



SURVIVAL FACTORS/HUMAN PERFORMANCE FACTUAL REPORT ATTACHMENT

MILLERSBURG, OR

Transcript of NTSB Interview with Witness 2

HWY23FH013

(19 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: JULIE MCCRAE
Witness to Crash

via telephone
Friday,
December 22, 2023

APPEARANCES:

JOHN HUMM, Survival Factors Group Chair
National Transportation Safety Board

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Julie McCrae:

By Mr. Humm

4

I N T E R V I E W

1
2 MR. HUMM: Today is December 22, 2023. I'm conducting a
3 phone interview with Julie McCrae. This is in reference to NTSB
4 Case Number HWY23FH013, a motor coach crash in Millersburg,
5 Oregon, on May 18, 2023.

6 My name is John Humm, H-u-m-m. I'm the Survival Factors
7 Group Chair for the NTSB.

INTERVIEW OF JULIE MCCRAE

8
9 BY MR. HUMM:

10 Q. Julie, thank you so much for taking the time to do this
11 interview. We really appreciate your willingness to participate.
12 Could you please say your first and last name, and spell your last
13 name for the transcriptionist?

14 A. Yes. Julie McCrae M-c-C-r-a-e.

15 Q. Thank you. And then as we discussed just before recording
16 could you please give your verbal consent that it's okay for us to
17 record this?

18 A. Yes, it is.

19 Q. Thank you. And then the last thing I'd like to remind you,
20 Julie, is if you could just limit the interview today to just the
21 things that you remember hearing or seeing that day, and try not
22 to speculate as best you can.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Thank you. Okay, Julie, thanks again. So I know it's been
25 several months, and I apologize for that. So do your best. Maybe

1 let's go back to the day May 18th. Do you remember at all what
2 you were doing just before you were leaving the house or what,
3 what was -- why were you, why are you getting in the car, and
4 headed, headed away from your home?

5 A. So I'm a home health nurse. So I pretty much drive between
6 visits for my job. So I was heading northbound on I-5 away from a
7 patient's home, and I was heading towards my house to finish up my
8 day.

9 Q. Okay. And so as you got on the, the expressway or I think
10 it's I-5 I believe --

11 A. Um-hmm.

12 Q. -- do you remember when, when you first saw the crush that,
13 sorry, the truck that was involved in the crash? Do you remember
14 that at all?

15 A. Yes. I was driving northbound north of Albany, and you want
16 me to go into like the complete detail now what I saw?

17 Q. Yeah. So I would say from now just tell me your story,
18 everything that you -- from when you first saw the truck up
19 through the crash, anything at all that you remember seeing,
20 hearing, whatever. Yeah. I'll just be quiet and listen now.

21 A. Okay. So, yeah, I was driving northbound past Albany, and I
22 was coming up behind a white semi-truck, and I was going to get
23 ready to pass him. There was an orange jeep coming up on the left
24 passing him and passing the lights of my truck. And the semi-
25 truck veered into the passing lane, causing the orange truck to

1 -- or the orange jeep to veer off into the shoulder to avoid
2 hitting him. The orange jeep sped off, and the white semi-truck
3 corrected itself, and got back into the right-hand slow lane. So
4 I backed off. I was, like, I'm going to stay behind this guy.
5 And he swerved about one, maybe two more times towards the
6 shoulder, the right shoulder at this time, and then once again
7 towards the passing lane. And that's when I was, like, oh my God,
8 this guy's going to, going to cause an accident. So that's when I
9 called 911, and reported a swerving truck. They transferred me to
10 the Oregon State Police Department.

11 While I was on hold waiting for them I continued to follow
12 the truck with some distance behind him, and he continued to
13 swerve between the right shoulder and the left passing lane. So
14 there was no cars passing him. They were all kind of backing off.
15 And we got to the rest stop that is on I-5, and he started to veer
16 off again. I was, like, thinking to myself, oh, maybe he's
17 falling asleep. He's going off to the rest stop. He passed the
18 exit for the rest stop, and just past the exit there's a pretty
19 large shoulder, and there was a Target semi-truck pulled off onto
20 the shoulder, and I witnessed the white semi pass the exit, and
21 then ram into the truck.

22 At that time, I pulled over. The state police came on. I
23 was reporting what happened saying, hey, he just hit somebody.
24 You guys need to send somebody. They asked me some questions
25 about what the truck looked like and where I was located. And I

1 confer that they're going to send EMS towards there.

