT [REDACTED] You're welcome.

12 BY LT [REDACTED]

13 Q. Oh, it has a little apostrophe on your name.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Yeah. I would like a copy of the -- his credentials, like
16 whenever we're done. If it's okay. All right. Okay. Where was
17 I? I lost my track a little bit. Hold on a second. So in case
18 that the captain, then you take over. All right. So you already
19 described your duties. So your hitch started on the 28th. So the
20 25th you're kind of like on a -- towards the end of -- about
21 halfway done. Right?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So what time you -- what are your times when the --

24 A. Watch times?

25 Q. Watch times. Yeah.

1 A. Five and 11.

2 Q. Five in the evening --

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. -- to 11 at night?

5 A. Correct. That's him. Then I come on at 11 --

6 Q. Oh, you come on 11.

7 A. Right. I work until 5 in the morning.

8 Q. Okay. So you come 11 p.m. to 5 in the morning.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. So okay. What time did the casualty happen?

11 A. 11:50-ish.

12 Q. Oh, 11:50?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. So were you on the watch?

15 A. He has -- I haven't relieved him yet. He was going to

16 proceed on down through the bridge. Then I was going to take

17 over.

18 Q. Okay. So you were up there --

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. -- on the bridge? Okay. So you were on the bridge. So you

21 usually relieve him by 11:00, but 11:50 it has -- you haven't

22 relieved him yet.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Why is that?

25 A. Because he has more experience going through that bridge than

1 I do.

2 Q. Okay. Makes senses. That makes sense. So what was the
3 agreement? Like when you were approaching the bridge, did you
4 discuss that before, after?

5 A. Yeah, as we was coming down -- with each other?

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. Yeah, he was telling me how to set up on it, and all that.
8 How to proceed going through the bridge, how to set up on it.

9 Q. Okay. So what the other captain told you when you were
10 approaching?

11 A. How the bridge sits, and how to line up on it and --

12 Q. You talk about the -- which bridge? Because you go through
13 two. Right?

14 A. Right.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Both bridges he explained.

17 Q. Okay. All right. So he was telling you that to wait until
18 he crossed the bridge so that you can take over.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Relieve each other.

22 Q. All right. Got you. Okay. Was that your first time going
23 through that bridge?

24 A. Yes. That span.

25 Q. That span.

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. Right.

3 A. I've made the bridge several times. Because we can duck it.

4 Q. Right. Right.

5 A. But this time we couldn't duck it. So he was showing me how
6 to make that span.

7 Q. Okay. First time through the span. Why you couldn't duck it
8 this time?

9 A. Because we had a split barge.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. A rig barge, with equipment on it. Didn't have the
12 clearance.

13 Q. Okay. Was it too high?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. All right. Okay. First time through the span. Okay. So
16 okay, before we get into the actual casualty and everything, okay,
17 I've just got a couple more questions. Just background stuff,
18 just to build my --

19 A. All right.

20 Q. -- my little story here in my brain. So you took over -- you
21 started your hitch on April 18th. Right.

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So what did you do the day before?

24 A. I was on another vessel.

25 Q. You were on another vessel.

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. So for how long?

3 A. For 2 weeks.

4 Q. For 2 weeks on another vessel. Okay. So all right. It was

5 a Terral --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- vessel? Okay. All right. What vessel is that?

8 A. The *Hallie T.*

9 Q. Do you know the spelling?

10 A. H-a-l-l-i-e --

11 Q. H-a-l-l --

12 A. i-e.

13 Q. -- i-e.

14 A. Space T.

15 Q. Space T.

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. Okay. And you were there for 2 weeks.

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. What was your position on that?

20 A. Same thing, relief captain.

21 Q. Same thing. Okay. And before that, where were you?

22 A. I was on another vessel.

23 Q. You were on another vessel.

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Okay. You don't take days off?

1 A. Sometimes.

2 Q. I know you like money. Right. Everybody likes money.

3 A. Saving them for vacation.

4 Q. That sounds good. When was your last vacation?

5 A. Last year.

6 Q. Last year. Like -- well, last year is very broad. Right.

7 Like, when last year?

8 A. Yeah, we took one in March.

9 Q. Oh, it's almost a year ago.

10 A. Spring break.

11 Q. Oh, spring break.

12 A. Yeah. Spring break we went to the mountains. In July we go

13 to the beach.

14 Q. Oh, really.

15 A. So I'll take two a year.

16 Q. Oh. So you took one in July too, last year?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. To the beach?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Oh. Where did you go?

21 A. Orange Beach.

22 Q. Orange Beach?

23 A. [Indiscernible].

24 Q. Okay. That's not that bad.

25 A. No.

1 Q. [Indiscernible].
2 A. I know, right.
3 Q. Yeah. Okay. You got family?
4 A. I do.
5 Q. Yeah. Kids?
6 A. Yes. I do.
7 Q. How many kids?
8 A. Two.
9 Q. How old are they?
10 A. Fifteen-year-old boy, and an 8-year-old daughter.
11 Q. Oh. The 15, you're in the teenager age. Right?
12 A. That's right.
13 Q. Yeah. I got a 14 in my house. Rough. Rough. So where are
14 you from?
15 A. Indianola, Mississippi.
16 Q. That's where you live?
17 A. Correct.
18 Q. Okay. Mississippi. So you do those 2 weeks. Right. So
19 when you work on a 2 weeks, you don't have any days off. Right?
20 So do you get to go home?
21 A. On a regular hitch, I work 2 weeks and I'm off 6 days.
22 Q. Six days.
23 A. Correct.
24 Q. Okay. And then you go home, like to the family. Right?
25 A. Correct.

1 Q. In Mississippi. And then -- and again, it's not me trying to
2 get into your personal life or anything. But like, a lot of --
3 every question has a reason for it.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. And -- but, it's nothing accusing you of anything.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. It's just -- it -- there is an analysis process behind it
8 that every little bit counts as, you know -- so, and then -- and
9 sometimes we like to keep it light to you, right. So this is an
10 interview. It's not an interrogation.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. So we just -- I like to keep it light. So going back to the
13 vacation -- no, I'm joking. So going back to the interview. So
14 you're on this hitch April to today. Then you're on a hitch
15 before, and then you're on another hitch before. So you've been
16 three hitch no vacation.

17 A. Yeah. I've been on --

18 Q. No breaks.

19 A. -- 5 weeks so far.

20 Q. Okay. You need a break. You got to tell this company to
21 give you a break. Okay. All right. All right. It's okay. So
22 on that day -- the day of the casualty, right, April 25th --

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. -- right, so, how were you feeling that day?

