

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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In the matter of: *

*

ISLAND LOOKOUT AND CENTERVILLE *

TURNPIKE BRIDGE COLLISION *

IN CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA, *

Accident No.: DCA21FM005

ON NOVEMBER 14, 2020 *

*

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Interview of: JOSHUA MILLNER, Bridge Operator

Via teleconference

Tuesday,
November 17, 2020

APPEARANCES:

ANDREW EHLERS, Marine Accident Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

MSSE2 [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
U.S. Coast Guard

RYAN GILSENAN, Attorney

LIBBY SINGLETARY
Stevens Towing Co., Inc.

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I N T E R V I E W

(10:00 a.m.)

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2
3 MR. EHLERS: Okay, the recording has started. Good morning,
4 it's 10:00 Eastern Standard Time on November 17th, 2020. This is
5 the interview of Mr. Joshua Millner conducted in conjunction with
6 the investigation into the November 14th, 2020, bridge strike at
7 the Centerville Turnpike Bridge in Chesapeake, Virginia, involving
8 the *Island Lookout* tow. The NTSB accident reference number is
9 DCA21FM005.

10 I'm going to ask everyone to introduce themselves. I will
11 start with Mr. Millner. Can you say your name and spell your last
12 name?

13 MR. MILLNER: Joshua Millner, M-i-l-l-n-e-r.

14 MR. EHLERS: All right, thank you.

15 And Warrant Officer [REDACTED].

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED], [REDACTED].

17 MR. EHLERS: Okay.

18 And Mr. Gilsenan.

19 MR. GILSENAN: Ryan Gilsenan, G-i-l-s-e-n-a-n, counsel for
20 parties in interest, Stevens Towing Company, Inc., and the mate on
21 watch, Adam Phillips.

22 MR. EHLERS: Okay, thank you. And again, my name is
23 Drew Ehlers, that is Andrew E-h-l-e-r-s.

24 Mr. Millner, this interview is being recorded. Do you
25 consent to this recording?

1 MR. MILLNER: Yes.

2 MR. EHLERS: Okay. And as we discussed, this interview is
3 being conducted in conjunction with a safety investigation, the
4 purpose of which is to find the facts of the accident, determine
5 the probable cause, and prevent future accidents of this nature.
6 Having said that, the NTSB cannot offer any guarantee of
7 confidentiality or immunity from a legal action. Do you
8 understand this, sir?

9 MR. MILLNER: Yes.

10 MR. EHLERS: Okay, thank you very much.

11 INTERVIEW OF JOSHUA MILLNER

12 BY MR. EHLERS:

13 Q. All right, we'll get started here. If you don't mind, can I
14 ask you your age?

15 A. [REDACTED].

16 Q. Okay. And can you tell me a little bit about your
17 background, how long you've been a bridge operator, any jobs that
18 you had prior to becoming a bridge operator, that kind of thing.

19 A. I've been a bridge operator for about a year. Before this, I
20 was still working for the city, but that was at -- I was working
21 pump stations, department of utility.

22 Q. Okay, all right. And so you've done this job for about a
23 year.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Are you working any other jobs?

1 A. Not right now, no.

2 Q. Okay. And how did you get trained up to be a bridge
3 operator?

4 A. Well, we do -- they do training, you know, at the bridge.

5 Q. Okay. So it's on-the-job training?

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. Okay. And did you -- were you alongside a qualified or a
8 working bridge operator, is that how you got trained?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Okay. What are your responsibilities and what are your
11 duties and tasks that you do as a bridge operator?

12 A. Open and close the bridge for traffic mainly.

13 Q. Okay. And is the Centerville Turnpike Bridge the only bridge
14 you work at?

15 A. No.

16 Q. Where else do you work?

17 A. I work at the Gilmerton Bridge and I work at the Great Bridge
18 Bridge.

19 Q. Okay. What are your normal working hours, like what are your
20 shifts, how often are you on, how often are you off?

21 A. I work all three shifts. I work the first, second, and third
22 shift, and it just varies on how my schedule is set up per week.

