



SURVIVAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE FACTUAL REPORT ATTACHMENT

MILLERSBURG, OR

Transcript of NTSB Interview with Witness 1

HWY23FH013

(18 pages)

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

ROADWAY DEPARTURE & FATAL CRASH WITH *
PARKED VEHICLES NEAR THE NORTH *
SANTIAM REST AREA NEAR MILLERSBURG, *
OREGON ON MAY 18, 2023 *

Accident No.: HWY23FH013

* * * * *

Interview of: VICKY FAULKNER
Witness

via telephone

Tuesday,
December 19, 2023

APPEARANCES:

JOHN HUMM, Investigator
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Vicky Faulkner:

By Mr. Humm

4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. HUMM: Okay, I'm going to start it. Today is December
3 19th, 2023. I'm conducting a phone interview with Vicky Faulkner.
4 This is in reference to NTSB Case Number HWY23FH013, the truck
5 crash in Millersburg, Oregon on May 18th, 2023. My name is John
6 Humm, H U M M, I'm the survival factors group chair with the NTSB.

7 Thank you so much, Vicky, for agreeing to participate in this
8 interview; I appreciate your time. Could you please say your
9 first and last name and spell your last name for the
10 transcriptionist?

11 MS. FAULKNER: Yes, I'm Vicky Faulkner, F A U L K N E R.

12 MR. HUMM: Thank you, and Vicky is spelled V I C K Y, is that
13 correct?

14 MS. FAULKNER: Yes, with a Y.

15 MR. HUMM: Okay, thank you, and Vicky, before we start this
16 recording, could you just give me your verbal consent that it's
17 okay for us to record this interview?

18 MS. FAULKNER: Yeah, that'd be fine.

19 MR. HUMM: All right, thank you very much.

INTERVIEW OF VICKY FAULKNER

20
21 BY MR. HUMM:

22 Q. So, Vicky, let's just start real quick, I know it's been -- I
23 apologize, it's been a few months since the crash itself. But if
24 you can, you know, kind of put yourself back in your mind to --
25 where were you driving on May 18th -- or the day that you

1 witnessed that crash?

2 A. Yes, on May 18th, my husband and I had an appointment in
3 Salem, Oregon for that afternoon. So, we were on the I-5 freeway
4 and we left Albany, went north, and as we kind of went past the
5 Jefferson-Millersburg area, there's a couple of rest areas and a
6 lot of farms off on the right-hand side. We kind of come up
7 behind these two semi-trucks and as we kind of got a little
8 closer, the one in the back pulled clear over into the parking
9 lane and would whip really fast back into the first lane. Then he
10 went a little bit and was back over there in the parking lane and
11 whipped again.

12 So, my husband and I, you know, backed off, slowed down quite
13 a bit, and got behind him some and then the third time that he was
14 pulled over and whipped back out again, we got over in the faster
15 lane to get farther away from him, not really knowing what he was
16 doing. We kind of had a conversation about how we thought the
17 truck driver maybe was getting really sleepy and that it was a
18 good thing there was a rest area coming up really soon. So, I
19 know he pulled over at least three times, possibly four, I've kind
20 of lost count over the time.

21 But as he got back into the lane, he went over the bridge
22 that goes over the river and then it widens out right there for
23 the start of the turning lane because there's kind of a sharp turn
24 that goes back towards the river for the rest area. As he's kind
25 of getting over into the pull out, I kind of relaxed a little bit

1 and I said oh, good, he's going to make it to the rest area
2 because we were kind of, you know, concerned about him being that
3 sleepy and whipping around that much.

4 I kind of said something to my husband about I don't see his
5 brake lights going on and the husband said that he was probably
6 going to just pull in. There's kind of a wide spot right there on
7 the road and usually there might be, like, two truckers will be
8 parked there sleeping. There was one truck there already and
9 there was some kind of a white vehicle that we saw behind it and
10 it had some people moving around and there was one man standing
11 right behind the white vehicle.

