

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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TOWING VESSEL BARGE STRUCK LOCK

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GATE NEAR MILE 88 ON THE LOWER

\*

Accident No.: DCA23FM038

MISSISSIPPI RIVER ON JULY 4, 2023

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Interview of: WILSON NAQUIN, Captain of the *Kitty*  
Enterprise Marine Services, LLC

New Orleans, Louisiana

Thursday,  
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  
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I N D E X

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Interview of Wilson Naquin:	
By LT [REDACTED]	5
By Mr. Tucker	14
By Mr. [REDACTED]	29
By Mr. Tucker	53
By Mr. [REDACTED]	58

I N T E R V I E W

(1:06 p.m.)

LT [REDACTED] All right. It is July 6, 2023. Time on deck is 13:06. 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, before we get started again, are you okay if we record this interview?

MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

LT [REDACTED] All right, thank you very much. We're going to go ahead and do introductions. I will start and then we'll work our way around this way, around the room. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I'm with the United States Coast Guard and I am an investigating officer.

MR. TUCKER: My name is Adam Tucker, I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board, and Captain, thank you for talking with us today.

MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

CAPT [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, I-NCOE. Thank you for your time today, Captain.

MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

MR. JOHNSON: Jeff Johnson, Enterprise Marine Services.

MR. ULFERS: And Chris Ulfers with Jones Walker as counsel.

MR. NAQUIN: And I'm Wilson Naquin, Captain of *Kitty*.

1 LT [REDACTED] All right, Captain, thank you very much again for  
2 speaking with us, we appreciate it. I just want to confirm your  
3 contact information. Phone number, [REDACTED], is that  
4 correct?

5 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

6 LT [REDACTED] Thank you. And your address is [REDACTED]  
7 [REDACTED]?

8 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

9 LT [REDACTED] All right, thank you very much.

10 INTERVIEW OF WILSON NAQUIN

11 BY LT [REDACTED]

12 Q. So yeah, we're just going to go ahead and let you walk us  
13 through what happened, please be as detailed as possible, nobody's  
14 going to interrupt you and we'll just wait until you're done, so  
15 go ahead.

16 A. All right. So I came on watch at 17:15, 17:20, in that area,  
17 it was on outside of Algiers forebay on the west bank. I relieved  
18 my relief captain, Josh, and had to wait on a vessel to come out  
19 the locks and I pulled it off the bank and started heading up  
20 towards the forebay and the lock. Master told me to bring it into  
21 the forebay, two men on the head, life jacket, bumpers. And I was  
22 turning into the forebay like 4 miles an hour and as I got into  
23 the forebay and time I got to the long wall down to like one and a  
24 half miles an hour. And as I was coming inside the gate, I was  
25 explaining to my steersman, you know, what to watch out for, what

1 to, you know, expect coming in these gates from the river side.  
2 And I looked on the computer, seen some ships coming, so I knew  
3 what to expect was going to go on, and as I was coming in to the  
4 wall, I started slowing it down between the walls and I was on the  
5 south gate flat against the wall coming in. And as my boat was  
6 coming past the gate, I was backing down already, breaking speed  
7 about probably down to .8, .6, somewhere in that area. And I  
8 started slowing down and it stopped and was just floating there,  
9 and the water started coming out and it started pulling the vessel  
10 and the barges back out of the gate when the ship passed, and  
11 that's when I started coming back ahead on it to slow it down.

12 And as I'm watching on the GPS and looking on the side of me,  
13 how fast I was moving and watching the GPS and as the GPS is  
14 slowing down, counting down from moving backwards, I got down to  
15 .4, .3 and then I kicked them out of forward and I put them in  
16 clutch and reverse because I knew it was going to surge me back  
17 in. And as I started moving, easing back forward, I hooked them  
18 back up in full astern and reverse and it just started picking up  
19 from there and the surge, when it came back in, it dropped me out  
20 like 3 to 4 foot, the water. They had two southbound ships and  
21 one northbound ship. The two southbound ships -- I guess they was  
22 within a thousand feet from each other, so the southbound ship  
23 passed, he sucked the water out from the chamber, and then when  
24 the second southbounder ship passed, he sucked the water out even  
25 further and sucking me out the chamber. And as the water was

1 coming back up, that's when the northbounder was coming, I guess  
2 that's what helped the water pushing in faster and I didn't have  
3 no control after, and I was full astern and it shoved me back 2,  
4 2.3 miles an hour into the canal side port gate within a hundred  
5 feet.

6 Q. Thank you very much. And if we pause, it's just because we  
7 were writing.

8 A. Not your fault.

9 Q. Thank you. All right. Thank you for that, Captain. How  
10 long have you been a master?

11 A. I got my license in 2007.

12 Q. Okay. What about working in the industry?

13 A. Since 1998.

14 Q. Ninety-eight?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Okay, thank you. Would you say you're an experienced  
17 captain?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Ever had any previous marine casualties, issues, things of  
20 that nature?

21 A. No, sir.

22 Q. None at all?

23 A. No, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Tell me about your crew that was working with you and  
25 your crew dynamics, relationships, and things of that nature.

1 A. Very good deck crew, you don't have to tell them much what to  
2 do and, you know, they follow on what needs to go on. And when  
3 they was on the head, I told Thomas, who was on the port side,  
4 Mason was on the starboard side, and I told them, once we cleared  
5 the river side gate, I told Thomas to walk to the back, his normal  
6 procedures, after we cleared that first set of gates on the river  
7 side, depending on what side you're going in and one of the guys  
8 will walk to the back and the other guy will stay on the head so  
9 he can catch the bow and the stern line.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And other than that, very experienced guys, talk to you well  
12 on the radio, and they count you down with 10 feet until you get  
13 to your location and your point.

14 Q. Anything abnormal at all about the vessel that day, the  
15 barges that day, the waterway, anything abnormal at all?

16 A. The only thing there was abnormal, forebay and the river is  
17 extremely low right now.

18 Q. Extremely low, yeah.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. How many times have you operated in that condition before,  
21 that low water condition?

22 A. A lot.

23 Q. A lot.

24 A. That pretty much was my steady runs, right there from the  
25 east side running through industrial Algiers, constantly going up



1 the river.

2 Q. How many times would you say you've done that lock?

3 A. Well over a hundred.

4 Q. Okay. Okay, so other than that, what was the weather like  
5 that day?

6 A. Clear, hot, sunny.

7 Q. Clear, hot, sunny, okay. I guess your protocol, walk me  
8 through your protocol when something like this happens, your  
9 company policy.

10 A. The company policy, I called the port captain that was on  
11 call. Within an hour, I took -- less than an hour, I took the  
12 alcohol test that we have on the boat in kits.

13 Q. Per policy?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. And as I -- I had got out of the forebay, I gave it to my  
17 relief captain until further notice.

18 Q. Um-hum.

19 A. You know, that -- pretty much when you have a tragic disaster  
20 like that bad accident, normally the next master will take over  
21 the station to the end.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And they pull you off the vessel and you have 32 hours to  
24 take a drug screen.

25 Q. And that was done?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Any other vessels around at that time?

3 A. They had the *Pamela Ann* that was a light boat astern of me  
4 and he -- when he noticed I was getting sucked in, he was like --  
5 I think he was at 3,000 and he had trouble stopping his light boat  
6 and he was getting shoved into the -- behind me into the gates  
7 with me.

8 Q. Were you all talking on the radios at that time?

9 A. No, I was talking to the lockmaster, the lockmaster, he was  
10 getting a little excited there, he was telling me to back it down,  
11 but I was, there was nothing I could do.

12 Q. Um-hum, right. Did they give you -- did the lockmaster give  
13 you any other direction other than just back down, back down?  
14 What other direction, if any?

