

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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BARGE COLLISION ITV *CAROL McMANUS*
& ITV *BIG D* NEAR ANGOLA, LOUISIANA
ON JANUARY 9, 2023

Accident No.: DCA23FM010

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Interview of: VAN POWELL, Pilot
ITV *Carol McManus*

ITV Carol McManus
Angola, Louisiana

Thursday,
January 12, 2023

APPEARANCES:

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
US Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Vicksburg

CWO [REDACTED], Investigating Officer
US Coast Guard Marine Safety Detachment Vicksburg

KENNY UNDERHILL, Director of Operations
Ingram Barge Company

RICK TORRES, Director of Compliance
Florida Marine Transporters

DAVID REISMAN, ESQ.

JASON KENNEY, ESQ.

LANCE BULLOCK, ESQ.

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Van Powell:

By CWO [REDACTED]

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I N T E R V I E W

1
2 CWO [REDACTED]: Good morning. This is Chief Warrant Officer
3 [REDACTED] with the Coast Guard. MSD Vicksburg. Currently, we
4 are on the ITV *Carol McManus*. This is an interview due to the
5 collision incident that occurred on the 9th of January, between
6 the *Carol McManus* and the *Big D*.

7 We're going to go around the room and do a quick roll call of
8 who's in the room. Going this way.

9 CWO [REDACTED]: This is Chief Warrant Officer [REDACTED]. Also
10 with MSD Vicksburg, US Coast Guard.

11 MR. UNDERHILL: Kenny Underhill with Ingram Barge Company,
12 director of operations.

13 MR. REISMAN: David Reisman with Liskow and Lewis. I'm
14 outside counsel for Ingram Barge.

15 MR. KENNEY: This is Jason Kenney with Staines, Eppling and
16 Kenney, outside counsel for Florida Marine Transport.

17 MR. TORRES: Rick Torres with Florida Marine. Director of
18 compliance.

19 MR. POWELL: Van Powell with Ingram Barge Company.

20 MR. BULLOCK: Lance Bullock, also with Liskow and Lewis.
21 Outside counsel for Ingram Barge.

22 CWO [REDACTED]: All right. Good. Thank you. So, that's
23 everybody in the room. And we're going to get going.

24 INTERVIEW OF VAN POWELL

25 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

1 Q. Mr. Van Powell, I guess, we'll start off with kind of could
2 just discuss your background, how long you've been in the maritime
3 industry, you know, how long you've been working towing vessels,
4 kind of just like your -- just kind of tell us your personal story
5 if you could, please.

6 A. Fourth generation tow boater in my family, so I've been on
7 tow boats since I was two to three years old. Off and on.
8 Started out working with a company my uncle owned called Fleet
9 Towing Company when I was twelve, fourteen years old and out of
10 school. Deck tending all summer. Went back to school. Since I
11 graduated, I went full-time, worked on tow boats. Then, later
12 graduated to better companies, better pay. Worked for Federal
13 Barge Lines, with my father. Moved up fleet mate in St. Louis,
14 later as a line boat mate. And then I moved to the Valley Line
15 Company with my uncle, and trained to be a pilot there. And I
16 spent ten years with Valley Line, moved up to pilot there. Later
17 transferred to American Commercial Barge Lines, at the time.
18 Spent twenty years there as a pilot, captain. And then I
19 transferred over to Ingram, and I've been here close to eleven
20 years, now.

21 Q. Great. So, you've been with this company for eleven years?

22 A. That's --

23 Q. Awesome. So, you're training as a pilot, it's all been like,
24 on the job training, like with companies? You haven't been to
25 like a maritime academy or anything like that?

1 A. No.

2 Q. So, specifically on this vessel, how long have you been a
3 pilot on this vessel?

4 A. I've probably been on this one a year and a half, I guess,
5 maybe.

6 Q. What is like a typical work schedule when you're onboard, a
7 hitch?

8 A. As far as daily? Daily onboard?

9 Q. Yes, sir. So, when you're onboard, what's the watch schedule
10 like, what is your work schedule?

11 A. We work six hours on, six hours off. On here, we change at
12 5:00 and 11:00. We work six, off six.

13 Q. Okay. So, on a regular hitch, you know, like when you're
14 onboard, how long is a hitch? Days off and days on.

15 A. Twenty-eight days on. Twenty-eight off.

16 Q. So, this past week of when the incident occurred, how far
17 along into this current hitch was it?

18 A. It would've been about twenty-five days.

19 Q. Okay. So, at the very end of your hitch?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Were there any changes on this voyage for you, in terms of
22 your schedule?

23 A. No.

24 Q. Can you explain this vessel? You know, in terms of like,
25 just it's capabilities, you know, how many engines, horsepower,

1 rudder, steering arrangements. Kind of just talk about the vessel
2 itself.

3 A. It's 9000 horsepower. Triple engine. Triple screw. It's of
4 course triple flank rudders and steering rudders, so there's one
5 for every engine. It's pretty capable with the size tow we had.
6 Carry usually thirty-five barges southbound. Pretty much a normal
7 tow, 35 loads.