25 A. Good.

1 Q. You feel good.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. Are you -- like, when you take over like at 11 p.m. --

4 usually your hitch are at 11:00?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. At night? Even on the other boats.

7 A. It varies.

8 Q. It varies, right.

9 A. 11, 12 -- 10:30, 11:30.

10 Q. But is -- it is usually like a night watch. Right? You get

11 -- or --

12 A. If I'm running relief, yes.

13 Q. Okay. Yeah. It can be a little -- a factor, a little bit,

14 right, if you do night watch for 2 weeks and then you come to day

15 watch. And then -- it can mess it up to the body a little bit.

16 That would probably happen to me.

17 A. Oh, yeah.

18 Q. Yeah. But, okay. Do you remember what you ate before you go

19 on a watch?

20 A. I didn't eat.

21 Q. You didn't eat?

22 A. No.

23 Q. When was the last time you ate?

24 A. At lunchtime.

25 Q. Oh, boy. How do you go through all that without eating?

1 A. Coffee.

2 Q. Coffee helps, huh.

3 A. That's right. But it's still not food. Okay. So you're
4 feeling good. Right? Feeling okay.

5 Q. Yes, sir.

6 A. All right. Do you take any medication?

7 Q. Just my sinus medicine.

8 A. Sinus medicine? Do you have a prescription for it?

9 Q. Yes, sir.

10 A. Okay. What is it -- what medication is that? Do you know?

11 Q. Fexofenadine. It's like a Singulair.

12 A. Okay. Okay. It's not like over the counter. Is it?

13 Q. No.

14 LT [REDACTED] Oh, it's just -- okay. All right. Does the
15 company have a policy on prescription medication, Frank? As far
16 as like if an employee is taking a prescription medication --

17 MR. THACKSON: I'm sure they do, yes.

18 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

19 MR. THACKSON: I --

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's [indiscernible].

21 LT [REDACTED] That -- is that -- okay. They do it that way?
22 Okay.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Everything is covered in that.

24 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'll make sure. I'm pretty sure we've

1 given you guys a copy of it.

2 LT [REDACTED] You did? Okay. Perfect.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: From Josh.

4 LT [REDACTED] Oh, yeah. Okay. Sounds good. Like I said,
5 some of this stuff I'm just trying to get --

6 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure.

7 LT [REDACTED] -- into the --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It's all in there.

9 LT [REDACTED] Yeah. Okay. Yeah. It's always good to know,
10 because sometimes I'm talking to some employees and then they
11 taking prescription medication. They not doing anything wrong.
12 But then the company has the policy and then they don't release
13 that to the company. And then that can become a problem among
14 themselves.

15 MR. O'REAR: Right.

16 LT [REDACTED] But, it's always good to know.

17 BY LT [REDACTED]

18 Q. Did you know about this policy?

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. Yeah? Did you sign anything? Did you have -- get any
21 training on prescription medications or anything like that?

22 A. I did. It was years back.

23 Q. Okay. And you probably don't remember. Right?

24 A. Right.

25 Q. Yeah. That's all right. Okay. All right. Yeah. I'll just

1 take a note here at the bottom, so I can take a look at that
2 policy. All right. All right. Okay. All right. Let's talk
3 about a little -- actually on the casualty. Do you -- so, Captain
4 Adams was driving the boat. You're there, trying to learn some
5 stuff, right, going through the first time.

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Is that correct? All right. If what I say is not what you
8 said, please correct me.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. Because I'm just trying to, you know, retain what you're
11 saying, put it on the paper. And, you know, sometimes my brain
12 can go all different ways. I'm not trying to lead you to answer
13 yes or no. And if you don't know just say, yeah, I don't know.
14 Okay. And if you say, like, well I didn't say that, just tell me
15 I didn't say that. I'll be like -- you're not going to offend me.

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Fine. So okay. So describe me from the moment you start
18 approaching the first bridge, okay, to right before you go through
19 the second bridge. Can you tell me a little bit what happened?

20 A. Yeah. We were southbound with one right barge. Before we
21 got to the bridges, you know, we called, set up an opening.
22 Proceeded. They get back with us on the opening. We kept on
23 coming. Coming down on the bridge visually, and he was still
24 showing me how to set up and all this.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Called again. They get back with us, getting with their
2 dispatch.

3 Q. That's you calling the bridge. Right?

4 A. Correct.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. They give a dispatch, get back with us for the opening. Went
7 through the first bridge and was slowing down. We done slowed
8 down, because --

9 Q. That was fine going through the first bridge?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. We were just waiting on them to get back with us to open the
13 swing bridge, so we can proceed on.

14 Q. How far out did you call the bridge?

15 A. It was --

16 Q. Just an estimate.

17 A. 37½ mile board. It wasn't 42 --

18 Q. So 37½ mile board. So --

19 A. About 7 or 8 miles out.

20 Q. -- the bridge is at 41.5.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Seven miles out.

23 A. Yeah, 7, 8, 9 miles out.

24 Q. Seven, 8 --

25 A. Like to give them a good heads up.

1 Q. Right. Okay. Call bridge. So you called the bridge
2 dispatcher. Or the --
3 A. On the vessel traffic system.
4 Q. Okay. And that goes to the dispatcher, right. Or go to the
5 operator.
6 A. It goes to the operator, then he does dispatch on his end.
7 Q. Okay. Operator. And then the -- during the call -- did you
8 hear the call?
9 A. Yes.
10 Q. It was -- everything was fine?
11 A. Everything was fine.
12 Q. Okay. What did the bridge operator say?
13 A. Stand by, have to get with dispatch.
14 Q. Okay. So from that moment that you call out how long it took
15 for you to pass that first bridge and be on a stand by for the
16 span to be open?
17 A. Fifteen minutes -- 10 to 15 minutes.
18 Q. Ten to fifteen minutes. Okay. All right. Okay. So that's
19 from the moment you called. So you clear the first bridge. Once
20 you clear the first bridge, you're on the other side. Right. So
21 between the two bridges.
22 A. Correct.
23 Q. So was the span already open?
24 A. No, sir.
25 Q. No, not open.

1 A. No, sir. Not open.

2 Q. So how long it took from the moment that you're there ready
3 to go through it until the actual span was ready for you to go
4 through it?

5 A. Sitting there waiting -- how long was we waiting?

6 Q. Yes.

7 A. A good 20, 25 minutes.

8 Q. A good 20, 25 minutes. Okay. Okay. Standing by, right.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. How was the weather that day?

