

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

\* \* \* \* \*

Investigation of: \*

\*

TOWING VESSEL *KEVIN MICHAEL* \*

CONTACT WITH MELVIN PRICE \* Accident No.: DCA21FM021

LOCKS AND DAM IN ALTON, \*

ILLINOIS, ON MARCH 19, 2021 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: JACKIE HENSHAW, Pilot

ITV *Kevin Michael*

Via telephone

Wednesday,

April 7, 2021

**Key to mark up.** NTSB IIC reviewed the audio to fill in  
missing information where (indiscernible) was found.

~~(indiscernible)~~ - IIC added information.

XXXX - Text added by IIC.

[xxxx?] - Text added by IIC, but unsure of what was said.

APPEARANCES:

MICHAEL KARR, Investigator  
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO [REDACTED]  
U.S. [REDACTED] t [REDACTED]

TONY ICE, President of Operations  
Hamm's Frontier Marine, LLC

JIM MONDL, Attorney  
Mondl Law Firm  
(On behalf of Mr. Henshaw)

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I N T E R V I E W

(11:05 a.m.)

CWO [REDACTED] -- [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard sector upper Mississippi River. The date is April 7th. It is approximately 11:05 a.m. Central Standard Time. And the purpose of this interview is to gather facts surrounding the allision between the inspected towing vessel *Kevin Michael* and Mel Price Lock and Dam on 19 March. I'll ask each participant to introduce themselves and identify their role in this interview, starting with the NTSB.

MR. KARR: I'm Michael Karr with the National Transportation Safety Board, and I'm the investigator in charge for the NTSB efforts into investigating this accident.

CWO [REDACTED] Mondl Law Firm?

MR. MONDL: Jim Mondl; I represent Hamm's Frontier Marine and also Jackie Henshaw.

CWO [REDACTED] Okay. And the pilot of the ITV *Kevin Michael*?

MR. HENSHAW: Jackie Henshaw, I was the pilot on watch.

CWO [REDACTED] Okay. And then Mr. Henshaw, just to verify, can you tell me your date of birth?

MR. HENSHAW: February 24, 1957.

CWO [REDACTED] Thank you, sir. And then the representative from Hamm's Towing?

MR. ICE: Tony Ice, president of operations, Hamm's Frontier Marine, LLC.

CWO [REDACTED] Okay. And then just to reconfirm, Mr. Henshaw,

1 we do have your consent to record this interview?

2 MR. HENSHAW: Yes, we do.

3 CWO [REDACTED] All right, thank you.

4 All right. We'll go ahead and get started with the  
5 questions, starting with Mike Karr.

6 INTERVIEW OF JACKIE HENSHAW

7 BY MR. KARR:

8 Q. Hello, Mr. Henshaw. So I'm going to start out with some --

9 A. Good morning.

10 Q. -- background information about your experience. So tell me,  
11 you know, briefly, when you started working on boats, when you  
12 became a captain of towing vessels and, you know, how long you  
13 been working for the company, things like that.

14 A. I started my career in March 1977. I went in the wheelhouse  
15 around November of '87; been a pilot ever since. And I been with  
16 Hamm's Marine now for roughly a month.

17 Q. And where were you before Hamm's Marine?

18 A. I was ~~(indiscernible)~~ tripping mostly for Inland Barge Line  
19 and prior to that I worked for Excel Towing out of Paducah,  
20 Kentucky, for two-and-a-half years. And before that I worked for  
21 Inland again for about eight years.

22 Q. So what brought you to Hamm's Marine?

23 A. I know the guy that runs it there. We're just old friends  
24 from way back and I decided to go work for him, just you know,  
25 that was the biggest reason was the owner.

1 Q. And how -- so on this -- with regard to the date of the  
2 accident, when did you report to the ship to start serving your  
3 watch or your rotation?

4 A. On the 17th.

5 Q. Had you ever -- and how long was your rotation going to be?

6 A. It was going to be 30 days.

7 Q. And then how many days would you have off?

8 A. I was in my first 30 days so I hadn't been off yet until  
9 recently -- I come home day before yesterday.

10 Q. All right. And so what is your rotation? It's 30 days on  
11 and then how many days off?

12 A. It's usually 30 days on, 30 days off.

13 Q. All right. And so March 17th was the first time you -- was  
14 that your first day of work for Hamm's Towing?

15 A. Yes, it was.

16 Q. All right. Did you have any orientation ahead of time?

17 A. I filled out -- you know -- yeah, we had an orientation. You  
18 fill out orientation and everything when you get on the boat. So  
19 we had that and, you know, we talked before about policies,  
20 procedures and, you know, work schedules and such as that.

21 Q. And what type of license do you hold?

22 A. It's a Master, Western Rivers.

23 Q. All right. And I'll ask you questions about the voyage. So  
24 when did you -- the barges that you were carrying, or that you  
25 were pushing, on the day of the accident, do you know where they

1 came from and where they were going to?

2 A. When I got on, they had part of it. Best of my recollection,  
3 we filled out in Hennepin; was going from Hennepin to St. Louis  
4 and Herculaneum and then Cairo.

5 Q. So the final destination was Cairo?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. All right. And you would have dropped off all those barges  
8 in Cairo or dropped off some along the way?

