

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

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Accident No.: DCA23FM038

MISSISSIPPI RIVER ON JULY 4, 2023

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Interview of: LANCE PELLEGRIN, Tankerman 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, 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 Lance Pellegrin:	
By LT [REDACTED]	5
By Mr. Tucker	11
By Mr. Tucker	15

I N T E R V I E W

(4:01 p.m.)

LT [REDACTED] All right, it is July 6th, 2023, time on deck is 16:01. The 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. PELLEGRIN: Yes, sir.

LT [REDACTED] All right, thank you. We're going to go ahead and state everybody's names and titles. This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard investigating officer.

MR. TUCKER: My name is Adam Tucker and, Lance, I'm with the National Transportation Safety Board. Thanks for talking with us.

MR. PELLEGRIN: All right.

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

MR. JOHNSON: Jeff Johnson, Enterprise Marine Services.

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

MR. PELLEGRIN: Lance Pellegrin, Enterprise Marine Services.

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

1 MR. PELLEGRIN: Yes.

2 LT [REDACTED] Perfect. And then your address is [REDACTED]

3 [REDACTED].

4 MR. PELLEGRIN: Yes, sir.

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

6 INTERVIEW OF LANCE PELLEGRIN

7 BY LT [REDACTED]

8 Q. So at this time we'll just kind of let you walk us through
9 what took place.

10 A. All right. I went out for watch change and I was -- I got on
11 the stern of the barge where Thomas was and he was explaining to
12 me, look, he said, once he catches his line, you catch the
13 opposite back here, you know, normal locking. He said -- he said
14 you just got to drag a line over. So I went up, I drug a line
15 over and as we was making relief, that's when the water started
16 dropping and we started falling back. And then it was like a
17 slingshot, we just shot forward after that and it all happened so
18 fast, like I literally was just making watch change and it was
19 over with within seconds.

20 I could hear Mason on the radio and he's counting them down
21 to the pin and I heard him say all right, Cap, I got your line and
22 then right after, I heard him say line popped. Then I heard him
23 say got you another line, lined popped. And then he was just
24 counting down to the gate and he went from 300 feet to a hundred
25 foot within -- like as soon as he says 300 feet, he was like 200

1 feet, 150, 100, and it was quick. And Thomas didn't even make it
2 off the barge yet, we were still making our watch change and it
3 was over with.

4 Q. Okay. Thank you. So walk me through your experience, how
5 long have you been a tankerman?

6 A. Going on 4 years. I've been with Enterprise going on five.

7 Q. Okay. What about time in the industry as a whole?

8 A. Going on 5 years.

9 Q. Okay, so you've worked with them the whole time?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Okay, awesome.

12 A. I've worked on crew boats and shrimp boats most of my life.

13 Q. Okay, what -- okay, so was that --

14 A. That wasn't for the 5 years.

15 Q. Not this barge, no.

16 A. Just Enterprise.

17 Q. What about prior to that? So what about crew boat time and
18 other fishing vessel stuff and all that?

19 A. Crew boat, I maybe worked on a crew boat a couple months --

20 Q. Yeah.

21 A. -- and shrimping, I was like 13 years old when I started.

22 Q. Okay, whole life, pretty much.

23 A. Pretty much my whole life.

24 Q. Got you. Okay, great. A lot of time on the water, that's
25 good.

1 A. Oh, yeah.

2 Q. Okay. And then, so you said you watch-changed, what time did
3 that take place, roughly?

4 A. At 1800.

5 Q. Okay, 1800. And then -- okay, so when you noticed all of the
6 water movement, you're down on the deck of the barge, right?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. So you're pretty much level with the water, so you
9 really have a good view of that.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Walk me through about how much water came out, roughly, and
12 then how much came in, in terms of feet.

13 A. It was a good 5 to 6 foot, like it was a big surge.

14 Q. Was that the drop or was that the surge?

15 A. The drop.

16 Q. The drop, okay.

17 A. The drop. And then we shot forward so fast, I couldn't even
18 tell.

19 Q. Okay. So the water dropped about 5 to 6 feet and then it
20 came in. How quickly would you say -- you said it was very
21 rapidly, but 300 foot to a hundred foot, how quickly did it cover
22 that distance, do you think? A rough estimate.