11 A. It was --

12 Q. That night.

13 A. -- it was night. It was nighttime.

14 Q. Nighttime.

15 A. No fog.

16 Q. No fog.

17 A. It was real dark.

18 Q. Really.

19 A. It was cloudy. It was pretty good darkness over everything.

20 Q. Okay. Raining or anything like that --

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. -- forecast was -- okay. Okay. What about the currents?
23 The current, like the river current.

24 A. Oh, it's pretty good smoking now.

25 Q. Yeah, right.

1 A. Yeah, it --

2 Q. Pretty rough up there, huh?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. High water.

6 Q. Yeah, it's high water there. Yeah. Do you have an idea the
7 speed of the water?

8 A. I do not.

9 Q. No? If you were a captain like behind the wheel, right, in
10 charge -- like you already had relieved him, let's say, would you
11 check the current speed? Do you have a way to do that on that
12 tug?

13 A. No.

14 Q. There's no way to do it?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Okay. Okay. It would be that -- it would be a good thing to
17 have on the boat, right? To monitor --

18 A. Sure.

19 Q. -- current speed, right, have an idea -- especially going
20 through a bridge. Is there -- okay. All right. Okay. That's
21 fine. Okay. So you waited, you said, about 20, 25 minutes
22 standing by until the bridge was open. Right?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. Were you looking at the bridge open? Were you able to see it
25 moving, and all that?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. How were the lights on the bridge?

3 A. They're good.

4 Q. They're good?

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. So everything was like clear --

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. -- as far as like passing? Okay. Did you notice anything

9 unusual that day -- or, that night?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. No? Okay. As far as like the bridge moving, everything

12 looks fine?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay. And it's not a trick question. Please. It's just --

15 A. No.

16 Q. -- it's just a fact. You know, because sometimes, you know,

17 you never know you can see something, right, like it was

18 something. But, okay. Once the bridge was completely open, so

19 then what happened?

20 A. We had to back up to get back in the correct path to make the

21 bridge.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. We had to back up and get lined up on it.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Then start coming back ahead to make the bridge.

1 Q. Okay. And then does the bridge operator gives like any --
2 A. They give us an okay. And the bridge is fully open, and you
3 can proceed.
4 Q. Okay. And then you -- so your maintain communication with
5 him --
6 A. Correct.
7 Q. -- the whole time. Right? Like as far as like what you're
8 going on.
9 A. Right.
10 Q. Okay. Okay. So you back it up and you try to line up with
11 the bridge, right, to try to go straight. Did the vessel line up
12 correctly?
13 A. The vessel lined up correctly.
14 Q. Okay.
15 A. Going from reverse to clutch --
16 Q. Okay.
17 A. -- and coming back ahead, to get lined up, you got the -- a
18 lot of current coming down and setting you a different way.
19 Q. Uh-huh.
20 A. So we kind of -- we didn't have enough time to --
21 Q. How -- okay.
22 A. -- get set up from where we was.
23 Q. So when you actually start pushing ahead the vessel was --
24 was actually ready in position? Or were you trying to fight the
25 currents? Is that what you're saying?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. What -- the current was pushing, pulling, what -- how was
3 that?

4 A. Yeah, it was setting us to the starboard side, to the
5 starboard pier.

6 Q. To the head.

7 A. And it was --

8 Q. Your head to the starboard pier?

9 A. Yeah. Stern, coming in like this.

10 Q. Okay. Oh, the stern.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Okay. So it was pushing away from the actual -- the center
13 span. Right?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. Okay, the span. But the push was mainly on the
16 stern. Right? That's what you're saying?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. More like kind of like turning.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. Yeah, doing that. Okay. Okay. All right. Then they
21 engage, push ahead and try to clear. Right?

22 A. Correct.

23 Q. So then tell me what happened.

24 A. We got sent too much to the pier. We knew right then we
25 couldn't make it. So we did what we had to do. We rang the

1 general alarm. Did our short blast, let the bridge know something
2 wasn't right. And we made impact.

3 Q. Okay. And then, were you able to see the moment you touched
4 the bridge?

5 A. Briefly.

6 Q. Briefly.

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. Okay. So it was -- the visibility was not good from the
9 bridge?

10 A. Not coming down on it, really.

11 Q. Not coming down.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Because you've got the equipment on the barge.

15 Q. Right. Right. Yeah, you had that big excavator, or --

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Right. Okay. So do you know what parts of the barge touched
18 the bridge first?

19 A. I know the starboard stern of the barge.

20 Q. Starboard stern?

21 A. Yeah. Starboard stern of the barge.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Between the middle and the stern, up in that area.

24 Q. Okay. So you were like -- you're coming like this, and this
25 part of the barge --

1 A. Right.

2 Q. It -- what --

3 A. Yeah. Like here's the boat. From here back.

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. And here's the barge. Coming down on it like this right
6 here, and it touched --

7 Q. Oh, I see.

8 A. -- up on the stern.

9 Q. So it touched the fixed center bridge.

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. And then it turned this way.

12 A. No, they --

13 Q. No.

14 A. -- it turned us this way. Once we hit -- we was trying to
15 steer up on it, to raise the stern. But it's so much current
16 pushing down. We made contact, and it come this way --

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. -- and hit the other side.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Then that -- with that momentum coming after the second hit,
21 it pushed the head over and that's what couldn't clear the swing
22 span.

23 Q. Oh, and that's when this part got stuck on it. Oh, okay.
24 That makes sense. Because I was going to ask, because like how is
25 the starboard bow of the barge -- why would the -- starboard,

1 right?

2 A. Yeah. Correct.

3 Q. How that got stuck under the bridge.

4 A. That's what it -- there at initial impact.

5 Q. That's why. Oh, the third impact. Okay. Okay. So the
6 third impact hit the bridge. Right?

7 A. Correct.

8 Q. And then how did you -- how did the bridge almost fully
9 close?

10 A. I guess with the momentum when it pushed it.

11 Q. That momentum.

12 A. Right.

13 Q. So when it hit it it would just start, like, closing the
14 bridge like that?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Huh. Interesting. Interesting. So three contacts, right.
17 You contact -- now it makes sense. Two -- and then the tug
18 touched --

19 A. Correct. The port bow of the boat itself.

20 Q. Right. And then it turned all the way --

21 A. Yeah. And it pushed ahead into the bridge.

22 Q. Did you guys get stuck on there?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. No? It just hit and push, push, push and then --

25 A. We came through, topped around and --

1 Q. Oh, you had to top around and then --

2 A. Yeah, it topped us around.

3 Q. Oh, it did.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. So you finished the whole 360.

6 A. Correct. On the other side of the bridge.

7 Q. Okay. Okay.

8 A. Right.

9 Q. Makes sense. So three touch contact. Okay. All right.

10 Let's see. So it touched there. Okay. So any damage on the tug?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. There was nothing? Okay. So what did you do? When you top

13 around, so what did you do after that?