23 Q. Okay. And how -- oh, go ahead, sorry.

24 A. (Audio distortion.)

25 Q. I think I missed you on that last one, can you say that

1 again?

2 A. Yeah, my schedule just varies on a weekly basis on what my
3 schedule is, but I work all three shifts, the first shift, second
4 shift, and third shift. Depending on how (indiscernible) a week.

5 Q. Okay. So does it have a regular rotation through each shift
6 or does it just depend on what your supervisor tells you what
7 shift you're on?

8 A. It goes by my supervisor.

9 Q. Okay. And do you work the same shift for the entire week or
10 do you shift through different shifts?

11 A. It's different shifts, like if I work the first shift, I
12 might be off the next day, and I'll work the second shift and I
13 might be off maybe Tuesday to Thursday or something like that.

14 Q. Okay, all right. Thank you.

15 MR. EHLERS: Did somebody just join the call?

16 MS. SINGLETARY: Yes, Libby Singletary from Stevens Towing
17 Company.

18 MR. EHLERS: Okay. And Libby, what's your purpose?

19 MS. SINGLETARY: I am to assist our employees.

20 MR. EHLERS: Okay.

21 MS. SINGLETARY: And I want to know what is -- what is going
22 to be said during this meeting.

23 MR. EHLERS: Okay. And you already have representation here.

24 MS. SINGLETARY: Yes.

25 MR. EHLERS: Or excuse me, Warrant Officer [REDACTED], are you

1 good with -- hold on just a second. Warrant Officer [REDACTED], are
2 we all right with this person joining in?

3 CWO [REDACTED]: Sorry, one second, please.

4 (Pause.)

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. Ma'am, could you just elaborate more on
6 what you intend to be as part of this PII investigation?

7 MS. SINGLETARY: Yes, I am assisting with the investigation
8 on our end. I'm a representative of Stevens Towing.

9 (Simultaneous speaking.)

10 MR. GILSENAN: If I could speak for Stevens, Mr. [REDACTED],
11 Libby will not be asking questions, but as a party in interest. I
12 will be doing that as Stevens' counsel, but she is there as the
13 principal, as the party in interest. It's kind of like if someone
14 was in court, their lawyer would be doing the talking but the
15 person's still sitting at the table.

16 CWO [REDACTED]: Yeah, okay. That sounds good.

17 Drew, I'm happy with this.

18 MR. EHLERS: Okay.

19 BY MR. EHLERS:

20 Q. Mr. Millner, you still there?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay, all right. I got to figure out where we're at here.
23 You were describing your shift cycles. On any given week, do you
24 always work the same bridge or do you work different bridges as
25 assigned?

1 A. Different bridges as assigned.

2 Q. Okay. So just to kind of repeat that --

3 A. That could vary because it's been the case where I worked the
4 same bridge for a month straight and then I was, you know, put at
5 another bridge the following month, so that just -- that all
6 varies.

7 Q. Okay. All right, that makes sense to me. Well, let me ask
8 this. So the accident happened early Saturday morning. Can you
9 run through what your shifts were the week before, if you remember
10 them?

11 A. On the 11th, I worked the midnight -- midnight to 8:00 at
12 Gilmerton. On the 12th, I worked midnight to 8:00 at Gilmerton.
13 On the 13th, I worked midnight to 8:00 at Centerville and then on
14 the 14th, I worked midnight to 8:00 at Centerville.

15 Q. Okay, all right. And what is a normal shift time? You just
16 mentioned midnight to 8:00. What's first, second, and third
17 shift?

18 A. Oh, midnight to 8:00 is the first shift, 8:00 to 4:00 is the
19 second shift, and then 4:00 to 12:00 is the third shift.

20 Q. Okay, all right. Thank you very much. I'd like to talk a
21 little bit about the Centerville Turnpike Bridge. Can you
22 describe the bridge a little bit for me, what kind of bridge it
23 is, how often it opens, that kind of thing? Just give me a basic
24 overview of the bridge.

25 A. It's a swing bridge, and the hours during the day shift or

1 the daytime, it opens on the hour and on the half hour. And then
2 after 6:00 p.m., it's on request.

