

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

* * * * *

Investigation of:

*

*

TOWING VESSEL BARGE STRUCK LOCK

*

GATE NEAR MILE 88 ON THE LOWER

*

Accident No.: DCA23FM038

MISSISSIPPI RIVER ON JULY 4, 2023

*

*

* * * * *

Interview of: MASON BEAUVAIS, Deckhand of the *Kitty*
Enterprise Marine Services, LLC

New Orleans, Louisiana

Friday,
July 6, 2023

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Investigator, I-NCOE
U.S. Coast Guard

ADAM TUCKER
National Transportation Safety Board

JEFF JOHNSON, Manager, Compliance and Investigations
Enterprise Marine Services, LLC

CHRIS ULFERS, Esq.
Jones Walker, LLP
Representing Enterprise Marine Services, LLC

I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Mason Beauvais:	
By LT [REDACTED]	5
By Mr. Tucker	17
By Mr. [REDACTED]	32
By Mr. Tucker	36

I N T E R V I E W

(4:21 p.m.)

LT [REDACTED] All right, it is July 6th, 2023. Time on deck is 16:21. Coast Guard and NTSB are conducting a joint investigation into the allision between the *ITV Kitty* and the Algiers Lock portside gate, which took place at approximately 19:30 on 04 July, which resulted in an estimated \$500,000 or more in damages.

I just want to confirm everybody's okay if we record this interview.

MR. BEAUVAIS: Yes.

LT [REDACTED] Okay, thank you. Go ahead and do introductions now. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard investigating officer.

MR. TUCKER: My name is Adam Tucker with the National Transportation Safety Board. Thank you for -- thank you, Mason, for talking with us.

MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard investigator, I-NCOE.

MR. JOHNSON: Jeff Johnson, Enterprise Marine.

MR. ULFERS: Chris Ulfers, Jones Walker, as counsel for Enterprise.

MR. BEAUVAIS: Mason Beauvais, deckhand at Enterprise.

LT [REDACTED] All right, thank you very much. I just want to confirm your contact information is cell phone [REDACTED].

MR. BEAUVAIS: Correct.

LT [REDACTED] Okay, address is [REDACTED]

[REDACTED].

1 MR. BEAUVAIS: Correct.

2 LT [REDACTED] Awesome.

3 INTERVIEW OF MASON BEAUVAIS

4 BY LT [REDACTED]

5 Q. All right, we'll just have you go ahead and walk us through
6 what happened on the day of the incident and if you don't mind
7 starting when you came on to duty.

8 A. So I was -- got on watch at 6 o'clock in the morning. I was
9 on swing watch, so I was working twelves. I don't really remember
10 what we did throughout the day, I'm being honest with you, it was
11 just sort of a normal day, where you just sort of mindlessly go
12 through whatever you're working on, you know. Eventually, went to
13 the locks or went to prep and go through the watch and I don't
14 remember if we came, if we were already in the fleet and then left
15 to go through the locks or however that happened. But we went to
16 the locks.

17 I'll just get down to the nitty-gritty part, the actual part
18 that we're all worried about here. Went to the locks, I was on
19 the head of tow, I was originally on the port side of the barge.
20 Then the captain wanted me to be the main lead guy on the barge so
21 that the tankerman could sort of go to the stern once we get past
22 the gates, like we normally do, to catch a stern line and they
23 could watch change and not have to walk 600 feet out, you know.
24 You know, I was like all right, that's fine, you know, not a big
25 deal. It's normal routine, pretty much, you know. So we called

1 -- I was on the -- moving to the starboard side at that point and
2 had a line on that side because I assumed we were catching the
3 line on that side. Called distance, got abreast of the long wall,
4 nice and easy, smooth, no trouble keeping a good distance on
5 either end. He started calling the specific time, was on the port
6 side at the time on watch, he was calling distance on the short
7 wall. A regular normal day going through the locks, pretty much.

8 We come abreast to the short wall, we're all inside the locks
9 at that point, we were coming into the locks at that point, called
10 distance, we get past the gate, or once we get up to the gate tell
11 him hey, coming abreast to the gate now, got about another 30 feet
12 to clear the gate, come clear the gate, lockmaster tells us, hey,
13 whenever you're ready, when you all can walk to the back to get
14 that stern line, all right, cool.

15 Tommy walked to the back, I stayed up on the head, Wilson
16 said whatever side we can -- whatever side we end up landing on,
17 we'll just tie it from that side, it doesn't matter what side we
18 tie off on. I said all right, cool, you know. We seemed to be
19 hugging that port side, a lot closer to that port side, so I went
20 ahead and walked over there, brought my line over there, called
21 distance, got all the way down to where I started actually
22 noticing something, you know, pretty much called distance, you
23 know, because those pins are about 50 feet apart or a hundred feet
24 apart, each block is 50 feet wide. So I called distance until we
25 got down there and I noticed something started happening whenever

1 we was about 220-ish feet away. I noticed the water level started
2 to drop, you know, and I didn't really think too much of it, I was
3 like now we're going into the lock, sometimes you see little waves
4 here and there, so I'm used to seeing a little bit of waves, so I
5 was thinking that it's the barge butting up and pushing waves.
6 And then I remember at about 200 feet, I called 200 feet, like
7 hey, you're 200 feet from the red.