23 A. It was, I'd say, within 4 or 5 seconds, he was --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. Because as soon as he would get the words out, he was

1 shooting another distance.

2 Q. Yeah. Did you notice any other vessels in the area?

3 A. I was paying attention straight forward --

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. -- because when I heard him, I heard the engines rev up --

6 Q. Um-hum.

7 A. -- and we were still falling back at the time. I guess he
8 knew that the water was going to come back, so he threw them in
9 reverse and I could hear the engines rev up and we shot forward so
10 fast, I thought he was in forward, that's how fast we was going.
11 And I just worked on trying to get a line --

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. -- and listen to everything Wilson was telling me to do.

14 Q. Got you. Tell me about the crew, how long have you worked
15 with this crew?

16 A. I've only been on this boat for a few days.

17 Q. A few days, okay.

18 A. But Thomas, I've worked with him for a few months on --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- another vessel.

21 Q. Got you. With the same company?

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. Okay. So first time with the captain, then, right? Okay.

24 A. Yes, first time with the captain and everybody on there,
25 pretty much.

1 Q. Yeah. How's the relationships -- I know you've only worked
2 there a couple days, but how would you say that those crew
3 dynamics are?

4 A. They get along real good, like they work together great.

5 Q. Awesome. No issues you noticed at all? Okay.

6 A. No. I'm actually comfortable working with --

7 Q. Good.

8 A. -- any one of them again.

9 Q. Awesome, okay. And then walk me through any abnormalities
10 with the vessel. I mean, did you notice anything going on in the
11 engine room or up in the wheelhouse, anything abnormal?

12 A. Not really.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I was in shock when I got on the boat because it was in such
15 good condition for an older boat.

16 Q. Great. Okay. And then what about weather?

17 A. The weather? The weather was nice.

18 Q. Yeah. You said you've been working, you know, for
19 approximately 5 years. What about this water level, have you seen
20 the water level this low before?

21 A. No. And I've never seen a surge like that ever before in my
22 life.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Like I've seen a little water go down, you know, like maybe a
25 foot and then come back up, but I've never seen it do like it did

1 that day.

2 Q. Yeah. What do you think caused that?

3 A. I'm thinking it was from the ships passing.

4 Q. Um-hum. And you didn't see them at all because you were just
5 focused? Okay.

6 A. Yeah, I was -- I was focused forward.

7 Q. Yeah. What about did you notice the -- was there another tug
8 around, did you notice that boat at all?

9 A. Yes, yes. The *Pamela Ann*.

10 Q. Yeah. You noticed that one?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. Did you happen to look at that vessel when they --
13 when the surge came out, came back in? You were not --

14 A. No, I didn't. I didn't notice.

15 Q. Okay. Okay. So tell me, did you guys do any type of
16 debrief, did you talk to the crew at all after this happened?

17 A. Yeah, after it happened, we went in the wheelhouse and Wilson
18 was like, look, you all did a great job and he said you all did
19 everything possible, you all -- there was not "you all could've
20 did to stop it."

21 Q. Okay. Did he talk about what he thought happened at all?

22 A. Yeah, he was saying that the surge, he thinks the surge --

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. -- is what pushed him forward because he was in reverse, wide
25 open --

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. -- and we still shot forward.

3 LT [REDACTED] Okay. I think that's all I have, Adam, if you want
4 to jump in.

5 MR. TUCKER: Um-hum.

6 LT [REDACTED] Thank you, Lance.

7 MR. PELLEGRIN: You're welcome.

8 BY MR. TUCKER:

9 Q. Lance, again, my name is Adam Tucker and I'm with the
10 National Transportation Safety Board. A couple of questions just
11 referencing again, boots on deck and what you saw, I understand
12 you were looking forward, you were focused on forward, but number
13 one, your watch, you're the 6:00 to midnight watch, is that
14 correct?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay, so -- and that also translates into 6:00 in the morning
17 until noon, right?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. All right, so you're on the front watch, so you're
20 always working with the captain?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Yeah, got you, okay. As you got up and this is all going on
23 right in the middle of watching, you said.