15 A. I don't know, just back down and, you know, as I was coming  
16 in the forebay, I was going to go the green pin on the canal side,  
17 but the light boat had to come in there with us, so they told us  
18 to go down to the red pen and I was just easing forward in there,  
19 but that was it. But as I was backing up into the surge and not  
20 to hit the gates, he wanted me tie back up in there and I couldn't  
21 tie because I busted two lines already because of the surge and he  
22 told me I couldn't leave and I said I'm not leaving, I said, but  
23 I'm not staying in your chambers and this is going to happen  
24 again.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. So I got on the outside of the river side gate and they  
2 closed the gates and that's less than 40 feet where I had tied up  
3 on the port side and they brought me some paperwork and I tell  
4 them, I said look, I'm not staying on these gates again because if  
5 another ship passes, I'm going to just do the same thing again to  
6 these gates, so I'm getting out of the forebay and that's when I  
7 made the decision to get out of there and I said I'm not going  
8 forward, I said I can either hang out on the outside of the  
9 forebay or I'm on the Star Fleet, I said. I notified -- this is  
10 May. Oh, port captain. I think it's Anthony.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. And Anthony notified Eric Grinka (ph.). And then they was  
13 calling in with him. I think I was heading up to the forebay,  
14 that's when I called Coast Guard, where I was heading and what  
15 happened and what was going on and we tied it up into there and --  
16 Jimbo (ph.) came out, Jimbo was with the port captain and he came  
17 out that night.

18 Q. Okay. I kind of looked at your AIS previously, but you have  
19 the names of the vessels, you said they were coming, just let me  
20 refresh, 16 southbound, right?

21 A. Yeah. One was 15.7, the time he got to the forebay, he was  
22 doing 16 and the other one's doing 16 at the forebay.

23 Q. Okay. And then do you remember the sizes, roughly, of those  
24 vessels?

25 A. I know the second one was like a hundred 50 foot wide. I

1 don't know if it's 380 feet or 680 feet, but we have it on  
2 Rosepoint --

3 Q. Yeah, great. Okay.

4 A. -- and we can see their names and size.

5 Q. Yeah, we'll take a look at that at some point. Okay. And  
6 then any video from what happened? A video from the --

7 A. Yeah, we have them on our camera footage.

8 Q. Okay. Can we take a look at that, as well? We don't have to  
9 do that right now, but --

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay, great. Thank you. So yeah, I guess, just I'm thinking  
12 what would you have done differently in this case, kind of knowing  
13 what you know now about this situation?

14 A. Everything in my experience that I know what to do and not  
15 get nervous or -- I seen it was going to happen, I have nowhere to  
16 go --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. -- and when I seen it starting to pull back full ahead  
19 astern, the best thing was to do is either keep it flat against  
20 the wall and it wasn't stopped and I didn't have nowhere to go  
21 that --

22 Q. Yeah.

23 A. -- I could do, but then being sideways and catching over at  
24 the corner and it would probably be more worse because it would  
25 probably act more as a wedge.

1 Q. Right.

2 A. I know, for future reference, you know, I think we all should  
3 be aware of when a river's real extremely low, try not to go in  
4 the forebay now, you know, with ships passing that fast or when  
5 they get past and everything settles down, maybe.

6 Q. Yeah. Okay. So we do have the names of those vessels,  
7 though. What about the *Pamela Ann*, is there any statements or  
8 anything from them?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. And you all have that?

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. Okay, great. And what company do they work with or for?

13 A. Star Fleet.

14 Q. So Star Fleet, that's the -- okay, that's the owner?

15 A. Yes, it's a trip boat.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The trip boat.

18 Q. And no other vessels that you noticed around?

19 A. They had two of them on the moorings on our canal side, but  
20 they wouldn't have -- they wouldn't have seen anything.

21 Q. Seen anything, right. Okay. And they wouldn't have been  
22 affected by that, it looks like, either.

23 A. Right.

24 LT [REDACTED] Okay. All right. I'll kick it over to Adam, I  
25 think, right now, if that's okay.

1 MR. NAQUIN: All right.

2 MR. TUCKER: Thanks, Cap. Yeah, again, my name is  
3 Adam Tucker, I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board and  
4 we work together jointly with the Coast Guard, we gather the same  
5 facts, the same information, we do separate analysis of accidents,  
6 and Coast Guard is the lead in this situation --

7 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

8 MR. TUCKER: -- for this case and so usually when -- in this  
9 circumstance, when there's a monetary damage threshold, then we'll  
10 -- we'll usually work with the Coast Guard to gather the same  
11 material.

12 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

13 MR. TUCKER: We generate reports, they're usually short  
14 reports, we're actually mandated to keep a report to be short and  
15 concise.

16 BY MR. TUCKER:

17 Q. So I'm just going to back on a couple things, Captain, and I  
18 apologize in advance. Like I said, I'm a blue water guy, you're  
19 going to get some dumb questions from me, but first of all, felt  
20 like I was drinking from a fire hose here, so just going to  
21 backtrack and make sure I captured everything correctly and I'm  
22 also not familiar with a lot of the geography here. So you said  
23 you got on watch around 17:15, 17:20, is that right?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Okay. And is that a normal time?

1 A. No, yeah. We go up there to see what's going on, you know, a  
2 watch changes anywhere from 17:30 to 1800, depending on, you know,  
3 the wheelhouse and me and my relief always try to give us 30  
4 minutes until so as to be able -- you can get something to eat and  
5 shower and all that, then right at 1800, you know.

6 Q. Okay. So you're the -- your normal watch is from 1800 until  
7 midnight and then 6:00 until noon?

8 A. Noon, yeah.

9 Q. Okay. So you're the front watch?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Okay. All right. And then you relieve Josh, he is -- is he  
12 the -- what do you call him?

13 A. Relief.

14 Q. Is there a name, the pilot or --

15 A. He's the relief captain.

16 Q. Relief captain, okay. I got to get -- familiarize myself  
17 with -- sometimes they're pilots, sometimes they're mates, so  
18 okay. And forebay, so I'm trying to visualize now the Algiers  
19 Lock and everything, when you reference forebay, that's the  
20 entrance going --

21 A. From the river into the forebay.

22 Q. Okay. So there's no -- is it like an open area where --

23 A. Yeah, it's kind of shaped, I mean, I can draw it for you  
24 better, if you want me to.

25 Q. Yeah, yeah. Awesome. A picture speaks a thousand words,

1 so --

2 A. So this is the long wall.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And the short wall.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. This is the river.

7 Q. All right. This is going upriver?

8 A. This is southbound.

9 Q. Southbound, okay.

10 A. Yeah, and this is northbound. So there's where we was, we

11 was coming up here and we turned into the forebay.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. And we came into the lock over here. So anything that's at

14 the river side, turning into a non-navigable canal, that's like

15 your forebay from the river.

16 Q. Oh, okay. All right. But that's the name of it, too, they

17 call that forebay.

18 A. Yeah, yeah.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Like all of this right here is the forebay.

21 Q. All right. A picture speaks a thousand words, so I

22 appreciate that. You mentioned -- so there were two southbounds,

23 one northbound.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Any estimates like how close the southbounds were to you?



1 A. Well, there was -- they had one right here and the other one  
2 was probably around -- shoving that ferry and the other one was  
3 down here coming north. So when the first ship passed, it sucked  
4 the water out and it was pulling me back. So the time he got here  
5 and this one was here, the water didn't come back, can't get to  
6 settle back in yet so it surged the water even more out, but this  
7 one was bigger than this one and when he got here, he sucked the  
8 water and I was going 16 at the forebay, so it sucked the water  
9 out of the forebay even more down to 4 foot.

10 When he passed, this one here, he was about right here coming  
11 north, so when he was around right here. So as the water was  
12 starting to come back in, the northbounder pushing water coming in  
13 and it just -- it helped it in a perfect storm, it just pushed me  
14 in and I was already backing as the second one was here and he was  
15 coming up and I was already backing and I kept doing that, it just  
16 kept shoving me, shoving me back in the chamber.

17 Q. Okay. And so you were -- at that time, when the northbound  
18 came up, you were hooked up --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- astern?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. Okay. And you like couldn't do -- you just got surged in?

