

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES

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Investigation of:

THE AXEL SPIRIT'S ALLISION WITH
THE AMBROSE LIGHT AT THE
ENTRANCE OF NEW YORK HARBOR
NOVEMBER 3, 2007

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Docket No.: DCA08FM002

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Interview of: LEO RAAGAS

On board M/T AXEL SPIRIT
Perth Amboy, New York

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to Notice
On November 5, 2007.

BEFORE: BILL WOODY
National Transportation Safety Board

APPEARANCES:

BILL WOODY
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO JIM PRITCHARD
U.S. Coast Guard

LARRY BOWLING
National Transportation Safety Board

DON P. MURNANE
Freehill, Hogan and Mahar

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I N T E R V I E W

INTERVIEW OF LEO RAAGAS

BY MR. WOODY:

Q. All right. Would you state your name for the record and what your position is on the ship?

A. Yeah. My name is Raagas, Leonoy (ph.) and M is the middle name and my position is always ordinary seaman.

Q. And --

A. My familial name is Raagas and my name is Leonoy, and the middle name is M for Madomba (ph.).

Q. M.

A. Yeah.

Q. All right. So that would be like --

A. Yeah. M --

Q. M.

A. R-a-a-g-a-s.

Q. Mr. Raagas --

A. Raagas.

Q. -- Raagas, what is your age?

A. My age is 4-1.

Q. 4-1?

A. Yeah.

Q. And what is your position on the ship?

A. My position is always ordinary seaman.

Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Can you give us just about a two-minute synopsis or
3 summary of your maritime employment? How long -- when you started
4 going to sea and --

5 A. I start here in this company since 1992 here.

6 Q. That's Teekay.

7 A. Until Teekay, they sail the single (indiscernible), and
8 for financial reasons, because I marry, I cannot break the
9 schedule, I transfer to the other company that (indiscernible)
10 contract and I finish that one contract (indiscernible) Teekay to
11 me in my home in the Philippines that I will go again in this
12 company (indiscernible).

13 Q. Okay. How long are your contracts?

14 A. In here, in Teekay, they are eight months but in the
15 other company (indiscernible), seven month contract.

16 Q. How many years have you been going to sea?

17 A. This is I think 1-6 year.

18 Q. 1-6.

19 A. Yeah. Because I start in 1992.

20 Q. '92.

21 A. Yeah, until now and I finish my contract here 2008
22 (indiscernible).

23 Q. Have you always sailed as an ordinary seaman?

24 A. What?

25 Q. Ordinary seaman sir.

1 A. I said (indiscernible) and then I sail also as AB.

2 Q. AB. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And how long have you been on the -- this ship this
5 time?

6 A. Four months and -- four months. Four months.

7 Q. Four months on board.

8 A. Yeah, four months and two weeks (indiscernible).

9 Q. Okay. Now what was your position at the time that the
10 ship had an accident?

11 A. Helmsman.

12 Q. You were the helmsman?

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. All right. What watch did you stand helmsman on at that
15 time?

16 A. My shift?

17 Q. Yes. When did you go on watch?

18 A. I go on watch at 0000 because the other watchman called
19 me on the telephone --

20 Q. Uh-huh.

21 A. -- when I'm resting in my cabin and sleeping, and then
22 he call me on my telephone, and I go up to the bridge to steer
23 because actually (indiscernible) anchor at this time and then I go
24 up on the bridge to steer but when I go up on the bridge, the
25 anchor is not yet secure, I wait. So when the anchor is secure, I

1 steer already there.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Now you mentioned (indiscernible). What watches do you
5 normally stand on the ship at sea?

6 A. (Indiscernible).

7 Q. Yes. What are your watches at sea?

8 A. My watch is 0000 to 0400.

9 Q. Uh-huh.

10 A. -- to 0400.

11 Q. Okay. Then do you do a day watch also?

12 A. I have my day watch but in this regulation of this Axel
13 Spirit 15 to 15. Need to take from 1 -- from first 15 of the
14 month --

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. -- I'm the watchman in the bridge. From 15 to 31, my
17 again rotation, I'm the day worker, yeah.