8 We pretty much came to a dead stop. I was like okay,
9 regrouping, it's kind of weird, you know, gave it a second,
10 figured he'd notice he stopped, so I'm like -- then he started
11 backing up, so we started falling back, so I was like hey, you're
12 starting to fall back now, you're about 210 feet below the red pin
13 now. And then I noticed we started going back forward, I had my
14 line ready, started calling distance, calling down, and I noticed
15 it started speeding up all of a sudden.

16 And I had that initial line on, you know, I saw a pin, got
17 the initial line on, grabbed it because I couldn't -- I couldn't
18 pull, I couldn't pull up enough slack behind me to wrap around the
19 timberhead, so I just held onto that mother fucker, you know,
20 trying to slow it down as best I can, just trying to check it
21 down. Then we slowed down a little bit, he got a little control
22 of it. I ended up -- he told me to tie it off and I tied it off.
23 We had another little surge or something happened and that line
24 popped. And then I remember I had that second line -- after that
25 first line popped, I sort of went on autopilot, like I was -- I

1 don't remember how, in the exact words, everything happened, but
2 that second line popped, or I grabbed the second line, put it on a
3 bit, second line popped. I noticed that, in the chamber the water
4 had dropped about 6 feet and I'm like man, that's kind of weird,
5 you know, we're not even -- we're not even locked in yet, why is
6 the water dropping so drastically, right? We need to tie off.
7 Started rushing ahead, I was like hey, Cap, 200 below again, 175,
8 150, about a hundred below.

9 Hey Cap, you're coming in kind of hot, you want to slow it
10 down. Cap, you're going to hit the fucking wall, slow down, back
11 up, and I could hear the lockmaster also yelling on the radio, and
12 once we got about a hundred 50 feet, I saw we were still speeding
13 up, I turned around, I was like -- I started yelling, I couldn't
14 tell if they could hear me or not, I couldn't tell if my mike was
15 working, if my radio was working.

16 So I turned around and started yelling, waving hands and I
17 saw two guys on the stern turn around and start yelling and waving
18 their hands and stuff, and I turned around and I saw we was like
19 right there and I started walking away as fast as I could and then
20 boom, we made contact.

21 Q. Okay. So how close were you to that wall? I mean, you were
22 on the -- obviously --

23 A. Like how wide were we to the --

24 Q. No, like how -- you said you were on the bow, calling
25 distance.

1 A. Um-hum.

2 Q. How close were you when you made contact to the -- I guess
3 the vessel?

4 A. Like, you're talking like -- oh, like -- so this is like --
5 imagine this is the barge, this is the rake into the barge, the
6 wall's over here, whenever it made contact, where was I at on
7 there?

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. I was probably next to the stairs, like really close to the
10 stairs, I was on my way back, I was pretty close to the stairs at
11 that point, because I saw that it was going to hit --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. -- started walking fast, walking back, you know, trying not
14 to stress too much.

15 Q. Did you fall?

16 A. No.

17 Q. No. Didn't hit that hard, I guess?

18 A. No, I --

19 Q. It didn't jolt you that hard, I guess?

20 A. I mean, I've been --

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. I was already in momentum, my body was already moving --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- so it might've been mid-step whenever it hit, but I didn't
25 really --

1 Q. Wow.

2 A. -- feel much, you know. I could hear the loud cracking of
3 the metal --

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. -- but --

6 Q. What did you do once that impact was made?

7 A. I kind of freaked out a little bit, like I was -- I was like
8 I've never had something like this happen, I remember yelling, I
9 remember yelling cuss words in the chamber and hearing it echo
10 back and forth. And then I remember kind of thinking about it and
11 I was like I did everything I fucking could to stop that. I was
12 breaking back -- I remember -- because I don't remember exactly
13 the order of it happening, but I remember I did everything I
14 could, because I remember I caught that first line, pop, where I
15 was sprinting back and forth, trying to get another line, trying
16 to make sure I don't get hit with the line whenever it does pop,
17 try to check it down, you know.

18 Held on to the line because I couldn't get enough slack to
19 check it down because I was trying to do anything I could to slow
20 the barge down, tried doing a quick bowline, I was panicking, so I
21 forgot how to make a bowline suddenly and I was like how did I
22 forget this? I immediately run up on the trunk and got a third
23 line, ran back down, was going to try and catch another one, but
24 by that time we was already -- I could tell we were already going
25 to hit, so I just backed up, there was no way I was going to catch

1 a third line.