23 A. I just -- I was backing. And before, where the gate was, and  
24 my boat was right here by the river side gate and they got a green  
25 pin and I was backing, that's probably within 50 feet and I was

1 backing, so I was about a hundred, a hundred feet from the canal  
2 side and once I started seeing my vessel starting to move, easing  
3 forward, I put them -- you see them in the video. I hooked them  
4 up for reverse and it just started -- out of nowhere just from .6  
5 backwards to one, two, two and a half, yeah, and to contact  
6 like -- that boat on a normal day in a canal or the river will not  
7 pick up speed that fast in a shorter distance.

8 Q. Yeah. And speaking of the boat, and I just got here this  
9 morning, so --

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. -- you're getting more dumb questions, but what's the  
12 horsepower of the boat?

13 A. Fifteen ninety.

14 Q. One five nine zero, okay. And she's a twin screw?

15 A. Triple.

16 Q. Triple screw, okay. And she got flanking rudders on her?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. And normal rudders, does she have --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. -- two or three?

21 A. Three.

22 Q. Three, okay. Are there any special rudders, are they Becker  
23 flaps or anything like that or just regular spade rudders?

24 A. Regular spade rudders.

25 Q. Okay. A lot of questions I ask to just kind of make sure

1 things are line in here, so no problems of propulsion, no delays  
2 or nothing?

3 A. No.

4 Q. Okay. Is she a pneumatic boat, when you change from ahead to  
5 astern or is it electric?

6 A. No, it's pneumatic, it's --

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. -- air control.

9 Q. I'm curious, a lot of these boats I see, on the head of the  
10 barge they'll have like a fathometer or depth finder or something  
11 like that or -- did you recognize any of the depths at the time?

12 A. We don't have no depth finder on that vessel.

13 Q. Okay. And you referenced, as well, Rosepoint and --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. So Rosepoint, do you know what kind of information the  
16 Rosepoint captures, is it just AIS, GPS?

17 A. It catches the AIS, speed of every vessel, which way and  
18 directions you're sliding, the movement ahead, astern. They got  
19 LOCUS (ph.) to mariners, we got river stages, Lightless (ph.) is  
20 in there. Pretty much a very good instrument tool to use.

21 Q. I've heard that a lot, yeah.

22 A. You can click on a vessel. If it might be like a small  
23 vessel, you can double click on it, it pops the name up and wait a  
24 few seconds, then it pops up what it is, if it's a tugboat, a  
25 ship, their length, their beam, the speed they're making.

1 Q. So that's how you were able to identify the two --  
2 A. Yeah.  
3 Q. -- southbounds?  
4 A. Yes, sir.  
5 Q. Okay. Did you capture the names or the --  
6 A. We got them on the Rosepoint.  
7 Q. Okay, all right.  
8 A. But not on it.  
9 Q. Understood, okay. And again, I hate to backtrack here. The  
10 barge, you just had, it was just a single barge, right?  
11 A. No.  
12 Q. Oh.  
13 A. It was a unit. Two 30,000 barrels of oil.  
14 Q. Okay, so two times three. And they were loaded?  
15 A. Yes, sir.  
16 Q. Okay. With what?  
17 A. LCO, light cycle oil.  
18 Q. Okay. And they were strung --  
19 A. Strung out.  
20 Q. Yeah, they had to be strung out, yeah.  
21 A. Yes, sir.  
22 Q. Yeah. And what's the total length of the tow?  
23 A. Two ninety-seven by 54 apiece.  
24 Q. So okay, 294 --297 by 54.  
25 A. Yes, sir.

1 Q. Okay.

2 MR. ULFERS: That's each barge.

3 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir. Each barge.

4 BY MR. TUCKER:

5 Q. Okay, so 297/297.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. And the boat is?

8 A. Seventy foot.

9 Q. And the barges are wider than the boat, okay. So you were

10 faced up to --

11 A. Yeah, the rake.

12 Q. And again, more dumb questions. Where were you going, like

13 where -- I know you said you --

14 A. I came off of -- I came off of PB, PBF Chalmette.

15 Q. P --

16 A. P, PB, PB, P -- yeah.

17 MR. ULFERS: PBF.

18 (Laughter.)

19 BY MR. TUCKER:

20 Q. P-B-F C-h-a-l --

21 A. Yeah, it's PBF.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. We was coming off that dock to -- we strung our tow and our

24 orders were to head to Jefferson terminal in Beaumont.

25 Q. And that's in Texas?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay, so it was just going to be ICW all the way across?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Until you get to Port Arthur, then it's Neches River.

6 Q. Okay, right. All right. We talked to the crew, as well.

7 How many crew is normally on that boat?

8 A. We normally have two tankermen and a deckhand at all times to  
9 help out with a lot of situation or, you know, string it up, so we  
10 don't overwork our bodies on the front lines or on the back lock,  
11 so we have a day captain that works swing watch so everybody gets  
12 to their adequate sleep.

13 Q. Okay. So two tankermen, deckhand, relief captain, and  
14 captain?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay, understood. So five total?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Any problems with the communication systems, any  
19 navigation system issues at all that you recall?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. You mentioned the water was extremely low.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Usually I find myself here when it's the opposite, when the  
24 water's extremely high, so what does -- what does extremely low  
25 mean, like was -- are you basing that off of the gauge, the

1 Carrollton gauge or something?

2 A. The gauge. At Algiers locks, the gauge was, at that time, it  
3 was 0.89, I want to say it was at that, that day.

4 Q. Zero point eight nine.

5 A. I want to say in Cairo, normally the river gauge in Cairo, I  
6 think, is 4 foot right now.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. Normal river stage, you know, this time of the year is --  
9 it's normally within 9 or 10 feet.

10 Q. Okay. Let's see. So again, I'm drinking from a fire hose  
11 here, so you pull in the forebay, you had two of the guys on the  
12 head of the barge, one on the port side, one on the starboard  
13 side --

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. -- and they were the deckhands or the tankermen or --

16 A. One deckhand, Mason. Mason was on the head as our deckhand.  
17 Thomas, the tankerman, was on the stern and right at watch change  
18 at 1800, that's when it all started getting ready to happen and  
19 that's when Lance Pellegrin, he came out to relieve Thomas on the  
20 barge, they was making watch change with the guy on the stern.

21 Q. Okay. Okay, so you're in forebay 4 miles per hour, got down  
22 to about 1.5, correct me if I'm -- if I'm --

23 A. Time I was in the chamber, when my boat was coming abreast of  
24 the gates, I was down to like .8.

25 Q. Okay. And your reference is always miles per hour and your

1 speed reference is what you're seeing visually on Rosepoint, is  
2 that correct?

3 A. Not only on Rosepoint but on the AIS.

4 Q. On -- okay.

5 A. Because Rosepoint will show you miles per hour --

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. -- but GPS is going to show you set and drift, and you got to  
8 calculate that from your speed, so if you're doing a half a mile  
9 an hour to a mile an hour on a slide, that will mean you're coming  
10 ahead --

11 Q. Right.

12 A. -- with the 3 mile an hour that your Rosepoint is showing.

13 Q. Got you, understood. Okay. And was there any currents, any  
14 abnormal currents or anything like that, any eddies in the forebay  
15 or anything like that?

16 A. Algiers does has an eddy that works on the north side, it  
17 runs right on the outside and what it does, it pulls back north  
18 real easy. So when you come in, you got to watch yourself, you  
19 got to point to the short water, break the slide because if not,  
20 the way the eddy works, because your tow's in but your boat is  
21 still out, so the river's trying to pull you this way and keep  
22 your head up to the north side as you're turning and you got to  
23 steer kind of hard so as you're coming in, you're sliding, then  
24 the eddy catches the boat and it keeps pulling you, so you got to  
25 point at the south wall to break the slide as you're coming and



1 you steer right, that's what breaks the slide.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. But I didn't have an eddy to bother me or anything to work at  
4 that river stage in there to be concerned about.