18 Q. Now when you're the watchman on the bridge, what watch
19 do you stand?

20 A. I'm the watch with the Second Officer.

21 Q. Second Officer.

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. And he's got the 12:00 to 4:00.

24 A. Correct, sir.

25 Q. Okay. And you're a day worker, what hours do you work

1 then?

2 A. I start -- when I'm a day worker, I start at 0800 in the
3 morning and finish at 1-7-0-0, 1700 in the afternoon.

4 Q. All right. Okay. On this day we're talking about, you
5 went to the bridge around midnight.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. 00, and the anchor was not up yet. Go ahead and tell us
8 what happened during your watch.

9 A. Yeah. So this is what happened. November 3 at 0000,
10 the other watchman told me because that was already my watch at
11 the time, 0000 to 0400. So (indiscernible) call me and I went to
12 work. I go up to the bridge because that is already my watch.

13 Q. Uh-huh.

14 A. But when I am up on the bridge, the anchor is still
15 heaving up so, and there is already the Second Mate and me and
16 the Captain.

17 Q. All right.

18 A. Because the other watchman was on the bow assisting the
19 boatsman heave up the anchor.

20 Q. I see.

21 A. Yeah. And then that is the one, when the Captain -- I
22 hear from the radio and the Captain is really -- when the anchor
23 is already secure, ready for let go or ready for going, I steer --

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. -- carefully and politely.

1 Q. I understand.

2 A. Yeah. It's (indiscernible) something, all of my mind
3 focused to the steering.

4 Q. Uh-huh.

5 A. Yeah. And then when we go steering -- when I go
6 steering, (the captain call the other watchman, the one that is on
7 the bow.

8 Q. On the bow.

9 A. On the bow, and the other watchman answer to the radio
10 that he will go up and get on the bridge.

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 A. So in this situation, we are already four.

13 Q. Four on the bridge.

14 A. Yeah. Lookout, me, Second Officer and the Captain.

15 Q. Yeah. All right.

16 A. Yeah. So we go steer -- I go steer. The Captain told
17 me to steer the course to 2-2-0. So I steer that 2-2-0, and I
18 repeat order and he said steer 2-2-0. So I repeat the orders to
19 him, 2-2-0, 2-2-0, okay. He said steady. I go steady.

20 Q. Uh-huh.

21 A. When we go carefully, I go carefully but I wasn't sure,
22 seeing to the bow, and gyro compass my steering is 2-2-0, I see
23 one, two lights on the starboard bow.

24 Q. Uh-huh.

25 A. But there is already a lookout at that situation because

1 as I said, that we are already four, and then we go. So I see it
2 and then (indiscernible) a couple minutes more, this lookout was
3 telling that what is that thing? I see light in the starboard
4 bow, one in the pilot and one in the white light. So for me, I'm
5 the helmsman, I will not -- I will steer what is the command of
6 the Captain. So --

7 Q. What I think I heard you just say is that the lookout
8 told the Second Mate --

9 A. Yeah, yeah, this is the story, and then --

10 Q. That there were two lights.

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. The pilot boat light --

13 A. And one light --

14 Q. And another light.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. The lookout tell to the Second Mate that what is that
18 light? One pilot boat and one white light.

19 Q. One white light?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. So the Second Mate, he told the lookout yes, yes, yes,
23 and then we are running, we are steering -- we are steaming the
24 ship. Again, (indiscernible) the lookout said, that a light, a
25 pilot light (indiscernible) in the starboard bow. And then he

1 said -- and then the second mate, yes, yes, yes. All my
2 steering, he did not give me some other course to steer, but I'm
3 only steering 2-2-0 at the time.

4 Q. Okay.

5 A. Maybe not maybe the Captain did not give me other course
6 to steer and I am steering because I am only following the
7 Captain, whatever the Captain told me to do because I'm not
8 authorized to change my course because he is in command, because
9 we (indiscernible) because I'm the helmsman.