2 Q. How close were you to that line when it popped?

3 A. I don't remember, to be honest with you. I want to say 20
4 feet away from the timbers whenever it popped, because you could
5 tell, you could hear it start to strain and then you hear tink,
6 tink, tink, and then boom, you know, a gunshot echoing off the
7 walls and I was like all right, time to get another line, I got to
8 go, I got to -- that thing popped, I need to be reactive, I have
9 to react, I can't just sit there and freeze up, boom, I was like
10 okay, that's going to pop, I started to get my next line ready.

11 I knew it was going to pop, started walking across and
12 grabbed that next line. Boom, you know, dragging that second line
13 back over, immediately undoing that other -- all that other junk
14 and trash on the timbers, throwing it behind, I didn't care where
15 it went, it just needed to get the fuck out of the way, you know,
16 so I could immediately lay that next line and try to catch
17 something. And then that one fucking popped and I was like --

18 Q. Yeah, a stressful situation.

19 A. I was -- by the time Max got up there, out of the -- because
20 we was -- I forget, I got that third line and I was going to catch
21 something on the other side --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- the starboard side for a second there. I was winded, I
24 was --

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. -- absolutely smoked at that point, I was cotton-mouth dry, I
2 was dehydrated a little, I was struggling. So when Max got up
3 there, you know, I made sure that he laid our back -- because were
4 sitting back, we were pulling back, you know, so I stayed with him
5 to make sure that he had that backing done correctly, the four
6 part, we had it tied off, you know, I stayed with him for that
7 part. I was working the mike, he was working the line, and after
8 we got that secured, we could tell we settled down a little bit, I
9 gave the radio off to Max and I was like, "Max, you got this?"
10 Like, I -- he was like yeah, I got it, and I was all right, cool,
11 I'm going to get some water, I'm fucking -- I feel like I'm dying,
12 you know. Ran back -- well, didn't run.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Walked back briskly, stopped to talk to Lance for a second,
15 make sure -- you know, sort of like make sure we were on the same
16 page, that I did literally everything I could --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- to stop that, you know, from happening.

19 Q. Sure.

20 A. And then I went back, got some water and I didn't go back
21 outside after that. I was like I'm not on watch anymore, I'm
22 done, that was it for me, you know.

23 Q. Well, I'm glad you're okay, that seems like that was a little
24 bit dangerous there. So walk me through your experience level,
25 how long have you been a deckhand with the company, in the

1 maritime industry, all that.

2 A. I've been working for Enterprise Marine since -- I went to
3 deckhand school in December, I got out of deckhand school and had
4 my deckhand book issued to me December 20 -- it was like the day
5 before Christmas, December 23rd, '21, I want to say, I've been
6 here a year and a half.

7 Q. Okay, great. And what about any -- any prior maritime
8 experience?

9 A. No.

10 Q. No, okay.

11 A. No.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. I've done a lot of trade work.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. This is my first time working in the maritime industry. I
16 really enjoy the work, I don't have a problem with the work, I
17 enjoy the work.

18 Q. Awesome. And how long have you -- have you been with this
19 vessel the whole time?

20 A. No. No, I've been with -- I've been around, I've been on a
21 bunch of different vessels, I've been on the *Henri'*, the *Kitty*,
22 the *Genie*, I've been on the *Xena*, I've been on most of our
23 vessels, most of Enterprise's vessels, I've been on a lot of them,
24 you know.

25 Q. Okay. And then what about working with this crew?

1 A. I've worked with Wilson Naquin --

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. -- and I have experience -- I had spent 7 months as their
4 deckhand when they were on a pressure barge run.

5 Q. Okay, cool.

6 A. Deckhand on that barge.

7 Q. How would you say the crew dynamic, relationships, how is it
8 on this vessel?

9 A. The crew at the time of the incident?

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. I think it was -- I mean, it was a pretty good crew, we were
12 all -- it was pretty -- it was an experienced crew, a crew that's
13 confident in their abilities to handle stuff whenever the shit
14 hits the fan, you know.

15 Q. Yeah.

16 A. We were all pretty confident what we could handle, you know,
17 we all knew --

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. -- what our job was, knew how to do it, you know, a really
20 nice crew.

21 Q. Awesome.

22 A. We got a long really well, worked together, there was a lot
23 of team work, there was no you're going to do this, I'm going to
24 sit back, you know, it was a team -- it was team work all the way,
25 pretty much.

1 Q. Okay. You said you worked with the captain before. How was
2 your workings with him in the past, ever any issues, I mean, how
3 would you rate him as a master, a captain?

4 A. You know, whenever I first was getting to know him, I didn't
5 care for him, but I mean, that's -- the more I've worked out here,
6 I learned that was my experience with a lot of captains the first
7 time, you don't like the captain the first couple times you get
8 them, you know.