2 So when I saw the truck hit the other semi-truck I did not
3 see the van. I just saw him hit the Target truck. I saw one
4 individual kind of run into the field to avoid the accident. I
5 assumed that was the Target truck driver. So when I went up to
6 provide assistance I just assumed it was the white semi-truck
7 driver and the Target driver. When I went up there to provide
8 assistance, and walked towards the field and around the white
9 semi-truck that is when I saw the, the van and the victims of the
10 van accident.

11 Q. Okay. Do you -- so as you go back to when the -- you saw the
12 truck veer into the lane with the orange jeep, so the jeep was in
13 the left lane. He was in the, the right lane. Did the jeep honk
14 at all or do you know what caused the truck to, to move back? Do
15 you recall that?

16 A. I don't, I don't remember hearing a honk.

17 Q. Okay. And then about how many times did you see after the
18 jeep would you estimate that he swerved -- and as I understand it
19 he swerved from the right lane into the shoulder? Did he ever
20 move like to the left lane?

21 A. Yeah. He was kind of bouncing between the right shoulder and
22 the left, crossing the left, the center line between the right
23 lane and the left lane so he --

24 Q. Oh, okay.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. He would never go, he would never go as far as the left
3 shoulder, but he was bouncing between, like, crossing the middle
4 line, and then crossing the shoulder line to the right.

5 Q. Okay. So he was taking up almost three -- if you count the
6 right shoulder as, as a lane, which it isn't, but he was crossing
7 almost three, three lanes then from the right lane, left lane, and
8 then into the shoulder.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay. Can you give me an idea roughly as best you can about
11 how fast you guys were all traveling?

12 A. Let's see. I was getting ready to pass from where it all
13 started. So I think I was going about 70. And then when he
14 veered off to the jeep, and then I slowed way down. I gave him
15 quite a pretty large berth. So I think I was going about 60,
16 maybe 65 behind him.

17 Q. Okay. And when you slowed down to give him room were there
18 any other cars that were kind of in his area or was it -- by that
19 point was it relatively cleared out? Were people backing off or
20 speeding up?

21 A. I think after the orange jeep one or two cars, like, were
22 able to pass him, but then he continued to swerve, and then
23 everybody else who was starting to pass him kind of slowed way
24 back. So all of us pretty much stayed behind after that.

25 Q. Okay. And you never got a look inside at him while he was

1 driving did you?

2 A. No. I stayed behind him.

3 Q. Okay. Did you when he veered -- so at the, the exit that
4 Santiam, I believe it's like Santiam rest stop at that exit, did
5 you ever see from the moment he went past that exit to the point
6 where he made contact with whatever vehicle you saw did you ever
7 see any brake lights, or did you ever observe any brake lights?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Okay. And now so then you, you pulled over. About how far
10 ahead of the truck, the Target truck, would you say that you
11 pulled over after the, after the crash?

12 A. I pulled off behind him.

13 Q. Oh, okay.

14 A. Yeah. Because I had a, like I said, I had (indiscernible) a
15 distance behind him. And so when he crashed, I pulled off to the
16 shoulder, and I was, I was pretty far behind. I would say I
17 pulled off maybe a car length or two from the actual exit, and the
18 accident happened, yeah. And then he -- so the way it's set up is
19 there's the exit off to the rest stop, and there is probably about
20 -- I'm really bad at feet measurement -- so like maybe four or
21 five semi-truck lengths of shoulder and field. And they were more
22 north towards the end of that little field shoulder area, and I
23 was closer towards the actual exit onto the -- just past the exit
24 to the rest stop.

25 Q. Okay. All right. Yeah. So, yeah, I've -- okay. So I've

1 been to the, the scene. So I know exactly what you're talking
2 about.

3 A. Okay.

4 Q. That's a great description. Thank you.

5 A. Um-hmm.

6 Q. So, and I hate to ask this now, but if you could go back in
7 your mind to approaching the, the crash. You came upon the white
8 truck. What did you see as best you can describe, and as best
9 you're comfortable describing?

10 A. Yeah. So when I ran up, I ran in toward the field so I don't
11 go on the road side or between the trucks. I came up around the
12 field side to the truck, and definitely was not prepared for what
13 I saw (indiscernible) inspecting just the two trucks. So I came
14 around the corner, and that is when I saw -- the first thing I saw
15 was the female on her back, and then the man next to her with his
16 intestines out. And I kind of just stood there in shock kind of
17 taking in the scene. I remember seeing blood spatter on the
18 Target truck, and kind of how it was kind of torn apart on the
19 side there. And I looked off to the side, and that's when I saw
20 the van that was pushed up kind off to the side in front of the
21 Target truck. And then I saw three gentlemen on the ground kind
22 of in front of the white truck. There was severed foot. There
23 was a gentleman on his stomach that another bystander was talking
24 to the 911 operator about. I came up to offer assistance, and he
25 said you got this one. I'm going to go check on the others. I

1 was, like, yeah, I'll stay here. So I stayed with that guy for,
2 for a little while. You could tell he was pretty, pretty injured.
3 He had very irregular breathing. He was kind of like had like the
4 frothy breathing in which you know that there was -- when he was
5 breathing he was kind of breathing out bubbles and stuff. Couple
6 times he would try to move, and I would tell him you, you need to
7 stay. I know it hurts. You just need to stay.