10 Q. Uh-huh.

11 A. So I steer 2-2-0. Now (indiscernible) this is already
12 the ship and this is already the lights, I see because I'm
13 concentrating about my steering. I don't want also to my bow to
14 go here, I don't want to (indiscernible) only to steady, this
15 light that the watchman told or the lookout told was very near
16 already to the (indiscernible) starboard side but at that time,
17 the ship is swell. Swell.

18 Q. Swell. Okay.

19 A. Yeah. So I see, I see already I see the light now
20 (indiscernible).

21 Q. Now you're moving your hand. What do you mean by that?

22 A. Some -- rocking like this.

23 Q. Like going around in a circle.

24 A. Around like --

25 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Rotate.

1 THE WITNESS: Like this, (indiscernible) the ship like
2 that, like that, and this is the ship, there was swell. At that
3 time, I did not even hear some sound, that we've gone already, the
4 lighthouse, because my concentration, my concentration is just on
5 the steering, but it is very -- from my observation, from my feel,
6 it is very near to the starboard side and to the midships
7 starboard side of this (indiscernible). So after the time there,
8 the Captain told me to go to port 10.

9 BY MR. WOODY:

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. Now that is my situation of the wheel because the
12 Captain told me to -- he command to me port 10, I go to port 10.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So what happens, the ship go port 10.

15 Q. Uh-huh.

16 A. Left, go port 10. I finish the task, the Captain told -
17 - order to me, midships the wheel. So I proceeded to midships
18 from port 10, reduce the swing to the port.

19 Q. Uh-huh.

20 A. That is the meaning of the midships.

21 Q. Yeah.

22 A. So I take the midships the wheel. Say I respond to the
23 Captain, midships the wheel now sir. First he said port 10. I go
24 port 10 and then he said midships the wheel, I said midships the
25 wheel and I reply midships the wheel sir, and then he said,

1 steady.

2 Q. Steady.

3 A. Yeah, steady. So the ship is already like this. This
4 light has was already passed.

5 Q. Already passed.

6 A. Yeah. The ship was already steady and then he command
7 to me again hard to starboard. So the ship go hard to starboard.
8 I said hard to starboard, wheel sir. And so the ship, the bow of
9 the ship go to starboard, to the right side.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. And then again he told to me midships, I go midships and
12 then I reply again to the Captain, midships rudder now sir and
13 then the last command he said to me, steady. I go steady. Then
14 little, about 10 minutes later, we pick up the Pilot.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. The Pilot on board here and then we go to the entrance
17 of the channel.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. Yeah, that is truly, truly the incidents what happened.

20 Q. All right. Now did the Captain ever -- when the
21 lighthouse (indiscernible) --

22 A. Yeah.

23 Q. -- you said the Captain had ordered port 10.

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. And that's the most he ordered -- the greatest port

- 1 rudder was port 10?
- 2 A. Yeah.
- 3 Q. Nothing like hard port.
- 4 A. Nothing. He only said port 10.
- 5 Q. port 10.
- 6 A. Yeah.
- 7 Q. And then he said steady and then did you ever get a --
- 8 let me ask you this. How much rudder did you take to steady the
- 9 ship?
- 10 A. How much rudder --
- 11 Q. Yes.
- 12 A. -- to steady the ship?
- 13 Q. Yes, uh-huh.
- 14 A. Well, sir, it depends upon the swing of the ship.
- 15 Q. Yes. I'm sorry. You put it hard starboard.
- 16 A. Yes.
- 17 Q. And then you said steady.
- 18 A. Yes.
- 19 Q. Is that right?
- 20 A. Yeah.
- 21 Q. Okay.
- 22 A. Hard starboard, now the ship is already hard starboard
- 23 and it's swinging to starboard.
- 24 Q. Uh-huh. Yes.
- 25 A. Yeah. He said, he said steady, you stop the swing to

1 starboard. So you go to the, you go your wheel to port.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. And you (indiscernible).

4 Q. All right.

5 A. Now (indiscernible) hard starboard, hard starboard
6 wheel, you go to port 20, port 30, something like that until the
7 (indiscernible) stop.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. Now do you remember the Captain stopping the ship and
11 you losing steerage way? Do you ever remember losing steerage way
12 because the Captain stopped the ship?