9 But over time of working with him, I realized he's actually a
10 really good guy, like really -- he sticks his neck on the line for
11 his team and I'm like that is a good leader, without a doubt,
12 there's not a shred of doubt in my mind he is a good leader. I've
13 never seen someone that good at leadership in a long time.

14 Q. In terms of safely operating a vessel?

15 A. Oh, yeah. No, he's a really good boat driver.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. He's really confident and he's a really good boat driver. If
18 you needed him to put that timberhead, you just tell him, like
19 wherever you need him to put it, you tell him hey, you're this
20 wide off of where I need you to be and this far down from where I
21 need you to be. He can see, you know, a decent ways out, but he
22 could see a little bit of what's going on. I know it's 600 feet
23 out or whatever.

24 Q. Right. So your initial reaction to maybe not liking him had
25 nothing to do with operations, just personal, right?

1 A. Yeah, that was it, it had nothing to do with -- that was just
2 personal, whatever.

3 Q. Okay. And then -- let's see, I want to make sure I'm getting
4 everything here. How was your debrief after this happened? I
5 mean, did you debrief with the crew at all, talk it over?

6 A. We went up there and we sort of talked about it, like trying
7 to figure out what exactly happened.

8 Q. Um-hum.

9 A. You know, like I was up on the head of tow, I can't -- I
10 don't know what's going on behind me, I was so focused on what I
11 was working with at that moment, I didn't care what was behind me,
12 I was so focused on just getting us settled down and taking care
13 of it, you know. So afterwards we talked about it and tried to
14 figure out what happened --

15 Q. Um-hum.

16 A. -- like what caused it, you know, like what -- who was at
17 fault was my main focus because I was like I don't want to get in
18 trouble for --

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. -- me doing everything, I don't want -- you know, I don't
21 know, so --

22 Q. And you had a firsthand account, like you were the closest to
23 that.

24 A. I was there, I was running mad.

25 Q. Yeah, I get why you would feel that way.

1 A. I was -- yeah.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. I thought it was --

4 Q. You couldn't really see any vessels behind you or anything?

5 A. Uh-uh.

6 Q. You were just --

7 A. I turned around, whoa, once --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- and the only point I turned around was whenever I saw we
10 were speeding up and I wanted to know if my radio was working and
11 I just started yelling down the -- I knew my voice would echo in
12 the chamber in the lock, so I started yelling. I keyed the mike
13 down the whole time and started yelling backwards, you know.

14 Q. Um-hum.

15 A. And then I saw those two turn around and started yelling
16 backwards. And I looked back at the gate that was coming at us
17 fast and I walked away.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. I got pretty far away.

20 LT [REDACTED] Well, thank you. I don't have anything further, I'm
21 going to pass it off here.

22 BY MR. TUCKER:

23 Q. Okay. Hi, Mason, thanks again. Adam Tucker with the NTSB, I
24 got a couple follow-ups and including my biggest confusion, but
25 you're going to make sure I understand this right now, is you

1 mentioned the lines and you were located on the port side of the
2 barge, working the lines at that time?

3 A. Um-hum.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Were they the boat -- were they the barge lines or were they
7 lines from -- from the lock people or from the lock?

8 A. Barge lines.

9 Q. They're --

10 A. Yeah, they were -- the lines were already on the barge.

11 Q. Okay. And what type of lines were they?

12 A. If I'm being honest with you, I know the green ones are
13 polypropylene and the other one was some sort of nylon. I heard
14 some people call them like a nylon-cotton mix because that line
15 was really stiff, but I mean, it's a nylon line, the things are
16 springy.

17 Q. Okay. And any size of -- was there a certain size of these
18 lines?

19 A. Two-inch.

20 Q. Two-inch, okay. And you mentioned that one had popped.

21 A. Two had popped in total.

22 Q. Two popped in total.

23 A. Two, two lines popped. After the first one was getting ready
24 to pop, I called out hey, this line's about to pop, you hear the
25 boom, I know a line popped and I was already on my way, getting

1 the second line to try and -- to try and replace that first line,
2 because it's not my first time I've had lines pop on me, that
3 happens, that's a commonality in the maritime industry --

4 Q. Um-hum.

5 A. -- you know, so I was already -- I already knew what to do, I
6 already was on my way to get my next line, already had it, I was
7 already prepping. By the time it popped, I was walking back.

8 Q. And that line was placed on what, the timberhead?

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. On the port side --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- right at the extreme port bow forward of the --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- barge, okay.

15 A. The port bow of the entire channel.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Easiest way to think of it.

18 Q. And that line was -- what caused the line to pop, it was
19 going, it was going to a ballard (ph.) on the --

20 A. Ballard?

21 Q. Or --

22 A. A bit.

23 Q. A bit, okay.

24 A. Yeah, we just call it a bit. In Algiers Lock there's pins in
25 the wall, the best way to look at it.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. A plate and it's a pin sticking up, you stick your bite on
3 that pin.