12 The truck driver never put on his brakes and he never started
13 to turn and so as he's going forward to the truck, I'm going he's
14 going to have to stop, he needs his brakes. We'd seen the man
15 that was behind the white vehicle, he's got -- his eyes got huge
16 and all of a sudden, he just started pumping his arms and legs and
17 he went running for the grass and I never did hear whether he got
18 out of the roadway. But he was moving. There was other people
19 that were in the vehicle and it just happened really fast. But he
20 never -- we said a second time, he's still not putting on his
21 brakes and he just smashed right into that back of that white
22 vehicle and he hit the back of the truck that was parked there
23 sleeping.

24 Then he kind of bounced backwards and then we couldn't see
25 the white vehicle at all anymore. It had, like, just disappeared

1 and then the big fuel tank -- the big, round, barrel fuel tank on
2 the truck come flying and arching out towards us because we were
3 getting even, where we had been right behind him. But we were
4 right even with the semi-truck and this big, huge gas barrel is
5 launching over and it's got a big hole ripped out of it and the
6 diesel fuel was just like a big waterfall and spraying. It was
7 just fuel going everywhere. Then I said something to my husband
8 about watch out for the gas tank and he got clear over into the --
9 from the fast lane, clear over into the pull-out lane clear on the
10 far other side of the freeway and was driving over there.

11 That gas tank landed kind of, like, right beside us and it
12 was still just leaking like crazy. So, we got kind of on past it
13 and the trucks had kind of all stopped, you know, moving forward
14 and the front of that -- or the back of that parked sleeping
15 thing, it had hit that so hard it had, like, lifted it up and
16 dropped it back down. But like I said, the truck that hit him, he
17 bounced backwards. Then as we got kind of around it, I hadn't
18 seen the white vehicle anymore, so I scooched forward in my seat,
19 and I got turned around and was looking back and I said well,
20 there's -- the white vehicle is coming up alongside of the trailer
21 and it's really twisted and mangled. You just can't even
22 recognize it anymore.

23 At that point, we didn't see any people. I don't know if
24 they were there or not there, but I didn't see any people. But
25 that white vehicle was just totally mangled and I said something

1 to my husband about well, are we supposed to stop and help if
2 there's any people and he asked me if I thought anybody would
3 survive something like that. I got kind of quiet and I said no, I
4 don't (audio glitch) survive and -- you still there? I'm hearing
5 a beep.

6 Q. Yeah, oh yeah -- no, I'm here.

7 A. Okay.

8 Q. Yeah.

9 A. Okay -- oh, Frank's trying to call me; he'll hang up.

10 Anyway, so we got around the vehicle and we were kind of talking
11 quietly and it was -- I looked at the clock and I said honey, it's
12 2:07 and it wasn't just minutes after that that we saw a couple of
13 police cars just screaming down from Salem going back down the
14 south freeway. So, there was just -- cars had just responded
15 absolutely just -- you know, they were moving right along and had
16 their lights going. By the time we got off at the exit in Salem,
17 it was 2:11 and I think we had passed, like, seven police cars
18 that went screaming towards from that direction.

19 So, other than that, we did make it to our appointment, but
20 then later would get in and out of my side of the vehicle and it
21 just -- absolutely just reeked of that fuel smell. So, we ended
22 up going down to a car wash to get that diesel off of the outside
23 of our car. But anyway, it kind of threw us in kind of a really
24 weird mood the rest of the day and, you know, we really didn't
25 even know what happened like you say until later. But what we saw

1 was just -- was that initial crash and it happened really fast.

2 Q. Yeah, you have a really good memory.

3 A. Oh, it was pretty -- yeah, it was pretty vivid. Pretty
4 traumatic.

5 Q. Yeah, I'm sure it was. So, I just wanted to just step back
6 and clarify a couple of things. So, you were the passenger in the
7 car and your husband was driving, is that correct?

8 A. Yes, I was the passenger.

9 Q. Okay, and then were you in the front seat, like, right next
10 to him in the right, front, passenger seat?

11 A. Yeah, I was in the front.

12 Q. Okay, and do you guys know, like, approximately about how
13 fast you guys might've been driving that day? Like roughly?