13 A. The steering, is that --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Do you ever recall the Captain stopping the engine?

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. And you losing steerageway. Do you know what I mean by
19 steerageway?

20 A. Yeah, yeah. Because he order also to me that I will
21 stop the ship but no steering, I will inform him.

22 Q. Yes, uh-huh. At anytime, did you lose steerageway?

23 A. At that time there is no loss of steering on the
24 (indiscernible).

25 Q. Okay. At this time. Right. After the anchor was

1 picked up, or anchor away and you're coming -- you're steering --

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- do you recall losing steerageway because the Captain
4 stopped the engine?

5 A. Oh, yeah.

6 Q. You did? This happened?

7 A. I'm not certain because he said to me that I stop the
8 engine --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and then he tell me no more steering.

11 Q. Right. Okay.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Now was that sometime before you got close to the light?
14 Did that happen when the light was still some distance away?

15 A. The light was some distance away, yeah.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Yeah. It was in the distance away that he said to me
18 like that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. How many times did you lose steerageway? Was it once or
22 twice or -- do you have any recollection? What do you recall?

23 A. Once.

24 Q. You only recall one time?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. And it was some distance before the light, you got to
2 the light?

3 A. Yeah, it was before the light.

4 Q. Right, before the light.

5 A. Yeah. Yeah, before the two lights.

6 Q. Before the two lights?

7 A. Yeah. (Indiscernible) when we see the two lights, here
8 is the ship, and here is the light here.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. Now do you recall the ship getting off course because of
12 a lack of speed? The ship going back and forth because of slow
13 speed?

14 A. No, sir. No, sir, because I'm the one who is shifting,
15 shifting (indiscernible).

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. I'm the one who control it (indiscernible) the wheel to
18 that position. So the wheel only steady like that.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. At the time the Captain stopped the ship, you don't
22 believe you got off course?

23 A. I did not get off course because I only, I only, I only
24 turn the wheel to keep it steady.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. And you're always steering the course, and the course
3 was 2-2-0. Is that correct?

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Okay. Guess what? I think it's what I wrote down.

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. When the lookout made the first report about the
8 light --

9 A. Yes, sir.

10 Q. -- the light that got hit, do you have feeling for how
11 far away that light was at that time? Was it a matter of a few
12 miles or was it a matter of a few ship lengths? Think about it,
13 too, was, was it sometime before the accident?

14 A. You mean to say the distance?

15 Q. Exactly.

16 A. Yeah, yeah.

17 Q. Was it half an hour? Was it five minutes?

18 A. I cannot exactly, I cannot exactly tell you how much?

19 Q. How long had you been steering? Were you steering for
20 10 minutes when the lookout reported it or --

21 A. I think something more than 10.

22 Q. More than 10.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Okay. About 10 minutes.

25 A. Yeah, approximately.

1 Q. Now first of all, you were steering the ship before the
2 lookout got to the bridge or were you?

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Now the lookout was on the bow.

5 A. Yeah, on the bow.

6 Q. And he was -- what was he doing? He was helping
7 boatsman with the anchor.

8 A. Yeah.

9 Q. Then he came to the bridge?

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. So how long did it take him to come to the bridge after
12 he was told to come to the bridge?

13 A. That was only a matter of maybe 20 minutes, sir.

14 Q. About how many?

15 A. (indiscernible) because when they finish this one, they
16 call already the other watchman to go up to the bridge.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And this other watchman, lookout, go up immediately to
19 the bridge.

20 Q. So he might have gotten to the bridge like 20 minutes
21 after you started steering, 20 minutes after the anchors away.

22 A. The anchor is secure.

23 Q. No, no. Once the anchor is secure, he comes to the
24 bridge, you -- how long were you steering at that time?

25 A. I think that it is 30 something.

1 Q. What?

2 A. Thirty.

3 Q. Thirty minutes.

4 A. Yeah, 30.

5 Q. You figure you were steering a half an hour before he
6 got to the bridge?

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. (Indiscernible).

10 Q. All right.

11 MR. WOODY: I think that's all I have.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I'd like to follow up on a couple
13 of questions.