5 Q. Okay. So on that day there was nothing of concern.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. Okay. Just to clarify, so you were coming from -- you were  
8 coming upriver and turning into forebay.

9 A. Right, coming upriver.

10 Q. Right, okay.

11 A. Because as I was waiting below here, they had another vessel  
12 coming out, so I had to wait until he cleared the forebay, until  
13 the locks called me to enter in.

14 Q. Okay. And what channel do you talk with on the locks, is  
15 it --

16 A. Channel 14.

17 Q. Fourteen VHF, okay.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You mentioned you had a steersman up there?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay. And so you had -- was he one of the five crew or --

22 A. No, he was an extra guy, he --

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. That normally happen, normally when I train because I'm a DE.

25 Q. Um-hum.

1 A. They'll put an extra guy on to get his steering time in.

2 Q. Okay. And so where was he -- I understand that you were on  
3 the sticks and you were on --

4 A. He was right behind me, watching.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Because I was going to let him take it in because he needs  
7 credit code, then I was like I want you to watch me because at  
8 this kind of river stage it surges you a lot and he can see me,  
9 and explain it to him coming in the forebay and telling him what  
10 to watch and expect and --

11 Q. So, I mean --

12 A. Kind of glad that he wasn't behind the wheel, you know.

13 Q. It's intriguing, so I mean, if you were to explain it to me,  
14 so with a surge, so you pull into forebay and you know that you're  
15 going to get -- you're aware that there's two southbound ships and  
16 they're going to suck the water out, so you're ready for that.

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. Okay. Explain to me, if I was a steersman, what's going to  
19 happen again because that's one of the notes I had, just --  
20 because you were going really fast, so what happened at that  
21 point?

22 A. As I was coming into forebay, as I was coming up to the  
23 gates, I was almost stopped and just easing ahead to the red pin  
24 because I like to try to control my speed to know where I can stop  
25 the tow with that kind of wake coming in.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. And it's always easier to come back ahead and stop, so I was  
3 controlling it and as the tow stopped, I eased it back ahead and I  
4 was backing with one, just easy to keep it against the long wall  
5 and I started seeing myself going back, back along the long wall  
6 and I started pushing ahead easier more, and then it started  
7 sucking me hard and I started coming ahead harder to try to slow  
8 it down because the *Pamela Ann* was behind me.

9 Q. Um-hum.

10 A. And then we almost got stopped, I kicked them out, put them  
11 in reverse and it was easing me ahead and all of a sudden I put  
12 them back up full astern and that's when it started pushing it,  
13 pushing, the water started coming back in and it shoved me where I  
14 could -- it wasn't even slowing it down, it just -- I had it  
15 hooked up and the speed kept going forward, forward, forward, and  
16 I wasn't even trying to break speed in reverse.

17 Q. Yeah. And you were hooked up, like, all three --

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. All three, okay.

20 A. Yes, sir. I mean, it felt like 4 to 5 foot of water out the  
21 chamber, so when it de-placed all of that water back, it just --  
22 it shoved me.

23 Q. Understood. Thank you for explaining that again.

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. We talked to the steersman, he saw the ships coming. You

1 were about .8 to .6 miles per hour. Okay, the water got pulled  
2 out as the ship passed, I understand that now. That pulled the  
3 boat out, so you mentioned kicking ahead.

4 A. Pushing ahead.

5 Q. Yeah.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. The throttles.

9 Q. And that's at all three, that wasn't the individual or  
10 nothing?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay. All right. Then you were doing about .4, .3. You  
13 kicked out of ahead, clutched in reverse, I understand that. Then  
14 that's when you hooked up?

15 A. Yes, sir. Full astern.

16 Q. Okay. And then the water -- I got 3 to 4 feet dropped --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- the water dropped 3 to 4 feet, okay.

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. The deckhands, I understand that. And the northbound ship  
21 pushed the water in, then you noticed, as the water started coming  
22 in, you were going about 2 to 3 miles per hour ahead.

23 A. At contact, I think it was like right at point -- 2.3.

24 Q. Okay. All right, into the canal. And that was the port  
25 gate. Okay. That's what I had there. The other question, again,

1 standard bank questions.

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. Weather was a factor, wind, was it -- I know you said it was  
4 a nice day, clear visibility.

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Wind a factor at all or --

7 A. No.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. No, sir.

10 MR. TUCKER: Okay. Let's see. Did I ask you that? These  
11 guys know me, I always have a couple back-end questions, so -- but  
12 for now I'm going to catch up with my notes here, as well,  
13 Captain, so --

14 MR. NAQUIN: Yes, sir.

15 MR. TUCKER: -- thank you, and [REDACTED]

16 BY MR. [REDACTED]

17 Q. Yes. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the U.S. Coast Guard, Captain. What type  
18 of license do you hold?

19 A. I have a master of towing.

20 Q. Master of towing?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. And you've held that for how long?

23 A. Let's see. Fifteen years or longer.

24 Q. Did you do any type of formal training or courses prior to  
25 getting your license?

- 1 A. Yes, sir.
- 2 Q. What did you do, where did you go?
- 3 A. Fletcher.
- 4 Q. Fletcher?
- 5 A. Yes, sir. In Houma.
- 6 Q. And what was that for?
- 7 A. For marine merchants.
- 8 Q. Prep, preparatory? Prep to license?
- 9 A. Yes, sir.
- 10 Q. What about radar?
- 11 A. Griffin. No, to get -- to actually get my first radar
- 12 license, I went to Morgan City. I don't know the -- I don't
- 13 remember the school's name.
- 14 Q. Okay. That was your initial, then?
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. First license.
- 17 A. Yes, sir.
- 18 Q. Have you renewed any license since your original?
- 19 A. As in -- like renew every 5 years?
- 20 Q. Coast Guard license.
- 21 A. Yes, sir.
- 22 Q. You've renewed? How many times have you renewed?
- 23 A. One, two, three. Three times, four times, I want to say. I
- 24 think.
- 25 Q. You're on your fourth issue now?

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. Okay. And are there any restrictions on your license?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. Are there any medical addendums to your license?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. My questions are a little bit all over the place, okay,

7 because I've been --

8 A. Okay.

9 Q. -- taking notes between two guys here, so -- you mentioned

10 that you've run that route, you were northbound in the river --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. -- and then westbound headed to the locks, right?

13 A. On the river, we turn into the forebay westbound, yes, sir.

14 Q. Okay. And you'd be -- that was your direction.

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Got you. And you're pushing two loaded red flags (ph.) --

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. -- strung out.

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. Tell me a little bit about face wires, configuration and

21 condition, how do you use them? How do you fasten them? I'm

22 sorry.

23 A. They four port it. They inspect the lines, four port.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. They were brand new, they just had got put on a month ago.

- 1 Q. Okay.
- 2 A. They ran a four port to the outside of the timberheads and  
3 ran jockeys from the barge to the top of the push knees.
- 4 Q. Got you. And how are your face wires made fast on the  
5 vessel, on the boat?
- 6 A. They run from the winch, from a chock to the -- abutting to  
7 the middle chock on the vessel, back to the timberhead on the  
8 barge and to the stern of the vessel.
- 9 Q. Okay, shackled in at the stern.
- 10 A. It's got an eye, there's no shackle, it's on a button.
- 11 Q. Okay.
- 12 A. On a button on the boat that's welded.
- 13 Q. Okay. So face wires are -- they're made fast through  
14 winches.
- 15 A. Yes, sir.
- 16 Q. On the deck, right?
- 17 A. Yeah, we have one winch on each side on the head.
- 18 Q. Okay. And how are those winches controlled?
- 19 A. By electric, our buttons in the wheelhouse.
- 20 Q. Up in the wheelhouse?
- 21 A. Yes, sir.
- 22 Q. You faced up to those barges originally?
- 23 A. Yeah. And I tighten up, yeah.
- 24 Q. You tighten up, okay. Any issues with those winches as far  
25 as --



1 A. No, sir.

2 Q. -- letting go or loosing, nothing like that?

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. So the two barges you have, had you pushed those two before?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Is that a routine tow for you?