9 A. I would drop off some along the way.

10 Q. All right. So when did you -- on the date of the accident,  
11 when did you -- you know, I'm going to get you -- when did you  
12 come up to the bridge to begin your watch or into the wheelhouse  
13 to begin your watch?

14 A. It was approximately 11:00.

15 Q. That seems a little early. Was there any particular reason  
16 why you were up there at 11:00?

17 A. Well, we change at 11 and 5.

18 Q. Ah, okay. And describe what -- tell me who you relieved and  
19 what you guys talked about.

20 A. I relieved Captain Tom and we talked about the river  
21 conditions; discussed the stage in St. Louis, you know, oncoming  
22 traffic, which was meeting at the time. You know, the wind was a  
23 factor; we discussed that. And then we discussed where we was  
24 going after we left the Lock. We had to stop and take on fuel --  
25 or not take on fuel; take on groceries. (Indiscernible) mechanic

1 (indiscernible) do some minor work. Then we was going on down --  
2 I believe the next stop would have been St. Louis, and pretty much  
3 discussed everything for the next six hours.

4 Q. If you would, just begin to tell me the story of how  
5 everything went. You know, how you used -- how you used the  
6 rudders, how you used the engines to address the voyage. And if  
7 you would, start above the Alton Bridge to tell me how the  
8 currents were, the winds, how the tow was behaving. You know,  
9 just give me a -- give me a good description.

10 A. Well, was probably running ~~(indiscernible)~~ a quarter to a  
11 third ahead, going down through the bridges and the wind was  
12 blowing. Well, it was on the starboard. I mean, on the port.  
13 You know, and according to our wind gauges, you know, gusts 15 to  
14 20 and sometimes go up to 30 or more. You know, and the current  
15 was definitely swift. And then all the rollers open as at the  
16 gates, you know, ~~(indiscernible)~~ at the lock. So I mean, it was  
17 pretty strong current and pretty good wind. And we just proceeded  
18 on down. You know, it was what I considered normal and  
19 ~~(indiscernible)~~ towing above the lock, that's when the  
20 ~~(indiscernible)~~ outdraft draft really got strong and started  
21 ~~(indiscernible)~~ pinning us against the lock wall. And that's  
22 pretty much how it happened.

23 Q. Well, can you tell me that again? I heard something in the  
24 background. So describe the approach where you said the outflow  
25 got you or whatever that was.



- 1 A. You want me to start over?
- 2 Q. I missed that last --
- 3 A. (~~Indiscernible~~) We was ... --
- 4 Q. I missed the last two sentences.
- 5 A. Oh, when I got down there roughly approximately 1,000 feet
- 6 above the end of the long wall, that's when the outdraft really
- 7 got strong and that's when it started taking me over. And like I
- 8 said, with the wind and everything, it just took me over a lot
- 9 faster than I anticipated. And that's when we landed on the wall
- 10 sideways.
- 11 Q. And what is --
- 12 A. That's -- you know, that's -- pardon me?
- 13 Q. Can you describe that outdraft for me, that you noticed?
- 14 A. Well, it was pulling me to the starboard. The side the long
- 15 wall was on --
- 16 Q. Yeah.
- 17 A. -- it was setting me hard in that direction. And you know,
- 18 you got to get down inside of the wall, you know, before you let
- 19 it get you over there. And it got me over there before I got
- 20 completely down inside of the wall.
- 21 Q. And do you know what that's --
- 22 A. The long wall and the lock.
- 23 Q. Do you know what that outflow is caused by?
- 24 A. That's caused by the dam. I mean, the flow of the dam and
- 25 the wall -- the lock wall sets above water. The water runs

1 underneath. So, I mean, all the current runs crossways  
2 (~~indiscernible~~) into there, going into the dam. And they had all  
3 the gates open. I mean, it had a strong pull. But the water runs  
4 under the wall.

5 Q. When you say under the wall, you mean at the -- are you  
6 referring to the dam or the --

7 A. I'm talking about the wall doesn't go all the way down to the  
8 bottom of the river.

9 Q. Oh.

10 A. So you got the current that goes under the wall.

11 Q. The lock wall that you --

12 A. I mean, if you drained all the water out, that wall is not  
13 all the way down to the bottom of the river.

14 Q. Oh.

15 A. It sets on pillars, you know, in the water. But there's  
16 still -- I wouldn't guess how many feet, you know, it sets above  
17 the bottom of the river, but I mean, and that's where you get your  
18 draw.

19 Q. Any idea how -- you know, do you have any idea how fast that  
20 current was that day?

21 A. I'm guessing the river current was somewhere between 8 and  
22 10, maybe less. I don't know, it seemed about 8 or 10 that day.  
23 Like I said, when you get down there, it goes crossways.

24 Q. And that's --

25 A. That's the only direction (~~indiscernible~~) it's got ... --

1 Q. And is that 8 to 10 miles an hour?

2 A. Do what?

3 Q. Is that 8 to 10 miles an hour?

4 A. I would -- that's what I'd estimate it at. I mean, it may  
5 not have been that much. But it was pretty strong. I mean, it's  
6 hard to tell. I mean, just watching the drift going down how fast  
7 it was going --

8 (Simultaneous speaking.)