14 A. We got control of the barge and landed on the bank and

15 assessed the situation.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. First, we made sure the crew was fine, assessed the damage of

18 -- on the barge.

19 Q. Okay. How was everybody?

20 A. It was good.

21 Q. Was everybody good?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Was anybody sleeping?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. Scared the life out of them. Right? Probably.

1 A. Well --

2 Q. Not really?

3 A. That's tug boating.

4 Q. Yeah. Tough people. Right?

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. That's good. Yeah. You got to be, man. It's not easy

7 stuff.

8 A. That's right.

9 Q. And then we understand that. So it's -- okay. So how was

10 that captain looking at that? Was he -- did it look like he knew

11 what he was doing? Was he a little concerned of the current?

12 What -- tell me about him a little bit.

13 A. Oh, he -- he's a good captain.

14 Q. I'm not asking you to --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- throw him under the bus --

17 A. Right. No, no.

18 Q. -- or anything like that.

19 A. No.

20 Q. I'm just trying to understand, like --

21 A. Right.

22 Q. -- some situation you would be like -- you would tell me or

23 say, hey man, look, I'm showing you how to go this. This is rough

24 today. Or, this is not rough today. You know, it's a piece of

25 cake. But sometimes a piece of cake might end up on a catch and

1 nobody knows. Right.

2 A. Right.

3 Q. But -- so, and that's the only reason I ask that, is just to
4 understand how the other person is taking in the situation. Okay.
5 And it's not to damage him or anything like that.

6 A. Right. I understand.

7 Q. I just want you to understand that. So I'm pretty sure
8 you're a good captain. He's a good captain. Otherwise, you
9 wouldn't be doing this for this many years.

10 A. That's right.

11 Q. Okay. And things happen.

12 A. That's right.

13 Q. Things happen. So --

14 A. No, he was very comfortable.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Handled the situation very well.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Just like I would have handled it in a situation like that.
19 Didn't freak out. The first priority was safety. We knew how it
20 originally sits.

21 Q. Uh-huh.

22 A. So we wouldn't -- didn't have no problem. Then coming down
23 on it, you know, you've got the other set coming back across that
24 we didn't --

25 Q. Right.

1 A. -- anticipate. Because it's high water. We didn't know it
2 was acting like that. We know the original set, how it's supposed
3 to, how to line up on the bridge.

4 Q. Right.

5 A. Wouldn't have been no problem.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And besides that, he did what he was supposed to do.

8 Q. Okay. And then, he was looking fine? He didn't look tired
9 or anything like that?

10 A. No, sir.

11 Q. Well, I would be tired after a hitch. Right?

12 A. Oh.

13 Q. After a day, you know, we're always tired. Right. We can
14 still -- let's say, we keep going, but, you know, sometimes --
15 it's normal.

16 Let me see here, if I have anything else. Just give me one
17 second to see --

18 A. Go ahead.

19 Q. -- if I'm missing anything here. It's just like driving a
20 boat, right? You do it for so long, but you still got to go back
21 to your notes because you always not -- forgetting something.

22 A. That's right. You always learn something.

23 Q. Yeah. Of course. If you say you don't have anything to
24 learn, it's just --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: You're in trouble.

1 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

2 MR. O'REAR: Yeah.

3 BY LT [REDACTED]

4 Q. You're in trouble. You're always learning. Right. Always
5 learning. So okay. All right. I've just got a couple, couple
6 more questions. All right. So let's talk about the boat itself.
7 How is the engine works? Good?

8 A. Good, yes.

9 Q. Was it working fine on that day?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Did you have any issues with anything, as far as navigation?

12 A. No, sir.

13 Q. The sounders -- every electronic on the boat, anything that
14 could have affect the passage --

15 A. No, sir.

16 Q. -- through the bridge?

17 A. With the boat, no, sir.

18 Q. Nothing with the boat? Okay. Rudders?

19 A. Good.

20 Q. Functioning?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So boat -- the boat was answering every command as much as
23 was possible with the high water.

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. Yeah. Okay. All right. Okay. If you were the captain in

1 charge -- not teaching everybody -- anybody, so you're just there
2 by yourself, what would you do different to avoid this from
3 happening? And again, you're not throwing anybody under the bus.

4 A. Right.

5 Q. I'm just asking your opinion.

6 A. Having the experience that he's got --

7 Q. Uh-huh.

8 A. -- honestly, I would have did the same thing, set up just
9 right like he did. I mean, it could happen to me too.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. Not knowing that the extra current was going to push us over,
12 I would have done the same way he done it.

13 Q. Okay. If you knew the current was going to push you that
14 way, what would you do?

15 A. I would have waited at least until daylight.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. So I can have a better visual link on it.

18 LT XXXXXXXXXX Perfect. Sounds good. You all have any
19 questions?

20 MR. MUISE: Sure.

21 BY MR. MUISE:

22 Q. So Captain, I'm Marcel. I work for the NTSB. We also
23 investigate accidents like this, just because of the dollar
24 amount. And we write reports and we produce safety ramifications
25 that might go to your company. They might go the Army Corps, or

1 the Coast Guard. So I'm just -- we're working together with the
2 Coast Guard at this point. But we'll go our separate ways, do our
3 own report later on.