14 Larry Bowling:

15 Q. I'm Larry. I'm also with the NTSB.

16 A. Okay.

17 Q. And as Bill was asking you questions, I want to
18 understand in my mind that I've got the comments you made on your
19 helm (indiscernible) and actually I'll just refer to your
20 statement. You'll look at this and I'll look at the one here.

21 A. Okay.

22 Q. The first one I want to point out, the Captain gave you
23 an order to put the ship's course on, and that order in your
24 statement, you said 2-2-0 I believe.

25 A. (Indiscernible).

1 Q. That's not your statement. Here's your statement. I'm
2 sorry. See right here, 2-2-0.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. Tell me, did you hear -- did the Captain tell you to
5 steer 2-2-0?

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. He said steer 2-2-0.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. And did you repeat that back to the Captain?

10 A. I repeat back.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Course 2-2-0 (indiscernible).

13 Q. So if I'm the Master, what would you say? I'd say,
14 helmsman, steer 2-2-0.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. Give me the response you gave him.

17 A. I said -- I go first to 2-2-0 on the gyro and then I
18 reply to you, course 2-2-0 (indiscernible).

19 Q. So you were in follow up at that time or not follow up.
20 So basically on your --

21 A. Non follow up.

22 Q. Non follow up.

23 A. (Indiscernible).

24 Q. Okay.

25 MR. WOODY: (Indiscernible) answer. He was the one

1 steering.

2 MR. BOWLING: Yeah.

3 THE WITNESS: I steering. I know the one he is talking
4 about and I follow up. It's more than.

5 BY MR. BOWLING:

6 Q. Right.

7 A. Yeah.

8 Q. You were going to steer. If the Captain -- at anytime
9 did the Captain tell you to steer 2-3-0?

10 A. No.

11 Q. No. Okay. Let me just ask you a couple of things on
12 this portion of your statement. You were talking to Bill, Bill
13 asked you a question about commands. You were steering 2-2-0.

14 A. Yeah.

15 Q. And then when the light, the vessel was very close to
16 the light, the lighthouse, (indiscernible), you said the Captain
17 gave you an order in your statement. What was that first order
18 that he gave you at the helm, you're on 2-2-0.

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. What was the first order --

21 A. He gave me an order 2-2-0. Still 2-2-0.

22 Q. Right.

23 A. So I replied all that to the Captain. I put first my
24 steer to -- the (indiscernible) to 2-2-0. So when the
25 (indiscernible) was on 2-2-0, I replied to the Captain, course 2-

1 2-0 (indiscernible).

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. And then you were ordered to -- again, when you were in
5 extremist, or you thought -- the Captain thought that the light
6 was very close to the ship, he gave you another order?

7 A. The ship is already steering 2-2-0.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. Going now like this.

10 Q. Right.

11 A. And then the lookout, the other lookout, told to the
12 Second Mate that is a light that's in the starboard bow.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. So for me, I'm steering 2-2-0 at the time. And now
15 still 2-2-0, 2-2-0. And now the second time the lookout, he said
16 to the Second Mate, he say the starboard -- the light on the
17 starboard bow is very near already. It's still 2-2-0. And then
18 we go here, I see really lighthouse. At that time, I don't know
19 about the swell, at that time, the ship is already like this
20 because I already see the starboard side), the Captain told me, he
21 told me to go to port 10. That is before we (indiscernible).

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Yeah. But before reached lights, before these lights,
24 the Captain did not give me any course, only when we got already
25 for example this is the lighthouse, we are already like this, he

1 gave me port 10.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. So the ship is like this, port 10, that is port 10.

4 Q. And then you -- did you relay that order back?

5 A. I relay to the Captain, yeah, because I gave to the
6 Captain that he give to me port 10, and I relay roger at port 10.

7 Q. Right.

8 A. But this one is already the lighthouse, it's already
9 here. He did not, he did not say to me any course before this --
10 before we see these lights. He say order to me when the light is
11 already like this.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. He gives me an order, not the course, but rather port
14 10.