24 A. Yes, it's literally as we were making watch change, it just
25 all happened.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Like I said, Thomas never even made it off the barge yet.

3 Q. So that watch change, this is what I wanted to just go back
4 to, you said the stern, you were at the stern of the barge with
5 Tom.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. What side of the barge, port side, starboard side?

8 A. Port.

9 Q. Port side, okay.

10 A. Yeah, we was aiming to catch lines on the port side.

11 Q. Okay. Everything was normal. Yeah, you wanted to catch
12 lines. And you said the water dropped and you said it was like 5
13 to 6 feet.

14 A. Yeah, it was -- like Thomas pointed it out on the lock wall,
15 he was like look how low the water is, and then it just came
16 rushing back in.

17 Q. Okay. So when you -- when it came rushing back in, how did
18 you notice it came rushing back in?

19 A. Because it was pretty much like a wave, like I did glance
20 back and you could notice the -- like the waterline on the lock
21 wall --

22 Q. Um-hum.

23 A. -- you could notice, like I noticed it like getting smaller,
24 you know.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Like you could see like the tide coming up.

2 Q. So like the barge is just going up against --

3 A. Yeah, yeah.

4 Q. Okay. And with that, had you witnessed any or seen any water
5 on deck, either on the barge or on the boat or anything?

6 A. No, I didn't notice any.

7 Q. Okay. Did you happen to notice any, like, wheel wash or
8 anything like that, do you recall?

9 A. No, no. Like maybe coming out the side when he threw it in
10 reverse, but not when we was pulling in and he was trying to get
11 the boat to settle down, but when he hooked it up in reverse, that
12 was it, nothing really coming out of the stern.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I didn't really look back there too much, like I said, I was
15 looking forward.

16 Q. Yeah. And you said who was on -- you heard somebody on the
17 radio? What was --

18 A. Yes, Mason --

19 Q. Mason, okay.

20 A. -- was on the head of the tow.

21 Q. He was the only one up there --

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. -- at that time?

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And then Mason ended up getting the line, you heard -- you

1 were hearing this over the radio.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. And then the line popped and then he got another line
4 and then that line popped, so two lines had broken.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. All right. And then after that, that's when you heard the
7 announcement, 300 down to 100 feet.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. He was spitting out numbers quick and the next thing I know,
11 we hit.

12 Q. Okay. So you say you hit, the next thing you know, you hit.
13 Did you feel the impact, did it --

14 A. Yeah, I felt a little bump and you could hear it.

15 Q. Okay. Understood, okay. You said the weather was nice.
16 Just to verify, was it windy, any strong winds, anything like that
17 you remember?

18 A. No, not that I remember. I don't think so.

19 MR. TUCKER: That's all I have. [REDACTED]

20 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard, I have no questions.

21 MR. PELLEGRIN: All right.

22 LT [REDACTED] This is Lieutenant [REDACTED] U.S. Coast Guard. No
23 further questions. I'm going to let Adam ask his final question
24 here.

25 MR. TUCKER: You can take it.

1 LT [REDACTED] No, no, it's all yours.

2 BY MR. TUCKER:

3 Q. All right. Well, Lance, thank you very much for talking with
4 us and you know why we're here, of course, this is an
5 investigation.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Our role is to gather facts to put all the pieces of this
8 puzzle together --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- and it's --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. It can be a big puzzle and a complex puzzle and certainly
13 when you're dealing with water in and out and surges and all that
14 stuff --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- complexities of vessel movements and all that fun stuff.
17 Long story short, is there anything that, you know, we have not
18 asked you, that we failed to ask you, that you might feel is
19 relevant or helpful for us kind of putting this puzzle together?

20 A. Not really.

21 Q. No?

22 A. Not really. Like I said, I've never seen anything like that
23 before in my life, it freaked me out.

24 MR. TUCKER: All right. Well, thank you very much for your
25 time, then, and that's all I have.

1 LT [REDACTED] All right, thank you.

2 MR. PELLEGRIN: All righty.

3 LT [REDACTED] We're going to go ahead and conclude the interview
4 at 16:15, thank you.

5 (Whereupon, at 4:15 p.m., the interview concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM038

PLACE: New Orleans, Lpuisiana

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