4 Q. Okay, all right. So that's what you were talking about
5 earlier, that was going to be one of my questions, you were
6 calling out from pins --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- and you knew the pin distances. What were the pin
9 distances again?

10 A. So each of those long cinder block -- because some, there's
11 others -- the way the blocks look is they have the cinder block
12 lodged in a flat concrete wall, you know.

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. Cinder block, flat concrete, you know. And you could tell
15 there's like a point where they had to stop, there will be a
16 framing or whatever for it, and then the next one, it's concrete
17 with a pin in it and you could tell there's a line where they had
18 to split off --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- and lay them separately, you know.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. So you could see, so it's about -- each of those concrete
23 blocks is about 50 feet --

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. -- so from pin to pin is about a hundred.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. And that's how I made my -- I call my distances.

3 Q. Got it, okay. As you can tell, I haven't been -- I haven't
4 been to the lock yet, so I'm glad I asked that question. And you
5 said there were -- did you or someone else say that they were
6 colored? Do they have colors on them?

7 A. Some of them do, not all of them. Usually, the two in the
8 center of the middle of the lock, the entirety of the chamber, the
9 two in the middle usually are blue.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And then on the outer edges they have a green and a red on
12 either wall.

13 Q. All right.

14 A. But they're usually perfectly lined up port to starboard.

15 Q. Got you. Okay, thanks for clarifying that. Now, you start
16 -- you said you work the swing watch, so that's 12 hours, so you
17 start at 6:00 in the morning and you were pretty much close to
18 wrapping up --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- at that time, right? Okay. Normal day. Let's see, I
21 just want to make sure I got this right. Got on the wall, called
22 distances, Tom was -- at that time, when you started going along
23 the wall, you were on the starboard side and Tom was on the port
24 side, did I capture that right?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay. And then --

2 A. He was on the port side until we got past the gates. Once we
3 came clear of the gates, he went to the stern and I moved to the
4 port side with a line and bumper in hand.

5 Q. Got it, okay. Called the distances. You mentioned shouting
6 back, if I understand, you turned around and started shouting back
7 because you weren't sure your radio was working or not. Did you
8 hear or did someone tell you afterwards, hey, we heard you over
9 the radio?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yes, they did confirm with me that they could hear me on the
13 radio the entire time.

14 Q. Okay, all right.

15 A. Because afterwards, I remember after we hit, I was like hey,
16 can you guys hear me on the radio, and I don't remember if it was
17 Lance or Tom, but one of them responded yeah, we can hear you over
18 here, and I was like all right, cool, so my radio's not broken,
19 it's not like my radio wasn't keying up, you know.

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. He definitely had it, it was definitely going through on his
22 end.

23 Q. Got it, okay. Two, then 20 feet away, I understand that. So
24 you noticed the boat kind of came to a dead stop or the tow kind
25 of came to a dead stop and you said that was a little bit weird.

1 A. Yeah. I mean, some captains drive weird --

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. -- so some captains will just bring the tow to a stop, you
4 know, in locks, you know.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. But at the same time that that was happening, I was like man,
7 this is -- I was looking around, you know, like what's going on
8 and I could see the water slowly drop a little bit, just a little
9 bit, not a whole lot, a little bit, you know, at first and I was
10 like -- so I was waiting until he made some sort of movement
11 either backwards or forwards or if he started winding out, then I
12 was going to call the next distance, the next distance that
13 happened, you know.

14 Q. Got it. So then you said it started backing up a little bit
15 because you went back to 210 feet.

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. Then -- yeah, okay, then you --

18 A. I told him that he was falling back all the time.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And then I called out the 210 feet because he was at 200, I
21 said you're falling back all the time, you're now at 210 below the
22 red.

23 Q. Right, okay, below the red pin. Yeah, okay. Then that was
24 at the point where you had -- the line was ready and then it
25 started speeding up.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And you held the line, okay, and you couldn't even wrap it,
3 it was happening that fast.

4 A. I had it in one hand and then I was trying to pull slack so I
5 can throw a wrap around the bit and that line was just shoo (ph.),
6 it was going clean through my hands and I was like -- for a second
7 there, I just stopped and held it and tried to put some tension on
8 it without, you know, roughing myself up.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. You know, that's -- it's a line sliding through your hands, I
11 don't want no rope burn or nothing, you know.

12 Q. Yeah, that will hurt.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. Had you noticed any raise in the height of the barge against
15 the lock wall at that point or --

16 A. I don't remember, to be honest with you.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. I just remember at one point I was even -- or no, I was
19 below, below my feet was one of the pins, okay, and then the next
20 point I looked up, it was above my head, that exact pin was above
21 my head and I was like that's -- I am 6 -- I'm 6'1" with the boots
22 on, so I was like that water dropped at least 6 feet, at least.
23 Minimum.

24 Q. That's a good reference, though.

25 A. That's how I call my distance a lot of times, call -- shorter

1 area, can I lay in that twice over, it's 12 feet.