9 Q. (Indiscernible) --

10 A. -- (indiscernible) And my speed, which was you know --

11 Q. And that's my question is what --

12 A. (Indiscernible) I was doing ...

13 Q. How, how -- give me an idea how you estimated that.

14 A. Well, I was doing about 4.3 and it was passing me pretty  
15 good. You know, I was guessing it was close to twice as fast I  
16 was going is what I based that on.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. You watch the drift and see how fast the drift will tell you  
19 -- you know, how fast it's going and which way it's going, you  
20 know. When we got drifts in the river, we always watch the drift  
21 and see what it does because it's going to go with the flow.

22 Q. And when you refer to drift, which way is that current  
23 flowing?

24 A. It's flowing downstream and then, you know, toward the dam.

25 Q. All right. Now, if the current was going faster than you

1 were, how were -- describe how you were using your engines if the  
2 current was going faster than you were. I would have thought that  
3 you would have been going at least as fast as --

4 A. I was probably right at -- I was, you know, probably about a  
5 third ahead, something like that, I would guess.

6 (~~Indiscernible~~) You know, it was pushing [on his?] [hard enough?]  
7 where ~~whether~~ you could steer (~~indiscernible~~) you know, whatever  
8 steerageway would be. There's a ... We was doing about 4.3.

9 Q. All right. But if you're going ahead in the current, how can  
10 the current be going faster than you are?

11 A. Well, you're just not pushing as fast as the current. I  
12 mean, you let off of it, that slows down. I mean, you just  
13 basically slow your boat down, and it slows down, you know.  
14 Current will still outrun you. I mean, it ain't going to carry a  
15 tow, you know, as fast (~~indiscernible~~) [as a piece of drift?].

16 Q. All right. So any trouble coming into the Alton Bridge?

17 A. None at all, no.

18 Q. Did you anticipate any trouble coming underneath the Alton  
19 Bridge?

20 A. Not really. I mean, I lined up like I always did, you know,  
21 went down to the middle.

22 Q. And how many times have you gone under the Alton Bridge and  
23 through the lock in question?

24 A. Over my career?

25 Q. Yeah.

- 1 A. Oh, lord, I don't know. Hundred maybe.
- 2 Q. Okay.
- 3 A. It's been a lot.
- 4 Q. That's -- exactly. So that's the answer I was looking for.
- 5 You know, whether it was 5, 50 or 100.
- 6 A. That's the --
- 7 Q. That's the answer I was looking for.
- 8 A. -- last 30 years.
- 9 Q. What, what are the hazards of entering and going through that
- 10 lock in Alton?
- 11 A. Well, it can be unpredictable. Sometimes it sets you along
- 12 faster than you think; sometimes it don't. I mean, it's -- you
- 13 know, it varies on the flow, you know, and the current, the river
- 14 stage, and just a whole lot of variances there, a lot of figures,
- 15 you know. In my opinion, what they need, if they put some cells
- 16 in, you know, in the upper end or something, you know, you could
- 17 drop down and (~~indiscernible~~) flank over to ...and then make sure
- 18 -- you know, approaching the lock instead of trying to drive down
- 19 in there and get stopped and get over to the wall. And then it
- 20 takes (~~indiscernible~~) [sweat out of it?]. That's kind of, in my
- 21 opinion, (~~indiscernible~~) a poor designed lock and a bad location
- 22 on top of that. But it's always been a treacherous lock in my
- 23 opinion.
- 24 Q. Yeah, what makes --
- 25 A. It's just, you know --

1 Q. What makes it a bad --

2 A. Pardon me?

3 Q. What makes it a bad location?

4 A. Well, (~~indiscernible~~) it's so narrow right there. I mean,  
5 you got all that water funnels down into that area right there and  
6 it's a narrow stretch of the river. I mean, the lock and all  
7 ain't really all that wide. I mean, it cuts off a whole lot of  
8 water and it just all funnels through. I mean, because it narrows  
9 down so quick right there, you know, and it funnels through the  
10 lock.

11 Q. So when you -- so describe -- hold up, pardon me one second,  
12 Mr. Henshaw. What -- ideally, how -- you know, I'm looking at --  
13 ideally, how would the tow that you were pushing that day have  
14 landed against the lock wall?

15 A. Well, because that's the direction that the current carries  
16 you (~~indiscernible~~) to, I mean ... It's got an actual draw there.  
17 It's naturally going to go that way.

18 Q. But how did you -- how did you intend to land against the  
19 lock wall?

20 A. I intended to have more of my tow down inside the lock, you  
21 know, before it caught me and sent me to the wall. You go down  
22 wide and, you know, you get her down in there. You know, got to  
23 punch it down in there pretty good, but at the same time, you got  
24 to be able to stop when you get down in there. You know, it's all  
25 about timing it out where you can get down in there and get set to

1 the wall. All work together to set you on the wall flat, you  
2 know, the whole tow.

