

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

\*

CINDY B TOW CONTACT WITH PORT \*

OF COLUMBIA BEAVER DOCK, MILE \*

Accident No.: DCA24FM010

53 ON THE COLUMBIA RIVER IN \*

OREGON ON NOVEMBER 23, 2023 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: WILFORD FALER, Deckhand

*Cindy B*

On board the *Cindy B*

Sunday,

November 12, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO-4 [REDACTED], Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

ITEM

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By CWO-4 [REDACTED]

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I N T E R V I E W

## INTERVIEW OF WILFORD FALER

BY CWO-4 [REDACTED]:

1  
2  
3  
4 Q. All right, I'm with Nikko Faler, he's a deckhand aboard the  
5 *Cindy P* (ph.), discussing an allision with a -- the biorefinery  
6 fuel pier. How long have you been on board?

7 A. Since Thursday.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah, Thursday, that sounds right. Yeah, Thursday.

10 Q. So, all three of you guys came on board together?

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. Okay, how would you describe your duties on board as a  
13 deckhand on the *Cindy P*? What's your typical day look like?

14 A. Yeah --

15 Q. So, whatever you -- I guess are you at the discretion of the  
16 captain, you know --

17 A. Yeah, pretty much, I do what needs to be done. I go out on  
18 the barge every time -- or not every time, I guess, but when I'm  
19 up and then --

20 Q. What's your watch routine? How are you and --

21 A. 6:00 to 6:00.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I'm 12:00 to 6:00 and then -- or no -- yeah, 12:00 to 6:00  
24 and he's 6:00 to 12:00.

25 Q. Okay, and regardless of what time you guys get underway, you

- 1 guys try to maintain that same schedule?
- 2 A. Yeah. Oh, yeah, we try to stay in the 6:00 to 12:00 and  
3 12:00 to 6:00.
- 4 Q. Okay, so you're from 12:00 at night to 0600 in the morning?
- 5 A. Yeah, and then --
- 6 Q. And then you'll come back on at --
- 7 A. At 1800.
- 8 Q. Yeah?
- 9 A. Wait, no, I think I said that one wrong.
- 10 Q. What, 6:30 --
- 11 A. 12:00 -- noon, sorry.
- 12 Q. So, noon to 1800?
- 13 A. Yeah, noon to 1800, sorry.
- 14 Q. And then during that time, you're standing lookout or doing  
15 rounds on the barge?
- 16 A. Doing rounds on the boat, checking all of the engine rooms  
17 and making sure everything's running good, and I'm in the barge.
- 18 Q. Are you up here in the wheelhouse very often?
- 19 A. Yeah, I come up and check on Joe and make sure he doesn't  
20 need anything.
- 21 Q. Yeah.
- 22 A. Just make sure he's all good.
- 23 Q. Okay, I was just talking to Joe this morning. It sounds like  
24 you got underway from Westport, Oregon about 4:00 this morning,  
25 does that sound about right?

- 1 A. Yeah, sounds about right.
- 2 Q. What happened after that?
- 3 A. We were coming up, Joe -- like, about the whole accident  
4 thing?
- 5 Q. Yeah.
- 6 A. Joe needed to use the restroom and get -- he was getting a  
7 pot of coffee and I was steering for him. I was pretty pumped up  
8 still from untying the barge, so I was up. So, I was steering and  
9 just dozed off.
- 10 Q. Okay.
- 11 A. Then I woke up as soon as we collided and he ran up and was,  
12 like, not happy.
- 13 Q. Yeah, scared?
- 14 A. Yeah, really scared. So was I.
- 15 Q. So, you -- how long after you guys departed Westport did Joe  
16 need to take a break?
- 17 A. Like -- I don't even know. It was, like, 15 -- ten, 15  
18 minutes before we collided.
- 19 Q. Yeah.
- 20 A. I mean, I was only up here for maybe ten --
- 21 Q. So, it sounds like the collision was around 6:00 this morning  
22 if that?
- 23 A. Yeah.
- 24 Q. So, maybe ten or 15 minutes before --
- 25 A. Yeah, 5:50?