2 Q. So that pin was below your feet.

3 A. Yeah, then suddenly it was like head level, a little bit
4 above my head.

5 Q. Okay. Line popped. Then you kind of went into autopilot,
6 you went and grabbed the second line, that lined popped, I
7 understood, okay. And that's where you referenced the 6-feet
8 drop, okay. You called 200 feet, 175, 50, then you actually got
9 into -- you were coming on --

10 A. Oh, shit.

11 Q. Oh, shit and --

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay. And you mentioned something about the lockmaster at
14 this point, too, though?

15 A. Yes. As I turned around, that's the only time I turned
16 around and looked towards the vessel, I was yelling and was
17 holding my mike down and I can hear him also yelling, Cap, you're
18 going to hit the wall, you're going to hit the wall, Cap. And I
19 remember looking up, like this quick little glance, and I could
20 see him walking at the same time I was walking, we were both
21 walking away from the gate because we knew what was going to
22 happen, we knew it was going to hit, so we both just started
23 walking away. Called -- not even calling distance, more or less
24 freaking out at that point, we were both sort of freaking out.

25 Q. Okay. Was he on the same frequency as you or no?

1 A. No.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. No. I believe he was on 14.

4 Q. Turned and started yelling, okay, I understand that. And you
5 say you didn't really feel much of an impact, but you heard a
6 crack.

7 A. Oh, you can hear the metal crack.

8 Q. Okay. And of course, you were in the chamber then and --

9 A. Yeah. Hearing the crack echo throughout the chamber.

10 Q. Okay. I know you were forward. Did you happen to notice any
11 other traffic, any marine traffic?

12 A. Uh-uh.

13 Q. No. Didn't expect so, but I had to ask.

14 A. Six hundred feet away, my only priority was the boat and
15 trying to keep everything -- trying to get everything secured, you
16 know, trying to get everything stabilized as best I can, follow --
17 following whatever the captain tells me to do, until he tells me
18 otherwise. It didn't matter at all.

19 Q. So you couldn't get to that third line.

20 A. No, I grabbed hold of the third line from the top of the
21 trunk of the barge.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. The trunk of the barge is at that part where it's raised up,
24 so I went -- because I tried doing a quick little bowline and the
25 -- because there was a third line there and I tried doing a quick

1 little bowline --

2 Q. Um-hum.

3 A. -- because I saw it didn't have an eye spliced into it, so I
4 tried to put a little bowline and I couldn't, I could tell I
5 couldn't, I tried twice and I was like I don't have time for this,
6 I walked up those stairs, grabbed the line right there, started
7 dragging that fucker back, you know, I was like -- because if that
8 thing happens again, where it surges again, I don't want to hit
9 the gate a second time.

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. So I immediately ran back up and grabbed that, just grabbed
12 that other line.

13 Q. Then Max was actually -- by this time Max had arrived up
14 there, right?

15 A. No. He didn't arrive up there until -- because I tried
16 catching that third line on the -- this is after everything hit, I
17 believe, I tried catching that third line on the starboard side
18 because we saw -- we were starting to drift toward the starboard
19 side. He said -- because the last thing I remember him saying was
20 it doesn't matter what you catch, just fucking catch me something,
21 and I was like okay, you got it, Cap, I will find anything to
22 catch you, you know, it doesn't matter if it's a rock, I will
23 catch you something, you know. I saw we were getting closer to
24 the starboard side, walked over there with that line, getting
25 ready, I realized that's a really long throw, I'm not going to

1 make that, I know my skill, I know that that -- with that tiny
2 little pin sticking out, it would be out of my range. I
3 immediately looked back on that port side and I stopped for a
4 second, I was trying to figure out which side was closer and then
5 I went back to that port side and I was going to put the line on.
6 He said no, no -- Wilson -- said no, no, I don't want you catching
7 the line, take the line off. And I was like, Wilson, the last
8 thing I heard you tell me was catch a line, catch me fucking
9 anything, so I was just trying to follow your last order that you
10 gave.

11 Q. Um-hum.

12 A. And then, we switched the radios off for a second, you know,
13 and I pulled the line off, he goes no, no, we're backing out of
14 this chamber, we're not, we're not staying here, not after that,
15 we're backing out.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. So we were backing out and wherever we were -- he said where
18 he, the lock guy walking along the starboard side of the locks at
19 that point, with somebody else.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. I don't know who the hell that was, but they said -- I could
22 hear them on the -- talking on their radio to Wilson, Cap, I got a
23 paper I got to give you, just tie off on that short wall, and then
24 I heard Wilson go back and say that to us, hey, we tie off on the
25 short wall at four port. I don't remember what he said after

1 that, I just know we made it backing.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And then Max got up there, Max got there before we did the
4 backing, before we made that --

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. -- because Max did the backing and I was on the radio and I
7 was trying to guide him and make sure he did the backing right
8 because my adrenaline was already sort of popping a little bit, so
9 I was like still on emergency mode, like I was ready.

