

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 *

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Interview of: NOAH FREY, Mate
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

BYRON PETERSON, Manager, West Coast Barge Operations
Centerline Logistics Corporation

I N D E X

ITEM

PAGE

Interview of Noah Frey:

By LT [REDACTED]

4

LCDR [REDACTED]

16

I N T E R V I E W

(11:37 a.m.)

1
2
3 LT [REDACTED]: Good morning. Today is Friday, October 13th;
4 the time is 11:37 a.m. My name is Lieutenant [REDACTED],
5 spelled [REDACTED]. I'm here on board the towing vessel
6 *Montlake* conducting interviews in regard to the allision that
7 occurred on 12 October 2023. In the room we have Lieutenant
8 Commander [REDACTED].

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

10 LT [REDACTED]: And the mate?

11 MR. FREY: Yep. Last name spelled F-r-e-y, Noah Frey.

12 MR. PETERSON: And I'm Byron Peterson, B-y-r-o-n. I'm the
13 manager for west coast barge operations, representative for the
14 company.

15 LCDR [REDACTED]: Can you spell your last name, sir?

16 MR. PETERSON: Peterson, P-e-t-e-r-s-o-n.

17 LCDR [REDACTED]: Thank you.

INTERVIEW OF NOAH FREY

18
19 BY LT [REDACTED]:

20 Q. So would you mind just walking me through the course of your
21 day kind of as you guys were starting the evolution that the
22 incident happened?

23 A. So like starting from when we were leaving in the dock to the
24 incident?

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. Okay. We were getting underway and just finished loading the
2 barge. Our assist boat showed at 2300, so we made them up three
3 lines on the port bow. And I was up here with the captain during
4 the evolution doing some training and observation. We called --
5 prior to leaving, you know, we did all our equipment tests and
6 everything, checked in with traffic, and then we had called the
7 bridge requesting a full lift, which they acknowledged. And then,
8 you know, we got everybody on the same page and continued with the
9 barge and that everybody was ready, in the right spot.

10 And once we started pulling away, we did everything very,
11 very, very slow. Got the barge almost lined up for the bridge,
12 right in the middle of the channel. And at that time, when we
13 were about to start making way with the unit, we noticed that the
14 bridge had still not opened yet, which we made a subsequent call
15 to ask that they open it, which caused us to wait for them to open
16 the bridge.

17 Once we saw the bridge was opening, it was also full lift, we
18 were starting to make way with the tug. We were still in the
19 middle of the channel and then we started to notice that -- both
20 me and the captain noticed at the same time that the vessel was
21 starting to set to -- I guess that's the south side, so the same
22 side as fender that got hit, it started setting that way. We
23 were -- you know, made corrective actions trying to lift that
24 vessel -- lift the vessel off that side of the channel. The
25 assist boat also made attempts as well.

1 As we got closer -- you know, we were in contact with the
2 barge -- or the boat, and after the attempts were made, we were
3 slowing down all the time and the captain started to back on both
4 engines to slow the vessel down once we saw that we weren't going
5 to make it, so we trying to make it stop. And what we were told
6 by the assist boat after the fact is that they had been working
7 full and it didn't do anything basically or resolve the -- the
8 *Olympic Scout*, which was our assist boat, clipped the fender. Our
9 unit didn't touch down on any of the fendering at all. We made it
10 through the bridge.

11 And then once we established that everybody was okay and that
12 neither of the vessels weren't in any like critical damage
13 conditions, we continued on our way to the bay to assess, to get a
14 better assessment of what the damage was and made our proper
15 notifications, all our calls, notified traffic and all
16 the -- actually I shouldn't say we notified traffic. Traffic
17 called the *Olympic Scout* first and relayed the phone number, which
18 I believe was your guys' phone, asking them for information. Once
19 we were out -- we waited out in the bay and we got the same call
20 from traffic, gave proper notifications. And that was that. It
21 happened really quickly.

22 Q. And so I just want to confirm that the captain was training
23 during the evolution?

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. Okay. So going back to kind of as you guys made the

1 preparations to get underway, what are your procedures for doing
2 that? Do you have a checklist? Is there a risk assess plan with
3 it? Kind of just walk me through that.

4 A. Yeah. So every voyage, every light boat, ship, everything,
5 we're supposed to do a -- we call it navigation assessment; it's a
6 voyage plan. You know, we create a route on our ECS program or
7 Rose Point, print that out with the route with all the waypoints,
8 like everything. We also print out -- there's like a coversheet
9 that makes us go through checking the tides and (indiscernible),
10 all the relevant point and navigation information that we need,
11 making sure our publications are up to date, making sure -- what
12 else -- you know, listing our graphs and everything, make sure
13 that we're, you know, going to be safely navigating the vessel as
14 per the company SMS policies and keeping the vessel safe.