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. 5:45, I'm not quite sure.
- 3 Q. Where was Brycen?
- 4 A. He was in bed.
- 5 Q. Did he help you untie the barge or was he -- or get underway
- 6 from Westport?
- 7 A. Nuh huh.
- 8 Q. So, he was in the rack from whenever?
- 9 A. Yeah, because it wasn't his time. He was -- it was 6:00.
- 10 Q. Got you, and when you -- what's the last thing you remember,
- 11 I guess?
- 12 A. Before we hit?
- 13 Q. Yeah.
- 14 A. Looking at that and then looking in front of me. I started
- 15 leaning forward and then I -- that's about all I remember. I sort
- 16 of don't remember dozing off or nothing. (Verbatim) I sort of
- 17 just fell asleep.
- 18 Q. Yeah, do you --
- 19 A. It's warm in here, so I was just --
- 20 Q. Do you remember feeling tired?
- 21 A. I wasn't even -- not tired, I was still sort of, like, felt
- 22 good.
- 23 Q. Yeah, when you're steering -- or at the helm, what are you
- 24 using as a guide? Are you steering a certain bearing, or are you
- 25 staying on a track line?

1 A. A track line on there, just staying in the middle of the  
2 channel.

3 Q. So, you use the chart and the middle of the channel, follow  
4 the track line?

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. Okay, was there any other traffic that you were --

7 A. Not at the time, no.

8 Q. Okay, so you didn't notice anything or interact with any  
9 other boats?

10 A. No.

11 Q. Did you notice any lights? Any aids to navigation, like  
12 channel markers?

13 A. Not at the time, no.

14 Q. Okay, so how was your day before that? So, you came on watch  
15 at midnight, what about the hours prior to that? Were you rested,  
16 did you have time to get some sleep?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. So, you got off watch around 1800 the night before?

19 A. Yeah, at 1800 and I slept until, like, 11:30. I woke up,  
20 used the restroom, and got --

21 Q. So, as soon as you got off watch, did you get something to  
22 eat?

23 A. Yeah, I got something to eat and -- so, usually, I'm in bed  
24 by, like, 30 minutes after lunch.

25 Q. Okay.



1 A. So, I get something to eat, something to drink.

2 Q. Eat, drink, and then roughly 1830, you're in the rack?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. So, it sounds like you guys were underway. Were you already  
5 at Westport when you woke up or went on watch, do you remember? I  
6 think that your log has them mooring up at 2323, arrive at  
7 Westport. What time does Brycen wake you up?

8 A. We left -- usually, he wakes up, like, 30 minutes before 2:00  
9 and sometimes we switch out different times. Like, he will come  
10 out 15 minutes early to give me a little extra time to eat and  
11 stuff and get to bed earlier.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. If he can't sleep the whole time, which sometimes you can't.

14 Q. Yeah.

15 A. But --

16 Q. Do you remember waking up before you went on that -- your  
17 last watch?

18 A. Before my last watch?

19 Q. Yeah, so you came on at midnight this morning, what time did  
20 you wake up?

21 A. Oh, I woke up at 11:30-ish.

22 Q. 11:30? Do you wake up on your own or do you have an alarm?

23 A. Oh, an alarm.

24 Q. Okay, 11:30, and do you remember when you came out of your  
25 compartment, if you guys were already moored up at Westport? Or

1 were you all underway?

2 A. We were, like, in the -- pretty much moored up, not quite  
3 yet, though.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Like, we were -- Brycen was in the process of it and I went  
6 up there and helped him finish. When I woke up, I got something  
7 to eat real fast, just a granola bar and a drink, then I went up  
8 there and helped him real fast and he came in and went to bed.

9 Q. Okay, got you. How often are you -- do you have to come up  
10 and stand a wheel watch?

11 A. Not very often, just as an emergency like the restroom.

12 Q. Yeah.

13 A. Not very often. I mean, I'll come up here with the captain.  
14 He'll, like, stand here next to me and he'll let me, steer with  
15 me, and I've been doing it for six months or so now. I've only  
16 been doing this for almost a year here in a week or two.

17 Q. Yeah, okay. All on the *Cindy P*?

18 A. Oh, no, on all of the boats -- all of our boats with whole  
19 different captains and stuff. I've worked -- actually, I guess  
20 we've gotten a lot of new guys, but I've worked with most of the  
21 guys that have been here or have left here.

22 Q. Yeah, okay, and in that time -- in the last few months, how  
23 often have you found yourself alone in the wheelhouse?

24 A. Not very often. I mean, I have a couple times. But it's  
25 just if they have to go. But it's less than, like, five minutes.