4 A. Okay.

5 Q. So just to follow up on what [REDACTED] was saying, so you came
6 from the *Hallie* -- or *Hallie* --

7 A. *Hallie T.*

8 Q. -- to the -- when was that?

9 A. The 18th.

10 Q. The 18th.

11 A. Correct.

12 Q. Oh, so it had been a couple of weeks, then. Or a week.

13 A. No, I come straight off of *Hallie T.* straight to the *Edna T.*
14 Same day.

15 Q. Same day. Oh, okay. But it's -- that was -- this happened
16 on the 24th?

17 LT [REDACTED] 25th.

18 MR. MUISE: The 25th.

19 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

20 MR. MUISE: So that was a few days --

21 LT [REDACTED] So yeah, he's had --

22 MR. MUISE: You had a few days on this boat.

23 MR. O'REAR: Correct.

24 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

25 MR. MUISE: Okay. All right.

1 LT [REDACTED] 18th to 20th.
2 BY MR. MUISE:
3 Q. You were on the back watch --
4 A. Yes.
5 Q. -- over there as well? Okay. A little bit about the boat.
6 Kort nozzles?
7 A. No, sir.
8 Q. Flanking rudders?
9 A. Yes.
10 Q. How wide is she?
11 A. Twenty-eight.
12 Q. Twenty-eight? And with the barge?
13 A. Thirty-five.
14 Q. How long is the barge?
15 A. 200.
16 Q. 200. Air drafts?
17 A. Of the barge?
18 Q. Yeah. Of the barge or both.
19 A. The boat's a jack-up. All the way down. Probably 18 feet.
20 Q. Eighteen. Okay. And jacked up?
21 A. Thirty-seven, maybe.
22 Q. Thirty-seven. Okay. And the spud and the rig on the barge.
23 A. The spuds are 45.
24 Q. Forty-five. Okay. The -- so everything was working okay.
25 Is this a sister to the *Marguerite*?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Exact same? Have you been on that boat?

3 A. Briefly, when I was steering.

4 Q. She handles the same?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Handles pretty well.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. The -- you said you went under the span a couple --

9 or, ducked under it a couple times.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Is the only reason you ducked under it because of what was on

12 the barge?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. With this river height, would you have made it with just the

15 boat?

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. You would? Okay.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. So how do you know that? Like how do you -- is there a gauge

20 or --

21 A. Yeah, we go by the river stage and how our boat is. And we

22 do the river stage. It's like 10 foot less than Melville, then

23 it's 10 foot less at Krotz -- at Simmesport. And we go off those

24 measurements --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- than what we got on our boat.

2 Q. All right. So I'm looking at the Army Corps chart. It says
3 44.8 minus the gauge. So where is that gauge at or how do you
4 know what the gauge is?

5 A. Junior would have to tell you about that.

6 Q. There's nothing on the bridge that would tell you?

7 A. Right. Nothing on the bridge.

8 Q. Nothing on --

9 A. It's something that he goes to, from the bridge. We got a
10 chart on the boat itself. It tells the clearance of each bridge.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And we've got to subtract that by the river stage and by our
13 boats.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I think that's how he does that.

16 Q. That's obviously changing all the time. Does that come from
17 the company or you guys listen to it on the radio or it comes from
18 the Army Corps or --

19 A. Yeah. It changes with the river stage current itself. Is
20 how they get them measurements.

21 Q. So who gives you that information?

22 A. The captain gives me the information.

23 Q. Okay. Where does he get it from?

24 A. That's what I'm saying, you'll have to ask him.

25 Q. Got it. Okay. We'll ask him, then. How about weather?

1 Where do you guys gets your weather forecast from?

2 A. I don't know.

3 Q. Is it -- some people have what -- apps on their phones? Some

4 people --

5 A. Yeah. Sure.

6 Q. -- get it from a weather service, or --

7 A. Right.

8 Q. Okay. Current-wise, so this is a -- let's look at this.

9 This is the Army Corps chart. Looking north, if you didn't have

10 the barge which span do you usually take?

11 A. That one right there where your finger is at.

12 Q. The middle one?

13 A. No, sir. The one --

14 Q. The one next to the turn span.

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. Where is the current -- I mean, which way is the best

17 way to go current-wise?

18 A. Northbound?

19 Q. Either way. It doesn't --

20 A. I'd say the same span either way.

21 Q. The same span has got the least amount of current?

22 A. Correct. No, that's just how it -- we take it. It's fine

23 either way.

24 Q. Okay. I know that some boats will go -- sometimes the

25 current -- some bridges the current is in the middle. Some places

1 the current is on the side. So I'm just curious about here, where
2 the high current is. It doesn't mean --

3 A. That's just how we're comfortable running that span.

4 Q. Okay. The river at this stage is far past cresting, or is it
5 dropping a little bit?

6 A. It's probably cresting. At the --

7 Q. You've seen it worse than that before, it --

8 A. No, sir.

9 Q. No. That's the highest you've ever seen it?

10 A. That's the highest I've ever seen it. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. So you guys -- you stopped, you said, to wait for the
12 bridge to open. Is that between -- below the highway bridge?

13 A. It was in between the bridges. Yes, sir.

14 Q. In between the bridges. Okay. The -- so, we were there
15 yesterday, and there was -- looking at the pedestal, there was
16 quite an eddy on the other side. And does that -- well, this is
17 your first time, I understand, going through there. But does that
18 eddy tend to suck people into it, or -- once you get through it?

19 A. Once we go through it, it's -- we just keep on shooting. It
20 don't pull us --

21 Q. It doesn't -- you don't expect the bow to pull over --

22 A. Right.

23 Q. -- to port at all? Okay. The company, do they have a safety
24 management system or --

25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. How -- can you describe that for me? Is it a book on the
2 shelf? Or is it online or --

3 A. Yeah, it's in a binder. It's got all of our RCPs in it.

4 Q. Okay. So RCP you --

5 MR. THACKSON: Responsible carrier program is referred to as
6 RCP.

7 MR. MUISE: From the AWO. Right. So that's something you
8 subscribe to and the company adopts it as their --

9 MR. THACKSON: Yeah. Yeah. It's a industry prescribed
10 program. You can be a member of the responsible carrier program.

11 MR. MUISE: Uh-huh.

12 MR. THACKSON: And to gain membership, you have to meet
13 criteria -- qualifications. You are audited to make sure that
14 you've complied with those qualifications and criteria. And
15 Terral is a member of the program, has been for years. And has a
16 manual called the responsible carrier program manual. I think
17 that's what --

18 MR. O'REAR: Right.

19 MR. THACKSON: -- Skip referred to. We had the manual.
20 We'll make it available for you to inspect.

21 MR. MUISE: Okay.

22 MR. THACKSON: But that's -- you were sort of asking about
23 that.

24 MR. MUISE: Sure. Yeah. That's fine.

25 MR. THACKSON: I hope my explanation is okay.

1 MR. MUISE: Perfect.

2 MR. THACKSON: You can ask the captain anything you want.

3 MR. MUISE: No, absolutely. I didn't -- I'm not familiar
4 with --

5 MR. THACKSON: Yeah.

6 MR. MUISE: -- every company is a little bit different.

7 MR. THACKSON: I'm --

8 MR. MUISE: So --

9 MR. THACKSON: -- yeah, I'm not -- you know, I'm trying to be
10 helpful.

11 MR. MUISE: No, please. Yeah. Absolutely.

12 MR. THACKSON: I just --

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Sure.