14 A. I'm not real sure on the fast. He's sitting right here if
15 you --

16 Q. Yeah, if your husband, Craig, remembers that would be good?

17 A. Yeah, he was in the car.

18 MR. HUMM: Yesh.

19 MS. FAULKNER: Do you remember how fast we were driving
20 before we started slowing down behind the truck?

21 MR. FAULKNER: 70?

22 MS. FAULKNER: 65, 70, probably?

23 Okay, we were probably doing about 65, 70, and then we slowed
24 way down when he kept whipping or whatever. We got farther behind
25 him, and then the other truck that was going ahead of him that was

1 driving -- when he kept whipping in and out and we backed off and
2 slowed down way behind him, that other trucker kind of pushed on
3 the foot pedal and he kind of got way out in front of him so that
4 nobody was really near him when it all happened. Then it was a
5 ton of cars behind us, but they were -- you know, they were back a
6 few car lengths. But yeah, we slowed way down and then we got
7 clear over basically getting off of the freeway and driving out
8 there in the parking side out there on the fast side just to get
9 away from all of this debris that was --

10 MR. FAULKNER: (Indiscernible)

11 MS. FAULKNER: Well, yeah, you were speeding back up again
12 to -- you did -- like, I'm hollering to watch out for that fuel
13 tank and --

14 So, it did not hit us, but it landed right beside us.

15 BY MR. HUMM:

16 Q. Yeah, wow, and so, when you say he was whipping back and
17 forth, do you mean -- so, he was, like, in the right lane and then
18 would quickly go over to the shoulder area or in the far lane?

19 A. He was in the right-hand -- the slow lane and there's, like,
20 little bridges, and the little guard rails and things, and then
21 there's all those fields, but there's places there where you can
22 pull over and change a tire or whatever. It's not really places
23 that, like, if you're driving at freeway speeds, your reaction
24 would have to be not over there very far, or you would drive off
25 the edge of the -- these little bridges, and the guard rails, and,

1 you know, the stuff they put alongside the freeway. He's clear
2 over there in that parking lane where you would pull over and
3 change your tire.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. And then whipping -- you know, so he doesn't hit the guard
6 rail, he's whipping right back into the -- but you know how a
7 semi-truck, when they're going left and right, if they're doing
8 that fast, that usually makes the trailer sway really bad. My
9 husband's a forklift driver, so he's like I don't want anywhere
10 near that.

11 Q. Sure.

12 A. So, he was trying to do a lot of evasive driving.

13 Q. Did it seem -- was he -- do you think he was trying to pass
14 or do you know what he -- like, could you tell at all what he was
15 attempting to do, like why he kept trying to -- why he kept moving
16 into that parking lane?

17 A. We just thought he was probably getting sleepy and either
18 nodding off or rubbing his eyes, you know, because we couldn't see
19 him, we were behind him.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. But we just kind of -- you see a sleepy driver every once in
22 a while. There's a big, long, straight stretch that -- they built
23 it, I think, so the airplanes could land on the freeway to make it
24 that long and straight. It's part of that freeway that that many
25 miles of long, straight road, they do get truckers every once in a

1 while out there that will fall asleep.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Well, not just truckers, cars, too. But there's just a long,
4 straight -- I mean, it kind of goes up and over a little hill here
5 and there, but it's just a really long, long straight stretch of
6 road. So, we've seen people before out there that, you know, get
7 sleepy and so, we just thought well, you know, if he can make it
8 to the rest area, he can pull in and get some sleep, he'll be
9 fine.

10 Q. Okay, so it was --

11 A. But he didn't pull into the rest area.

12 Q. Yeah, so -- okay, so it wasn't like he was, like, moving into
13 the shoulder and speeding up, it was just kind of like he was
14 moving over and then it looked like -- almost like he was correct
15 and, like, pulling back into the driving lane or something?

16 A. Yeah, it was more like he had just kind of taken a turn and
17 was correcting and getting right back into his lane again. But it
18 was kind of scaring us.

19 Q. Sure, yeah, absolutely. I can appreciate that. Anything
20 else unusual about the trucks -- the truck that impacted the
21 vehicle? Anything unusual about his driving behavior that you
22 noticed at all that maybe you haven't discussed already?

23 A. I can't really think of anything else. I just -- where he
24 was -- you know, he pulled off of the road multiple times. I know
25 he did at least three times, possibly four, and then that fifth

1 time, he was pulling off of the road after he -- going over the
2 bridge. Then, I mean, it does widen up there, so if he was
3 following the lines, maybe, at that point, I don't know because he
4 got over the bridge and pulled over to the right.