3 Q. I see. So at the time of the accident, it was an on-request
4 opening, is that correct?

5 A. Yeah. Well, on the weekend, Saturday and Sunday, it's a
6 request regardless, yes.

7 Q. I see, okay. All right. When the bridge is open, how wide
8 is the channel opening, do you know?

9 A. I want to say over 60 feet, I want to say.

10 Q. Okay, all right. And where is your station on the bridge?

11 A. On the -- what is that, the north side of the bridge.

12 Q. Okay. In that little house there, is that correct?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Okay. So now, okay, I'm not a bridge operator, as you can
15 already tell. What I'd like you to do for me now is just explain
16 to me or describe for me a normal bridge opening and closing at
17 Centerville Turnpike Bridge from beginning to end starting from
18 when you get a signal from a vessel, hey, they want an opening to
19 the bridge, what kind of actions you perform, what actually
20 happens on the bridge. Can you do that for me?

21 A. Yes. All right, so basically I go to my panel, it's a lever
22 (indiscernible) that makes the lights go red. Once the lights go
23 red, I close my -- I close all my gates, then I release -- what is
24 it called? I can't even think what it's called right now. But I
25 release, basically, the -- my brake and then you just open the --

1 you push the open button and it opens the bridge up. And then you
2 sound your horn, notify that the bridge is opening, and you
3 usually do the steps in reverse when you close them.

4 Q. Okay. So each of the steps is a separate controller, is that
5 correct? So you push a separate button for the lights for the --
6 or a separate operator for the lights, for the gates, and for the
7 brakes, and then for the opening and closing, is that correct?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay. And you mentioned the lights. Are those lights the
10 roadway lights?

11 A. Those are the roadway lights.

12 Q. I see. Is there an amount of time between when you turn the
13 lights on and when the gates go down and when you can start
14 opening the bridge? How does that work?

15 A. As soon as the panel -- as soon as there's lights on the top
16 and they go a certain color, blue, that's when you do your next
17 step and it takes maybe like 30, 30 seconds give or take.

18 Q. Okay. And are those blue lights just on a timer or are they
19 looking for like a car on the roadway or something like that?

20 A. No, (indiscernible). Just on a timer.

21 Q. On a timer, okay. I see. You mentioned a horn. Is that
22 horn -- what does that horn signify, that the bridge is moving or
23 does that signify that the bridge is open?

24 A. That signifies that we're opening up, maybe 5 seconds, an
25 interval of 5 seconds blowing the horn and then do an interval of

1 1 second. And that just notifies, you know, oncoming vessels that
2 the bridge is just about to come open. Closing --

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. -- and/or opening.

5 Q. Is there a manual or anything that explains all these steps
6 for opening the bridge, like is there a book or anything that
7 you've got there on the -- at the bridge?

8 A. I'm sure that it is, but I wouldn't know where to find it
9 right this second.

10 Q. Okay, all right. How long does it take to open the bridge
11 from the moment that you hit the lights until the moment that the
12 bridge is open? How long would you say that is?

13 A. From the moment what's open?

14 Q. The bridge is fully open.

15 A. So are you talking about from when I first start my opening
16 or from when it's opening after I've done all the steps to make it
17 start opening?

18 Q. From when you first start, from your very first step that --
19 I think you said the first step is turning the lights on.

20 A. Yeah, it's about 3 minutes, like three and a half minutes, 3
21 minutes.

22 Q. Okay. And the actual rotation of the bridge, how long is
23 that, would you guess?

24 A. That one is about 7, 7 minutes. From open to close, it's
25 about 7 minutes -- 7 minutes, maybe seven and a half minutes.

1 Q. Okay. Sorry, I'm -- so from -- how about when you hit the --
2 take the brake off and then you -- the bridge, you go ahead and
3 operate the motor to open it, how long between when it's in the
4 closed to the open position?

5 A. That's probably like a minute and a half.

6 Q. Okay, all right.

7 A. Two minutes, yes.

8 Q. All right. Is there any lights from the waterside that
9 indicate whether the bridge is open or closed, almost like a stop
10 light, a red light, or a green light to say whether the bridge is
11 open or closed?