1 Q. Yeah, okay. Yeah, well you're well regarded. I mean, they  
2 think you're an outstanding deckhand, so, you know.

3 A. I'm definitely nervous.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. I've never had nothing like this happen. (Verbatim)

6 Q. I know, it's definitely a big deal and I understand the need  
7 for you being nervous. Mechanically, everything runs fine?

8 A. Oh, yeah.

9 Q. Anything play an issue or a part in what happened this  
10 morning?

11 A. Oh, not a single thing I've noticed yet.

12 Q. Okay, are you familiar with the bridge navigation watch alarm  
13 system?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Did that activate this morning? Do you know how it works?

16 A. Yeah, the motion sensors --

17 Q. Yeah.

18 A. Usually, if it stops moving or if it's -- if, like, it  
19 doesn't detect movement --

20 Q. Is it always on or can you turn it off?

21 A. Yeah, it's always on. I've never seen anyone turn it off.  
22 They always leave it on.

23 Q. But for what you know, it was on this morning?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay.

- 1 A. Well, I know -- that's one thing I do know, the steering has  
2 to be on for it to be on.
- 3 Q. Okay.
- 4 A. Just because the steering -- if no one's in here, the  
5 steering's off.
- 6 Q. Okay, so it's off right now, so it's --
- 7 A. Yeah, it --
- 8 Q. Okay, and then what -- how were you steering? How was the  
9 steering set up, do you remember? Was it -- was the main rutter  
10 synched?
- 11 A. Yeah, main rudders were synched.
- 12 Q. And the flanking rudders were amidships?
- 13 A. They were just straight.
- 14 Q. Okay, when you steer, are you using just the main rudders?
- 15 A. Yeah.
- 16 Q. Did you make any throttle changes this morning?
- 17 A. Nuh huh.
- 18 Q. Okay.
- 19 A. No.
- 20 Q. So, no throttle changes, no traffic, main rudders were  
21 synched, mechanically fine?
- 22 A. Yeah.
- 23 Q. And then what's the first thing you remember afterwards?
- 24 A. Afterwards, just I hear the door open and -- well --
- 25 Q. Joe's coming in, is that it?

1 A. I mean, it was all so abrupt. I mean, I looked, and I heard,  
2 and I -- it's just like -- I just had so much going on in me. I  
3 was like -- I didn't know what to do.

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. Like, I was sort of -- it was all sort of a blur for a minute  
6 there. But I know Joe came in and I looked up and all I see is  
7 we're in -- pushing into it and I'm like oh, my God, and my heart  
8 just dropped.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. And I thought -- and I was like oh, my gosh, I know what  
11 happened.

12 Q. Yeah, where were the throttles at that time? Were they still  
13 ahead?

14 A. Yeah, ahead.

15 Q. Did you -- do you clutch or reverse?

16 A. Joe ran in here and I'd seen it too and I pulled them out of  
17 gear as soon as I could and Joe did -- he came right there with me  
18 and sort of grabbed the thing there.

19 Q. Okay, Joe was excited at the time, I'm sure? Yeah, I think  
20 he feels bad about that, for what it's worth. Everyone was  
21 scared.

22 A. He handled it great, in my opinion.

23 Q. Yeah, what happened afterwards?

24 A. I put on all my lifejacket, hardhat, and all my PFD, and ran  
25 out on the barge and made sure, you know --

1 Q. He instructed you to go check on the barge?

2 A. Make sure I don't go off of it into the scene, but, like, go  
3 out there to look off the side to make sure there's nothing in the  
4 water and stuff.

5 Q. Was there any -- I see you guys were faced up to the stern,  
6 right?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. The product -- the rock, was it -- do you guys -- the  
9 wheelhouse is up pretty high, so it's not really a -- was it a  
10 factor in, like, visibility where --

11 A. Oh, no.

12 Q. So, you're well above that, you can see?

13 A. Yeah, way above it, yeah.

14 Q. Yeah, okay. So, no visibility issues?

15 A. Nothing, and it was -- I mean, it was clear out. I mean, it  
16 was --

17 Q. Not raining as far as --

18 A. No, it was just beautiful out, no wind, like, the water was  
19 perfectly calm.

20 Q. What about -- it was pretty dark this morning, right? I  
21 mean, it was clouded over?

22 A. It actually wasn't that dark at the time.

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. I remember I could see the sky, like, not all clouds. There  
25 was clouds, but you could see the sky.