14 MR. MUISE: Is there -- in there, is there a fatigue
15 management policies or procedures?

16 MR. THACKSON: There's all kinds of policies and procedures.
17 The manual is --

18 MR. MUISE: That's a good binder.

19 MR. THACKSON: It's in a binder. It's 3 inches plus thick.

20 MR. MUISE: Is there high water procedures in there too?

21 MR. THACKSON: I'm not familiar. That -- as I say, the
22 manual is --

23 MR. MUISE: Okay.

24 MR. THACKSON: It's hundreds of pages. I'm not aware of a
25 specific high water policy in the manual.

1 MR. MUISE: Okay.

2 MR. THACKSON: It could be there. If it is, I'm not aware of
3 it.

4 MR. MUISE: Is there a way for the crews or the captains to
5 get feedback to the company to make -- to improve it? I mean,
6 anything from a typo to something that needs to be updated. Is
7 there a feedback loop available for these guys to make changes to
8 that manual?

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: The guys who are actually on the
10 river, you're saying.

11 MR. MUISE: Yes.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's a good question.

13 MR. THACKSON: I, I --

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's a question for the safety
15 personnel.

16 MR. THACKSON: Yeah.

17 MR. MUISE: Right.

18 MR. THACKSON: If the captain knows, he can certainly answer
19 it. If he doesn't, then we'll provide you somebody that does
20 know. How about that?

21 MR. MUISE: That's fair enough.

22 MR. THACKSON: I don't know the answer to your question. I
23 don't want to say something that's not correct.

24 MR. MUISE: Sure. Okay.

25 MR. THACKSON: Do you know the answer to his question?

1 MR. O'REAR: Ask Josh.

2 MR. THACKSON: Huh?

3 MR. O'REAR: Get with Josh.

4 MR. MUISE: Oh, it's Josh. We'll talk to him.

5 MR. THACKSON: Josh Easterling would be a man that could
6 provide that to you.

7 MR. MUISE: Okay.

8 MR. THACKSON: And he's here, and he's available.

9 MR. MUISE: Yes.

10 MR. THACKSON: Okay.

11 MR. MUISE: Yes. Okay.

12 BY MR. MUISE:

13 Q. Other bridges, are they -- they're all different as far as
14 when you call them. Right? Some of them are -- they have 3 hours
15 --

16 A. It's --

17 Q. -- one hour --

18 A. It depends on if they have notices on them.

19 Q. What is this one?

20 A. We just give them a good heads up.

21 Q. Okay. And that's about mile 37?

22 A. That's about where we call. Give them enough time to get it
23 up for us.

24 Q. When did you come up to the bridge?

25 A. Come up to the bridge itself?

1 Q. Yeah. You -- this night. This specific night.

2 MR. THACKSON: You talking about the pilothouse -- coming up
3 to the pilothouse?

4 MR. MUISE: Yes. I'm sorry. The -- I'm a big ship guy.
5 Sorry.

6 MR. O'REAR: Right. Right.

7 BY MR. MUISE:

8 Q. When did you come up to the pilothouse, then?

9 A. Yeah, it was right before 11:00. Because I'm always early.

10 Q. Okay. And you were at -- that was before the 37 or 39 bend.

11 A. Yeah, it was right there at that. Yes, sir.

12 Q. And they answered right away when you called?

13 A. Yes, sir.

14 MR. MUISE: Okay. That's all I had.

15 LT [REDACTED] You good?

16 MR. MUISE: Oh, actually, I'm sorry.

17 LT [REDACTED] Yeah.

18 BY MR. MUISE:

19 Q. This -- so, this is your first time through this turn span.

20 Is he coaching you on what to look -- how to line up, and --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. So can you walk me through that? What does he tell you to
23 look for?

24 A. He's just telling me the lines. The set is going to set this
25 way, so kind of hold close to this side.

1 Q. Oh, I'm sorry. I got locked out. So the set is coming from
2 which way? From --

3 A. The set is coming from the west to the east.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. The -- how it regular sets. It sets that way. The -- and
6 that's what was anticipating on in the beginning. You know, we
7 didn't know it was having that eddy coming up, and --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- shooting back across. We didn't know that. That's what
10 set us over there on top of the bridge itself.

11 Q. Okay. So you're anticipating getting set to the east. Did I
12 get that right?

13 A. Correct.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Yeah. It pulls that way, at a regular --

16 MR. THACKSON: Could -- for clarification, and not to impede
17 you in your --

18 MR. MUISE: No, please.

19 MR. THACKSON: -- answering --

20 MR. MUISE: Please.

21 MR. THACKSON: -- guys like the skipper I think refer to the
22 set as either a port set -- set to port or set to starboard.

23 MR. MUISE: Okay. Fair enough.

24 MR. THACKSON: Not the east or west, because sometimes you're
25 going north, sometimes you're going south.

1 MR. MUISE: Right.

2 MR. THACKSON: So --

3 MR. MUISE: Right, right, right.

4 MR. THACKSON: -- so, if you'd phrase your questions about
5 sets being -- the port set, starboard set, something like that,
6 would probably be more helpful.

7 MR. MUISE: Thank you. Okay.

8 MR. THACKSON: Okay.

9 MR. MUISE: So -- and just so I understand right, you're
10 anticipating in the set to the left.

11 MR. O'REAR: To my port side, correct.

12 MR. MUISE: To the port. To the port.

13 MR. THACKSON: Port set.

14 MR. MUISE: Okay. So you're lining up a little bit closer to
15 that -- to the fixed span.

16 MR. O'REAR: Correct.

17 MR. MUISE: But in this case, you've got something a little
18 bit to the right.

19 MR. THACKSON: Starboard set.

20 BY MR. MUISE:

21 Q. Starboard set. Okay. And the tow boat hit -- the barge hit
22 first.

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. On its starboard side. And then the boat hit on the port
25 side on the turn span, the pedestal.

1 A. Correct.

2 MR. MUISE: Okay. I think I got it now. Thank you. Thank
3 you, Captain. That's all I have.

4 LT [REDACTED] Okay. Union Pacific, do you have any
5 questions for relief captain?

6 MS. KEELER: We do. I just have a couple questions.

7 BY MS. KEELER:

8 Q. Captain, my name is Karen Keeler, and I'm an attorney with
9 Union Pacific. And I was just wondering, did you make the call to
10 Union Pacific to request the opening of the bridge, or did
11 somebody else make that call?