15 Q. Okay. Just to ask you some general questions about
16 things going on on the bridge that night, was there any
17 distractions to the Captain and the Second Officer? Was there a
18 radio on? Was there -- were there crew dancing on the bridge, or
19 was it kind of a quiet watch?

20 A. Nothing.

21 Q. Nothing going on.

22 A. Nothing.

23 Q. Okay. Was the -- how was the Master, the Captain's
24 behavior? Was it normal, not normal? Was there anything unusual
25 about his behavior that night?

1 A. This one seemed usual when we were in this position, the
2 ship, and when we reach I said to you the port 10, it was already
3 lighthouse here, it seemed usual.

4 Q. That's the ship though. I'm talking about his person.
5 Was he happy? Was he sad? Was he sleepy? Was he alert?
6 Anything unusual you saw or was the Captain normally being the
7 Captain?

8 A. Normal Captain.

9 Q. Okay. Normal Captain.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. What about the Second Officer?

12 A. Also normal, too.

13 Q. You didn't notice any difference or anything like that?

14 A. No.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Because I know (indiscernible).

17 Q. Okay. Tell me what, what communications, you heard? If
18 Bill was the Master and I was the Second Officer, what do you
19 recall, communications both from the Master to the Second Officer
20 and from the Second Officer to the Master? Do you recall the
21 extent of any conversations between the two of them during that
22 watch that you can tell us about?

23 A. No, no, no conversations, but they are ordinarily
24 focusing to (indiscernible).

25 Q. The (indiscernible)?

1 A. (indiscernible).

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. When the lookout came in and reported the second time,
5 reported the light being very close to the ship --

6 A. Yeah.

7 Q. -- were there any communications between the Master and
8 the Second Officer at that time that you recall?

9 A. That is not (indiscernible).

10 Q. When the lookout came in and talked to the Second
11 Officer, who -- did the Second Officer talk to the Captain or did
12 the Second Officer not talk to the Captain?

13 A. At the time, sir?

14 Q. At the time, yes, which have been the second report from
15 the lookout when he really (indiscernible) the lights, I think I
16 remember the statement, the second notification to the Second
17 Officer that the lookout gave on this lighthouse.

18 A. There is no conversation.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Yeah, but I hear the conversation that the lookout talk
21 to the Second Officer.

22 Q. You heard that part?

23 A. Yeah, and the Second Officer talked to the lookout, yes.

24 Q. And that was it?

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. Where was the Captain at that time?

2 A. Still on the bridge.

3 Q. How far from you?

4 A. I'm standing here (indiscernible).

5 Q. Two meters?

6 A. Something like that.

7 Q. Did you, did you feel, when the Captain gave you that
8 order to swing to port and then you went I think you said hard
9 starboard --

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. -- did you feel any vibration, hear anything, see
12 anything? What was going on with the ship at that point from the
13 standpoint of being on the wheel of the helm?

14 A. I feel only the swell.

15 Q. The swell.

16 A. Yeah.

17 Q. Did you hear anything?

18 A. I did not hear anything but feel only the swell, swell
19 like --

20 Q. At anytime when you were standing watch during this
21 period, did you hear the Second Officer, the Second Mate, tell the
22 Captain bearings and ranges to either the pilot board or the
23 light? Were they communicating on the bearings of any of these --
24 the pilot boat which you said there was knowledge of and the
25 light? Did you hear any communications between them?

1 A. No.

2 Q. In your mind --

3 A. Yeah.

4 Q. -- when, when you came up and you took that helm --

5 A. Yeah.

6 Q. -- who were you taking orders from? Who had control of
7 the ship?

8 A. The Captain did.

9 Q. The Captain?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. And why do you say that? I know he's the Captain.

12 A. Yeah.

13 Q. Okay. But beyond that, did he say I've got control of
14 the ship?

15 A. Yeah, because he's the one, he's the one who give me the
16 order to steer 2-2-0.

17 Q. Okay. Did the Second Officer give you any orders to
18 steer?

19 A. No. So my concentration, I follow the Captain.

20 Q. He's the Captain, yeah.

21 MR. WOODY: Coast Guard?

22 MR. PRITCHARD: This is Jim Pritchard from the Coast
23 Guard.

24 BY MR. PRITCHARD:

25 Q. Leo, you said you felt the swell right when you were

1 close to the -- close to a light. Did you feel the swell before
2 you got to the light?