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Those same two barges?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay, good. And you've pushed them on this route before --

11 A. Yes, sir.

12 Q. -- right? Into the forebay, into the locks.

13 A. In the locks.

14 Q. Got you. How do you configure -- I know they're strung out,

15 but what's the actual configuration of the barges, are they double

16 rigged, are they --

17 A. They're double skinned.

18 Q. Okay, do you have a rake in the front --

19 A. Yes, sir.

20 Q. -- and a rake in the back in both barges?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Or is it a box on either end?

23 A. One barge is made with a rake and the stern is a box.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. And same thing with the other one. So we make up on a rake

1 and we put it in a unit.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. There's some wedges that you lock in, when you string out, it  
4 locks it into the plates and then we put a fork for our cables.  
5 We have some long cables that -- on a coupling, timberhead, a  
6 timberhead and then we got a sharp button to button and run a  
7 four-port safety line in the middle of the barge and put a six-  
8 port and I make them put each a four-port of safety lines on the  
9 timberheads.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. In case something happens and you bust a cable, you have a  
12 safety line that hold the barges.

13 Q. Okay. So that was two barges and what I'm seeing is I see  
14 rakes on each end --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. -- and boxes made fast in the middle, right?

17 A. Yes, sir.

18 Q. If you were pushing one barge, if you were, and I know I'm  
19 being hypothetical, but if you were pushing one barge, how would  
20 you make up to that barge --

21 A. On a box --

22 Q. -- if it was a -- you make up to the box ends?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. So what's the purpose of putting the two box ends  
25 together and the rakes out and you making up on the rake end of

1 this tow?

2 A. It pushes better in a unit, because with a loaded barge you  
3 have water displacement that comes off on the box ends and being  
4 on a rake, if you're loaded with a 10.6 draft or 11, your -- them  
5 rakes are higher and they got little push knees, but if you touch  
6 something or you happen to run aground or push in a bank, you can  
7 push that barge up in the back and go down, and that rake will run  
8 over the back of the barge and hit your pipeline and all.

9 Q. Okay. So if I'm pushing ahead and I got two rakes on  
10 opposite ends, one I made fast to.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Right? And the other end is out in front of me, obviously  
13 that's going to help the water pass under --

14 A. Smoother.

15 Q. -- smoother, right?

16 A. Right.

17 Q. Okay. If I need to back that tow, opposite direction, right,  
18 what's the dynamic there as far as the water? How does that help  
19 me if I'm going to back and stop that tow?

20 A. That helps the water flow easier on the rake side than the  
21 box end. On the box end, it's just hitting the wall, it's almost  
22 like you'll push yourself a little bit before it actually starts  
23 backing.

24 Q. Got you.

25 A. If you're throwing water on a box, then I need the rake.

1 Q. Okay, so opposite effects, instead of going forward with  
2 water passing under, you backing it down, the water's going to  
3 pass under, it gives you shorter, shorter stopping --

4 A. A lot smoother -- right.

5 Q. -- distance and speed, right?

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. And then what you have to account for is you're  
8 pushing a liquid product?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And how does that affect your stopping distance in a barge or  
11 in a tow?

12 A. On a loaded barge, it's a lot of weight, you have 3200-ton  
13 barge loaded down, you know, and it takes a little while to stop,  
14 stop some loaded barges. How you load it, doing a safe speed of 5  
15 miles an hour, it would probably take you about 6, 700 feet, if  
16 you was in a canal, to stop and that's why we have, you know,  
17 policies and I try to teach a lot of people not to come into  
18 anywheres .5, .8, once you're coming up on a long wall, dock,  
19 anything, so you have no power but not enough speed to stop the  
20 vessel if you need to, than getting yourself in danger.

21 Q. Okay. Is there any policy, company policy, as far as how you  
22 make up a tow or is that at your own discretion?

23 A. In a river there are certain things, but we got our  
24 protocols, we call our port captains. If we don't know, we don't  
25 assume that it's right and they help us out. And policy, you

1 know, you put unit to unit, box to box. Normal standard if you're  
2 empty, we'll put -- we'll piggyback them going up the river  
3 because if you got a rake to rake and you got a guy walking on a  
4 deck and a freaking tree comes out from the rig and it's going to  
5 go straight out into the boat or hit somebody, kill somebody, so  
6 we try to keep that blocked off if we got empties.

7 Q. And of course, not having as deep a draft, if it's a light  
8 barge --

9 A. Right. It can --

10 Q. -- you're not -- you can stop it --

11 A. Right.

12 Q. -- because of the water passing, okay, I got you. All  
13 righty. So what was the draft that day on these two barges?

14 A. Ten six.

15 Q. Ten six, is that a standard draft?

16 A. Yeah. For max loaded. Our orders, depending on the -- we  
17 get a lot of things from the port captain, navigation alerts,  
18 drafts, for the route or the area, we have to do barge plans, look  
19 at the routes, the draft, see what the orders are that the  
20 customer wants and then if that route says we can load a 10-foot,  
21 then we have to load a barge to 10 feet or the 10.6 and, you know,  
22 normal ICW, amount of tons, 10.6, you can run that in a canal and  
23 those were the orders called for that day, it was max loaded 10.6  
24 draft, so it was either ones, either put what you can on it or the  
25 10.6 draft, so --

1 Q. Okay. So that's a standard, that's nothing different, then?

2 A. No.

3 Q. Okay. You had mentioned that this particular route you had  
4 made several times --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. -- and I know you've answered this, but was there anything in  
7 particular that was any different this day, this time, than any  
8 other time that you had made those locks?

9 A. No, nothing different. Wasn't expecting what happened,  
10 happened. Made it a hundred times. I know that when you go in  
11 there on a normal day, when you get in there, tying up, you have  
12 surge sometimes 3 to 4 feet, you know, tide (ph.) out, especially  
13 when they're closing the gates and pushing the water, it will pull  
14 you back and forth, and I went in there before with a ship passing  
15 and, you know, it surged me, but it wasn't where I couldn't stop  
16 in it. I guess having three of them, wasn't expecting that to  
17 happen to me.

18 Q. Um-hum. Okay. So when you left the dock -- and I ain't  
19 going to say it because you all couldn't get it right, so I ain't  
20 sure what the name of that dock was, which was --

21 A. PBF.

22 Q. Okay, thanks. When you left that dock, you had your two  
23 barges, they were loaded.

24 A. They was doubled up on the dock.

25 Q. They were doubled up, breasted (ph.) up?

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. You strung them out at the dock?

3 A. Well, they had another tow below us within 3 feet, and so I  
4 had to downstream and get the piling right here about 20 feet  
5 behind my vessel, so I down-streamed and got it on top of my rake  
6 and made up. Until the guys fastened me in, I got to make some  
7 calls because the way our policies are, if you -- and not only our  
8 policy, if you don't feel safe or think you can't get the job done  
9 safely, you know, we call our port captains or, you know, call  
10 somebody and they'll help you, don't try to figure it out on  
11 yourself.

12 So I called Caleb, our dispatcher, and tell me if they had a  
13 boat nearby, they help us get out from the dock, it would be nice,  
14 and they had the *Genie* and so he was able -- while I was twisting  
15 the stern, he was able right here to pull me out straight.

16 Q. Um-hum.

17 A. So we went full on the dock and trying to twist and hit the  
18 dock or, you know, put the boat on the bottom (ph.) or anything,  
19 you know, and get help. Once he got out there, I told him I had  
20 it from there, if you want to just stand by in case I needed him,  
21 before you leave, let me get this strung out, put in a notch and  
22 when I got in the river, I got where I needed to get below  
23 Chalmette ferries, I told him I cut the stern line loose and I had  
24 to top a lot and I just let that boy (ph.) flip around while I was  
25 back in the river. Strung out tow, put it in a notch, then went

1 down to Algiers forebay, topped her out, put it below the water  
2 intake on the west side and took on fuel in the water that day and  
3 that afternoon, that's when I got up and took over.