3 Q. Is it as -- is it -- I'm going to ask a question thinking  
4 that there's a simple answer -- with regard to the bullnose, if --  
5 what part of your tow would be lined up with the bullnose that you  
6 would want to --

7 A. You're talking about the little nose of the long wall?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. None of it. You wouldn't want none of it lined up with it.  
10 You'd want to be, you know, a good 200 feet or more, you know,  
11 wide off of it, you know, pointing about 800 feet down the wall.  
12 You wouldn't want to aim at the bullnose.

13 Q. All right. So when you come against the wall, you would like  
14 the stern of the tug to be -- or the towing vessel to be like 200  
15 feet from the bullnose?

16 A. Yeah, you want to land the stern of your tow -- there's  
17 lights on the wall there. You usually try to land the head of  
18 your tow about the second light down. There's three lights on the  
19 wall, and that's what we use for marks is the second light down.  
20 That'll put you roughly 1,000 feet down on the wall, you know,  
21 (~~indiscernible~~) have your tow down inside the wall of the bullnose  
22 completely.

23 Q. Yeah, are those lights specifically -- are those lights  
24 installed specifically to help you like that?

25 A. No, it's just something we've used over the years. Just, you

1 know, when it started out, maybe they decided that's, you know,  
2 where it worked best and that's what everybody's used. You know,  
3 it's no specific mark. It's just kind of something we aim for as  
4 a reference.

5 Q. All right. Now, I'm going to ask you questions about the  
6 winds and the currents. So when did -- or how did the winds and  
7 the currents affect your tow and what did you try to do to  
8 compensate for that?

9 A. Well, I tried to, like I said, stay out wide, you know,  
10 because like I said, (~~indiscernible~~) because you had the empties  
11 on the head, which the way it was going to push (~~indiscernible~~)  
12 you know, but you know, then you had the draft of the wall, but I  
13 mean, you know, you just got to kind of keep it pointed in the  
14 wind, I guess is what I'm trying to say.

15 Q. Were you successful in keeping the bow pointed in the wind?

16 A. Not at the end. I mean, it all caught me, between that and  
17 the draft catching the loads on the stern, and it sent me down in  
18 there, like I said, before I got the tow all the way down inside,  
19 is what basically happened. I went to the wall, you know, too  
20 early.

21 Q. All right. And help me understand what you just said about  
22 the draft catching the loads. Am I correct in assuming that -- or  
23 describing that because of those barges were lower in the water,  
24 the current was able to act on --

25 A. Catches them harder.



1 Q. Catches them harder, okay.

2 A. Yeah. Because like I said, the water runs under the wall.  
3 You get to a certain point, the water pretty much runs sideways,  
4 you know, because it's running across there and then going into  
5 the dam, you know, into the wall.

6 Q. And what did you try to do to keep from getting pushed over?

7 A. Well, I tried to ~~just slow~~ get as far down in there as I  
8 could, you know, and then break it around (indiscernible) you know  
9 where I did landed on the wall so hard, like I said, I didn't get  
10 down in there deep enough.

11 Q. So as you were approaching -- so you didn't get down there  
12 deep enough, which means that you were getting set to the -- you  
13 know, to the right descending bank faster than you anticipated or  
14 faster than you wanted to be?

15 A. That's -- yes, exactly.

16 Q. All right. And then, what kind of, what kind of rudder and  
17 engine controls were you using to try and beat that situation or  
18 to prevent that from happening?

19 A. I was still probably right about the same speed and, like I  
20 said, you know, I was steering away from the wall all I could, but  
21 when you do that, then it just slides your stern over that much  
22 farther. So we was pretty much just going straight down in there  
23 at the time.

24 Q. Straight down in there. So you're saying that if you --

25 A. (Indiscernible) until I got -- you know, saying I was getting

1 down on the wall, then I went to back it up.

2 Q. So as you were getting --

3 A. (~~Indiscernible~~) So I get it slowed down. I was probably back  
4 at full stern by then.

5 Q. And your -- I think I heard you say that your rudders would  
6 have been at mid-ship rather than port?

7 A. They probably would have been straight at that time.

8 Q. Straight at that time, okay. Was there -- from 11:00 until  
9 the accident, was there anybody on the bridge with you or in the  
10 wheelhouse with you?

11 A. We had our watch change and everything and the cap left,  
12 which we usually do, you know, because you don't want no  
13 distractions going down in there. So I was up there by myself,  
14 you know, at the last minute because, like I say, you don't really  
15 want nobody up there, no distractions, you know, when you get  
16 close to a lock or a bridge.

17 Q. And did you -- can you describe any conversations you had  
18 with the men that were on the barges at the head of the tow?

19 A. Yeah, they was keeping me posted, you know, where we was  
20 pointed and how wide we was and how fast we was coming in up to  
21 the point where we landed.

22 Q. Were they giving you good information?

23 A. Yes, they was.

24 Q. All right. And were they concerned with the approach? Did  
25 they --

1 A. Yeah, they was getting concerned. They knew we was coming in  
2 -- you know, we was coming in too early.

3 Q. Yeah, how did -- can you kind of describe the tone of their  
4 voices or the words they used that you believed that they --

5 A. They was just, you know, giving me distance and length and  
6 what have you, you know, and it was pretty much normal procedure.  
7 They was talking a little faster than usual because, like I say,  
8 it's happening pretty fast.

