

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN RE: *
*
THE EL FARO INCIDENT OFF * NTSB Accident No.
THE COAST OF THE BAHAMAS ON * DCA16MM001
OCTOBER 1, 2015 *
*

Interview of: Victor Skorapa

Tuesday,
November 3, 2015

BEFORE:

BRIAN YOUNG, NTSB
BRIAN CURTIS, NTSB

This transcript was produced from
audio provided by the National Transportation
Safety Board.

APPEARANCES:

On Behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard:

██████████ ██████████ U.S. Coast Guard

On Behalf of Maine Maritime Academy:

CAPT NATHAN GANDY
Commandant of Midshipmen
Maine Maritime Academy
1 Pleasant Street
Castine, Maine 04420
207-326-2250
commandantsdivision@mma.edu

1 P-R-O-C-E-E-D-I-N-G-S

2 MR. YOUNG: -- probably a good plan.

3 MR. SKORAPA: All right. That's
4 fine.

5 MR. CURTIS: And this way nothing's
6 taken -- appreciate it -- nothing's taken out of
7 context either if we take summary notes. This
8 way it's -- everything is said.

9 So, I'll just run through some
10 formalities just so you're up to speed. And
11 once again, as Brian said, it's a very low-key
12 process, but we certainly appreciate your
13 participating.

14 I'm Brian Curtis. I'm the Acting
15 Director in the Office of Marine Safety at the
16 NTSB. And so, we are the lead federal
17 investigative agency for the accident. So our
18 tasking is to conduct investigations of major
19 marine casualties and to find out what happened
20 and eventually establish probable cause. And
21 part of our system of how we investigate
22 accidents, called the party system, is to

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 include other technical expertise. So that's
2 the reason [REDACTED] [REDACTED] here. He's an
3 investigator with the Coast Guard. And Brian's
4 an engineering investigator. They'll be asking
5 you other questions.

6 But I would like to go just through
7 a few formalities and to get you up to speed
8 with how the NTSB works. We have no regulatory
9 or enforcement power. We basically live by
10 recommendations to hopefully prevent any
11 recurrence of such an accident as occurred here
12 on the *El Faro*. And we've talked to the party
13 system. We have several parties, one of which
14 is the Coast Guard. They're here for their
15 technical expertise to assist with us.

16 And just to give you an idea how
17 this will play out, we're now in the phase of
18 collecting factual information. We're actively
19 working the wreckage, trying to get the VDR
20 (phonetic) back. We're conducting interviews.
21 We've conducted a lot of interviews in
22 Jacksonville. We've interviewed many people.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 And now we're reaching out to those that may
2 have not have been in Jacksonville, but have
3 maybe some good relevant information that can
4 fill in some gaps down the road. We'll spend a
5 few months gathering factual information between
6 the parties, and then we'll eventually get down
7 to writing a report with findings, conclusions
8 and recommendations to hopefully prevent this
9 from occurring again. That whole process will
10 take about a year probably to develop the final
11 report.

12 So as such, I just want you to know
13 that you're entitled to -- they call it
14 representation, but you can have anybody in here
15 with you. Captain Gandy's here, but you're
16 entitled to have anybody in here.

17 And if you need a break, just let us
18 know.

19 Other than that, this is being
20 recorded. We can't guarantee the
21 confidentiality because eventually this will be
22 transcribed and put in the public docket. We

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 certainly will redact any private information
2 you share with us, so whether it's address,
3 Social. Any personal information will be
4 redacted.

5 So with that, I think we're -- if
6 you have any questions about the process, if you
7 want to ask them now, we'll get into the
8 interviews, but, Victor, if you have any
9 questions, we can certainly field them now and
10 --

11 MR. SKORAPA: No, I'm -- I'm good.

12 MR. CURTIS: All right. So I
13 encourage you to relax. Some of these
14 questions, if you don't know the answer or you
15 don't know it to be factually correct, we're not
16 going to -- we don't want you to have
17 conjecture, what you think happened. If you
18 don't know, feel free to say I don't know,
19 because there's a lot of questions that you may
20 well not have any background on, but we're going
21 into a lot of areas because you probably have
22 some relevant information we need to get. And

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 so, we may ask in areas that you don't have
2 background in.

3 So with that, we'll open it up with
4 Brian Young and we'll go to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] And
5 there may be some follow-up questions, but we'll
6 go through. And if you need to take a break,
7 let us know.

8 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

9 MR. YOUNG: Sounds good. And just
10 what we'll do is just for the recording, too, we'll
11 introduce ourselves so that the transcriber
12 knows who's speaking. But my name is Brian
13 Young. I'm the engineering investigator for
14 this accident. I went to New York Maritime and
15 I went to sea for 25 years as an engineer. So I
16 have a good maritime background to help me work
17 on this case. So I've worked on steamships and
18 diesel ships. That's my background. So I
19 couldn't get into Maine Maritime, so I had to go
20 to Fort Schuyler.

21 (Laughter)

22 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis, Acting

1 Director, Office of Marine Safety. Graduated
2 '81 from Maine Maritime, a few years ago. But
3 so I'll be basically participating, but Brian
4 and ██████ will be the primary -- those asking
5 the questions.