4 Q. Okay. So you were -- from the time -- once you left the  
5 dock, you strung everything out and got it all situated for your  
6 transit, right?

7 A. Yes, sir. By 11 o'clock I pulled it off of the --

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Off the dock.

10 Q. And made your way over to the west bank.

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. You stood by there, waiting lock turns.

13 A. We didn't get -- actually get on a lock turn until after we  
14 took on fuel on the water.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. So after we took on fuel in the water, that's where we was  
17 initially standing by for the locks.

18 Q. Okay. You had mentioned that the river was really low,  
19 0.89 --

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. -- right? It was low. What about current?

22 A. Current, probably half a knot, maybe 1 knot southbound.

23 Q. Southbound?

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. So when you have a low river stage and is 1.5 or 1.9, is that



1 -- is that a strong current, I mean, is that something you feel is  
2 strong, medium, moderate, light?

3 A. It's moderate and it's not -- you know, still you got to pay  
4 attention to the current, you know, what it's doing and how it's  
5 going to affect you.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. But there wasn't nothing a big concern about that day in that  
8 kind of river stage, you know, current-wise, to affect the boat or  
9 anything like that.

10 Q. Okay. What effect does that have on what's called an eddy?

11 A. An eddy, upstream eddy?

12 Q. Any kind. Yeah, what type of -- what effect would a low  
13 river and low current rate have on eddy effect?

14 A. On a vessel?

15 Q. Yeah. On a bank, where you normally have to steer and you'd  
16 notice you had problems --

17 A. It's not as strong, it works slow, but the higher the river  
18 is, the stronger that eddy's going to pull back north, because you  
19 have more strong of a current coming in to -- hitting that forebay  
20 along that bank and that's what encouraged that eddy in that  
21 forebay and makes the current want to go back north.

22 Q. Is that eddy typically found on the lower bank of the  
23 forebay, on the south side?

24 A. It's more in the middle to the north side of the forebay.

25 Q. That particular day was that eddy current an effect or a

1 concern to you?

2 A. No, sir.

3 Q. No.

4 A. No. It didn't have no effect at all because of the river  
5 stage.

6 Q. Being so low.

7 A. Yes, sir.

8 Q. Okay. So when you were making your transit in the river,  
9 leaving from the dock, crossing to the west bank and eventually  
10 leaving the intake dock, right, facility --

11 A. Yeah, below the water intake?

12 Q. Yeah, below the water intake.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. When you left there going into the forebay, did you make --  
15 did you meet any traffic northbound?

16 A. They had a -- I can't -- I think it was a Blessey tow topping  
17 around and he was getting ready to get on lock turn and I was  
18 seeing him on two whistle (ph.) and they had another tow coming  
19 out and I was below the forebay and I talked to the locks, I  
20 talked to him on 14 and he was going to be turning northbound out  
21 of the forebay and I told him I was going to be below the forebay  
22 when he came out.

23 Q. How about any ship traffic, did you encounter any ships north  
24 or southbound?

25 A. As I was transiting the forebay?

1 Q. As you were approaching the forebay, northbound in the river.

2 A. No, sir.

3 Q. None, okay. So you didn't speak to any, anyone, any pilots  
4 or any ships?

5 A. No, sir.

6 Q. Okay. And then when you turned in to the forebay, the other  
7 vessel cleared, coming out, is that right?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Or she cleared and then you went in?

10 A. Yes, sir.

11 Q. Okay. When you got into the forebay, did you -- are you  
12 still -- at that point, were you still monitoring 67, which is the  
13 local traffic, right, navigation traffic?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yes, sir.

17 Q. You were still monitoring?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Could you hear any ship traffic or did -- I know you focused  
20 in on what you were doing at the locks --

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. -- but did you happen to hear or pick up any ship traffic?

23 A. No, not coming down on Chalmette at that time, I didn't hear  
24 any.

25 Q. Okay. When did you realize that there were ships in the

1 river, during the -- you're in the forebay approaching the  
2 chambers, right?

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. When did you actually realize that there was ship traffic  
5 approaching the forebay north or southbound?

6 A. When I started getting sucked, sucked back out slowly, then  
7 it started pulling me harder --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- and I was like what the hell is going on and then I zoomed  
10 out and I looked on the Rosepoint and that's when I seen the two  
11 ships coming southbound and that's what I was telling my pilot, I  
12 said see, that's what you got to watch out for. As they're coming  
13 down, they're pulling all that water with them --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- and that's when I started pushing ahead and I was telling  
16 him, I said then you got to be careful as you're getting to a  
17 stop, you got start backing because the water's going to come back  
18 in after the ship.

19 Q. Have you been in the forebay or approaching the locks before  
20 when ships had passed that forebay?

21 A. Yes, sir.

22 Q. North and southbound?

23 A. Yes, sir.

24 Q. Did you happen to know if either of the two -- go back.  
25 There were two southbound ships.

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. One northbound ship.

3 A. Right.

4 Q. Which ship, in your opinion, do you feel, had the most impact  
5 or the initial impact on the control of your tow?

6 A. The second ship.

7 Q. The second ship?

8 A. Southbound.

9 Q. Second southbound ship.

10 A. It really -- the second one really done it, the first one  
11 pulled the water, the water's already pulled.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It was down like 2 foot and it wasn't pulling me that bad,  
14 but the water never was able to come back in and settle back down.  
15 When the second one passed, it pulled the water out even harder  
16 and further, that's when it dropped me down to like 4 foot. And  
17 then when the water was starting to come back in and then when the  
18 northbounder was passing, I guess, you know, the water did shove  
19 northbound, a lot of water's coming in and they was -- in that  
20 area of the forebay, shoved me and that's when I didn't have no  
21 more control, I was hooked up in reverse and didn't have anything  
22 to do or any other thing to do to get out of that situation.

23 Q. Right. First southbound ship, do you recall if she was empty  
24 or loaded?

25 A. No, I couldn't. Normally, when they coming southbound, but I

1 can't recall if they was loaded. The second one was.

2 Q. The first ship, do you recall if she was moving at a high  
3 rate of speed or did she look unusual?

4 A. They normally do, they normally coming down the river at that  
5 river stage, maybe 9 miles an hour, but coming at the forebay at  
6 15, 16 miles an hour, I never seen them do it like that before.

7 Q. And as an estimate, I'm sure it's -- it can be calculated  
8 through your Rosepoint and -- but how far -- did it look like the  
9 ship was closer to the forebay than what normal southbound ships  
10 passing would be?

11 A. Normally, yeah. These two, they come -- the way -- it's kind  
12 of like in a slight bend right here when they're coming south --

13 Q. Yeah.

14 A. -- and that, when that northbounder was coming up out of  
15 Murphy, the first two, they came more down this a way and then  
16 when they came right here, this is when they turned right here to  
17 come back this way to make the next bend to come south.

18 Q. In relation to your photograph that you have there, where's  
19 the anchorage?

20 A. The ship anchorage?

21 Q. Yeah, where is --

22 A. Right past Murphy right here, they got a Murphy dock, they  
23 got a ship anchorage, and they got a fleet right here.

24 Q. Um-hum.

25 A. And then you got a turn, a service fleet right below 9 mile,

1 right there.

2 Q. Did you notice -- do you recall ships anchored in that  
3 anchorage?

4 A. No, not at that time, I didn't really look to see if there  
5 were ships anchored.

6 Q. So this first ship that you're pointing to, you -- let me ask  
7 you again, do you feel like he was closer than what you've  
8 normally seen or experienced or know to the forebay than normal?