8 And then his breathing became very, very irregular, kind of
9 similar to agonal breathing which is just not effective breathing.
10 So I stayed with him for maybe a minute longer, and I kind of saw
11 that there was nothing I could do for him. So I got up, and I
12 looked around. I found a woman on her back. I went up to her,
13 and she did not speak English. I speak very, very little Spanish.
14 So I was asking her (untranslated Spanish) her pain. She pointed
15 to her ribs. I lifted up her shirt to ensure there was no like
16 puncture injury or anything. She was not bleeding externally that
17 I could tell. So I told her you need to just lay here. I know it
18 hurts. You need to lay here. Don't move. Ambulance is on the
19 way.

20 To her right towards her feet was a gentleman on his stomach
21 propped up on his shoulders with blood coming down his face. He
22 was alert and oriented for the most part. So I was able to talk
23 to him. He said I'm fine. My face and my head just really hurts.
24 I was, like, do you hurt anywhere else? He was, like, not that I
25 can tell. So I was, like, okay (indiscernible) I know it hurts.

1 I know you're scared. Just stay here. Don't move.

2 I do remember a gentleman standing who when I was talking to
3 the woman was able to translate a little bit for me.

4 And then I went to the van. There was -- so the way the van
5 happened it looked like the impact caused like the front passenger
6 seat to kind of buckle forward. So there was a man kind of laying
7 on the back of the front passenger seat on his back. He had a
8 bloody face. Again, there was nothing that I could really do.
9 There was no external (indiscernible) I could really take care of.
10 So I talked to him a little bit; told him that you just need to
11 focus on his breathing, stay calm, don't move.

12 Behind him on the passenger back seat was another gentleman
13 who was laying completely like supine on his stomach between the
14 second row and the front passenger seat. I could not -- the way
15 he was laying I couldn't get a pulse or anything. So I put my
16 hands on his ribs, and I was able to feel a very -- what I thought
17 was very mild movement, but he was unresponsive.

18 In the middle of the second row was the gentleman that was
19 essentially folded in half. He looked like he was kind of
20 standing with his feet, and his front half was kind of down
21 touching his toes. Again, I couldn't reach him. So I watched for
22 breathing. Didn't see anything.

23 I walked around to the driver's side of the door, and that's
24 when I saw another gentleman who was on the floor of the
25 (indiscernible) passenger -- or I'm sorry, driver's side in the

1 van, but there was no external injuries, and I didn't get a pulse,
2 and I didn't see him breathing.

3 So I walked from there kind of back to the scene to kind of
4 see if there was anybody else that I missed. That is when I saw a
5 gentleman kind of more in the middle of the field with a black
6 shirt and a dog on a leash kind of watching everything. He kind
7 of looked dazed. So I ran up to him -- no. I'm sorry, that's not
8 correct. He looked kind of dazed, but I kind of just assumed he
9 was a bystander (verbatim). I went back around. I was talking
10 to people, and being like is there anything I can help? And saw
11 the guy in the black shirt with the dog walk over to the slope of
12 the hill. That was kind of between the white semi-truck front end
13 and the Target truck, and he kind of stumbled or tripped or
14 something and into a sitting position. That's when I ran up to
15 him, and I was like are you okay? Were you in the accident? He
16 was, like, yeah, yeah, I'm fine. I'm like were you in the
17 accident? He was, like, yeah, yeah, I was, I was driving. I said
18 you were driving this truck? And I pointed to the, the white
19 semi-truck. He was, like, yeah. I'm like what was going on?
20 I've been following you, and you have been swerving. What
21 happened? And he said I don't know. I'm just really dizzy. I'm
22 so tired.

23 So that's when I started asking him like are you having chest
24 pains? He said, no, I'm just really, really dizzy. And I was
25 like are you a diabetic? And he was, like, well, no, but I'm

1 supposed to go see my doctor to have blood work done. And I was,
2 like, okay, well, are you hurt anywhere? He was, like, no, no.
3 I'm just, I'm just really dizzy. I'm just really tired. I was,
4 like, okay, well, you need to sit here, and the EMTs are on their
5 way, and so don't move.