15 With that, we -- in this packet we include weather for the
16 areas to be transited, tides and currents for the departure route.
17 Somewhere midway in the voyage or if it's a longer voyage, we try
18 and get, you know, tides all the way up to the entire route, the
19 tides and currents, and the tides and currents after
20 (indiscernible). You know, weather for those areas as well. And
21 then we get a UKC calculation for the vessel to calculate squat,
22 stuff like that, when it's windy. I think, let's see, weather
23 (indiscernible) -- yeah, and that's it.

24 And then we do a pre-arrival/pre-departure conference prior
25 to every evolution. We put that up on the computer. Then we also

1 all sit down, have a conversation about, you know, what's about to
2 ensue. We talk about any anomalies or not after these evolutions,
3 So like if it's -- like we were just in -- again, when we were in
4 Alaska, our last two -- not this last trip, but a trip before,
5 which is not a place we normally -- my crew normally goes. So,
6 you know, we take (indiscernible) all those things, what we need
7 to be careful, we need to watch out for.

8 And then on the bridge team side, we do a pre-arrival/pre-
9 departure checklist. We go through all our navigation equipment,
10 all our radio equipment, engines, steering, and go through our
11 (indiscernible) pre-departure procedures. What else? Your
12 question was again?

13 Q. Just that -- I think you covered most everything that I was
14 asking. So everything that you guys do prior to getting underway,
15 you know, the weather, the operation, the area you're going to be
16 operating in, was there anything of note that you guys had that
17 either were challenging or out of -- outside of normal parameters?

18 A. So I have been through this waterway a number of times as --
19 not on the barge. And normally when we do go down through here to
20 leave, we go in, make a turn, go the turning the base and turn
21 around and come back up. We dock and then we're going to straight
22 out through the bridge when we go (indiscernible).

23 Normally there aren't -- I mean, we have -- there's always
24 construction equipment on that side of the channel, but normally
25 at that turn, that turns parallel in the (indiscernible) there.

1 And coming in, we -- there was another company's barge and boat
2 parked on the outside of the turn that made that turn
3 exceptionally tight. And we were able to safely navigate that
4 turn and everything and then get down and turn and basically flip
5 around and come back up through that same turn to park. But we
6 notified the office. I'm like the tug we have, it's -- we need,
7 you know, we need to figure out a better way to do this. And it
8 was acknowledged, it was -- and received well. They're like,
9 yeah, definitely, you know, whatever you guys need. So, but that
10 was something we noticed on the way in that was kind of, noticing
11 not ideal.

12 But from what we observed for going out, it was pretty run of
13 the mill, safe. There wasn't any adverse weather, no high wind,
14 light current. It was nighttime, which is favorable. But yeah, I
15 mean, that was pretty much it. We didn't observe anything else,
16 no.

17 Q. Okay. And so all the equipment was fully operational on the
18 vessel and all the other vessels involved in the operation?

19 A. I can speak for my vessel. I can't speak for the *Olympic*
20 *Scout*, but as far as I know -- I mean, they're our company; they
21 got to do the same procedure, so -- and the captain on there I
22 trust wouldn't get underway unless everything's working.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. He's one of those people (indiscernible), you know, to leave.
25 So as far as I know, yes.

1 Q. Okay. And so in reference to the personnel on deck, was it
2 customary to have two people located on the starboard side of the
3 barge and nobody on the port side?

4 A. So it is customary for us when we got through here. The
5 assist boat watches outside, watches their distances and keep
6 themselves off, because they are an extremity, right? And then
7 usually the major deckhand would set up on opposite side to watch
8 the distances on that side when going down the channel -- not even
9 just through the bridge, going out the channel through the bridge.
10 So that is normal operating procedure for that.

11 Q. Okay. And as you guys were transiting through the waterway,
12 would you say that the speed of the vessel was going slower,
13 faster, or about average for the normal operation?

14 A. I'd say it's very average. Most people that I know at other
15 companies and at some other places that work here in the sound
16 said that the speed that we were making, you know, is adequate,
17 wasn't too fast, it wasn't too slow. And the speed that we were
18 making when the incident happened was around that speed or, you
19 know, at that speed. Yeah, I don't feel like we were traveling at
20 an unsafe speed for what we were doing.

21 Q. Okay. And so the *Olympic Scout*, when they were making the
22 range calls, when did you guys -- do you remember any of those
23 numbers specifically?