- 1 Q. Yeah.
- 2 A. It was sort of light this morning and all the --
- 3 Q. So, when you're operating at night, are the house lights on  
4 red or are they white? Like when -- if you come from, let's say,  
5 the galley or your common area, is it red lights or white lights?
- 6 A. On the house?
- 7 Q. Yeah.
- 8 A. I think they're -- aren't they yellow?
- 9 Q. Are they? Like inside the house?
- 10 A. Oh, inside?
- 11 Q. Yeah.
- 12 A. Oh, they're white.
- 13 Q. Are they red lights up here?
- 14 A. Yeah, there's the spinning covers, then this has, like, a  
15 red -- we don't usually turn the lights on. Usually, it's just  
16 on.
- 17 Q. The reason I asked if you go from white light up here to  
18 complete darkness, you know, it takes time for your eyes?
- 19 A. Oh, yeah, for eyes to adjust.
- 20 Q. Do you think that was a factor?
- 21 A. No, I (indiscernible).
- 22 Q. Yeah.
- 23 A. I know it -- I mean, that's the first thing I realized when I  
24 woke up. I was like oh, my gosh, I fell asleep. That's all I  
25 remembered was --

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. That's what I realized. I don't even remember falling asleep  
3 really.

4 Q. So, on your six on, six off, are you -- how many hours of  
5 sleep do you think you're getting in a 24-hour period?

6 A. In a 24-hour, a little over eight. Sometimes I can sleep a  
7 little under, but eight is where I sleep -- like, that's enough  
8 sleep. If I sleep more than eight hours, I start feeling groggy.

9 Q. Yeah.

10 A. Like, it has an effect on me. I don't know. It's, like,  
11 weird.

12 Q. So, if you're off from 6:00 in the morning until noon, are  
13 you allowed to rest that entire time?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. Or are you, like, day work, change the oil on something or  
16 paint something?

17 A. No, you're off.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Do the work when you're on and do whatever you want when  
20 you're off.

21 Q. Got you.

22 A. Try to manage your sleep good. I mean, that's what I learned  
23 because -- like taught when I first got on here is manage your  
24 sleep, don't, like, stay up on your phone and don't do stuff like  
25 lose sleep, like, manage your sleep, get your sleep, and be rested



1 all the time.

2 Q. Are you on any medications or -- so, no prescription  
3 medications?

4 A. No.

5 Q. Nothing taken -- any drugs or alcohol?

6 A. No.

7 Q. Okay, is that allowed or condoned on board at all?

8 A. No.

9 Q. Strictly prohibited for what you know?

10 A. What?

11 Q. It's strictly prohibited for what you know?

12 A. Oh, yeah.

13 Q. Okay, how's the company and the atmosphere?

14 A. The company?

15 Q. Yeah, are you -- do you enjoy working for them?

16 A. Oh, yeah.

17 Q. Do they treat you well?

18 A. Oh, they treat me really well, yes.

19 Q. Okay, no, you know, forced to work extra hours?

20 A. No.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I do, like -- I mean, I do like to work -- not extra hours,  
23 but extra days.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. I always just worked my whole life, so it's sort of -- it's a

1 hobby also for me.

2 Q. Yeah.

3 A. And after I started getting a little better doing this stuff,  
4 it sort of became more fun and, like, just trying to get better  
5 about it the whole time.

6 Q. Do you want to be a captain, is that your goal?

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Well, that's good. Are you pursuing a license?

9 A. Not yet, no.

10 Q. But eventually?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. Okay, any other question? Anything else that comes to mind  
13 that you want to -- that I haven't asked or that you feel is  
14 relevant?

15 A. No.

16 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: All right, yeah, I appreciate it. I  
17 know these -- I never meet my customers on their best day. I know  
18 it's --

19 MR. FALER: Yeah, that's the truth.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: So, yeah, I wish I would've met you  
21 on, like, an annual inspection.

22 MR. FALER: Yeah, that would've been cooler.

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I know you would've done really well.

24 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF:            *CINDY B* TOW CONTACT WITH PORT OF  
   COLUMBIA BEAVER DOCK, MILE 53 ON THE  
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   Interview of Wilford Faler

ACCIDENT NO.:                DCA22FM010

PLACE:                        On board the *Cindy B*

DATE:                         November 12, 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.



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Carolyn Hanna  
Transcriber