3 A. Yeah, I feel the swell before we got to the light but it
4 only little (indiscernible), not, not different from when we
5 already like this.

6 Q. So when you were coming from anchorage, there was a
7 small swell?

8 A. Yeah, yeah.

9 Q. Was the swell larger when you were close to the light?

10 A. Yeah, it become, it become a lot different when we
11 already --

12 Q. You were at port 10, hard starboard, and then you came
13 around and picked up the Pilot.

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. After you picked up the Pilot, what was your next course
16 that was ordered?

17 A. The next course?

18 Q. Right.

19 A. At that time, because I already steering about hour, the
20 other help, the other lookout came to change with me at the time.
21 When the Pilot come, we changed.

22 Q. You went to lookout?

23 A. Yeah, I go lookout when we go inside the channel, yeah.
24 That is -- I don't remember already the next course. Yeah.

25 Q. You said there was 10 minutes between when you were

1 really close to the light to when you picked up the pilot

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. -- and when you picked up the Pilot.

4 A. Uh-huh.

5 Q. When we had talked to the Captain earlier today, he had,
6 he had said that he might have talked to the bridge crew about not
7 talking to the Pilot about, about what had just happened. Do you
8 remember that conversation?

9 A. Not talking about the Pilot?

10 Q. Not talking about passing close, with the Pilot when he
11 came on board? Do you remember that conversation?

12 A. I don't remember that conversation.

13 Q. You don't remember any conversation with the -- that the
14 Captain had with the crew before the -- with the bridge crew
15 before the Pilot came on board?

16 A. No, sir. Only the Pilot was on already aboard, okay,
17 (indiscernible).

18 Q. But that's it. Nothing before that, before the Pilot
19 came on that the Captain had with the crew?

20 A. No, sir.

21 Q. Just -- you've been four months on the ship, right?

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. As you increased -- as the Officers increase speed on
24 the ship, how does that affect your steering? Does -- your
25 steering, is it more responsive, less responsive?

1 A. Y think he didn't increase the speed, basically the
2 engine, the one that you're talking?

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. So the steering respond quicker.

5 Q. It does respond quicker.

6 A. Quicker. I mean just quicker, yeah.

7 Q. Do you remember if when the Captain gave the order for
8 port 10?

9 A. Yeah.

10 Q. -- did the responsiveness of the ship change at that
11 point? Since you had been steering trying to keep course at that
12 point.

13 A. Yeah, it responded immediately.

14 Q. It's more responsive than it was before he gave that
15 order or less responsive?

16 A. More responsive when he gave me port 10.

17 Q. It was more responsive with port 10.

18 A. Because if I remember, I think (indiscernible) slowly
19 (indiscernible) he reply, he put my rudder position, to port 10.

20 Q. Do you remember when -- what time did you find out about
21 the damage on the vessel?

22 A. Morning time. I don't remember the time, but it was
23 already morning.

24 Q. Morning. Was it light out or dark?

25 A. Already daybreak.

1 Q. It was light.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. Now the lookout said that he had to get -- he got woken
4 up because he had to come down and take a test. Did you find out
5 about it before he came down to take the drug test? Did you get
6 woke up for that, too?

7 A. Yes, sir. I woke up.

8 Q. Do you remember finding out it before then or was it
9 after that?

10 A. After (indiscernible)test.

11 Q. Yeah. Thank you.

12 MR. PRITCHARD: No more questions.

13 BY MR. WOODY:

14 Q. Do you recall getting a breath test?

15 A. Yeah, already got, drug test and I already put
16 (indiscernible), yeah.

17 Q. I do recall you talking about the Captain giving you a
18 port 10 --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- and steady.