6 And, captain, if you'd identify
7 yourself for the transcription?

8 CAPT. GANDY: Captain Nathan Gandy,
9 Commandant and Midshipman of Maine Maritime
10 Academy, and '92 alumni.

11 MR. ██████ And my name is ██████
12 ██████ I'm a civilian investigator with the
13 Coast Guard. I have a deck officer's license.
14 Went to sea for awhile and been around the Coast
15 Guard for about 20 years. And I work for the
16 National Center of Expertise down in New
17 Orleans. And I'm very happy that you're here
18 and willing to be interviewed by us. I think
19 your story is very important and thank you very
20 much for being willing to share with us.

21 MR. CURTIS: With that, we'll get
22 started. So, Brian?

1 MR. YOUNG: So, good. The easiest
2 question of the day: Can you state your name
3 and spell it?

4 MR. SKORAPA: My name is Victor
5 Landon Skorapa IV. That's spelled V-I-C-T-O-R,
6 L-A-N-D-O-N, S-K-O-R-A-P-A, IV.

7 MR. YOUNG: Thank you. You need a
8 break?

9 MR. SKORAPA: No.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Good. All right.
11 If you'd maybe just start and tell us a little
12 bit about your -- maybe start from high school,
13 when you started here at the academy, what kind
14 of classes you're taking -- you've taken and
15 maybe what training on the training ship or
16 anything towards your license that you may have
17 had prior to heading out to sea.

18 MR. SKORAPA: Prior to heading out
19 to sea.

20 MR. YOUNG: On the *El Faro* as a
21 cadet.

22 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Prior to heading

1 out on the *El Faro* I entered the academy at --
2 right after I graduated high school in fall
3 2013. I had completed freshman training cruise
4 successfully. I also completed several labs and
5 classes including two courses on diesel engines,
6 a basic steam course that just explained the
7 fundamentals of how a steam plant works, a
8 fundamentals of engineering operations class
9 that spent a lot of time talking about the
10 ranking cycle. I took a machine tool course. I
11 also took power equipment lab where we -- we
12 practiced servicing pieces of equipment such as
13 filters and strainers and pumps. I also took
14 some theoretical courses like a thermodynamics
15 course, a course in ship structure and
16 stability.

17 I'm trying to think what else that
18 would be relevant that I took. A basic nautical
19 science class and an ocean survival class where
20 we learned how to properly conduct lifeboat
21 drills and how to survive at sea in the event
22 that we had to abandon ship.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: So you had done sea
2 cruise with the *State of Maine*?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I rode on the
4 *State of Maine*. I -- I'd also worked winter
5 cruise the winter before this past summer as a
6 cook for Sodexo. Well, that's what it said on
7 my -- on my station bill card. Really I was a
8 kitchen hand.

9 MR. YOUNG: On the *State of Maine*?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

11 MR. YOUNG: So when you went out on
12 the *El Faro* as a cadet, was that a required
13 training mission or was there something above
14 and beyond that you did?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Cadet shipping. That
16 was required.

17 MR. YOUNG: Required? And did you
18 select to go on *El Faro* or was that chosen for
19 you?

20 MR. SKORAPA: That was chosen for
21 me.

22 MR. YOUNG: And is it a Maine

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 Maritime -- say a rule or something that you
2 have to get out on a steamship as a cadet, or
3 was it just luck of the draw --

4 MR. SKORAPA: No.

5 MR. YOUNG: -- that you ended up on
6 a steamship?

7 MR. SKORAPA: No, I just happened to
8 end up on a steamship.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And had you been
10 on a steamship at all prior to?

11 MR. SKORAPA: With the exception of
12 as a passenger, no.

13 MR. YOUNG: A passenger on?

14 MR. SKORAPA: There was a old
15 tourist-y river boat that I once rode on.

16 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So when did you
17 actually get onto the *El Faro* as a cadet?

18 MR. SKORAPA: As a cadet it was like
19 two weeks after the school year ended. I'm
20 trying to remember the date, but I can't.

21 MR. YOUNG: So maybe sometime in the
22 spring of this year?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. YOUNG: And how long did you
3 stay aboard that ship?

4 MR. SKORAPA: Sixty-two days.

5 MR. YOUNG: And was there a required
6 time that you were supposed to be aboard, or was
7 that --

8 MR. SKORAPA: Sixty days.

9 MR. YOUNG: A 60-day trip was what
10 the schedule was?

11 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

12 MR. YOUNG: And during that time did
13 you just steam back and forth from Jacksonville
14 to Puerto Rico?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, that's all it
16 did.

17 MR. YOUNG: Yes? And during your
18 trip on there were you required to do a sea
19 project?

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Yes, they
21 required us to do sea projects.

22 MR. YOUNG: And what does that

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 entail?

2 MR. SKORAPA: Doing engineering
3 drawings of all the ship systems, answering
4 various questions about the ship like who made
5 the engines, how big is it, who's the officers
6 on the ship?

7 MR. YOUNG: Is that report -- do you
8 still have it or did you submit that somewhere?

9 MR. SKORAPA: They took our reports.

10 MR. YOUNG: And who is "they?"

11 MR. SKORAPA: The school.

12 MR. YOUNG: The school?

13 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

14 MR. YOUNG: Is there any chance that
15 we could maybe take a look at that report,
16 because I think that would be very valuable
17 information.

18 CAPT. GANDY: Well, Victor's
19 intellectual property, so if Victor is willing
20 to offer up a copy of it, we can facilitate
21 getting you a copy of it. But it's his
22 property.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Yes.