24 A. Yeah. They said -- the first one kind of came in a little
25 broken and we asked for clarification. And we came to realize

1 they were -- had about 10 feet on the left. And that was pretty
2 early on, so we immediately tried to correct for it before we made
3 our approach. And then it decreased to about 5, and then things
4 kind of -- toward the end, things got very garbled and they kind
5 of got (indiscernible), so it was really hard to hear who was
6 saying what. But I wasn't able to make out what the last -- I
7 myself wasn't able to make out the last call they made.

8 But from what I saw, I mean, they always handled
9 (indiscernible), but when we got to the other end of, when we got
10 to the other end of the fender, he said that there was no damage
11 to the boat as far as he could see immediately after. And I saw
12 when we got -- when we gave him the lines back, I think he said I
13 can (indiscernible) and we threw him the lines. But I was
14 surprised. I mean, I was -- you know, it wasn't like they got
15 like peeled off the side of the boat, but they had the lines.

16 Q. And were you able to see any of the damage on the bridge
17 side?

18 A. Briefly. I was more focused on getting the stern of the
19 vessel through because, I mean, we were still about halfway
20 through it and moving. So I did see some of it, but I -- it
21 happened, like I said, it happened quick and it was very
22 frightening for me. I was just like, ahh, you know. But I was
23 able to glance at it and it didn't look like the pad had been like
24 totally torn apart or anything. It just looked like it had been
25 pushed out of place. But, yeah, we were -- I was more focused on

1 trying to not cause anymore damage, to keep our vessel off of it
2 and getting through the --

3 Q. And so when you guys are normally making this transit, what
4 is like typical ranges that you're expecting to see on the
5 starboard side and port side?

6 A. So typically expecting on the non-tug side -- so the normal
7 boat that we have down there, the *Lela Joy*, with that set up as an
8 assist boat, they usually when we go in -- so coming from
9 (indiscernible) we have the tug on the starboard side and then
10 usually (indiscernible) is on the port side, and you're expecting
11 about 20 feet on the non-tug side and anywhere between 5 -- it's
12 usually about 5 feet on the tug side.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So it's close.

15 Q. So when you heard the 5 feet, it wasn't necessarily alarming
16 this time around?

17 A. It was, because it -- we were still coming over. It sounded
18 like he was still, still overlapping. And we were telling him
19 like do what you need to do to get out of the way of that. And he
20 was doing everything at the time. But it was, it was a little --
21 I mean, to an extent, because sometimes when you line up for it
22 initially, because like coming into it we have to make a turn
23 first, so you have set. You transfer, you know, when you make a
24 turn. So it's like hearing 5 foot in that or 10 foot in that even
25 is like not super -- I mean, it's bad, but it's not super

1 alarming. But it was -- and when we did hear it, it was really
2 not that, it was the position, I believe, that was
3 (indiscernible). We were doing everything we could do. It was --
4 yeah. But it was the fact that it wasn't changing direction.

5 Q. Right.

6 A. That was what was alarming.

7 Q. Do you remember any engine or steering commands that the
8 captain did? And it's okay if you don't. I'm just curious about
9 like once you got that initial range and you're like, oh, we need
10 to do something about this.

11 A. We were -- I know -- I don't remember at what point or how
12 far off the bridge exactly, but we were -- at the end of it, we
13 were aft part over and slow starboard to try to get him open. But
14 once we realized that we weren't making way -- I mean, I don't
15 where he had -- I can't remember where he had the rudder because I
16 was looking out the window.

17 Q. Right.

18 A. I don't know the rpms but I saw him backing on both engines
19 and doing what he could to slow everything and then stop it at the
20 end. That was like the last attempt we had made and then
21 obviously once he made contact, you know, I mean it was -- it was
22 (indiscernible) we have to get the boat through, I'm not positive,
23 whatever it took.

24 Yeah. I mean, we started off, we didn't like put it to the
25 lid or anything. I mean, we were all -- like came off the dock,

1 we were all stop, and then we just put it and slowly built up the
2 rpms. We made push ahead and slowly started building up once we
3 saw the bridge open. But I want to say we didn't make more than
4 like 4.3 knots. Like I don't know if that's -- I won't say that's
5 an exact number, but -- yeah, so I don't know what the engine rpms
6 were right at (indiscernible). I was paying attention to what he
7 said every time he made like a steering command, I was checking
8 the OD to make sure -- or not the OD, the rudder indicator to make
9 sure it's responding the right way. But I don't remember the
10 exact commands he was (indiscernible)

11 Q. That's okay. And so you're either on the -- is this the
12 mooring bridge or just the bridge?

13 A. Yeah, we call this like the upper wheelhouse usually.

14 Q. Okay. Upper wheelhouse, okay. So you and the captain were
15 in the upper wheelhouse the whole time during the transit?

