

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

Docket No.: DCA08FM002

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Interview of: NIGEL HORSFIEL

On board AXEL SPIRIT  
Perth Amboy. New Jersey

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

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I N T E R V I E W

## INTERVIEW OF NIGEL HORSFIELD

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2  
3 THE WITNESS: H-o-r-s --

4 BY MR. WOODY:

5 Q. H-o-r-s --

6 A. F-i-e-l-d.

7 Q. F --

8 A. F-i --

9 Q. F-i --

10 A. -- E-l-d.

11 Q. E-l-d. I can get that right.

12 A. Horsfield.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Field.

14 BY MR. WOODY:

15 Q. Field. Let's see if I have it right now.

16 A. Yes. H-o-r-s-f-i-e-l-d.

17 Q. And, Mr. Horsfield, you're the Chief Engineer on the  
18 ship?

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. And where were you at the time that the ship passed the  
21 light?

22 A. I was in the engineer room.

23 Q. Engine room. About what time did you go to the engine  
24 room that evening or that early morning?

25 A. I'll say 2330.

1 Q. 2330. And this would be 2330 on Friday or --

2 A. That would be the 2nd.

3 Q. The 2nd of November. And you were in the engine room  
4 for how long?

5 A. Until just after 6:00 in the morning.

6 Q. Was everything operating normally in the engine room?

7 A. Yes, absolutely.

8 Q. And what other crew members did you have in the engine  
9 room at that time?

10 A. It was the Second Engineer and the wiper.

11 Q. Did you hear anything unusual during this time period?

12 A. I wouldn't say hear anything unusual --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- but around about the 1:30 time, I heard -- I felt a  
15 slight sensation that I attributed to a bit of a swell coming up  
16 on the stern of the ship.

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. That was my instant (indiscernible) what it was.

19 Q. Was there any -- were all these areas of equipment  
20 operating normally at that time?

21 A. Yes, absolutely.

22 Q. They were operating normally throughout the time you  
23 were in the engine room?

24 A. Yes, absolutely.

25 Q. Did anyone else in the engine room hear anything

1 unusual?

2 A. No, no. The (indiscernible) would be with the second on  
3 the, on the wiper.

4 Q. But he did not hear?

5 A. No.

6 Q. Did you get any communication from the Captain about any  
7 kind of a near miss or coming close to a light?

8 A. No.

9 Q. No.

10 A. I had no communication with the bridge (indiscernible).

11 Q. So he made no communication to you and you made no  
12 communication to him about this phenomena?

13 A. No, not during when he was on watch.

14 Q. Not on watch. Okay. Had you ever felt anything like  
15 this before?

16 A. Yes (indiscernible).

17 Q. You had felt it before. In port waters or at sea or --

18 A. Usually it's -- I thought it was a little bit of a big  
19 swell.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Not a normal wave.

22 Q. Uh-huh.

23 A. So approximately (indiscernible). Offshore, we have  
24 that a lot.

25 Q. You get this offshore.

1 A. Yeah.

2 MR. WOODY: Jim, do you have some questions.

3 MR. PRICHARD: Yeah.

4 BY MR. PRICHARD:

5 Q. Chief, when did you -- you said you discussed it, you  
6 talked about it with your crew in the engine room. When did  
7 you --

8 A. That was after.

9 Q. After.

10 A. Yeah, during the morning.

11 Q. Do you remember a time, roughly a time? Was it --

12 A. It was right before midday I think.

13 Q. Okay. So it was after you moored then?

14 A. Oh, yes, probably.

15 Q. I have one question, it's less about the incident and  
16 more about just the ship characteristics. If I remember right,  
17 you've been -- since this ship was -- the company took possession  
18 of the ship --

19 A. Yeah.

20 Q. -- you've been alternating on Chief Engineer.

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. Which the comparison of shaft vibration as you alter  
23 speed, is that something normally you would hear in the engine  
24 room, almost that cavitation that you get when you normally --

25 A. No, not below half speed. You might start getting a

1 little bit of sensation when you move from half to full, when the  
2 engines come under a load but anything up to half ahead is really  
3 very, very smooth.

4 Q. Now would you feel a sensation when you come from stop  
5 to ahead?

6 A. Well, they start up the engine which is a noisy  
7 operation anyway.

8 Q. Right.

9 A. But once it's fired, then it's really not  
10 (indiscernible).

11 Q. Then what you're feeling or hearing at that point is  
12 more associated with the engine itself starting rather than with  
13 the prop or the shaft --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- rotating? So in ahead you said from about half speed  
16 to full --

17 A. Yeah.

18 Q. -- then you start to feel that churn.

19 A. That sensation, yeah, yeah.

20 Q. Okay. How about going from -- to astern bell to ahead  
21 bell?

22 A. It would depend upon what sort of speed you were doing.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. If you're doing a few knots then as you go into the  
25 stern position, then you would -- it would be more load on the

1 engine (indiscernible), you know, you get that characteristic  
2 astern shudder.

3 Q. Do you remember during, you know, between when you left  
4 anchorage and say to -- do you remember feeling that type of  
5 sensation at all?