8 Q. Does the vessel have flanking rudders? It does, right?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. For operating the rudders, can they be operated independently
11 from each other, or is it all one?

12 A. It's all one.

13 Q. All one system.

14 A. Re-phrase that. Flanking rudders operate separately.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. You can operate those separate, but not the individual
17 rudders.

18 Q. Got you. How do you control the engines?

19 A. We have electronic throttles in the pilothouse.

20 Q. On the vessel, have you ever had any trouble with the rudders
21 or the engines?

22 A. There an occasional engine problem. Nothing serious. Just
23 minor stuff.

24 Q. Can you describe like, what is minor stuff?

25 A. Last problem I can really think of was actual the engine,

1 shaft broke and went -- But we were northbound.

2 Q. Can you describe all of the navigation equipment in the
3 wheelhouse that you use on this vessel?

4 A. We have two radars, port and starboard. We got the chart
5 system. Of course, we have two depth finders. AIS system, works
6 on the chart. Got your Rose Point, if you want to call it that.

7 Q. So, when you're on watch in the wheelhouse, are you allowed
8 to have your cell phone on you? Your personal cell phone.

9 A. Just for emergencies, sort of.

10 Q. So, the night of the incident, did you have your personal
11 cell phone with you up on the wheelhouse?

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. During your watch, the night of the incident, were you using
14 it to do anything? Like, surf the web, or you know, text, or call
15 or anything like that?

16 A. I called my wife for a few minutes right after I came on
17 watch. Would've been 11:00 p.m.

18 Q. So, 11:00 p.m. was --

19 A. Right in that area.

20 Q. -- was changing watch?

21 A. Right after watch --

22 Q. So, that night, that was the only time you used it? Or, was
23 that the only time?

24 A. Check messages.

25 Q. As per company policy, is there any restrictions to use cell

1 phones while you're on watch?

2 A. Um-hmm.

3 Q. So, what is the company policy for that?

4 A. Well, let's see. I think Kenny run that one by you.

5 MR. UNDERHILL: It's a no distractions when you're in
6 critical areas, things of that nature.

7 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. So, there's -- the company policy's like,
8 they're allowed to have it, but not, you can't use it while, you
9 saying, during critical maneuvers?

10 MR. UNDERHILL: Correct.

11 BY CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. All right.

12 Q. So, I think at this point, if you, can you just go through
13 everything leading up to the incident? So, kind of start from
14 when you came on watch, like the pass down, or whatever you did
15 with the captain, and then, all the way up through until after the
16 event. Try to be as detailed as you can. And, kind of let you
17 tell your story.

18 A. Okay. Well, our watch change. Discussed what was going on.
19 River conditions. Where we were. What was coming. What was
20 behind us. At that time we weren't close enough to discuss the
21 *Big D*. So, anyway, when I got above the ferry landing, Angola
22 ferry landing, north middle of the ways, I checked traffic. *Big D*
23 responded, he was coming down up around old river control area.
24 Kind of went back and forth on who was going to go where, and who
25 was going to stay on the point side. Who was going the bend way,

1 and actually, right at the end, I think we decided what one or
2 two, and decided on the one. And, evidently, I got confused
3 between all of the, who was going which way, and forgot that one.

4 Q. And then what happened?

5 A. Well, I was watching, he wasn't in actual view until the last
6 few minutes. I was watching his predictor line, and it was going
7 straight down, toward the bend. So, I thought I was in good
8 shape. But, I have maneuvered out, I was actually completely out
9 of the channel, behind the buoy line, because there's plenty of
10 water there at the time. And close to that out flow channel,
11 lower out flowing channel for old river. Pretty close to the
12 diversion dyke, right there at the lower side of it. And, it was
13 with the length of barges I had and all the empties out there,
14 when he come off the point, I couldn't see his running lights.
15 So, I was still looking at the Rose Point, watching that predictor
16 line, and evidently, at that time, he saw me. And, -- said,
17 you're still closing on me. Not sure exactly what I said at that
18 time, and I said, so, I went backing full astern, I said, let's
19 see if you can stop. Hit before I could stop. That's the best I
20 can explain it.

21 Q. Okay. So, while they were making the passing arrangement, so
22 you were more focused on -- like the Rose Point? Was that your
23 main way of trying to assess where, you know, how everything was
24 going?

25 A. Well, if you don't have any visual contact with them, the

1 radar, that's all you've got.

2 Q. So, what was your set up with the barges? Like, what was
3 your arrangement?

4 A. We had twelve loads at the center, and thirty empties around
5 them. Seven long, six wide.

6 Q. So, how long was the tow?

7 A. Seven long.

8 Q. Seven hundred? Is that what you said?

9 A. It would've been approximately 1400 feet.

10 Q. Is this a regular route for you? For the vessel?

11 A. Yes.

12 Q. What was the destination?

13 A. Cairo, Illinois.

14 Q. Cairo.

15 MR. UNDERHILL: Actually, that would've been Columbus. It's
16 right below Cairo. Our fleet is at Columbus.

17 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

18 Q. So, how many times would you say that you've made this trip?

19 A. Numerous. Let me think back. Six trips a year. Twenty
20 years. One hundred and twenty.

21 Q. So, around one hundred and twenty times? So, you would say
22 you've been around this bend that many times?

23 A. Well, you know, we don't catch it every time.

24 Q. Oh, yeah. If you're on watch you're --

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. So, how often have you made this turn, do you think?