21 A. Yeah.

22 Q. A midships rudder.

23 A. Yeah.

24 Q. Then he gave you hard starboard.

25 A. Yeah.

1 Q. And then he said steady?

2 A. No, midships --

3 Q. Midships --

4 A. -- and then steady.

5 Q. -- and then steady. Right. Thank you. What course
6 were you steady on? Do you remember?

7 A. What course was I steady on? I don't remember that
8 course but I stayed in the (indiscernible). I don't remember.

9 Q. Okay. You had the heading 2-2-0.

10 A. Yeah.

11 Q. You didn't go back to 2-2-0 I presume?

12 A. I didn't go back there because that's tower was
13 (indiscernible) moving the starboard.

14 Q. Moving the starboard.

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. So it would have been some course larger than 2-2-0?

17 A. Larger, yeah.

18 Q. I think that's all we have. Thank you very much.

19 A. Thank you, sir.

20 MR. WOODY: Do you --

21 MR. MURNANE: Just a couple of questions.

22 BY MR. BOWLING:

23 Q. When you were steering 2-2-0 --

24 A. Yeah.

25 Q. -- was the ship responsive to your commands, to your

1 helm?

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. How much helm were you required to use to keep on 2-2-0
4 roughly?

5 A. (Indiscernible) if you, if you hold the wheel,
6 depending, 15, 15 to starboard, 15 to port or 10 to port and to
7 starboard --

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. -- depending upon the current there. And sometimes the
10 current gets very bad. So you have to go to big rudder so that
11 your course will be maintained.

12 Q. On the 220 --

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. -- when you were on the 220 --

15 A. Yeah.

16 Q. -- was there any point in time where you needed more
17 ruder to maintain 220?

18 A. Yes, sir.

19 Q. What was the range? What was the range of the rudder
20 you applied to keep it on 220?

21 A. 15.

22 Q. A maximum of 15?

23 A. If you not go to starboard (indiscernible).

24 Q. Just so we're clear. 10 degrees port rudder, order from
25 the Captain --

1 A. Yes, sir.

2 Q. -- was the light already alongside your starboard side
3 or was the light still forward of the ship?

4 A. It was alongside the ship.

5 Q. About where?

6 A. (Indiscernible) starboard.

7 Q. Near the connection, the manifold?

8 A. (Indiscernible).

9 Q. (Indiscernible). Were the doors to the bridge wing open
10 or closed?

11 A. They were closed, sir.

12 Q. Were they closed the entire time from when you left the
13 anchorage until you passed the light?

14 A. Yes, sir.

15 Q. And did anyone ever go outside on the wing?

16 A. (Indiscernible) after the incident.

17 Q. After.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. But not before you passed the light?

20 A. Yeah, (indiscernible).

21 Q. But before the light passed down your starboard side --

22 A. Yes, sir.

23 Q. -- no one had gone outside the bridge?

24 A. Yes.

25 BY MR. PRITCHARD:

1 Q. Let me just make sure I heard what you said. You said
2 after you passed by the light, somebody did go out onto the bridge
3 wing?

4 A. After already had -- yeah, after that.

5 Q. Do you know who went out?

6 A. I think the Second Mate.

7 Q. The Second Mate.

8 A. Yeah. The Second Mate go out. Because I only look like
9 this and then (indiscernible).

10 Q. Okay.

11 MR. BOWLING: One more question.

12 BY MR. BOWLING:

13 Q. You were still on the helm when the Pilot came on board.
14 You remember when the Pilot came up to the bridge after he met
15 with the Captain and they talked. Did the Pilot go out on the
16 bridge?

17 A. No.

18 Q. He didn't. Do you remember if -- he didn't go out
19 through the door to the bridge wing?

20 A. No, sir. Only inside the bridge and they talk
21 (indiscernible).

22 Q. Do you remember if when the Pilot came on did he put a
23 computer -- he had a computer on board with him? Because you were
24 lookout at that point, right?

25 A. I was look at that point, yes, he bring computer, sir.

1 Q. Thank you.

2 MR. WOODY: Okay. Thank you very much.

3 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter
4 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: The Axel Spirit's Allision with the
 Ambrose Light at the Entrance of
 New York Harbor
 Interview of Leo Raagas

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-08-FM-002

PLACE: New York, New York

DATE:

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been compared to
the recording accomplished at the hearing.

Kathryn A. Mirfin
Transcriber