2 MR. SKORAPA: Should I do that?

3 CAPT. GANDY: And I don't see where
4 it would be anything --

5 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

6 CAPT. GANDY: -- negative to you and
7 it might give them some insight into --

8 MR. SKORAPA: All right.

9 CAPT. GANDY: -- the modifications
10 of the ship, or who knows what?

11 MR. SKORAPA: All right.

12 MR. YOUNG: Exactly, yes.

13 MR. SKORAPA: I'll -- I'll try and
14 get it. The only problem is that my laptop
15 recently died and a lot of components I'm
16 guessing had something to do with the memory of
17 the computer are having to be thrown away and
18 replaced. So I might have it on -- in the
19 cloud, but I'm not sure if I'm going to be able
20 to retrieve a copy.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 CAPT. GANDY: The academy can

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 provide them a copy as long as you're okay with
2 it.

3 MR. SKORAPA: Okay. Yes, I'm fine
4 with that.

5 CAPT. GANDY: So I can get that
6 through Captain Leech's (phonetic) office.

7 MR. SKORAPA: All right.

8 CAPT. GANDY: Okay?

9 MR. YOUNG: Great. And that is a
10 big help, because again you've done a lot of the
11 work that we would have done as investigators.
12 If we had gone to the ship, we would have been
13 looking at name plate data for the boilers and
14 the turbines. And so you're a big help to us if
15 we could use that information.

16 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

17 MR. YOUNG: Because then it will
18 help even guide us. If we can get the boiler
19 information, maybe can go to Babcock Wilcox and
20 find out more information about the boilers. So
21 that's a huge help.

22 And on the same lines did you take

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 any pictures at all while you were aboard?

2 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

3 MR. YOUNG: And is there any chance,
4 the same thing, where you could maybe share
5 those with us either electronically or -- be
6 easiest with if -- with through hard drive? And
7 again, we're looking for condition of the
8 boilers and turbines and machinery, lifeboats,
9 that kind of equipment.

10 MR. SKORAPA: Should I do that?

11 CAPT. GANDY: If you've got any
12 pictures that would be of equipment and --

13 MR. SKORAPA: All right. Yes.

14 CAPT. GANDY: -- not of people.

15 MR. SKORAPA: Right. Yes, no
16 selfies. Okay. Yes.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

18 MR. SKORAPA: I can --

19 MR. YOUNG: And again, that's a huge
20 help, because once we get on scene typically all
21 we do is we take hundreds and hundreds of
22 pictures.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Okay. Well, I -- I
2 can try. It's just that my phone hasn't been
3 too cooperative in me trying to upload my
4 pictures to my sea project. I -- I had some --
5 or I was unable to because my phone decide to
6 just stop cooperating.

7 MR. YOUNG: Okay. But whatever we
8 can get is a huge help.

9 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

10 MR. YOUNG: We really appreciate
11 that. Okay? So while you were aboard *El Faro*
12 as an engine cadet, maybe you can take us
13 through what a typical day was like. What did
14 you do everyday and did you stand on watch and
15 what did they make you do?

16 MR. SKORAPA: First part of the
17 cadet shipping they'd have me stand an early
18 morning watch and then do a four-hour work
19 period. No, that was the second part. First
20 part of my cadet shipping for two or three weeks
21 they had me stand the 8:00 to 4:00 watch and
22 then do a work period from -- from 12:00 or 1:00

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 until 4:00 or 5:00 in the afternoon, and then
2 stand another watch. When the first engineers
3 changed out, that would change to just one watch
4 and one work period. And I would work then from
5 the early morning 4:00 to 8:00 shift, too. And
6 then I would do the morning work shift. And
7 then at the end of the -- or towards the end of
8 my cadet shipping for the last three or four
9 weeks they would have me do just two work
10 periods from 8:00 to 4:00 and then -- or not
11 8:00 to 4:00. -- 8:00 to noon and then from 1:00
12 to 5:00.

13 MR. YOUNG: Would they let you do
14 some sea project time at nights then?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, they wanted to
16 give me extra time to work on my sea project.

17 MR. YOUNG: That's good. And when
18 you were working in the engine room did you have
19 any issues or any problems with any of the
20 engineers? Did anyone give you a hard time or
21 did everyone get along and treat you right?

22 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, everyone got

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 along.

2 MR. YOUNG: Yes.

3 MR. SKORAPA: They were just busy.
4 That's all.

5 MR. YOUNG: Did you ever notice at
6 any time while you were in the engine room if
7 they had any major failures of either the boiler
8 or the main engine? Was there anything that
9 broke that maybe caused some concern?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Only thing I can think
11 of right off the bat would be one of the vacuum
12 pumps for the -- for the turbines started losing
13 vacuum one day, but that was an easy fix. All
14 they did was they brought -- they have three, so
15 they brought the other two online, shut down
16 that vacuum pump, opened up the heat exchanger
17 and found out it was just clogged with marine
18 debris. They took out the debris, brought it
19 back on line and it was working just fine.

20 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So it was kind of
21 routine failure?

22 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: Nothing out of the
2 ordinary?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Nothing too -- too
4 extraordinary, no.

5 MR. YOUNG: At any time when you
6 were there did the boilers ever get shut down
7 either for normal maintenance or --

8 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

9 MR. YOUNG: They did?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, they -- there
11 were two occasions when I was there, because the
12 ship had a port and starboard main boiler. They
13 turned them off and then just cleaned them out.