9 Q. And you estimated that -- you gave me an estimate of the wind  
10 speed and the gust. Can you describe -- can you tell me, you  
11 know, what you -- how you may have made that estimate or seen  
12 those figures?

13 A. We got a wind gauge. We got a wind gauge in the wheelhouse  
14 that's pretty accurate. It's fairly new.

15 Q. And those were the --

16 A. We got a real good wind gauge.

17 Q. And those were the --

18 A. I mean, it tells you the exact direction and -- but like I  
19 said, it was kind of bouncing around, 15 to 20, up to 30. I mean,  
20 it was waving pretty good that day. The wind was blowing pretty  
21 good. It was gusting up probably I'm going to estimate around 30,  
22 it looked like. You know, like I said, I didn't sit and stare at  
23 it, but I was looking at it pretty regular.

24 Q. Are there any -- do you know if -- do you know of any  
25 guidelines or rules, company policies, Coast Guard policies about,

1 you know, the wind with regard to when you should adjust your  
2 operations?

3 A. Yeah, you just (~~indiscernible~~) [actually do?]. I mean, you  
4 know, you got to keep it pointed in the wind. You can't, you  
5 know, (~~indiscernible~~) you just cannot run it like on a calm day.

6 Q. Were there --

7 A. I mean, you got to keep it pointed in the wind. Pardon me?

8 Q. Was there any kind of special concerns given to you other  
9 than your -- you and the captain talked about the conditions that  
10 day?

11 A. We was talking about the draft -- we knew there was going to  
12 be a hard draft to the wall. We discussed that and we discussed  
13 the wind. I mean, it was pretty common knowledge we was going to  
14 have a pretty good draft to the wall. I mean, once I got to the  
15 bridge, got a look at the lock and seen all the gates was out of  
16 the water, it was pretty obvious what we was looking at.

17 MR. KARR: All right. Well, Mr. Henshaw, thanks for  
18 answering my questions.

19 [REDACTED] I'll stop --

20 MR. HENSHAW: Thank you.

21 MR. KARR: -- I'll stop asking questions now. I might have  
22 some later on after I listen to you and Mr. Mondl.

23 CWO [REDACTED] All right. So with that being said, this is  
24 Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'll begin a few of my  
25 questions.

1 BY CWO [REDACTED]

2 Q. So Mr. Henshaw, when you, when you came on watch, you  
3 mentioned that you and the captain were talking about some of the  
4 river conditions. Can you explain how you came to discuss those  
5 and how you were made aware of the river conditions?

6 A. Well, that's pretty much wheelhouse protocol. I mean, you do  
7 that at watch change, you know. We refer to it as wheelhouse  
8 protocol and the procedure you go through, you know, for watch  
9 change.

10 Q. Okay. And do you --

11 A. We discuss weather, river conditions, drift, traffic, you  
12 know what I mean, anything pertaining to the next six hours of  
13 watch, you know, far as --

14 Q. Okay. And are you guys given any kind of alerts, messages,  
15 things like that to kind of warn you about some of these  
16 conditions?

17 A. Yeah, we get those, you know, like they'll email you mostly  
18 in the afternoons. (Indiscernible) Yeah - pretty much every day.

19 Q. Any radio traffic?

20 A. Yeah. I mean, everybody warns the next guy, you know, more  
21 or less, you know what I mean. You stay up on it. You know, like  
22 I say, everybody warns everybody what's ahead and how stuff acts.

23 (Indiscernible) [It's situational?], things to look out for,

24 (Indiscernible) [Be aware of the?] circumstances, you know.

25 Q. Do you recall any broadcast Notice to Mariners from the Coast

1 Guard?

2 A. Not prior to that time. Like I said, I just come on watch.

3 Q. Okay. All right. And when you started your trip, how many  
4 barges did you guys have in tow?

5 A. I'm trying to remember. I know they already had the six  
6 empties and I'm -- the best of my -- best I can remember -- I  
7 think we filled out (~~indiscernible~~) in Hennepin, I'm not sure.  
8 Because I don't remember stopping after we left Hennepin.

9 (~~Indiscernible~~) They kind of run together, so I believe we had  
10 nine loads and six empties, best of my knowledge.

11 Q. Okay. And the nine loads and the six empties, can you  
12 describe to me how those were arranged and any purpose in  
13 arranging them that way?

14 A. Well, they arranged them, you know, depending on where they  
15 drop and, you know, the best way to build the best tow is  
16 (~~indiscernible~~) [you have?] nine loads with rakes across the  
17 stern, and then on the end of those, you have a rake on each  
18 corner with a lock load in the middle there (~~indiscernible~~) of that  
19 and then we had the nine empties -- or six empties on the head.  
20 And those there was were (~~indiscernible~~) one rake, so there was a  
21 rake on the starboard corner and boxes in the center and on the  
22 port side.

23 Q. And is this typical? Is this arrangement with the empties  
24 and the loads, is this a typical towing -- is this a typical tow?