2 A. I would say, probably at least half that. Fifty, say fifty
3 times.

4 Q. -- times or so? Okay.

5 A. One way or the other.

6 Q. So, in your experience on making this turn, what was the
7 typical arrangement if you pass a vessel at that turn?

8 A. Well, I wouldn't consider it really typical. It depends
9 mainly on the river stage and the tow sizes. It's done either
10 way, a lot of times.

11 Q. I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

12 A. I said it's done either way, one whistle or two whistles a
13 lot of times. Just, like I say, according to your tow size and
14 river conditions.

15 Q. So, what was the weather like?

16 A. Dark, clear.

17 Q. So it was clear? Okay. The incident location, is there
18 anything unusual about that spot? You know, weird about that turn
19 or anything like that, that you know of? Currents? Or, you know,
20 like shoaling or anything like that, that you know of?

21 A. Well, at times, if there running water through the out flow
22 canals, it gets pretty tricky there. It tries to suck you up into
23 that canal when you get too close to it. They weren't running
24 anything, or, if they were it was very little that night.

25 Q. During -- you kind of described the events that led up to it.

1 So, at what point did you realize that it was like an emergency
2 situation?

3 A. Well, once he got below the point, say, he was turning so
4 hard it showed his track line going straight on down the river.
5 His vessel was actually going that way, but the barges were coming
6 this way. When I started catching him on radar, he wasn't very
7 far away.

8 Q. So how far away do you think the vessel was when you realized
9 it was --

10 A. I'd say twelve, maybe a thousand feet ahead of the tow,
11 something like that.

12 Q. So, what actions did you take after the incident, or after
13 the accident, what were your actions?

14 A. Main thing was trying to get what barges I had left and get
15 them out of the way, get over to the shore and we had one of his
16 barges across the head of our tow. Just eased over to the shore
17 trying to keep from flipping it over.

18 Q. You talked about making passing arrangements before the turn,
19 do you like, record that anywhere? Like, do you write that down
20 or anything, saying this is what we agreed upon?

21 A. No. I didn't write it down. It's recorded on our radio
22 recorders.

23 Q. I meant like as in terms of is there a way for you to like,
24 look at something to say, yeah, this is what we agreed upon?

25 A. Not on the charts. If you write it down --

1 Q. During a twenty-four hour period, how much sleep do you
2 normally get?

3 A. About five hours. By the time you get out of five and
4 halves, grab you a bite to eat, that's first up. Get in bed, get
5 up thirty minutes early to get ready to go back on watch. So,
6 it's an hour gone, pretty much every time.

7 MR. UNDERHILL: So that five hours in the twenty-four hours,
8 or five hour between each watch?

9 MR. POWELL: Yeah. Between each watch.

10 MR. UNDERHILL: I'm not sure that's what you're asking.

11 BY CWO [REDACTED]:

12 Q. So you would say you get roughly ten hours of sleep in a
13 twenty-four hour period?

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And it's split between the two.

16 A. Um-hmm.

17 Q. That's what you're saying, right?

18 A. Yeah.

19 Q. So, how much sleep would you say you got prior to that watch?

20 A. I'd say pretty close to the five hours.

21 Q. How would you describe like, the quality of sleep you got
22 that night? Or, that evening I should say, before?

23 A. It was pretty good. As long as everything is going smooth,
24 sleep pretty good.

25 Q. During that night, after you took watch, how did you feel

1 during the watch? As far as like, you know, yourself. How were
2 you feeling that night?

3 A. I'd say fine.

4 Q. Do you drink caffeinated beverages?

5 A. Um-hmm. I drink coffee. When I go on watch, every watch, I
6 drink coffee.

7 Q. So, coffee. That's what you drink? No soda or anything like
8 that? Just coffee? Did you fall asleep at any time while you
9 were on watch?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No. Just give me a moment. I'm going through Drew's list
12 here. I just want to make sure I hit all the points that he was
13 looking for.

14 CWO [REDACTED]: He's the NTSB -- Drew's the NTSB guy. He got
15 stuck in D.C. so.

16 So, I think we're good to start wrapping this up.

17 Mr. Powell, thank you for your time. Is there anything else
18 that you can think of that would help us in our investigation at
19 this point? Anything that you'd like to say?

20 MR. POWELL: Nothing I can think of right at the moment.

21 CWO [REDACTED]: Okay. So, at this point I'm going to stop the
22 recording. This concludes the interview. It's approximately
23 10:20. Thank you all for your time.

24 (Whereupon, at 10:20 a.m., the interview was concluded.)

25

CERTIFICATE

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

IN THE MATTER OF: BARGE COLLISION ITV *CAROL McMANUS*
 & ITV *BIG D* NEAR ANGOLA, LOUISIANA
 ON JANUARY 9, 2023
 Interview of Van Powell

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA23FM010

PLACE: Angola, Louisiana

DATE: January 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.



Angela Allen
Transcriber