14 MR. YOUNG: Is that when they get
15 inside the fire box and come in with the vacuum
16 --

17 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

18 MR. YOUNG: -- and scrape the soot
19 and stuff of?

20 MR. SKORAPA: They had me doing
21 that.

22 MR. CURTIS: Lucky you, huh? Did

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 you come out as dark as that sweater?

2 MR. SKORAPA: They told me I could
3 go get off the -- well, one time they had me do
4 it during a watch period. Another -- actually
5 it was both during the early morning watches.
6 So they then told me I could leave watch and go
7 take a shower because I was very dirty.

8 MR. YOUNG: I bet.

9 MR. SKORAPA: And we also went
10 underneath the boiler right before we shut it
11 down, popped off a panel on the bottom and just
12 checked for any leaks of steam, and didn't find
13 any.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So those two
15 times when they let you get inside the boiler
16 were kind of normal shutdowns that was planned?

17 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, it was all
18 planned. Nothing out of the ordinary.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And was that in
20 port or was that at sea?

21 MR. SKORAPA: It was right when we
22 were about to enter port.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: Okay. That they would
2 shut the boiler down?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

4 MR. YOUNG: Okay. But other than
5 that with the boilers, did they ever have any
6 sort of issues or shutdowns that you were aware
7 of?

8 MR. SKORAPA: That weren't supposed
9 to happen?

10 MR. YOUNG: Correct. Yes.

11 MR. SKORAPA: No.

12 MR. YOUNG: No?

13 MR. SKORAPA: No, all the shutdowns
14 were planned.

15 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Good. And how
16 about the main unit, the turbines there and the
17 reduction gear that actually turns the
18 propeller? At any point do you know if there
19 was any sort of issues or problems or failures
20 with that, maybe an overspeed or any sort of
21 lube oil system?

22 MR. SKORAPA: No, they worked

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 perfectly.

2 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

3 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, there was one time
4 when we had just changed an expansion joint on
5 the condenser on some piping that went -- can't
6 remember if it was to or from the condenser, but
7 the vacuum had caused the rubber expansion joint
8 to implode, but it wasn't damaged to a point
9 where it broke. So all we did was we just when
10 we were in port shut it down and swapped it out.
11 And that -- and it ran fine after that.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Good. I know I'm
13 asking a lot of engineering questions, but
14 that's my specialty. I know [REDACTED] is more about
15 how you dealt with other people and everything,
16 but I'd like to kind of stick with the
17 engineering portion of this, if that's okay with
18 you.

19 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

20 MR. YOUNG: So there's a lot of
21 questions about how that plant ran and what you
22 kind of worked on that's important to me.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 Did you ever transfer fuel with the
2 second in the mornings when you were on the
3 watch, or help him?

4 MR. SKORAPA: I can't remember
5 really if I helped with fuel transfer. What the
6 second would have me do during then is practice
7 tracing out the fuel oil system. Actually he
8 did have me help a little, but mainly what I --
9 he'd have me do is just run and open a valve
10 while he was monitoring a level or something
11 like that. Nothing too big.

12 MR. YOUNG: And when you were
13 helping him was he always pumping out of the
14 same tanks?

15 MR. SKORAPA: I think so. I
16 honestly don't remember.

17 MR. YOUNG: You don't remember?
18 Because maybe the three is, if that rings a
19 bell, maybe where they were taking fuel from.

20 MR. SKORAPA: Could have been. I
21 don't remember.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay. That's fine. So,

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 and every morning the second would transfer fuel
2 into his settler?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

4 MR. YOUNG: And then from the
5 settler it would go through some fuel pumps and
6 then into the boiler.

7 MR. SKORAPA: Right.

8 MR. YOUNG: And I know there were
9 some strainers.

10 MR. SKORAPA: There were.

11 MR. YOUNG: A hot strainer and a
12 cold strainer. Did you ever get an opportunity
13 to change those strainers?

14 MR. SKORAPA: They never actually
15 had me change the strainer alone. They -- I
16 think I might have cleaned out the strainer once
17 it was removed and swapped out, but I never
18 actually did the job myself. They always had a
19 boiler or wiper do it. Or actually an oiler.
20 Yes, it was always an oiler doing the job.

21 MR. YOUNG: And were you involved
22 helping the oiler on more than one occasion, or

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 do you remember?

2 MR. SKORAPA: It wasn't very many,
3 however many it was.

4 MR. YOUNG: And if you do remember
5 when that strainer was getting cleaned out was
6 it caked with debris and stuff or was --

7 MR. SKORAPA: No. No, it was
8 relatively clean.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

10 MR. SKORAPA: Just a little oily.
11 That's all.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. That's good. Do
13 you remember; here's a hard question now, when
14 every time you'd come into port and out of port
15 -- going back to the condenser and the bellows
16 that was broken, they have a high suction and a
17 low suction. Do you remember if the switched
18 that every time they would come into port? It's
19 the sea suction from the bottom of the ship to
20 get salt water through the main circulator into
21 the condenser.

22 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember if

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 they switched where they were getting their
2 suction from.

3 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Because I think
4 they might have been electronic valves that they
5 might have been able to control from the control
6 station, electric valves that opened and closed?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I honestly don't
8 remember if they switched.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Did you ever
10 observe or get involved with cleaning the lube
11 oil strainer for the main engine? Did that ever
12 get checked or opened up, do you remember?