25 A. Well, we -- like I said, we had the box put on there so we

1 made sure we put it in the center, you know, on the head. Then  
2 with the empties, we had the one rake, so we put it on the  
3 starboard side (~~indiscernible~~) you know especially for Mel Price  
4 locks. You know, you got to rake large on the corner when you're  
5 locking so you don't square in. So you build it to whatever you  
6 need to get down the river. And that's what we did to get this  
7 one down the river, built it that way.

8 Q. Okay. I guess what I'm asking, is it typical -- like you  
9 have a great wealth of experience; is it -- have you commonly  
10 pushed empties and loads like this together?

11 A. Yeah, all the time.

12 Q. Okay. And can you describe the mechanism in which they're  
13 put together in the tow with wires and things like that, the highs  
14 and the lows?

15 A. Yeah. Is you talking about the high and low (~~indiscernible~~)?  
16 coupling? Q. Yes, sir.

17 A. Okay. We had -- it was fore and aft ~~four-and-a-half~~ you're  
18 aware of what that is ~~to~~ (~~indiscernible~~) I mean, (~~indiscernible~~)  
19 ~~four-and-a-halfs~~ fore and afts, and on the double ups on the  
20 outside, they had long ~~four-and-a-halfs~~ fore and afts leading down  
21 the center (~~indiscernible~~) [?] little less up and down lead to it.  
22 But they got scissor wires, you know, on both sides  
23 (~~indiscernible~~) [of there?]. We are talking, what is that, 12 sets  
24 of riggings, does that sound right? Pretty much the high/low  
25 couplings. Which these days, you know, these 14-foot barges, your

1 high/low couplings ain't as high and low as they used to be and  
2 depending on your empties (~~indiscernible~~) [unless they're?] real  
3 tall, but I'm guessing there was probably a six-foot difference  
4 between the loads and the start of the empties, somewhere in  
5 there.

6 Q. Okay. And is this a -- is this something -- does this change  
7 the way in which your deckhands would operate?

8 A. I'm not following you, what you're saying there.

9 Q. Meaning, so when you have highs and lows like this, are the  
10 deckhands more observant of the couplings and wires? Is there  
11 (~~indiscernible~~) a --

12 A. Yeah, I mean -- I mean, I'm not sure what you're asking. But  
13 yeah, I mean, it was built -- it was a good built tow, if that's  
14 the question.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. (~~Indiscernible~~) [?] I mean, it was -- I was surprised. You  
17 know, most of the time you have to tell them, but this guy knew  
18 what he was doing.

19 Q. Okay. So they were on top of checking all the wires, making  
20 sure everything was tight?

21 A. Oh, yes, sir. It was a good tight tow.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I mean, well built all the way out. Like I said, I was kind  
24 of surprised. I never worked with this guy before. Most of them  
25 you have to check and tell them. Which I always check, but this



1 guy here was on top of it. So I mean, we had a good tow.

2 Q. All right. So there was no -- you had no concerns with how  
3 that tow was, was being handled as you were operating the vessel?

4 A. Oh, no, not at all. Like I said, it was good tow.

5 Q. Okay. All right. And how far of a transit was it from --  
6 roughly from Hennepin to the lock?

7 A. Well, that's mile 207 roughly (~~indiscernible~~) [till, it?]  
8 depends on which end of the harbor you're at. So (~~indiscernible~~)  
9 207 miles, and then when you get out of Grafton, that's another  
10 18, lock is mile 200. So what are we talking, 227, 228 miles?

11 Q. Okay. And so, for that roughly 228 miles, had any changes  
12 been made to the tow?

13 A. No. I mean, other than just checking the water and keeping  
14 it tied.

15 CWO [REDACTED] All right. I don't have any other questions.  
16 Mr. Mondl, would you like to ask any questions?

17 MR. MONDL: I don't -- let me just take a look here. I don't  
18 think I have anything that I need to ask Mr. Henshaw, so I think  
19 you guys have done a nice job, covered everything, and I don't  
20 have anything to add or to ask to have him to add.

21 MR. KARR: All right. [REDACTED] I'll jump in. This is  
22 Mike Karr of the NTSB.

23 CWO [REDACTED] Go ahead, Mike.

24 BY MR. KARR:

25 Q. Mr. Henshaw, for my knowledge, why are empties in the front

1 of the tow and the loads behind?

2 A. Well, you'd have all that weight out on the head of the  
3 empties. I mean, you put your weight back toward the boat. I  
4 mean, you couldn't build a tow like that. I mean, it'd break in  
5 two before you got started. But put your weight out front -- you  
6 know, you always put your empties on top the loads.

7 Q. All right. And so explain that to me. I do not have a  
8 towboat captain's license, so explain to me how that --

9 A. Well, I mean, you wouldn't want to face up to -- you wouldn't  
10 want to face up to the empties, try to wire loads to the empties.  
11 I mean, you just have all that weight out there. There's no way  
12 you could ever -- I mean, it wouldn't handle. You got to put your  
13 weight back -- you start at your boat, you know, with your weight  
14 and work your way out.

15 Q. So the weight would make the tow sluggish? It would make it  
16 less responsive; is that correct?

17 A. Yeah, because it'd probably break in two first time you  
18 steered on it.

19 Q. Ah, okay. Say that again -- you'd probably break what?

20 A. It'd probably break in two at the coupling first time you  
21 steered on it, I mean with the loads on the empties.