12 A. It should be, yes.

13 Q. But --

14 A. Red light.

15 Q. Is there or --

16 A. Yes. There are green lights on it to show when it's fully
17 open.

18 Q. Okay. Those are on the bridge?

19 A. It should be, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. How long before a vessel gets to the bridge do they
21 normally signal you to ask to open the bridge?

22 A. Anywhere between 5 to 7 minutes.

23 Q. Okay. And how do they normally do that?

24 A. By radio.

25 Q. Radio. Do they ever use sound signals or lights to open a

1 bridge?

2 A. No, I've never seen that.

3 Q. Never. Oh, okay. Have you been trained to respond to sound
4 signals or light signals if they were to come on?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay, all right. Can you see vessels as they're approaching
7 the bridge from your operator station?

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Depending on the weather (indiscernible). Depending on how
11 the weather is.

12 Q. I see. And at night, can you see them?

13 A. As long as they have some sort of light on, yeah.

14 Q. Okay. Do you have any kind of radar or anything like that,
15 that you can see them in weather or in darkness, see how far away
16 they are?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay, all right. So when a vessel contacts you on the radio,
19 talk me through the normal communication between you and the
20 vessel as far as requesting the bridge being open and the bridge
21 being open, and what you tell them as that process is going
22 through, can you tell me that?

23 A. I mean, they call me and then usually, like I said, they call
24 me when they're about 5, 7 minutes out, and as soon as they call
25 me and say that, I just start opening from their -- their timing

1 that they give me, you know. That's when I make my opening.

2 Q. Okay. And other than saying -- acknowledging that you're
3 going to open the bridge, do you have any other communications
4 with them? Do you tell them when the bridge is open or anything
5 like that?

6 A. Yeah, as soon as the bridge is fully open, I let them know,
7 like hey, cap, the bridge is open, you can bring it on through.

8 Q. Okay. Do you ever tell a vessel bring it on through while
9 the bridge is still turning?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Okay. Do you ever watch vessels as they move through the
12 bridge opening?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. Yeah. Do they ever hit the fendering as they line up to pass
15 through the bridge?

16 A. Not for me, that's never happened.

17 Q. You've never seen that before?

18 A. (Audio distortion.)

19 Q. Okay, all right. Do you keep a log in the operator station,
20 like to write down stuff, or is there a way you record information
21 as you go about your shift?

22 A. Like when (indiscernible) to the bridge?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is it a written log or is it on a computer?

1 A. It's written.

2 Q. Okay.

3 MR. EHLERS: So for Warrant Officer [REDACTED], I'd like to get a
4 copy of the log for the couple hours prior to the accident.

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Yes, sir, I'll reach out to them and get a copy
6 for us.

7 MR. EHLERS: Okay, great.

8 BY MR. EHLERS:

9 Q. When there aren't any vessels coming through, what do you do?
10 Are you allowed to watch TV, use your phone, anything like that?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay. So what do you normally do?

13 A. I just (indiscernible) on my phone.

14 Q. Okay, all right. So now I'd like to go to the Saturday
15 morning, the day of the accident, and I'd just like to describe,
16 in your words, what you remember happening kind of leading up from
17 the moment you got called by the *Island Lookout* to the moment that
18 the accident happened. And give me as much detail as possible;
19 even the littlest thing might be interesting to me. Can you go
20 ahead and do that?

21 A. At about 4:30, I got a phone call from the *Island Lookout*
22 saying they need an opening, I told them okay, I'll make my
23 opening. I start to make my opening. About three-quarters of the
24 way open from the bridge being fully opened, I hear a loud crash
25 noise. I had no idea what it was, I wasn't even thinking it was

1 the vessel crashing into the bridge, it felt like a transformer or
2 something blew near me and everything stopped moving in front of
3 me. There's a gauge on it and it tells you how far open your
4 bridge has gone, so I see that spot. And then I finally look
5 over, and I look up and look around to my right, and I see that --
6 I look at a crash (indiscernible). So the first thing I
7 immediately did was called my supervisor to let him know. Then I
8 called the Coast Guard and I called the non-emergency police.
9 That was pretty much, you know, my first thing to do.