13 MR. SKORAPA: Probably it had to be
14 cleaned at some point, but I don't remember
15 doing the job --

16 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

17 MR. SKORAPA: -- or helping with
18 that particular job.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Good. How about
20 bunkering? Were you involved with taking on
21 fuel?

22 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, but I was really

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 an extra because they -- when we were in port
2 there wasn't very much work to do, so they just
3 figured they wanted me to work for so many
4 hours, so they just had me go and sit up with
5 the -- with the wiper and the third engineer up
6 at the bunkering station and run papers to the
7 chief engineer up in his office while they were
8 bunkering.

9 MR. YOUNG: Were you able to work
10 with both chief engineers, or did you work
11 predominantly with one? There's a chief named
12 Rich (phonetic) --

13 MR. SKORAPA: Rich --

14 MR. YOUNG: -- and a chief named
15 James (phonetic).

16 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, yes. I worked
17 mostly with James, but it was -- I worked mostly
18 with the firsts. I rarely ever did anything
19 with the chiefs.

20 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

21 MR. SKORAPA: The only time I can
22 really think of doing something just with a

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 chief engineer was when I was standing a fire
2 watch when James was doing some cutting of old
3 bolts to remove a fan and he needed a fire
4 watch.

5 MR. YOUNG: We both said chief and
6 we know chiefs don't leave their office very
7 much, right?

8 MR. SKORAPA: No.

9 MR. YOUNG: He sits up there and
10 looks at the log book. The first does all the
11 work.

12 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, but it was a lot
13 of paperwork for him.

14 MR. YOUNG: I bet. Speaking of
15 paperwork, do you remember doing a lot of
16 checklists or observing that checklists were
17 being followed, say when they departed port or
18 arrived in port, or --

19 MR. SKORAPA: I didn't do any of
20 that. That was -- I think that was all the
21 chief.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Did you ever fill

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 out the log book for them on your watches?

2 MR. SKORAPA: They had me practice
3 doing a round, but that was all the third
4 engineers. They wanted like the actual officers
5 to write things down in the log books.

6 MR. YOUNG: That makes sense. You
7 need a break? You doing okay?

8 MR. SKORAPA: No, I'm doing fine.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Are these
10 questions too hard?

11 MR. SKORAPA: No.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Good. Did you
13 ever get involved with any sort of testing of
14 the boiler shutdowns or the main engine
15 overspeeds?

16 MR. SKORAPA: I didn't get involved
17 with any of that.

18 MR. YOUNG: No?

19 MR. SKORAPA: No.

20 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Do you ever
21 remember the Coast Guard or the ABS coming
22 aboard the ship to --

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, they sent two
2 Coast Guard officers who were working to get a
3 higher rank that would let them -- I don't --
4 inspect -- I can't remember if it was if it were
5 to let -- was to let them inspect U.S. flagships
6 or to let them inspect foreign flagships, but
7 they had to -- what they had to do is they had
8 to ride on a merchant ship for a while just to
9 observe what daily life is like so they'd have a
10 better understanding of how to do their job when
11 they finally got their rank that they were
12 working for.

13 MR. YOUNG: And they were riding
14 aboard with you as you were a cadet?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

16 MR. YOUNG: And did they do
17 typically the same sort of activities, observe
18 and go to the bridge, go to the engine room?

19 MR. SKORAPA: They observed, but
20 they didn't do any actual work. They just
21 observed.

22 MR. YOUNG: Do you think that they

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 were treated like cadets?

2 MR. SKORAPA: No.

3 MR. YOUNG: No?

4 MR. SKORAPA: They were in the sense
5 that people were willing to teach them stuff,
6 but they -- they were -- I think they were
7 looked at with a little bit more -- I'm trying
8 to think what the word would be for it --
9 prestige because they were Coast Guard officers.

10 MR. YOUNG: Did you deal with the
11 captain at all?

12 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

13 MR. YOUNG: Which captain did you
14 deal with?

15 MR. SKORAPA: The one that went
16 missing, Mike (phonetic).

17 MR. YOUNG: Davidson (phonetic)?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

19 MR. YOUNG: How did you get along
20 with him?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Just fine.

22 MR. YOUNG: Yes.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. YOUNG: He's a Mainer, too,
3 right?

4 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, he is.

5 MR. YOUNG: Yes. For your project
6 did you have to get any information from him, or
7 was it mostly engine-related stuff?

8 MR. SKORAPA: No, I didn't have to
9 get
10 out of -- off of him.

11 MR. YOUNG: Would you ever go to the
12 bridge and say just chat with him? Was it that
13 kind of relationship where you could kind of
14 talk to him or --

15 MR. SKORAPA: I never went on the
16 bridge when he was on the bridge. I had to go
17 up there for some engineering questions related
18 to things like batteries for the -- the radios
19 and stuff, but I never had to deal with him for
20 my project.

21 MR. YOUNG: Would you see him at the
22 mess deck maybe?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, yes. Every day.

2 MR. YOUNG: And was he cordial and
3 friendly and --

4 MR. SKORAPA: Very.

5 MR. YOUNG: Was he? Okay. When you
6 were doing your checks with batteries -- and
7 this reminds me of the emergency generator. Did
8 you ever see that thing run?

9 MR. SKORAPA: I was not involved
10 with testing the emergency generator.

11 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

12 MR. SKORAPA: I was in the room
13 where it was quite a bit working on my sea
14 project questions regarding the generator, and
15 everything seemed to be in good shape, but I
16 never tested it.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Do you remember
18 that it may have been tested every month or so,
19 or do you remember hearing the engineers talk
20 about it?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Not particular.