6 By that time the EMTs had arrived, and they started kind of
7 dispersing, and they had one of the EMTs kind of tagging, and I
8 asked if there was anything I could help with. So she asked if
9 I'd help tag the deceased. So I tagged the gentleman with the
10 intestines out, and the female. And by that time I was kind of
11 starting to lose it.

12 So I walked to the front of the semi-truck, the Target semi-
13 truck where all the other bystanders were kind of gathering, and
14 then we all kind of talked, and we're like that was really rough.
15 Thanks for stopping. We all kind of shared a hug. And then
16 that's when the state trooper showed up, and they told me --
17 they're asking did you see the accident? And the ones who said
18 no, he's like, thank you for your service. Please go on your way.
19 He got to me. He asked did you see the accident? I was like yes
20 I did. Okay. I need you to just sit in your car, and don't move
21 until one of us comes and talks to you. So I went back to my car,
22 and I sat there until one of them came to interview me.

23 Q. Okay. Well, that was -- I didn't realize that you had --
24 that you were essentially the first responder. I'm very sorry
25 that you had to witness that and see all that. And thank you for

1 taking care of the victims as best you could. I know you didn't
2 have the equipment or, you know, to do, do that much, but the
3 support you provided I know is very much appreciated. So thank
4 you. Just so I just want to be sure that I understand kind of the
5 -- because I, I am trying to figure out like who was ejected from
6 the vehicle, who was still in the vehicle. So I'm just going to
7 run down. And, again, I, I don't want to bring back any bad
8 memories. So if you at any point need to stop, that's fine.
9 So as you approached the van you saw there were three men on the
10 ground. One I know one you said had the intestines out. The
11 other might have like a severed limbs. And then there was one,
12 one woman on the ground. Now, as I recall so the one that you,
13 that you were with that had the, the -- had the frothy breathing,
14 the agonal breathing.

15 A. Um-hmm.

16 Q. Do you know if the EMTs took care of him? Do you know if
17 that was the gentleman that was air lifted at all? Did you --

18 A. I, I don't know. I know that I was in that area when the
19 EMTs showed up, and one of the bystanders said, you know, he's
20 kind of pointing around who is deceased, who is deceased,
21 (indiscernible) he told the EMTs he was responsive but he isn't
22 anymore. And that's when I kind of walked off.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. So I don't know.

25 Q. Okay. And --

1 A. (Indiscernible).

2 Q. No, that's fine. Did you see anybody at all in the front
3 right seat? So you have like the driver's seat, but then the seat
4 that was immediately to the right. Did you see anybody there?

5 A. Yeah. So the, like the front passenger seat, is that what
6 you're asking?

7 Q. Yes. I, I -- because you mentioned the front passenger seat,
8 and I wasn't sure if you meant by passenger the first row or if
9 you were talking about the actual seat in the, in the front right.

10 A. Yeah. So there wasn't anybody in the front passenger seat
11 because the front passenger seat was collapsed forward.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. So like the back of the passenger seat was down, and then
14 laying across that was a -- was the gentleman that had like the
15 bloody face and --

16 Q. Okay. So the -- and if I, I just want to make sure I
17 understand. So the front right seat was actually the seat back if
18 you think of it as upright. It was fully forward or was it fully
19 reclined like you were laying down?

20 A. Fully forward.

21 Q. Oh, okay. All right. Yeah. When I saw the vehicle it had
22 been fully reclined, and I assumed that it broke during the, the
23 rear impact. So, okay, thank you. That's some good information.
24 I appreciate that. Okay. And how are you doing now?

25 A. I'm okay.

1 Q. Okay. I can imagine that from everything you saw that it was
2 obviously quite the ordeal. So is there anything else from that
3 day that stands out in your mind that I haven't asked you about?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Okay. Well, I thank you very much for this, this account. I
6 mean you, you were the first one on the scene, and you've been
7 able to give details that no one else has been able to. So I
8 really appreciate -- I appreciate your time and willingness to, to
9 talk about this.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. I'm going to, I'm going to stop the recording right now. I
12 think I've asked all the questions that I need to.

13 A. Okay.

14 Q. If you could just hold on just a second.

15 A. Okay.

16 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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

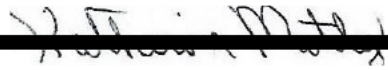
IN THE MATTER OF: ROADWAY DEPARTURE & FATAL CRASH WITH
 PARKED VEHICLES NEAR THE NORTH
 SANTIAM REST AREA NEAR MILLERSBURG,
 OREGON ON MAY 18, 2023
 Interview of Julie McCrae

ACCIDENT NO.: HWY23FH013

PLACE: via telephone

DATE: December 22, 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.



Katherine Motley
Transcriber