9 A. When I was in the chamber --

10 Q. Yeah.

11 A. -- when I looked at Rosepoint? Yeah, normally. I don't  
12 know --

13 Q. He was closer?

14 A. Yeah. Than they normally would have been, be more in the  
15 middle.

16 Q. More in the middle? Okay.

17 A. Right.

18 Q. Yeah.

19 A. And they coming down more than the middle --

20 Q. Right.

21 A. -- to get shaped up on the other bend.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And I guess maybe because the smaller ship was coming north,  
24 they just moved over more to meet each other.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. I don't --
- 2 Q. You don't know if that guy was empty or loaded?
- 3 A. I can't recall.
- 4 Q. Okay. This guy now?
- 5 A. He was loaded, coming south.
- 6 Q. He was loaded?
- 7 A. Yes, sir.
- 8 Q. Do you know what type of ship he was?
- 9 A. It was -- I know it was a liquid ship, I don't know what
- 10 kind, I don't know if it was an LPG ship or -- or it wasn't no,
- 11 like --
- 12 Q. Like a bulk or a cargo ship.
- 13 A. Yeah.
- 14 Q. Didn't have hatches on it.
- 15 A. No.
- 16 Q. Okay, all right. He, too, when he's southbound, is he as
- 17 close to this forebay as the first?
- 18 A. Yeah, he was really -- you can see him on Rosepoint, when he
- 19 turned, he was closer to the forebay.
- 20 Q. Do you know if both of these ships met that ship? Did they
- 21 meet each other, pass each other?
- 22 A. He was down here when he probably was about Murphy, he was
- 23 coming past the forebay as this northbounder was in between Murphy
- 24 and the water intake on the east side.
- 25 Q. Do you know if this ship ever overtook that ship?



1 A. No.

2 Q. No, you don't know or you didn't --

3 A. No, I didn't -- they didn't overtake their self anywhere in  
4 this area, but further down --

5 Q. Not the "U."

6 A. -- I don't know.

7 Q. Okay. All right. So we're looking at a low water situation,  
8 right?

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. And you're pushing those in the canal, so I know you know how  
11 hard this is. What kind of an effect would you expect to have  
12 when you have low water and you have suction from wheel wash?

13 A. Sucking the water, no, from the bank.

14 Q. And what's that typically do, that you know of, to a tow,  
15 control?

16 A. It sucks the water out from underneath the tow and the harder  
17 you push in a canal, you try to push harder, you're not going to  
18 make speed and you'll burn more fuel, but it makes the tow want to  
19 -- chasing a tow on a tide. If you slow it down and drive with a  
20 normal speed, you know, four and a half, five, without shoving  
21 hard, it actually keeps the water smooth underneath the boat to  
22 steer the boat because if not, you end up steering harder and then  
23 if you cut a point it'll suck the water out from underneath of  
24 you, it's just going to shear off and go to the other side of the  
25 bank.

1 Q. Right. In relation to a prop and a rudder, what's the  
2 dynamic of steering? How does that work?

3 A. You got the propeller right here and you got the rudder and  
4 this spins the water into the propeller and then -- and that's  
5 what steers the current which way you want to go --

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. -- while the wheel wash is pushing.

8 Q. All right. What gives you the greatest steering, what gives  
9 you more steering in something like that?

10 A. As in, you mean, pushing ahead or backing down?

11 Q. Pushing ahead. Do you get more water across the rudder, it  
12 gives you more steering?

13 A. Yeah, more rudder.

14 Q. Going backwards, in reverse, astern?

15 A. If you backing and you're moving ahead at -- if you're moving  
16 ahead at 4 mile an hour, you're not going to have no steering at  
17 all as you're backing it to the tow, it's almost stopped.

18 Q. Right.

19 A. It's almost like you're dead in the water because the tow's  
20 still shoving as you're backing, there's no control of the vessel  
21 until you get down to less than a mile an hour.

22 Q. So when you -- if I were to push water from your stern, if I  
23 were to push water on your stern against the rudder, which goes  
24 against the prop, are you going to have as much steering or less  
25 steering?

1 A. Less.

2 Q. That's right, okay. I say that's right, I guess that's  
3 right. I don't know, I agree with you. Okay.

4 A. It's almost like a bathtub, you take some and you take your  
5 hand and push it this a way --

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. -- it's going to -- it's going to push everything --

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. -- and you just -- that kind of surge, within 2 foot, you're  
10 not going to shove anybody from a 2,000 up -- a 2-foot surge, if  
11 he was just going to go through and oh, you can run through, that  
12 boat ain't going to shove up through there because of the surge.

13 Q. Had you ever experienced that before with -- with a situation  
14 where the difficulty of controlling the tow was from a surge of  
15 another vessel?

16 A. I had it done before in Houston ship channel with ships and  
17 all passing by, by the dock, and surging you, yanking you and  
18 pulling you, but not something like this.

19 Q. Got you. Okay. Once everything got settled down, were you  
20 able or did you attempt even to speak to any of the ships that had  
21 passed?

22 A. No, sir. I was trying to keep the tow in control and keep my  
23 cool, you know, calm, because there was a little -- you know,  
24 after the -- you know, they never seen nothing that like that,  
25 so --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Or one of them didn't, Mason didn't, and I don't know if the  
3 other two did, but I didn't speak to another vessel, I was  
4 speaking to the locks and trying to keep the vessel from surging  
5 back and forward and get it out of there safely and back it out of  
6 there.

7 Q. So if you had the ability, ability right now, to change  
8 whatever needed to be changed from all the other times that you've  
9 done this, not necessarily your actions --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- or your boat, but whatever it was that you feel caused  
12 this, what would it be, what would you change, what would you  
13 correct? What would you make right so that this wouldn't have  
14 happened to you or happened in the locks?

15 A. In the long run?

16 Q. Yeah.

17 A. Knowing what I know now, at a low river stage where that  
18 happened, it kind of gave me an eye opener what to expect at that  
19 more of a lower river when ships are coming, to try to let them  
20 pass and, you know, come in at -- you know, come in the lock. I  
21 mean, handling a tow and driving a tow in the safe speed I was in  
22 didn't have no factor of what happened, it's more of the ships,  
23 the surge of them, what caused it. And I think we ought to be  
24 advised at a lower river of -- you know, pass on to our marine  
25 people, you know, be aware at low river, ships are coming, you

1 know, at the forebay, not -- let them pass and get clear first and  
2 let the water settle down, you know, before going in.

3 Q. Do you think if either of these vessels had passed this  
4 forebay at a reduced speed, the same thing would've taken place in  
5 here?

6 A. No.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Thank you. I have nothing further.

8 LT [REDACTED] All right, so this is Lieutenant [REDACTED] with the Coast  
9 Guard. I also have nothing further, I'm going to open it up to  
10 anybody else that would like to ask questions or anything, so --

11 MR. TUCKER: I got a couple follow-ups, but mostly language.

12 MR. NAQUIN: Because I know coming southbound on the river  
13 with a tow, can't speak on a ship, but our boats, when the river's  
14 up 10, 12 feet and you're pushing with a sized tow output, you can  
15 make 12, 14 miles an hour. At this river stage with the tow I  
16 had, I only was able to make nine and that's shoving on it. So  
17 for those ships to make that kind of speed, they had to really be  
18 shoving on it hard to get that kind of speed in that river  
19 condition, to pull that kind of water.

20 BY MR. TUCKER:

21 Q. Captain, this is Adam again here, just language stuff.  
22 What's a lock turn?

23 A. A lock turn?

24 Q. Is that like waiting your turn for a lock or --

25 A. Say if he calls me and gives me information, his tow tonnage,

1 how much he has, he's number one, then you call me, want to get a  
2 lock turn and give me all your information, well, you'll be number  
3 two going west --

4 Q. Okay, so you're waiting your turn.

5 A. -- into the lock, yes.

6 Q. Yeah, okay. That was an assumption, but I just wanted to  
7 make sure I understood.

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. Previous, this is a question I had gone back to when you --  
10 you mentioned there was some dialogue with the lock master. What  
11 do you recall of that dialogue, was he giving you instructions of  
12 any sort or --

13 A. Their instructions where to lock up at in the locks?

14 Q. Yeah, I -- well, I believe you said you were communicating  
15 with --

16 A. Before you go in the locks, he would tell you before you come  
17 in to the forebay, two men on the head, lifejackets, hard hat,  
18 bumpers in each hand.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. And as I'm coming in there, he tells me we're going to the  
21 green pin, then after the *Pamela Ann*, the *Pamela Ann* that was  
22 coming in, it was like all right, Cap, change of plans, bring it  
23 down to the red pin. I said all right, that's fine. And you tie  
24 up on either side, doesn't matter what side, if you're laid up on  
25 one side, you catch the lines on the pins on the wall on that

1 side, starboard or port, and that was about it, you know, getting  
2 it in there safely, you know, getting it tied up.