22 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: But I would assume
2 that they were running it every month, at least.

3

4 MR. YOUNG: And that's something
5 we'll look into once we get the log books.
6 That's the kind of thing that we are interested
7 in knowing.

8 When you were working with the
9 engineers and the oilers and the other crew,
10 what was the team aspect of the engine crew?
11 Were they a tight team and worked together well
12 or was there a lot of complaining and
13 unhappiness?

14 MR. SKORAPA: No, everyone worked
15 together pretty well.

16 MR. YOUNG: Would you say they were
17 a hardworking ship?

18 MR. SKORAPA: They were a very
19 hardworking ship. I -- I didn't see the
20 officers just sitting around ordering around the
21 wipers and oilers. They were in doing dirty
22 work as well.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: And I know you're a
2 cadet and I know you haven't been on a lot of
3 ships, but did it seem like the ship ran pretty
4 well, or did it seem like they had to do a lot
5 of emergency repairs and a lot of --

6 MR. SKORAPA: No, I'd say it ran
7 better than the school ship. It barely rocked
8 and it never broke down to a point where it made
9 the ship stop moving.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And were you ever
11 in bad weather on the ship?

12 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, but the ship in
13 bad weather was rocking about as much as the
14 *State of Maine* does when it's just moving
15 through calm seas.

16 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So it rode pretty
17 well?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, it rode very
19 well.

20 MR. YOUNG: And how bad would you
21 say was the worst weather you saw when you were
22 out on *El Faro*?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: It was bad enough to
2 make us slow down the ship and stay at sea for
3 an extra day. It was -- I forget the
4 hurricane's name, but there was some hurricane
5 going into Florida and it was safer at sea than
6 it was to go into port.

7 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So I know you're
8 an engine cadet and us engineers don't go up to
9 the bridge much, but do you think that maybe
10 they took a different route because of the storm
11 or slowed down because of the storm, as you
12 understand it, that previous hurricane?

13 MR. SKORAPA: I'm fairly certain
14 they slowed down, but I honestly don't know.

15 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

16 MR. SKORAPA: I really wasn't paying
17 attention.

18 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And did you ever
19 anything from the engineers, especially the
20 licensed engineers, that there was a lot of push
21 or pressure for them to make an arrival time?
22 Did they ever say, man, we have to be in Puerto

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 Rico at this time, this date?

2 MR. SKORAPA: No. Captain said --
3 or actually commended the once for slowing down
4 slightly even -- not enough to make us to miss
5 an arrival time, but just slowing enough that
6 we'd make our arrival time but we'd burn less
7 fuel doing it.

8 MR. YOUNG: Did you ever see the
9 chief and the captain interact with each other
10 say at meals or over the phone? Did they seem
11 to get along or --

12 MR. SKORAPA: They got along just
13 fine, both the chiefs that I saw.

14 MR. YOUNG: With the captain?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

16 MR. YOUNG: And did you only work
17 with Captain Davidson or was any other captains
18 aboard the ship at any time?

19 MR. SKORAPA: The only captain who
20 was on the ship when I was on the ship was
21 Davidson.

22 MR. YOUNG: The whole time?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: The whole time.

2 MR. YOUNG: Okay. How as the food?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Great.

4 MR. YOUNG: Really?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. They did had a
6 really good southern cooking. All the cooks
7 were from the south.

8 MR. YOUNG: And the crew seemed to
9 enjoy the food, or did they complain about the
10 food?

11 MR. SKORAPA: The crew thought it
12 was great.

13 MR. YOUNG: Really?

14 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

15 MR. YOUNG: Did crew complain about
16 their overtime at all, like they were getting
17 not enough money or worked too much hours?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Should I answer that?

19 MR. YOUNG: If they complained.
20 That's it. If the crew was complaining.

21 CAPT. GANDY: I mean, if they were
22 complaining. They're not asking you to name

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 names.

2 MR. SKORAPA: All right.

3 CAPT. GANDY: I don't see where that
4 would --

5 MR. SKORAPA: Officers did not
6 complain about their hours. There was one,
7 maybe two wipers that complained, but that was
8 it.

9 MR. YOUNG: Saying they were working
10 too many hours, or too hard, or what was their
11 complaint?

12 MR. SKORAPA: He was complaining
13 that his contract said he didn't have to work in
14 port, when in fact it did.

15 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

16 MR. SKORAPA: That was it.

17 MR. YOUNG: And that's typical. You
18 hear that a lot on ships.

19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

20 MR. YOUNG: Yes. People aren't
21 happy unless they're complaining sometimes.

22 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Other than that,

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 everyone was happy with the hours and stuff.

2 MR. YOUNG: And were you required to
3 keep a list of your work hours and sleep hours?

4 MR. SKORAPA: No.

5 MR. YOUNG: Do you know if any of
6 the engineers or boilers may have had to keep
7 that -- work/rest hours they call it?

8 MR. SKORAPA: I don't know about
9 maintaining their -- or recording rest hours,
10 but I do know they had to maintain their work
11 hours for the -- I think the payroll.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. As part of your
13 training on there did you ever go to any abandon
14 ship drills?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, we had safety
16 meetings weekly and -- but most of those weeks
17 there was an abandon ship drill as part of the
18 safety meeting. Like what they'd do is sometime
19 around noon they'd pull the fire alarm. We'd --
20 and often what we would do is practice doing
21 what we would do in the event of a fire, an
22 emergency. And then they'd blow the ship's

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 whistle seven times and the bell seven times and
2 we'd go up and practice abandoning ship.