12 A. The captain of the vessel did.

13 Q. Did you hear the call at all?

14 A. I did.

15 Q. He was on it.

16 A. Yes, ma'am.

17 Q. Can you recall who he spoke with?

18 A. Repeat that, ma'am.

19 Q. Do you recall who he spoke with, called about the opening?

20 A. I -- they don't provide the name. We just call them vessel
21 traffic system. And they answer us back, and we tell them what we
22 need. And they'll tell us that they'll have to call their
23 dispatch to, I guess, check for train traffic or all that stuff,
24 before they can get back with us.

25 Q. Okay. How was that call made to Union Pacific? Was it by

1 radio, by cell phone, by boat log?

2 A. It was by vessel traffic system, by radio.

3 Q. And did you receive confirmation that the bridge was open?

4 A. After two calls. After we checked back in to him twice.

5 Q. Okay. Do you recall when the first call was made, what time?

6 A. 11:20, 11:15. It was right when I got up there. I was up
7 there for a few minutes. So right after 11:00 made our first
8 contact call with them.

9 Q. Okay. And then how long was -- after that was the second
10 call?

11 A. It was about 10, 15 minutes when we called back.

12 Q. And that's when you received confirmation that the bridge was
13 open?

14 A. No, ma'am. He said still stand by.

15 Q. Okay. And when did you finally receive confirmation that the
16 bridge was open?

17 A. When he called us back and said the span is open, you can
18 proceed.

19 Q. Okay. Do you recall that -- what time that was?

20 A. 11:45.

21 Q. All right. Thank you.

22 A. Yes, ma'am.

23 MS. KEELER: I don't have anything further.

24 LT [REDACTED] Sounds good. Frank?

25 BY MR. THACKSON:

1 Q. After you passed -- well, let me ask the question this way.
2 Were you continuously in the *Edna Gattle's* pilothouse -- from the
3 time the first call was made to the bridge asking that the bridge
4 open through the time of the allision, were you continuously in
5 the pilothouse?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. All right. After you passed the highway bridge, but before
8 you were told by the bridge operator that the channel span was
9 open -- you know the time frame I'm referring?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. All right. What was the -- what were the -- what was the
12 *Edna Gattle* and the barge in her tow doing? Describe her
13 maneuvers after she passed the highway bridge, but before the
14 bridge span was open.

15 A. We was in reverse holding it up.

16 Q. Okay. By reverse, you are referring to what?

17 A. Backing up.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Holding -- trying to hold it still, steady.

20 Q. Okay. Now, on the *Edna* what type of rudders is the *Edna*
21 equipped with?

22 A. Steering and flanking.

23 Q. Okay. Now, what's the difference between the flanking
24 rudders and the steering rudders?

25 A. The steering is for going ahead. And the flanking is for

1 backing up -- for reversing.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Coming astern.

4 Q. How does a pilot like yourself and Junior -- how do you
5 control a vessel when you're backing up?

6 A. Which way you want it to go the stern, you point the sticks
7 that direction.

8 Q. Do you have different sticks in the pilothouse that control
9 the flanking rudders versus the steering rudders?

10 A. Yes. We do.

11 Q. Okay.

12 LT [REDACTED] Frank, where are you trying to get with that?

13 MR. THACKSON: I'm sorry?

14 LT [REDACTED] How -- what are you trying to get with all
15 this --

16 MR. THACKSON: I'm going to explain the maneuvers --

17 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

18 MR. THACKSON: -- that the vessel employed as she undertook
19 to travel -- to pass through the channel span.

20 LT [REDACTED] Uh-huh.

21 MR. THACKSON: I thought you'd be interested in that.

22 LT [REDACTED] Okay.

23 MR. MUISE: Yes. So --

24 MR. THACKSON: Huh?

25 MR. MUISE: Please. Yeah. I am, so --

1 MR. THACKSON: Okay. And I'll do it in --

2 LT [REDACTED] Yeah, and that's --

3 MR. THACKSON: -- and I'll do it in a nonleading way.

4 LT [REDACTED] No, no. You're doing fine this time,
5 actually.

6 MR. THACKSON: Okay. Well, good.

7 LT [REDACTED] I was just trying to get -- understand what
8 you're trying to get to.

9 MR. THACKSON: Okay.

10 LT [REDACTED] Because I know -- if that's where you're
11 trying to explain, that's fine. We'll continue with that.

12 MR. THACKSON: That's what --

13 LT [REDACTED] But if we're --

14 MR. THACKSON: -- that's what I'm trying to explain.

15 LT [REDACTED] -- if you're trying to just -- yeah. Okay.
16 That's -- yeah, keep going.

17 BY MR. THACKSON:

18 Q. Okay. So as you are below the highway bridge you're waiting
19 on the Krotz Springs bridge to open its channels. It's a swing
20 span. What are your throttle settings? Are they ahead or are
21 they astern?

22 A. They are astern.

23 Q. And why is that?

24 A. Because we were waiting on the bridge to open.

25 Q. Okay. Why was it necessary to -- for the position that you

1 were in, to come astern to wait for the bridge to open?

2 A. That's the only way to stop it to keep on -- from going
3 through the bridge.

4 Q. Okay. So when you got clearance from the bridge you say you
5 -- I think you said roughly at 11:45 that night. What maneuver
6 were you in at the time you got the radio clearance to go through
7 the channel span?

8 A. We was backing up.

9 Q. Okay. Now, after you got clearance to go through the bridge,
10 and while you were backing up, did you continue to back it up or
11 did you change your maneuver? And if so, what was your maneuver
12 change?

13 A. We had to flank it up and back over to get lined up on the
14 bridge.

15 Q. All right. Now, describe what you mean by flanking it over
16 to get lined up to go on the bridge.

17 A. You're still in reverse. You got the sticks going back to
18 your port side. And you got the current coming down, so you're
19 trying to keep it like this to line up.

20 Q. All right.

21 A. Then you're changing your maneuver.

22 Q. Okay. So so, you changed your maneuver from what to what?

23 A. From reverse to clutch, then from clutch to forward.

24 Q. Now, how did you go about lining up? How did you go about
25 lining up the barge and the vessel to go through the channel span

1 -- the swing span, once you had been told it's open.

2 A. Like I said, we was -- had to back up to get lined up. When
3 we come ahead, we started to drive on it to get our set to line
4 up, go through the bridge.