10 Q. Yeah, yeah.

11 A. So he did the backing, the backing looked good, you know,
12 tied it off, he wanted to check down for Wilson. With my
13 experience, you know, with Wilson, I was like I think he's going
14 to want that tied up. I was like, Max, you go ahead and tie it
15 off, you know. He goes no, I mean, I don't know if he wants us to
16 tie it off, and then Wilson immediately came over the radio, what
17 are you doing, Max? Tie off the line. I was like, Max, told you,
18 tie off the line.

19 Q. Yeah.

20 A. You know, I told you, you know.

21 Q. Right.

22 A. I knew what he was going to say, you know, and Max was like
23 all right, all right, and he tied off the line, and he was talking
24 to Wilson back and forth, just like trying to make sure we closed
25 up softly, didn't hit nothing hard.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. And after that, I was like, I was like, Max, you got this?
3 He was like yeah, yeah, I got this, and I was like all right,
4 cool. Here's the radio, I'm going to get water and I started
5 walking back, I was like that's it, man, I'm -- I am breathing
6 heavy the whole time and I am running back and forth like a ping-
7 pong ball on the front of that barge, you know, running back and
8 forth getting lines, fixing the line, pulling the slack for the
9 line, oh, this line popped, grab the next line, you know, trying
10 to make a quick bowline, that's not working. I run back down to
11 the trunk, grab the third line, you know, I was tore -- not tore,
12 I was worn out after that, I was absolutely exhausted.

13 Q. Pretty hot day, too --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- on top of it all, yeah.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. So after that, I was like you got this? Cool, I'm going to
19 get water.

20 Q. So you went back and finally got the water.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. You went back on deck after that or no?

23 A. No, that was it.

24 Q. That was it.

25 A. That was it.

1 Q. You were done with your watch then, too.

2 A. Yeah. Yeah, I went up to the wheelhouse to check on him and
3 I stayed up there and I checked on him, I was constantly trying to
4 help out wherever I could with --

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. -- whatever came up at that point. I don't remember who we
7 saw that night, I remember we seen -- met up with the surveyor
8 that night. Jimbo (ph.), the port captain, came on board. I
9 don't remember if we met Lieutenant [REDACTED] here that night or if it
10 was the next morning.

11 LT [REDACTED] Next morning.

12 MR. BEAUVAIS: Yeah. I couldn't remember exactly, you know,
13 when we met him, but I remember we met a few people that night and
14 I was trying to check on them to make sure if they needed
15 anything.

16 MR. TUCKER: Yeah.

17 MR. BEAUVAIS: Trying to take some of the weight off their
18 shoulders the best I could, you know.

19 BY MR. TUCKER:

20 Q. Are there any times -- sometimes you reference time and you
21 look at your watch, you look at your phone, whatever, like that.
22 Are there any times that kind of stand out in your head,
23 throughout that evolution?

24 A. No.

25 Q. No.

1 A. No. That's why, like whenever I was talking about like how
2 my day went --

3 Q. Um-hum.

4 A. -- I don't remember really much of the day, the day didn't
5 matter, you know. The only parts I really remembered was
6 approaching the locks, you know, that part was sort of --
7 everything around the locks is sort of engraved in my mind at that
8 point because of what had happened, you know, didn't really --
9 didn't really think about the rest of the day, you know
10 (indiscernible) it's a really big focus.

11 Q. Okay. Any pictures taken with your phone or anything like
12 that?

13 A. No, not my phone, no.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. I left my phone on board the vessel because that is
16 Enterprise Marine policy, no electronic devices on a barge.

17 MR. TUCKER: I may have one or two on the back end, but [REDACTED]

18 BY MR. [REDACTED]

19 Q. [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard. So when you were on the head of
20 the tow, Mason, and you're entering into the locks, you're giving
21 the pilothouse reports as far as distance, right?

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. You're looking through the lock chamber, at that point, are
24 you watching the gate?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. I'm trying to keep an eye out --

1 Q. On the gate. In this particular case, are the gates on the
2 other end closed?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Have you ever entered into a lock chamber and the other gates
5 on the other end are open?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Is that considered running the locks, is that what they call
8 that when you just pass through the locks without it really
9 locking?

10 A. I don't know what the exact term is, but I have a feeling
11 I've heard that term before. That could be the term, but I'm not
12 sure. I just know --

13 Q. Is that a practice, is that a procedure where you just run
14 right through the locks and they don't even lock you?

15 A. Yeah, sometimes.

16 Q. Do you know why that is?

17 A. Because the water levels on both sides are even.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. There's no reason for you to close the chamber just to not go
20 up or down.

21 Q. So the gates are closed on this end, on that end, and you're
22 entering, this day you're entering into locks, the river was
23 considered low, extremely low? What would you have said? What's
24 your opinion?