10 Q. Okay. All right, I appreciate that. So a question or two
11 here. When the *Island Lady* -- or excuse me, *Island Lookout* called
12 you, were you able to see them at all?

13 A. I sort of did.

14 Q. Did you see the lights of the vessel? What did you see?

15 A. I did and, yeah, I saw the light moving around at first
16 (indiscernible).

17 Q. Okay. Did the vessel appear to be close by, about right
18 where you'd expect them to be? Was there any --

19 A. It was right in that 5-minute mark where most vessels usually
20 sit at --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- when they call.

23 Q. So the position didn't give you any concern?

24 A. No, not at all.

25 Q. Okay. Other than that first call in which you told them you

1 were opening the bridge, did you have any other communications
2 with the vessel?

3 A. Actually, no. None.

4 Q. All right. Did you ever tell them to bring it on through? I
5 think that's the word you used.

6 A. I didn't get a chance.

7 Q. Okay. So you never had that opportunity?

8 A. The bridge was not open all the way yet.

9 Q. Yeah. I think you said you were looking at a gauge or
10 something to that effect that showed how far the bridge was
11 opened. Do you remember about where that was when you heard the
12 crash?

13 A. I want to say 84, 84 or 86.

14 Q. Okay. All right.

15 A. And I think it's got to be 90.6 or 90.8 or something when
16 it's fully opened.

17 Q. I see. So the fully open position is 90 -- you said point
18 six, point --

19 A. I guess it's a degree thing, it's like 90 degrees when it's
20 fully open, I can say like 90.6 or 90.8, and it wasn't -- it just
21 wasn't there yet.

22 Q. So you said, I think, and tell me if I'm wrong, it was
23 probably about six to eight degrees off of fully open when you
24 heard the crash?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay, all right. And then you mentioned a couple of tasks
2 you did once you -- once the accident occurred. I think you said
3 you called your supervisor, you contacted the Coast Guard, you
4 contacted the police.

5 A. Um-hum.

6 Q. Is that a standard emergency procedure that you use?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Okay. Is that procedure written down somewhere?

9 A. That's what I was trained when I first got here, so I
10 wouldn't know. There probably is, but that's just what they told
11 me --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- when I was doing my training.

14 Q. All right, that's fine. That's perfectly fine. What did the
15 vessel do after the accident, do you know?

16 A. Can you repeat that?

17 Q. What did the *Island Lookout* and the barge do after the
18 accident? Do you remember what happened with the vessel?

19 A. They backed up and like pulled to the -- to their right and
20 just sat there.

21 Q. Okay. Did they call you at all?

22 A. No. They didn't contact me.

23 Q. Okay. And did you contact the vessel?

24 A. Yes. As soon as my supervisor arrived on site, that's when I
25 finally contacted them.

1 Q. Okay, all right. How long after you -- after the accident
2 would you say your supervisor arrived?

3 A. About 30 minutes, 25 to 30 minutes. Maybe sooner.

4 Q. Okay. Who's your supervisor's name?

5 A. Mike Abram.

6 Q. Okay, Mike. Do you know how he spells his last name?

7 A. A-b-r-a-m.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Michael Abram, Abram.

10 Q. Okay. Do you know what his official title is, what his job
11 title is?

12 A. I have no idea.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. I know he's a bridge operator supervisor.

15 Q. Okay, all right. I'm going to ask you now a couple
16 questions, these are standard questions that we always ask at the
17 NTSB about sleep and stuff like that. We are interested because
18 fatigue and stuff like that is something that we see a lot in
19 accidents, but you're just going to have to bear with me as I ask
20 these questions. When was the last time you slept prior to your
21 shift on Saturday morning?

22 A. (Indiscernible) midnight to 8:00, so probably when I got home
23 the prior shift before that, so probably around 9:00, from 9:00 to
24 like 5 or 6 o'clock in the afternoon.