22 Q. All right. Thanks for that explanation.

23 A. I mean, you always -- okay.

24 Q. All right. Next question I have for you is describe the  
25 approach to the lock when you thought the wind and current is bad

1 and I'm having trouble here.

2 A. Well, I was going down favoring (~~indiscernible~~) the Illinois  
3 side tried to keep enough speed up to get in there, but not -- the  
4 same time, to get down there and not be able to stop. And like I  
5 said, to the best of my knowledge, it was looking good to me until  
6 about 1,000 feet or so above the lock, and that's when she just  
7 really took off strong, you know. And like I said, by then, I was  
8 1,000 feet above the tow lane, above the wall, so there wasn't  
9 nothing (~~indiscernible~~) [but try to?] get as much down in there  
10 and try to slow her down as much as you could as far as the swing,  
11 but I mean, after that, it's pretty much up to the current. You  
12 know, all you could do is keep it pointed at the wind and try to  
13 get some of the speed out of it.

14 Q. And at that point, you know, 1,000 feet from the lock, did  
15 you -- do you recall making any comments to the guys that were at  
16 the head of the tow, telling them about whether --

17 A. Oh, yeah, I told them watch it was coming -- I knew it was  
18 coming. I warned them, watch it, because she was coming in faster  
19 than I wanted her to, you know, than normal.

20 Q. And when did you first make that call? Just before the  
21 accident, or when it was further, further up the river?

22 A. About 1,000 feet above the wall.

23 Q. And when you say 1,000 feet above the wall, that's where the  
24 head of the tow was at the time?

25 A. Yeah, the head of the tow was 1,000 feet from the end of the

1 long wall.

2 Q. All right. I'm curious just --

3 A. (Indiscernible).

4 Q. I'm curious, you had Rose Point on your vessel. Can you tell  
5 me how you use Rose Point when you -- well, ask you this: in this  
6 evolution, did you use Rose Point?

7 A. To about the bridge, but I mean, that Rose Point, I mean,  
8 when you get down there that close, as fast as everything was  
9 happening, you're looking at the window. You don't need the Rose  
10 Point anymore. I mean, it's not going to do anything to tell you  
11 anything, you know, you're not looking at already.

12 Q. All right. And when you said you used Rose Point --

13 A. I know people claim they make -- do what?

14 Q. No, go ahead. Sorry for interrupting.

15 A. I say, you know, I mean, that Rose Point is good to a certain  
16 point, but then it's time to look out the window and pay  
17 attention.

18 MR. KARR: All right. Thanks. All right. Thanks for  
19 answering those questions. I have no more.

20 MR. HENSHAW: Okay.

21 CWO [REDACTED] All right. This is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]  
22 [REDACTED] again. I don't have any further questions.

23 MR. MONDL: Officer [REDACTED] on second thought, could I just  
24 pose a couple of questions for the captain before we -- or to the  
25 pilot before we adjourn here?

1 CWO [REDACTED] Sure.

2 BY MR. MONDL:

3 Q. Just going back, Mr. Henshaw, you said that you had done, I  
4 think this lock, if I heard you right, you know, probably over 100  
5 times. Is that what you said?

6 A. (~~Indiscernible~~) It would be every bit of that I don't think  
7 I'd be saying at least that.

8 Q. And I guess, over your 30-plus years, you've --

9 A. Thirty-three.

10 Q. (~~Indiscernible~~) You've made 33, you've probably gone through  
11 probably many thousands of locks and -- would that be fair to say?

12 A. That's -- yeah, that'd be fair.

13 Q. And probably several thousand bridges; would that also be  
14 (~~indiscernible~~) --

15 A. Every bit of that.

16 Q. Yeah. And have you ever before had an accident hitting a  
17 bridge or a lock?

18 A. Oh, no, sir.

19 Q. And how does the Mel Price Lock and Dam compare to other  
20 locks?

21 A. In my opinion, that's probably the hardest lock to make. I  
22 mean, with Lock 19 running a close second if you ain't got  
23 (~~indiscernible~~) helper boat.

24 Q. Is there -- or I guess -- over the years, have the captains  
25 talked about the difficulty -- you know, captains on the river,

1 your colleagues, talked about that Mel Price Lock and Dam  
2 (~~indiscernible~~) of the difficulties?

3 A. Oh, it's talked about quite a bit.

4 MR. MONDL: All right. That's all I have. Thank you, sir.

5 CWO [REDACTED] All right. If nobody has any other questions or  
6 follow-up questions --

7 BY MR. KARR:

8 Q. I have a follow-up comment. Mr. Mondl, and for Mr. Henshaw  
9 -- for Mr. Henshaw, I watched some videos about the new lock and  
10 dam -- you know, the Mel Price Lock and Dam, and one of the things  
11 they said was placing it in the middle of the river was an  
12 improvement. So I'm surprised to hear you say that there's a lot  
13 of people that complain about it.

14 A. It's, it's -- I mean, my question has always been why they  
15 put the (~~indiscernible~~) [chamber?] in the middle of the river  
16 instead of putting them side to side like they do in the Ohio  
17 River. And like I said, what would really make -- my opinion,  
18 what it's worth, if they put a couple cells in above the lock  
19 there about 500 feet and another one about 1,000 where you had  
20 something to kind of go down and flank toward and get on that gets  
21 you in there.

