

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: \*

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CONTACT OF TOWING VESSEL \*

*OLYMPIC SCOUT* WITH THE *HYLEBOS* \*

Accident No.: DCA24FM003

WATERWAY BRIDGE IN TACOMA, \*

WASHINGTON ON OCTOBER 12, 2023 \*

\*

\* \* \* \* \*

Interview of: DREW SMITH, Deckhand  
*Montlake*

Aboard the *Montlake*

Friday,  
October 13, 2023

APPEARANCES:

LT [REDACTED], Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

LCDR [REDACTED], Senior Investigating Officer  
United States Coast Guard

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Drew Smith:

By LT [REDACTED]

4

I N T E R V I E W

(11:21 a.m.)

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2  
3 LT [REDACTED]: Good morning. It is Friday, October 13th, and  
4 the time is 11:21 a.m. My name is Lieutenant [REDACTED], and  
5 I am on board the towing vessel *Montlake* conducting interviews in  
6 regards to the allision that took place last night. My last name  
7 is spelled [REDACTED]. In the room we have Lieutenant  
8 Commander [REDACTED].

9 LCDR [REDACTED]: Last name is spelled [REDACTED].

10 LT [REDACTED]: And the crew member?

11 MR. SMITH: My name is Drew Smith, S-m-i-t-h, and I'm the AB  
12 on board.

13 LT [REDACTED]: Great.

## INTERVIEW OF DREW SMITH

14  
15 BY LT [REDACTED]:

16 Q. So Mr. Smith, if you wouldn't mind just kind of walking us  
17 through the start of the operation that the allision occurred in?  
18 So I believe you guys were down south. So if you can just start  
19 there?

20 A. Yeah. So we are -- first of all, I've been on this boat for  
21 2 weeks.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. New to the tug industry, you know, so I'm pretty green when  
24 it comes to everything going on here. I mean, I'm experienced on  
25 boats, just new to this.

1 Q. Um-hum.

2 A. So we took on ethanol and, you know, we left Tacoma. We're  
3 heading through the channel and I was on the starboard side of the  
4 barge and I was flaking out our -- one of our spring lines. I was  
5 getting it ready on the deck for our -- once we came back here. I  
6 heard on the radio, I heard, you know, distances being called and  
7 I knew we were approaching the bridge, so I didn't really think  
8 anything of it. Everything sounded normal to me on the radio.

9 Then I heard, I heard the captain on the assist tug, he said  
10 his distances -- I don't recall the numbers, but I remember him  
11 saying his distance. And then I remember hearing him say  
12 something along the lines of like he's in line to hit. And then I  
13 heard -- what I remember is he sounded nervous on the radio and  
14 then I think he said something along the lines of we're going to  
15 hit. And then I heard the pop, you know, I heard the spring line  
16 pop. I didn't hear any damage or anything like, you know, bridge  
17 breaking or anything like that. But when I heard him scared, I  
18 definitely was not going to walk over to the port side. You know,  
19 I stayed where I was and, you know, kind of really just braced for  
20 an impact, you know, especially hearing what he was saying on the  
21 radio.

22 And then so once we had passed the bridge, I walked over, you  
23 know, to assess and stuff, see what happened. You know, I mean, I  
24 saw the damage. I don't know if the damage was from us. I just  
25 saw damage, you know. But I didn't hear anything, I didn't feel

1 anything, you know, so --

2 Q. Okay. And then so kind of after the conclusion of the  
3 allision, where did the vessels go after that? Did you guys just  
4 come here?

5 A. So after that, I remember hearing the radio calls to -- that  
6 we were going to head out into -- we were going to get out of the  
7 very narrow channel into the open area and they were going to call  
8 the office or call you guys. I don't really know. I'm on deck,  
9 you know. I remember letting the tug go. Actually, I didn't let  
10 it go. I don't remember if I let it go. I think it was the other  
11 AB.

12 Q. And this is the *Olympic Spirit*?

13 A. Yeah, the *Spirit* -- *Scout*, *Olympic Scout*.

14 Q. *Olympic Scout*. Okay.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah, so we let them go and then we got out into open waters.  
18 That's when I'm assuming somebody called -- started making  
19 appropriate, you know, what needed to be done.

20 Q. Okay. And so as you guys were transiting through the  
21 waterway at the time of the allision, did you notice anything  
22 about the speed or can you say about what speed you guys -- what  
23 you were transiting at?

24 A. Yeah. No, I remember because I'm very observant and, you  
25 know, I want to be a captain on one of these boats so I'm looking

1 around, and I didn't think we were going fast. I thought we were  
2 making a slow, steady approach, you know, to an upcoming bridge.  
3 I knew the bridge -- I remember I was thinking up here when we  
4 were going through and I saw how narrow it was. I remember the  
5 captain explaining to me, you know, how narrow it was and exactly  
6 where he needed to aim to go through, you know, so --

7 Q. And what was -- when he was explaining that to you, how did  
8 he describe the approach through that waterway?

9 A. So he was telling me -- what I remember is not to -- when I'm  
10 calling out the distances or making my approach, not to  
11 necessarily look on the, you know, inner side of where the bumper  
12 is but, you know, make my approach to where -- make sure watching  
13 the outside of the bumper, you know, where you would hit it.