25 Q. Okay. Nine to five or six on the -- on Friday day, during

1 the day?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. Okay. And how did you sleep? Do you remember if you slept
4 -- did you sleep well, was it tough to sleep?

5 A. No, it's never tough to sleep.

6 Q. All right. How about the night before that? So you
7 mentioned you got -- you slept and you had a shift before that and
8 the night before that -- or I should say the day because it
9 sounded like you were on night shift.

10 A. Well, I work the same shifts, just different bridges, so my
11 sleep schedule is the same (indiscernible).

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. When I get off -- when I get off today, I get home, I wind
14 down for about from 9:00 to 5:00, 9:00 to 6:00, I go to sleep.

15 Q. Okay. And again, the days before, you slept pretty well, as
16 well?

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. Okay. Did you drink any alcohol the night before or the
19 morning of your watch?

20 A. Don't touch it.

21 Q. Okay. And did you drink any caffeinated beverage, coffee,
22 soda, anything like that while you were on watch?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Or while you're on shift -- okay.

25 MR. EHLERS: All right. I'll probably have a question or two

1 more, but what I'm going to do right now is I'm going to turn it
2 over to Warrant Officer [REDACTED] and ask him if he's got any
3 questions.

4 Go ahead, Warrant Officer [REDACTED].

5 CWO [REDACTED]: Yes, Drew, thank you.

6 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

7 Q. Hey, Joshua, this is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]. I just
8 got one question about when -- did you signal the horn this time
9 when you were opening the bridge, whenever the --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- bridge was opening?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. You did?

14 A. Huh?

15 Q. Okay, you said you did?

16 A. Yeah. That's my protocol, you got to signal them to let them
17 know that you're opening up.

18 MR. EHLERS: Okay.

19 CWO [REDACTED]: And then -- yeah, that's the only question I got
20 for that one. I'll reach out to Mr. Arbon (ph.) and get a copy of
21 the log book from the shack after we finish here, but that was the
22 only question I had as of right now, I think.

23 BY MR. EHLERS:

24 Q. Okay. I got a follow-up question based on Warrant Officer
25 [REDACTED]'s question. This is Drew Ehlers again. The horn, when you

1 sound the horn, is that -- is it required to sound the horn to get
2 the lights to flash for the next step or is that something extra?

3 A. No, that horn is its own thing.

4 Q. Okay, all right. All right.

5 A. Because you do it before and -- or right when you're about to
6 close the bridge, you do five, five horns when you close the
7 bridge. So that has nothing to do with anything, that's just a
8 requirement.

9 Q. Okay, all right.

10 MR. EHLERS: Okay, thank you.

11 All right, Mr. Gilsenan, do you have any questions?

12 MR. GILSENAN: Yes. Just a few.

13 BY MR. GILSENAN:

14 Q. Mr. Millner, are you on -- what channel are you monitoring on
15 the radio?

16 A. Thirteen.

17 Q. Okay. Is that recorded?

18 A. No idea.

19 Q. Okay. Are you able to adjust the volume in your bridge
20 tender's cabin?

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Okay. And where do you usually keep the volume? Is it loud,
23 is it quiet?

24 A. Extremely loud.

25 Q. Extremely loud, okay. On the morning, on Saturday morning

1 when this occurred, how many vessels had -- how many times had you
2 opened the bridge that night while you were on your shift that
3 started at midnight?

4 A. That was my first one.

5 Q. Okay. And did you have any other radio traffic on 1-3 before
6 the *Island Lookout* came?

7 A. Not really, no.

8 Q. I was wondering if you happened to hear other vessels using
9 the same channel talking to other people.

10 A. No, it's hard to -- if they're too far away, I'm not going to
11 hear them.

12 Q. Okay. Yeah, sure. And you weren't hearing other vessels
13 that night?

14 A. No, just the *Island Lookout*.

15 Q. Okay. Now, when a vessel calls on 1-3 to request the bridge
16 open, do I understand right, do you acknowledge the request on the
17 radio?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Okay. And then you said you sound the horn, correct?