25 A. I don't pay attention to the river stage, it's not my job to

1 pay attention to river stage, I'm being honest with you. I work
2 the deck, I don't drive. Maybe one day I would love to, you know,
3 I'd love to go to school and do that and make more money, you
4 know, provide for myself a little better, but as of right now and
5 as of that day, it was not my job, did not pay attention to it.

6 Q. So entering a lock chamber and the pins that you use to
7 secure the barges, that you tie off on, what's that distance
8 between -- you know the distance --

9 A. Length --

10 Q. -- length-wise, what about height-wise?

11 A. It could be 15 to 20 feet, I'm not exactly sure on that one.
12 I never really -- I never really thought about it, I never looked
13 at it. It's more of a -- you don't want to catch a pin below
14 because it's just going to slip off, so you usually look to the
15 pin that's above your bit --

16 Q. Right.

17 A. -- because it's not going to slip off.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. So I never really looked at it too much, haven't really
20 thought about it.

21 Q. So when you first put the line on a pin that day, was it
22 below your feet or at your feet or --

23 A. It was about like halfway up me.

24 Q. So about your waist height?

25 A. About waist height, yeah.

1 Q. Okay, all right. What would you have expected had the
2 locking gone smooth, normal? Would you have expected the locks to
3 have dropped you to exit out the other end or to raise you to get
4 out?

5 A. Drop. You're going from the river to a canal, we generally
6 expect a drop, at least a foot. At least a foot.

7 Q. So you expect that the river level, right, would've been
8 higher than what the canal level was that day?

9 A. Yeah, you would expect it to be.

10 Q. Even with the low river?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Do you have any idea what the differential would've been in
13 levels?

14 A. No.

15 Q. No. When you entered in, was there any waterline marking
16 that you noticed?

17 A. A couple inches above the actual water because, as you're
18 going in and you have the water displacement, all the waves from
19 the barge moving in, they move up and down so you see like the
20 waterline a little bit, a couple inches above the waterline. A
21 couple inches of above the water itself.

22 Q. Do you think that differential between what you were in and
23 what you were going to would've been more than 2 feet?

24 A. No, no.

25 Q. One foot?

1 A. I mean, no. Honestly, whenever we were going in, you know,
2 you generally look at the -- you notice something like that.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. There's only -- the water level and the waterline was only a
5 couple feet (ph.) apart.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. I didn't really notice anything else after that. I noticed
8 -- the only thing I noticed after that waterline to water level
9 was whenever it went down a couple feet, you know, that initial
10 surge and then that 6-foot drop and I'm like something's going on
11 here, you know.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. That's the only other thing that I noticed there.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. No further questions, thank you.

15 LT [REDACTED] Lieutenant [REDACTED] I have no further questions.

16 BY MR. TUCKER:

17 Q. They always leave it up to me for the last one, but this is
18 pretty -- I just want to cross-check with you on this one. Adam
19 Tucker with the NTSB. And you recognize why we're here, we're
20 here to gather facts, put all the pieces of this puzzle together
21 and --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- sometimes these puzzles in the investigation can be very
24 complex. And saying that, I'm wondering if there's anything that
25 we haven't asked you, we failed to ask you, that you might feel is

1 important to provide to us to help put this puzzle all together?

2 A. No, I think you guys pretty much went over the majority of
3 everything, everything I could think of, at least or whatever. I
4 know I went over from the beginning of my day to the end of that
5 shift. I don't even remember the beginning of my day, I just know
6 it started at 6 o'clock, so you all went over more than I
7 remember, so yeah.

8 Q. I can't even remember what I had for breakfast, so I'm right
9 there with you.

10 A. The only thing I remember is I ate about nine donuts in the
11 little office over there.

12 Q. Took all my donuts.

13 A. All the Bavarian crème donuts.

14 (Laughter.)

15 MR. TUCKER: And you're still awake, you're not on carb
16 overload, so --

17 MR. BEAUVAIS: No.

18 MR. TUCKER: -- that's good, that's good. Well, again,
19 Mason, thank you for talking with us, we do appreciate it, we're
20 -- well, there's no such thing as a good accident, but if there
21 is, everyone's got their 10 fingers and 10 toes --

22 MR. BEAUVAIS: Everybody was safe.

23 MR. TUCKER: -- and that's the most important. All right.

24 LT [REDACTED] It is 1700, we're concluding the interview.

25 (Whereupon, at 5:00 p.m., the interview concluded.)

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: TOWING VESSEL BARGE STRUCK LOCK
 GATE IN NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA
 NEAR MILE 88 ON THE LOWER
 MISSISSIPPI RIVER ON JULY 4, 2023
 Interview of Mason Beauvais

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM038

PLACE: New Orleans, Louisiana

DATE: July 6, 2023

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.



David A. Martini
Transcriber