3 Q. Okay, so nothing -- nothing out of the ordinary.

4 A. No, than him freaking out about it. We coming ahead and  
5 couldn't stop it, I mean --

6 Q. Okay, yeah. But that was all -- that was all while --

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. -- things were going on.

9 A. Going on, yeah.

10 Q. Yeah, going -- yeah, okay. We mentioned the drafts of the  
11 barges, as well, just to verify, draft of the vessel?

12 A. Draft for the vessel is 9.6.

13 Q. Nine-six.

14 A. Nine-five.

15 Q. What's that, sorry? Nine --

16 A. Nine-five.

17 Q. Nine-five.

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. Nine-five. You know my story, I just got here this morning.  
20 What part of the barge hit the lock wall, was it the starboard,  
21 port?

22 A. It was on the port front, the lock hit from pretty much half  
23 of the barge to the port side.

24 Q. Got it, okay. We also talked to cameras and it sounds like  
25 you guys have seen this, we haven't, is it one camera? It sounds

1 to me like there's a camera in the wheelhouse --

2 A. We have --

3 Q. -- looking forward or --

4 A. -- two cameras on the front deck, one faces at the deck,  
5 where the windshields are, and your push knees only got one facing  
6 forward at a whole tow.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. And there's one that faces back at the back of the vessel.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. That watches the wheel wash or whatever, the exhaust, and  
11 somebody come hit you or -- and there's one in the engine room  
12 that watches the engines.

13 Q. Okay. And so there's no camera in the wheelhouse or nothing?

14 A. Yeah, it has one behind me in the wheelhouse.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Looking at me from behind.

17 Q. All right. And is that capturing audio, too, or just --

18 A. Yeah, the video, yeah.

19 Q. All right.

20 A. They're all like -- no audio.

21 MR. TUCKER: All audio, okay.

22 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: No, no --

23 MR. NAQUIN: No audio.

24 MR. TUCKER: No audio, okay.

25 BY MR. TUCKER:



1 Q. Still on the subject of cameras again, totally unfamiliar.  
2 Not on your boat, but are you familiar with the cameras in the  
3 locks or around the locks in that area?

4 A. They got them on the lock walls, but I'm not familiar with  
5 them all around at their facility.

6 Q. Okay. *Pamela Ann*, you said she was a light boat?

7 A. A light boat.

8 Q. Okay. And you said she was from the Star Fleet.

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. Okay. And Star Fleet was on the other side of the lock.

11 A. No, it's in river side. It's at mile board of 90. Just north  
12 of the forebay about 2 miles.

13 Q. Is there anything, Captain, that I or we have failed or not  
14 asked you that you might feel is important, relevant, and for us  
15 to know so we can kind of put all this together?

16 A. Maybe talk to the ship pilots, you know, tell them to be more  
17 considerate about their speed and others that's around them. Do  
18 they have any, like, restrictions on ships at a speed? I know we  
19 all got to watch our weights and be considerate to the other  
20 marines and responsible for them, but is there any rule on that in  
21 the river with these ships?

22 Q. Good point. Just to verify, you said there was no -- you had  
23 no echo sound or no depth finder on the vessel at all.

24 A. No, sir. No, sir.

25 MR. TUCKER: Okay.

1 BY MR. [REDACTED]

2 Q. [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard. Just a couple of questions.

3 A. Yes, sir.

4 Q. So how many people -- how many people were on board the boat  
5 the day that this took place?

6 A. Six people.

7 Q. Six?

8 A. Yes, sir.

9 Q. So we're looking at -- you lead (ph.) captain?

10 A. Yes, sir. I'm the master of the vessel.

11 Q. You're the master of the vessel?

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. And we have a relief captain on board --

14 A. Relief captain.

15 Q. -- and the pilot was off watch at home?

16 A. Yeah, he was at home.

17 Q. Okay. And how many deckhands do we have?

18 A. We have two tankermen, a deckhand, and a steersman.

19 Q. Two tanks, two decks, two deckhands?

20 A. Two tankermen.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. And one deckhand and one steersman. Steersman trainee. For  
23 the wheelhouse.

24 Q. Okay, I got you. Out of those people, who handles the engine  
25 room?

1 A. While we're running, our deck crew and the tankermen do  
2 hourly check, they check all the engine room fluids, day tanks,  
3 and they report to the wheelhouse every hour on the hour to make  
4 sure we're okay, we need anything or if anything's wrong.

5 Q. Got you.

6 A. When we stop, we'll go down there and do our maintenance and  
7 oil changes and check everything.

8 Q. Are they authorized -- are they authorized to do any types of  
9 repairs or --

10 A. No, we --

11 Q. -- replacements or anything?

12 A. -- got to call it in to -- to the maintenance hotline and  
13 they make a work order on it and they will send out a third party  
14 or one of our electricians and mechanics, they come fix it.

15 Q. What were the most recent repairs done on the vessel that you  
16 know of? Engine room-wise.

17 A. Engine room, okay. Engine room. I want to say when I was --  
18 when I was on, that I know of, that we changed the rear seal on  
19 the generator that was leaking a little bit of oil and they got  
20 that fixed. Nothing that I know of that they came. They might've  
21 did a tune-up, I'm not sure if my relief told me, on the  
22 generators. They got their standard, you know, 10,000 hours or  
23 whatever, they come do a tune-up, whatever.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But no major maintenance done. The engines just got put in

1 there, they got 6800 hours on them.

2 Q. Throttle controls. Air, electric, hydraulic, what are they?

3 A. That's air.

4 Q. Air?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Any issues with any of that?

7 A. No, sir.

8 Q. Any repairs recently you know of?

9 A. No, sir.

10 Q. Okay. From the time that you left the bank below the water  
11 intake northbound --

12 A. Yes, sir.

13 Q. -- all the way into when this whole thing began in the  
14 locks --

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. -- who all was on the bridge with you?

17 A. It was me and my steersman. My relief captain, he went  
18 downstairs to fix him something to eat.

19 Q. Okay. And it's just you and the steersman up there, right?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Any discussions, any conversations going on between you two?

22 A. Yeah, we was just talking and I'd tell him what to expect  
23 and, you know, steering, how to watch, how to point at the short  
24 wall. The reason why, when the river's up, you know, the eddy  
25 works, you know, coming in there and showing him how -- what you

1 do to break the slide when you're coming in.

2 Q. How long has he been a steersman? How long has he been in  
3 the program?

4 A. He's been with me for the last two months. Being in the  
5 program, I couldn't tell you.

6 Q. Any distractions you can think of that took place, radio  
7 calls, telephone calls, cell phone use, texting?

8 A. Nothing like that.

9 Q. Bells, whistles, anything, to do on the vessel, any type of  
10 distraction at all?

11 A. No, sir.

12 Q. Everything's going smooth, no problems.

13 A. No, sir.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you, Captain, I appreciate it.

15 MR. NAQUIN: You're welcome.

16 MR. [REDACTED] I don't have anything.

17 LT [REDACTED] All right, this is Lieutenant [REDACTED] with the Coast  
18 Guard again. If nobody else has anything to add, we're going to  
19 go ahead and conclude the interview at this time. All right, it  
20 is 14:23, July 6, 2023, we're concluding the interview. Thank  
21 you.

22 MR. NAQUIN: You're welcome.

23 (Whereupon, at 2:23 p.m., the interview concluded.)  
24  
25

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 Wilson Naquin

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.



---

Karen D. Martini  
Transcriber