20 A. Yeah, when I'm doing my opening. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay. I think, if I had it right, the sequence was you turn
22 on the lights on the roadway to indicate to cars that the bridge
23 is going to be opening, correct?

24 A. Yes. You got to go red and then you drop the gate.

25 Q. Right. First you go red lights and then the gates come down,

1 it's kind of like when you get to a train crossing, is it like
2 that?

3 A. Yes. Yes.

4 Q. Okay. So when do you sound the horn? Is it before or after
5 the lights and the gate?

6 A. Once you drop the gate and as soon as you pull your lock and
7 you hit the open button for the bridge, that's when you start
8 sounding your horn. It's like a (indiscernible) thing so they
9 would know that it's being -- or started the process to opening.

10 Q. Okay. So you're at the control panel, you do lights, you do
11 the gate, then once the gate's down, you unlock the bridge. I
12 think you said you release the brake, correct?

13 A. Yeah. Yes.

14 Q. All right. And at that point, you hit the horn.

15 A. Yeah --

16 Q. Correct?

17 A. -- (indiscernible) you do your horn, 5-second interval, and
18 then you do a 1-second interval while your bridge is being opened.

19 Q. Okay. So you hold that horn button down for 5 seconds?

20 A. Um-hum. And then you stop for --

21 Q. And --

22 A. Then you do another interval.

23 Q. Okay, you stop for a second and then you sound the horn again
24 for 1 second, do I have that right?

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. Okay. And just so I'm clear, is that horn a signal to the
2 cars, like as if they needed anything else, they (indiscernible)
3 or is it for the vessel?

4 A. That's a signal for the vessel letting them know that the
5 bridge has started opening.

6 Q. Okay. And --

7 A. It's not open, but it's starting (indiscernible).

8 Q. Starting to open, yes. And then when is the next time you
9 sound the horn in the sequence?

10 A. Once the vessel's clear and I'm about to come -- I'm about to
11 close the bridge. That's when I do my five --

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. My five horn signals.

14 Q. Okay, so when the vessel clears, you hold the horn button for
15 5 seconds again, correct?

16 A. Yeah. You just tap it five --

17 Q. And then you release it for a second and then do it for one
18 more second?

19 A. No, when you close, you tap it five times, so it's a
20 boom-boom-boom-boom-boom, five times.

21 Q. Okay. Completely different signal.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. Now, is there a horn signal in your sequence that says when
24 the bridge is all the way open? Like you horn signal to say I'm
25 about to open it, you horn signal when you're going to close it,

1 but is there a signal that says, okay, I'm now fully open?

2 A. No, not to my knowledge. That's why we talk to them on the
3 radio and let them know that we're open.

4 Q. Okay. So just so I get the timing straight, from the time
5 you sound the horn to indicate you're going to open the bridge,
6 how long does it take to swing to 90?

7 A. I want to say like maybe 2 minutes, two and a half minutes,
8 but I am not sure (indiscernible).

9 Q. Two to two and a half minutes, okay.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. And so I want you to focus on more set of timing here. When
12 you get the call and you dial it and you say, okay, captain, I'll
13 open the bridge, now you got to -- you got to hit the button for
14 the red traffic light, you got to hit the button for the gate --

15 A. Um-hum.

16 Q. -- and your next move is to simultaneously unlock the bridge
17 and sound the horn. How long does it take you from "okay,
18 captain, I'm going to open it" to unlocking the bridge and
19 sounding the horn? In other words, the time it takes, how long
20 does it take to put the red traffic light on and lower your gate?

21 A. Ten seconds, 15 seconds, maybe 20. I'm not sure.

22 Q. Okay. No, that's fine. Ten or 15 seconds, you know, I don't
23 need stopwatch precision, this isn't the Olympic relay race, just
24 your -- you know, as best you can tell.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. So 10 or 15 seconds for the lights and gate sequence, and
2 then two to two and a half minutes to actually open the bridge to
3 90 degrees, correct?