5 But it actually does widen and there is -- you know, there's
6 a white striped line because it makes almost like U turn to turn
7 sharp enough because you really have to put on your brakes. I've
8 gone into that rest area a lot of times and you really got to put
9 on your brakes after driving the freeway to slow down enough to
10 make that really sharp turn to go down into that rest area. My
11 husband and I never saw anything for brake lights what-so-ever.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. So, if he did put them on, it was after we were already
14 starting to pass him and, you know, wasn't behind him anymore. He
15 maybe did, I don't know.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. But I know from the time that we were behind him, we never
18 saw brake lights and so, we were like already kind of getting on
19 edge if he's driving right at those parked vehicles. Then he just
20 slammed right into them and shoved it all forward. I said he even
21 did damage to the back of the truck that -- the guy that was
22 sleeping.

23 Q. Yeah, did you see at all if there was a trailer behind that
24 white van? Did you notice that at all?

25 A. No, we only saw the white vehicle for just a really short

1 window.

2 Q. Sure.

3 A. Because we were behind those two trucks and like I said, the
4 one, you know, kind of speeded up and went out farther. Then we
5 were right behind the truck that crashed and then because he had
6 pulled in and out so many times, we had actually got over into the
7 second lane got a little farther away from him that way as well.

8 Q. Sure.

9 A. So, we were still behind him and when we went over the bridge
10 and stuff, we were probably about two car lengths probably behind
11 him and we didn't see any -- you know, any brake lights. Then he
12 hit all of that and other than identifying that the color was
13 white and seeing the man that started pumping his arms and
14 running, I mean, it just -- it was just like -- it was almost like
15 you blinked your eyes and all of a sudden, the white -- it was
16 like a magician or something, the white vehicle just completely
17 disappeared. I didn't see it again until I turned around and when
18 I looked back, it was still kind of rolling really slowly forward
19 alongside that front trailer.

20 Q. Yeah, okay.

21 A. But it was pretty unidentifiable. It was just mangled and it
22 was just, like, sticking -- you know how metal gets when it gets
23 mangled and it's going every different direction and whatever.
24 It's like I really don't know what kind of vehicle, you could
25 still see that it's white, but as far as knowing what -- I mean, I

1 did find out later what kind of vehicle it was. But at the time,
2 I didn't really know.

3 Q. Right, and I know this is a very tough question to answer
4 because you're in a moving car, but do you know -- if you had to
5 estimate how fast the truck was going when he hit the van, what
6 would estimate? What would be your best guess?

7 A. He had to have been doing at least 60, 65, because like I
8 said, we had kind of slowed down because I'm pretty sure we were
9 doing, like, at least 65. So, if we slowed down, I think he was
10 probably doing at least 60. He could've been going faster, but I
11 think he was doing at least 60 when he hit all of that.

12 Q. Okay, that helps, thank you. I actually -- I don't really
13 have any other questions. You've done an excellent job of
14 recounting that. Is there anything else from that day either
15 before or after -- you know, before, during, or after the accident
16 that stands out in your mind that you think I should know that I
17 haven't asked about?

18 A. It was a nice day. It was a warm afternoon. I know when we
19 got to our appointment, we were sitting out there in the sun and
20 kind of -- you know how you do after an accident and whatever, you
21 kind of -- anything that's warm and, you know, get yourself
22 comfortable and kind of get back to something reality. We
23 eventually went and got out car washed to get that -- you know,
24 that diesel smell off the whole side of our car.

25 Q. Sure.

1 A. We finally went to a place and just sat down and just ordered
2 a thing of chicken tenders and just kind of sat there and didn't
3 really talk very much, just kind of tried to do something normal
4 and, you know, get back to where you're yourself again.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. So, it was a bit of a shock.

7 Q. Yeah, okay. Well, thank you again for your time. I really
8 appreciate it. I think I'm going to end this interview if you
9 could just hold on one second?

10 A. Uh huh.

11 MR. HUMM: Let me just stop it.

12 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: ROADWAY DEPARTURE & FATAL CRASH WITH
 PARKED VEHICLES NEAR THE NORTH
 SANTIAM REST AREA NEAR MILLERSBURG,
 OREGON ON MAY 18, 2023
 Interview of Vicky Faulkner

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH013

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: December 19, 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.



Carolyn Hanna
Transcriber