3 MR. YOUNG: When you did practice
4 abandoning ship, did you ever notice or observe
5 the lifeboats being lowered?

6 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

7 MR. YOUNG: They did?

8 MR. SKORAPA: Almost every time.

9 MR. YOUNG: And was there ever a
10 problem with them getting lowered down --

11 MR. SKORAPA: No.

12 MR. YOUNG: -- or did it seem like
13 they went down in a reasonable -- without any
14 problems?

15 MR. SKORAPA: No, they worked
16 perfectly.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And which boat
18 was your boat?

19 MR. SKORAPA: My boat was on the
20 starboard side. It was the Fleming gear one.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

22 MR. SKORAPA: They had a diesel and

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 a Fleming gear-powered lifeboat.

2 MR. YOUNG: Yes. And you were in
3 the starboard boat?

4 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

5 MR. YOUNG: During the drills did
6 you wear a PFD or bring a PFD to the drill?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, they said you
8 have to bring a life jacket to the drill.

9 MR. YOUNG: And where was your life
10 jacket stored?

11 MR. SKORAPA: In my room so I could
12 just grab it.

13 MR. YOUNG: And it was easily
14 accessible? You were able to get it?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, it was right in
16 my locker, so I just opened it up, grabbed it
17 and went to the drill.

18 MR. YOUNG: About a survival suit?
19 Did you have one of them in your room?

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, everybody did.

21 MR. YOUNG: So again it was stored
22 in your room?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, right with the
2 life jacket so I could just grab that if I
3 needed it.

4 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And were you ever
5 required to test it and get in it?

6 MR. SKORAPA: No.

7 MR. YOUNG: Okay. But you're
8 absolutely sure you had one in the room, right?

9 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

10 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Perfect. Did
11 they ever lower the lifeboats down to the water
12 in port?

13 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember doing
14 that.

15 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And sometimes
16 it's only required quarterly, so you may not
17 have been on when it was required to be done,
18 but I just was wondering if it had been done
19 during your stay there.

20 But did they bring it to the
21 embarkation level each drill, if you remember?

22 MR. SKORAPA: Most drills, yes.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: Okay. That's good. At
2 any point did anyone ever show you or train you
3 or teach you with EPIRBs or handheld radios or
4 any sort of communication device that may have
5 used during an emergency?

6 MR. SKORAPA: No.

7 MR. YOUNG: Okay. I think I'm going
8 to take a break from my engineering questions
9 and maybe pass it around to some other people
10 about maybe some other areas of interest, unless
11 there are some other engineering questions from
12 some of the other guys, unless you need a break.

13 MR. SKORAPA: No, I can keep going.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay. You're doing a
15 great job, by the way, and I appreciate all your
16 help.

17 MR. CURTIS: Maybe we can pass it
18 along to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] now for some questions.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Piece of gum?

20 MR. SKORAPA: No, thanks. I'm all
21 set.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Anybody?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. CURTIS: No, thanks.

2 MR. YOUNG: Good. Thank you.

3 MR. [REDACTED] So this may sound a
4 little odd, but what I'd like you to do is like
5 try to think back to when you arrived. Did you
6 join the ship in Jacksonville?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

8 MR. [REDACTED] By the way, this is
9 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the tape.

10 So I want you to take just a minute
11 to sort of collect your thoughts and paint for
12 me a picture of you arriving at the ship. In
13 other words, there she is. What were your
14 thoughts?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Well, when I rolled
16 into the port, I'd never seen so many new cars
17 in one place. And then when I first saw the
18 ship, it was huge, because the main deck was up
19 a lot higher than the main deck on the school
20 ship and the ship was longer by at least 250
21 feet.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And the reason

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 I'm asking these questions, I'm working on the
2 Human Factors Team. There are several teams:
3 engineering, nautical operations, survival
4 factors. And I'm interested in decisions that
5 people made and things like how comfortable the
6 ship was and were people getting enough sleep,
7 so that's why I'm trying to take you down this
8 road.

9 So there is. There's the ship
10 sitting at the dock. And you arrive at the side
11 of the pier. What happens next?

12 MR. SKORAPA: I go up the gangway.
13 I speak with the -- the quarter -- I forget if
14 it -- I don't know if it would be called quarter
15 master or AMOOD, but the -- the people who were
16 in charge of deciding who gets on the ship.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And you come
18 aboard the ship and you're getting settled in
19 your job. Could you walk us through the
20 process?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. So after I speak
22 with them, I then lug my stuff up another couple

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 of decks to my room. And when I get there -- or
2 when I get to the deck that I was going to be
3 staying on, I meet the chief steward at the
4 time, and he said to go -- or showed me which
5 room was mine, told me where the mess deck was.
6 And after I -- told me after I dropped my stuff
7 off go see the captain to fill out paperwork.

8 MR. [REDACTED] All right. So where
9 did you find the captain?

10 MR. SKORAPA: I found him in his
11 office, which was another couple decks up.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So what
13 happened when you got there?