6 A. I don't think there was any (indiscernible) movements  
7 during waying anchor and (indiscernible) I think all ahead, varied  
8 between dead slow, slow, possibly the occasional half ahead but as  
9 I mentioned before, we were basically waiting for the boat with  
10 the Pilot. So, you know, we only had a certain distance to go.  
11 So we went as slow as possible.

12 Q. So really the only thing out of the ordinary that you  
13 encountered between when you, when you weigh anchor and 2:00 was  
14 that, that sensation that was similar to a wave striking the  
15 stern.

16 A. Yes.

17 MR. PRICHARD: That's all I have.

18 MR. WOODY: Just a couple of pieces of data.

19 BY MR. WOODY:

20 Q. Dead Slow Ahead, what RPM is that?

21 A. 30 revs.

22 Q. 30 revs. And full?

23 A. 87.

24 Q. 87.

25 MR. PRICHARD: Is that 8-7?

1 THE WITNESS: 87.

2 BY MR. WOODY:

3 Q. And do you have an upper most speed that you can make?

4 A. When we want to make -- when we're at deep sea, then we  
5 will increase the revs up to maximum of 104.

6 Q. Of what?

7 A. 104.

8 Q. 104.

9 A. That's the maximum, but up to 87 revs is the  
10 maneuvering.

11 Q. Maneuvering speed.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay. Well, I think what we called you here for was to  
14 find out if you heard anything unusual and I want to thank you  
15 very much for coming by.

16 A. Well, I pride myself in being an engineer --

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. -- you know, being able to recognize any changes in the  
19 sounds --

20 Q. Sounds.

21 A. -- or impacts. There was nothing that was in any  
22 unusual.

23 Q. Uh-huh. Have you seen the side of the ship, the damage  
24 to the ship?

25 A. Yeah, yeah. I'm absolutely flabbergasted that --

1 Q. It was no more noise?

2 A. Yeah, yeah. I don't know how we could have caused that  
3 not heard it. That's just unbelievable.

4 Q. What was the location of your people in the engine room  
5 at the time of the -- about. I mean you can't be sure because --

6 A. I'm pretty sure that I was in the control room on my  
7 own.

8 Q. Uh-huh.

9 A. I'm sure the wiper was on duty whilst maneuvering down  
10 by the jacket water controls. It was necessary to switch on and  
11 switch off the steam heating for the jacket water

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. -- (indiscernible). So he was down there. The Second  
14 Engineer was coming in and coming out of the control room, on a  
15 regular, routine basis --

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. -- because as he's making patrols around the engine  
18 room, he'll come back and have a look around (indiscernible) and  
19 stay in the control room for maybe 15, 20 minutes and take another  
20 patrol.

21 Q. Do you recall when you talked to people later, if they  
22 could recall where they were at that time? I believe you said you  
23 talked to them. Did they recall where they might be at say --

24 A. I think the Second Engineer couldn't recall --

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. -- if he was in the control room or not.

2 Q. Okay. Well, you're saying they should have been but I  
3 mean was he there 100 percent of the time?

4 A. I would say the majority of the time, yeah.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Because we were maneuvering. The steam has got to put  
7 on and put off and so every time the engine stops (indiscernible).

8 Q. You heat the water that the (indiscernible) water. What  
9 do you mean?

10 A. Yeah, it's the cooling water for the main engine.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. As I said, it runs the main engine, it cools down a  
13 little bit.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. So we try and maintain the cooling water, round about 80  
16 degrees.

17 Q. Okay. So when the engine's not running to make the  
18 heat, then you use steam to heat the water to a uniform  
19 temperature of 80 degrees.

20 A. Precisely.

21 Q. Is that 80 degrees Centigrade?

22 A. Centigrade.

23 MR. WOODY: Jim.

24 BY MR. PRICHARD:

25 Q. I think you may have answered it and I might have lost

1 it. When did you first find out about the damage to the ship?

2 A. When we were -- came into the general office at the  
3 immigration.

4 Q. That was right around 9:00 if I remember correctly.

5 A. 9:00-ish, 9:30. As I came down from my cabin to the  
6 power control room, I (indiscernible) operations, the Mate  
7 mentioned that, you know, we must have hit something during the  
8 night. That's when (indiscernible).

9 Q. So you hadn't heard anything about it prior to that  
10 9:00, 9:30 timeframe?

11 A. No.

12 Q. Did the Captain come to you and have you -- talk to you  
13 about examining your engineering stations to see if there was any  
14 damage to any of your spaces?

15 A. No.

16 Q. After you heard about that, was that something you would  
17 normally do?

18 A. Examining engine spaces?

19 Q. Examining engine spaces, if you had a strike with a --

20 A. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. If we knew about it, yeah. Of  
21 course.

22 Q. Did you -- did your engineers examine the engine spaces  
23 on that morning after -- when you found out about the --

24 A. As soon as I found out, I went to have a look at that  
25 9:30 time, and you could see whatever damage was, was there was

1 just -- ended just after the (indiscernible). So halfway between  
2 the accommodation and the manifold there.

3 Q. (Indiscernible).

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. Thank you, Chief.

6 MR. WOODY: Thank you very much. We appreciate it.

7 (Whereupon, the interview in the above-entitled matter  
8 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 Nigel Horsfield

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.

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Kathryn A. Mirfin  
Transcriber