5 Q. All right. Now, what -- how did it look? Once you got lined
6 up, and before you came ahead, what did the configuration of the
7 barge and the boat look to you like in terms of going through the
8 bridge?

9 A. It was going straight in.

10 Q. Going straight for the bridge.

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay. All right. Now, so then you went from -- you went
13 from astern throttle setting to an ahead throttle setting.

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay. Now, what would be the time lapse from going from
16 astern, while you were lining up, to ahead to approach and pass
17 through the bridge?

18 A. Seven, 8 seconds.

19 Q. All right. Now, once you started ahead you put your throttle
20 settings in an ahead configuration. And which rudders then
21 control the maneuverability of the boat?

22 A. The steering rudders.

23 Q. And now, the flanking rudders are located where?

24 A. On top.

25 Q. Are you just talking about the sticks?

1 A. Correct.

2 Q. I'm talking about the rudders themselves. The rudders
3 themselves are located -- are they located forward or after the
4 wheels?

5 A. They are after.

6 Q. This -- the flanking rudders are located where?

7 A. On the front of the boat.

8 Q. The flanking rudders are located -- are they located forward
9 of the wheels or after the wheels? Flanking rudders.

10 A. Yeah. They're behind it.

11 Q. All right. The steering rudders are located where?

12 A. The opposite direction.

13 Q. All right. Now -- okay. So you've gone from astern to
14 ahead. Right?

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. And you're lined up to run the bridge. Right?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. Now, how was the speed of your boat at that time, when you
19 started ahead? How was the speed of your boat? How did the speed
20 of your boat compare to the current speed.

21 A. You had to catch up with it.

22 Q. By that you mean what?

23 A. You had to come ahead to outrun the current speed.

24 Q. Well, when you first came ahead was your speed the same as or
25 less than current speed.

1 A. Less than current speed.

2 Q. And you came ahead for what purpose, in terms of current
3 speed?

4 A. To get -- to beat the current speed, to have momentum.

5 Q. Why did you have to beat the current speed to have momentum?

6 A. So you can have steer on it.

7 Q. Okay. What effects on maneuverability of a boat like you
8 were on, what effect is it if the boat is trying to proceed in
9 current, where you have sets -- you told us generally about the
10 sets there -- when your boat is below current speed?

11 A. It's going to set you. It's going to set you worse, because
12 you're not going current speed yet.

13 Q. So why do you try to go ahead to achieve current speed?

14 A. So you can have more, more mobility of what you're going
15 through.

16 Q. To maneuver through the sets --

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. -- do you need current speed or better to be able to do that?

19 A. To better.

20 Q. To -- what kind of speed do you need to achieve to overcome
21 the effects of these sets?

22 A. More than current speed, for sure.

23 Q. Current speed or better.

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. And if you can't get current speed or better, what effects do

1 the sets have on your maneuverability?

2 A. You don't have a lot of control over it.

3 Q. So what effect -- in this case, when you had to come ahead to
4 try to go through the bridge, what effect did the fact that you
5 were not able to achieve current speed have on your
6 maneuverability?

7 A. I didn't have enough time.

8 Q. Didn't have enough time? What do you mean you didn't have
9 enough time?

10 A. To get from where I was, because I was already through the --
11 I had to stop. Then I had to back up. Then come ahead to make
12 momentum to beat current speed.

13 Q. But you didn't even -- you were not able to achieve current
14 speed.

15 A. Correct.

16 Q. Okay. And so what happened?

17 A. The set got us. The set pushed us over.

18 Q. All right. Hypothetically, had you not had to stop and wait
19 on the bridge to open -- and not had to achieve a course and speed
20 below current speed -- hypothetically, how would the
21 maneuverability of the bridge have been?

22 A. It would have -- it wouldn't have had no contact with it. It
23 was more than -- had more than over current speed, had control --
24 total control over it, we could have beat the set. We could have
25 maneuvered down through without any problems.

1 Q. So what effect did the fact that the bridge was not open have
2 on the maneuverability of your boat and therefore this allision?

3 LT [REDACTED] Well, I think that's a -- you -- no. Let's
4 not go over that.

5 MR. THACKSON: This is an experienced river pilot.

6 LT [REDACTED] Right. I understand. I understand how --
7 where you're trying to go.

8 MR. THACKSON: I, I -- well --

9 LT [REDACTED] But then I think you start getting into too
10 much what he is saying, then now you're talking about like the
11 effects of hitting the bridge. And then your questions are
12 pushing a little too much for him to answer what you want.

13 MR. THACKSON: Well --

14 LT [REDACTED] So I understand what you're saying. I
15 understand. And then I gave you enough time to ask him a lot of
16 questions. We all understand now the current and then the time
17 when he came in he did not have a lot of control with the vessel
18 due to the time lapse between the switch on the flanking to the
19 steering rudder. Okay. And then -- and let's move on.

20 MR. THACKSON: Sir --

21 LT [REDACTED] Do you have any last question for him?

22 MR. THACKSON: Well, let me respond to what you just said.

23 LT [REDACTED] Of course.

24 MR. THACKSON: Don't you think it's critical to your
25 investigation to know what caused the collision? And this man was

1 there, and he's a witness. He's an experienced pilot. And he saw
2 what caused the collision.

3 LT [REDACTED] What's --

4 MR. THACKSON: And that's what I'm asking him.

5 LT [REDACTED] -- what's going to, what's going to come to my
6 analysis after I've talked to everybody and I get all my
7 evidences, then I will make the analysis on it.

8 MR. THACKSON: I understand.

9 LT [REDACTED] And then I -- I understand your point and your
10 part on --

11 MR. THACKSON: Got it. Okay. All right.

12 LT [REDACTED] Yeah. You made your point clear. Everybody
13 understood. I got it. Okay.

14 MR. THACKSON: Thank you.

15 LT [REDACTED] So you're welcome.

16 So anybody have any questions? You have no other questions?
17 All right. Okay. All right. I think that's it.

18 MR. O'REAR: That's it?

19 LT [REDACTED] That's it for now. So it's 11:16, May 1st,
20 2019. This concludes the interview with Mr. Mickey --

21 MR. O'REAR: Yes.

22 LT [REDACTED] -- O'Rear.

23 MR. O'REAR: Correct.

24 LT [REDACTED] All right.

25 (Whereupon, at 11:16 a.m. the interview was concluded.)

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
SPRING, LOUISIANA, ON THE
ATCHAFALAYA RIVER, APRIL 24, 2019
Interview of Mickey O'Rear

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.


Jane W. Gilliam
Transcriber