16 A. Um-hum.

17 Q. And is that like per company policy you guys have to have two
18 people up here or can you -- it's like only during like navigation
19 times or like (indiscernible)?

20 A. It's not a policy. I was up here on (indiscernible) because
21 I was -- I am prospective person to try to move up, you know. I
22 want to become a captain at some point and so I've been, the last
23 couple trips, been trying to use some of my time to, assuming rest
24 hours allow and everything, to, you know, observe and train a
25 little bit (indiscernible) when they let me.

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. So normally we have three crew members out on deck and have a
3 skipper up here. And usually the captain's doing the docking
4 evolutions up here. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. Great. And so as you were up here, would you describe
6 the captain's demeanor as normal or like your interactions with
7 him were kind of on par with what he normally would be?

8 A. I'd say so. Yeah, I mean, we were all just coming off,
9 getting off watch. And we were all -- we had been talking about
10 this transit, talking through what we were going to do and
11 planning the (indiscernible). And yeah, it seemed pretty on par
12 for what our normal relationship and interactions are. I didn't
13 see -- yeah, he didn't seem any sort of odd at all.

14 Q. And how would you describe the amount of rest that you had
15 throughout most of the day?

16 A. Adequate. The -- like I say, we had left -- yeah, we left at
17 8:40 from Pier 25. We got to the dock around 8. I'll have to
18 double to check the log when last all (indiscernible). But we --
19 yeah, we were down there and then the minute we -- yeah, the
20 minute we were all tasked down there, me, the captain, and the
21 engineer put our feet up for -- how many -- I would say it's 16 to
22 2300. So that's --

23 Q. About 7 hours?

24 A. Yeah. And then we had -- for the last week we had been
25 sleeping all night. I had been getting, you know, the full 8, 9,

1 10 hours of sleep at night because we had been sailing quite a lot
2 this month. Everybody was within rest hours for the operation.
3 We had the hours to be able to do what we were doing.

4 Q. And so is there anything else that I haven't asked you that
5 you think would be important to share with us today?

6 A. Not that I know of. Yeah, no, it's just one big thing. I
7 mean, I feel had the bridge opened right away when we called --
8 so, I mean, like I had called the bridge before we got underway
9 and asked for -- I requested a full lift and -- because I was like
10 we're right here and it's going to take us -- I mean, it's a very
11 short evolution to get us off the dock, (indiscernible) minutes.
12 So I was like we'll be through, by the time it opens, on the dock.
13 And the fact that he didn't open caused us to wait, which
14 potentially could have been one of the reasons that this went the
15 way it did. And I'm not trying to blame it on the bridge tender
16 or whatever, but it did kind of throw a wrench into what was
17 happening. But yeah, that's just one comment that I had about --

18 Q. Yeah. Thank you for, thank you for sharing. And, you know,
19 sometimes like when we're doing these interviews you forget
20 something that you wanted to share. So we'll make sure we leave
21 our contact information so if you think of anything, you can
22 always reach out and share that with us.

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

24 BY LCDR [REDACTED]:

25 Q. Yeah, you talked about the navigational assessment, that

1 plan, you said you talk about it. Who do you talk about it with?

2 A. Like the -- like what -- so you're talking like the voyage
3 plan specifically?

4 Q. Yeah. You said that you have a meeting or conference with --

5 A. Oh, so we have a pre-departure/pre-arrival conference.
6 That's with the entire crew.

7 Q. Okay.

8 A. So everybody talks about the planned evolution of what we're
9 going to do, where we're going to put who, and how it's expected
10 to go, and what our Plan A, Plan B, and Plan C is, you know.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. We had -- yeah, that's with the entire crew. Yeah.

13 MR. PETERSON: Nothing.

14 LT [REDACTED]: Unless you have anything else, that concludes
15 the interview. So the time is 12:01 and we'll stop the recording.

16 (Whereupon, at 12:01 p.m., the interview was concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

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


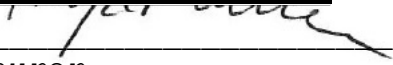
IN THE MATTER OF: CONTACT OF TOWING VESSEL
OLYMPIC SCOUT WITH THE HYLEBOS
WATERWAY BRIDGE IN TACOMA,
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Interview of Noah Frey

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.

Kay Maurer
Transcriber