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. Okay. And you mentioned earlier where the *Island Lookout*
6 stopped to make its call to request the bridge opening is about
7 the typical spot where you see other vessels make a call for a
8 bridge opening, is that --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Do I have that right?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. No concerns there?

13 A. No.

14 Q. Okay. And I think you described that as about a half mile
15 out or what you called the 5-minute mark, is that right?

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. Okay. So the 5-minute mark, does that mean like for the
18 typical tow, when they're at that spot, it takes them about 5
19 minutes to get to the bridge?

20 A. Give or take, yeah. I mean, that's where they slow down to
21 where they know, if something bad happens on my end, they'd be
22 able to stop and make adjustments or whatever.

23 Q. Right. And if something bad happened on your end, how would
24 you communicate that to them?

25 A. Channel 1-3 on the radio.

1 Q. Okay. You didn't have any communication with them that
2 night, did you?

3 A. When they originally called me, that was the only time.

4 Q. Right. But there was no follow-up, like hey, I'm having a
5 problem here, slow down?

6 A. No, because I wasn't the problem.

7 Q. All right. So I think we got the timing pretty well nailed,
8 it was about, you know, 10, 15 seconds for lights and gate and two
9 to two and a half minutes to open the bridge, and when the vessel
10 made its request and you acknowledged the request, the vessel was
11 about 5 minutes out, is that right?

12 A. That's when I was told, so yes.

13 Q. Well, you said you were able to see where the vessel was, you
14 saw its lights, right?

15 A. Yes. I mean, that was my (indiscernible) mark, but it just
16 all depends on their speed (indiscernible) how fast they're
17 moving.

18 Q. Okay. Well, I think your explanation's really good, because
19 I checked their speed. If they were going about 4, 4 to 4.3
20 knots, typical, a half mile out is 7 minutes.

21 A. Um-hum.

22 Q. So I think your eyes are pretty good.

23 MR. GILSENAN: So all right, I think that's all the questions
24 I have, gentlemen.

25 And Mr. Millner, I appreciate your time today. Thank you for

1 speaking with me and, of course, the government authorities.

2 MR. MILLNER: No problem.

3 MR. EHLERS: All right. So I'm going to have one last
4 question for you, Mr. Millner, and I appreciate it, as well.
5 Before I do that, just, Warrant Officer [REDACTED], do you have any
6 follow-up questions?

7 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

8 Q. Yes, I just got one, Mr. Millner. Whenever you were sitting
9 in the tender booth, before the vessel hailed you or was coming
10 your way, what were you doing before they actually tried to get a
11 hold of you or you could see them coming down the river?

12 A. Probably on my phone.

13 Q. What were you doing, just like playing games or movies or
14 what were you actually doing on it, do you know? Do you remember?

15 A. I was probably on Facebook or Instagram, something.

16 Q. Okay, thank you.

17 CWO [REDACTED]: Drew, I think that's it for me on this side for
18 now, if you want to finish up your side.

19 MR. EHLERS: Sure.

20 I just have one question for you, and it's a broad question,
21 Mr. Millner. Is there anything we haven't asked you about that
22 might be important for this investigation, something that we're --
23 we need to look at to make sure we're covering all of our bases,
24 anything you can think of?

25 MR. MILLNER: Nothing I can think of right now, no.

1 MR. EHLERS: Well, if you do think of anything, you can
2 contact Warrant Officer [REDACTED]y, you can contact myself and let us
3 know. But otherwise, I very much appreciate your time this
4 morning. It's been very helpful and enlightening, and thanks for
5 taking the time.

6 MR. MILLNER: Yeah, no problem.

7 MR. EHLERS: All right, I'm going to stop the recording right
8 now.

9 (Whereupon, at 10:40 a.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: *ISLAND LOOKOUT* AND CENTERVILLE
TURNPIKE BRIDGE COLLISION
IN CHESAPEAKE, VIRGINIA,
ON NOVEMBER 14, 2020
Interview of Joshua Millner

PLACE: Via teleconference

DATE: November 17, 2020

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

A thick black horizontal bar redacting the signature of Karen D. Martini.

Karen D. Martini
Transcriber