22 I mean, like Lock 52 and 53, they had flanking cells is what  
23 they call them. You just flanked your stern in there and, you  
24 know, got a line and flattened out. You know, of course Mel Price  
25 you wouldn't need a line, but if you had something to go in there

1 and land on until everything comes to the wall, then you'd be  
2 there and all you'd have to do is slide straight in. Instead of  
3 having to race down there to make sure you get in there and then  
4 try to get stopped.

5 Q. Yeah. So what --

6 A. That's what makes it hard is getting it off.

7 Q. Well, that lock wall seems very long. So is it possible to  
8 just go further into -- you know, further into the lock before  
9 coming alongside?

10 A. Yeah, it is, and then a lot of times people don't get stopped  
11 if they ain't got the gates dropped and they go down there and run  
12 over the gates.

13 Q. Okay. All right.

14 A. And sometimes -- I mean, you got to go down in there so fast  
15 sometimes, you know, that if you ain't careful, then you'll get  
16 down there and won't get stopped.

17 Q. Why would you have to --

18 A. I guess it's all about timing, you know.

19 Q. Yeah, why would you --

20 A. Do what?

21 Q. Oh, I was going to say, why would you go in fast, or is it  
22 more along the case of you will go in fast because of the current?

23 A. Well, you've got to or you'll get sent to the wall before you  
24 get down in there.

25 Q. Okay. All right. No more questions --

1 A. I mean, you got --

2 Q. -- except for, Mr. Henshaw, do you have anything else you  
3 want to tell us besides the (~~indiscernible~~) mooring cells?

4 Anything about this accident?

~~indiscernible~~<sup>5</sup>

A. Well, no, I just -- you know, like I said,  
6 it's not an easy lock to bank. We've had to deal  
7 with it for years, but those cells -- I mean, in my opinion, it'd  
8 be great. I mean, it would sure make it easier. I know it's a  
9 long wall, but like I said, it gets short pretty quick, you know,  
10 after you stick () a thousand-foot tow in there.

11 MR. KARR: All right. Thank you for those comments.

12 MR. HENSHAW: Okay. Thank you.

13 MR. MONDL: This is Jim Mondl. It's not a question posed  
14 toward the captain [sic] so much, but in response to your comment  
15 a moment ago about watching videos on this lock. I think the  
16 Coast Guard, or maybe it's the Corps of Engineers, conducted a  
17 study just a year or two ago on this lock because there were so  
18 many accidents of people, you know, hitting it when they're trying  
19 to get in and out. I guess mostly in. But I don't know if you've  
20 seen that. But I don't know if they've ever come up with any  
21 conclusions on what to do, but I think the Corps of Engineers or  
22 Coast Guard or both probably are aware of some of the difficulties  
23 with this lock.

24 CWO [REDACTED] All right. Well, thank you all for your  
25 comments. If there are no other questions --



1 MR. ICE: Can I make a comment?

2 CWO [REDACTED] Sure. Who is this?

3 MR. ICE: This is Tony. I've been licensed for 20 some  
4 years, made that lock hundreds of times myself, and in 2018, we  
5 were working in the same harbor, and we had a request from  
6 (indiscernible) possibly send one of our boats up there to assist  
7 due to all the facts of close calls. I believe it was the *John D.*  
8 *Gary* (ph.) went around the wall in 2018 and several tows had  
9 busted up there. That lock is very unforgiving when it decides to  
10 start pulling you to the wall. I just wanted to make that clear.

11 CWO [REDACTED] Thank you. All right. Well, if there's no  
12 other questions or comments, we'll go ahead and conclude this  
13 interview. The time is approximately 11:49 Central Standard Time.  
14 And basically what will happen next, Mr. Henshaw, is we will --  
15 the Coast Guard and the NTSB will conclude their investigations,  
16 and I'm still gathering evidence as we speak on my end. There  
17 will be no report of investigation; it's not required for this  
18 level.

19 MR. HENSHAW: Okay.

20 CWO [REDACTED] But if in the future we do decide to, you know,  
21 have follow-up questions or we'd like to ask for another  
22 interview, we'll probably reach out to Mr. Mondl or Mr. Ice and  
23 coordinate that accordingly.

24 MR. HENSHAW: Okay.

25 CWO [REDACTED] So with that, we'll conclude the recording and

1 everybody have a good day.

2 MR. HENSHAW: You, too.

3 MR. KARR: All right. Thank you, Mr. [REDACTED]

4 MR. MONDL: Thank you.

5 CWO [REDACTED] Thank you. Bye-bye.

6 (Whereupon, 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:           TOWING VESSEL *KEVIN MICHAEL*  
                                  CONTACT WITH MELVIN PRICE  
                                  LOCKS AND DAM IN ALTON,  
                                  ILLINOIS, ON MARCH 19, 2021  
                                  Interview of Jackie Henshaw

ACCIDENT NO.:               DCA21FM021

PLACE:                       Via telephone

DATE:                        April 7, 2021

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.

*Ann D. ...*  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Transcriber