14 Q. Um-hum. And so did you know any weather or do you recall the  
15 weather at the time that you guys were transiting through?

16 A. I remember it was freezing. I live in Hawaii, so I was very  
17 cold.

18 Q. Quite cold. Okay.

19 A. Yeah. But that was about it. It wasn't raining. I didn't  
20 feel any wind.

21 Q. Did you notice anything about like the current or the sea  
22 state at all?

23 A. Flat calm.

24 Q. Okay. And so kind of going back to your role during this  
25 whole thing, and you said you were on the starboard side --

1 A. Yep.

2 Q. -- working the lines for when you guys moored here in  
3 Seattle.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. Is that -- and I know you're fairly new to the vessel, but is  
6 it normal to have both people on deck on one side or have you seen  
7 it where they'll put one person on the port side, or it just  
8 depends on the connect and how the vessels are arranged?

9 A. Well, no. If we're going to be mooring, we're both on one  
10 side.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yeah. But in that situation I was the one dealing with the  
13 lines and the AB, he was on the bow calling the starboard  
14 distances.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. So was it -- did it seem weird to you that there was nobody  
18 on the port side also calling like port side distances?

19 A. No, because we had an assist, who -- that was his role.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. I heard, you know, distances on the starboard side and I  
24 heard them on the port side from the person who had the best  
25 angle.



1 Q. And do you remember what the distances were?

2 A. No.

3 Q. And do you remember, was it the other AB calling the port  
4 side distances or who was calling those distances on the port  
5 side?

6 A. It was the person at the helm on the *Scout*. They were  
7 calling the port distances.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. I'm assuming they were at the helm. I don't know. I don't  
12 know.

13 Q. And how would you say the day of the incident, the totality  
14 of the day of the event for you guys, was it a pretty long day?

15 A. Well, I mean, I would say longish, you know, with adequate  
16 breaks, you know. We had come from here -- we went from Seattle  
17 to Tacoma, and then once we were moored up, I don't know, I mean,  
18 we -- most of us went down. Like I slept for a while and then got  
19 up and that's when we untied, you know, took off.

20 Q. Were you aware of who was driving during the evolution?

21 A. (No audible response)

22 Q. Did you have any interactions with the captain before,  
23 during, or after the allision?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And they all seemed like fairly normal? He didn't have

1 anything of note in your interactions at all?

2 A. Well, I wouldn't say normal after you go through an  
3 experience like that, you know.

4 Q. Sure. Yeah.

5 A. It was actually depressing hearing, you know, the captain and  
6 the captain on the *Scout*. I could just hear just sadness in their  
7 voices, you know.

8 Q. Um-hum. Absolutely. But so nothing of note that you would  
9 think --

10 A. Nothing alarming to me. Not at all.

11 Q. In regards to equipment on board, did you guys, did you --  
12 were you aware of any equipment that wasn't working on the vessel,  
13 any of the vessels? Everything seemed --

14 A. No.

15 Q. -- fully operational?

16 A. No, everything I've used has been operational. I've been  
17 trained with everything, you know, I believe professionally.

18 Q. Okay. In regards to the equipment that you had with you on  
19 deck, was it just a handheld radio that they use for  
20 communicating?

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. And everything seemed to be working okay with that? There  
23 were no comms issues or anything?

24 A. Yeah, everything was fine.

25 Q. That you're aware of?

1 A. I mean, I heard everything.

2 Q. Okay. Great. And is there anything that you think I haven't  
3 asked you about that you think would be important to share?

4 A. Not really. Everything I just told you is what I remember,  
5 you know. It just -- crappy situation.

6 Q. Yeah.

7 A. You know? Like I said, this is my first time working, you  
8 know, in this type of industry, so I've never been on, you know,  
9 400-foot, you know, kind of go through a very narrow area like  
10 that, so --

11 Q. And is this your first transit through that waterway or have  
12 you guys done it before?

13 A. God, was it my first? We moved -- I moved before and I've  
14 moved on a few other tugs as well around the area, but I think  
15 that was our first like -- that was our first trip to Tacoma, my  
16 first, with this crew.

17 Q. Okay.

18 LT [REDACTED]: Commander, do you have any other questions?

19 LCDR [REDACTED]: Nothing.

20 LT [REDACTED]: Okay. If there's nothing else, I think we're  
21 done with the interview, so I am going to stop the recording.

22 MR. SMITH: Cool.

23 LT [REDACTED]: And the time is 11:32.

24 (Whereupon, at 11:32 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: CONTACT OF TOWING VESSEL  
OLYMPIC SCOUT WITH THE HYLEBOS  
WATERWAY BRIDGE IN TACOMA,  
WASHINGTON ON OCTOBER 12, 2023  
Interview of Drew Smith

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA24FM003

PLACE: Aboard the *Montlake*

DATE: October 13, 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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Kay Maurer  
Transcriber