14 MR. SKORAPA: The captain had me
15 start filling out paperwork.

16 MR. [REDACTED] And what was that?
17 What kind of paperwork? Just so I understand.
18 I haven't shipped for awhile, so --

19 MR. SKORAPA: Mostly it was payroll
20 stuff.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Did he ask you
22 to have a seat? Was he kind of like fatherly to

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 you? Was he official?

2 MR. SKORAPA: He was very official.

3 MR. ██████████ All right. So you
4 fill out the payroll stuff. Was there any other
5 documentation that you recall filling out?

6 MR. SKORAPA: I remember there was
7 payroll stuff. I don't remember what other
8 documents there were. Probably whatever the
9 typical documents are when somebody boards a
10 ship that they have to fill out.

11 MR. ██████████ Okay. So you finished
12 up your meeting with the captain.

13 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

14 MR. ██████████ And then what
15 happened?

16 MR. SKORAPA: Then he told me which
17 way the engine room was. And I go to the engine
18 room and I -- until dinner I just look around
19 the engine room and see what's going on.

20 MR. ██████████ Okay. So --

21 MR. SKORAPA: And get a -- just a
22 general idea of the layout.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So when you get
2 down to the engine room, what were your
3 impressions? I mean, here you are in the *El*
4 *Faro's* engine room. What did you think?

5 MR. SKORAPA: It was hot and it was
6 very big.

7 MR. [REDACTED] All right. So how did
8 you get into the engine room, do you remember?

9 MR. SKORAPA: I was later told not
10 to do this, but on the engineering officer's
11 deck there was a door to the engine room. But
12 that was really meant for emergencies. So I was
13 supposed to go another couple decks down and
14 enter there, because if I entered on the
15 officer's deck, it -- you'd hear a loud noise
16 from the engine room and that disturbed anyone
17 who was resting who was off duty.

18 MR. [REDACTED] All right. So how did
19 you know -- like did you have a mentor? Who was
20 your like person on the ship that took you under
21 their wing? Was there anybody?

22 MR. SKORAPA: The first engineers.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. ██████████ Okay. So we've had
2 the opportunity to look through a lot of
3 paperwork that the ship provides to crew
4 persons. When did you get your orientation?

5 MR. SKORAPA: They had me review the
6 engine room papers I'd say the first day. So
7 they had me go around the engine room and also
8 review the papers that they had everyone who
9 boarded review so they know procedures and where
10 things are. And they also had me do it the
11 second days I was there as well.

12 MR. ██████████ Okay. So the day you
13 came aboard they were off-loading cargo and
14 loading cargo?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

16 MR. ██████████ It was very hectic,
17 right?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

19 MR. ██████████ So how long after you
20 came aboard did the ship sail?

21 MR. SKORAPA: It was a matter of
22 hours. I -- sometime in the evening it took

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 off.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So the
3 orientation checklist that you would have done,
4 where would that have been? Before you sailed?
5 After you sailed?

6 MR. SKORAPA: Before and after, I'd
7 say.

8 MR. [REDACTED] So would you say you
9 started it before and then --

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

11 MR. [REDACTED] -- wrapped it up after
12 you sailed?

13 MR. SKORAPA: Started it before;
14 wrapped it up after we were moving.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Like I said, I wasn't
16 there, so your story is very important. So
17 you're on the ship. You go down to the engine
18 room. You take the tour. You find out how hot
19 it is.

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] You greet the captain.

22 All this is going on. Your buddy -- was there a

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 guy from Maine Maritime there with you?

2 MR. SKORAPA: There was, but he was
3 a deck cadet. So after captain had us file
4 paperwork that everyone had to fill out boarding
5 the ship, I think I didn't see much of him
6 except at meals and when we were -- maybe if we
7 went off into port together.

8 MR. ██████████ Okay. So you're on
9 the ship. When they got underway do you recall
10 if you were down in the engine room?

11 MR. SKORAPA: No. When the ship
12 left port, I was not in the engine room the
13 first time.

14 MR. ██████████ Okay. Do you remember
15 where you were?

16 MR. SKORAPA: It was late enough
17 that I was in my -- in my room.

18 MR. ██████████ All right. So you
19 were in your cabin when you sailed?

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

21 MR. ██████████ So at what point did
22 someone say from the ship here's where your

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 muster station is? They point out to the lodge,
2 quarter and station bill. Here's your duty,
3 cross the emergencies, and showed you where your
4 lifeboat was. Where did that happen?

5 MR. SKORAPA: I'd say that was first
6 or second day that I figured that out.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So if you can
8 just take a minute to think, do you think that
9 was at sea or that was in port?

10 MR. SKORAPA: I think I made a point
11 to learn that in port.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And did you
13 learn that or did someone like the third mate or
14 the second mate come to you and said, Victor,
15 come with me? Here's your station bill. Here's
16 your lifeboat. Here's all the emergency gear.

17 MR. SKORAPA: I went and figured
18 that out on my own.

19 MR. [REDACTED] And did someone come
20 to you and say, oh, great, Victor, you did that?
21 I was just coming to get you. Let's check this
22 off on a check sheet?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. How about your
3 deck cadet? Did you chit-chat with him and he
4 maybe said he did the same thing?

5 MR. SKORAPA: I didn't speak with
6 him about that.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So how did you
8 figure out you had the vote with the Fleming
9 gear?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, because the --
11 every so often I'd go up and help test the
12 diesel engine on the other lifeboat.

13 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you said
14 your boat was on the starboard side, right?

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

16 MR. [REDACTED] And then so how did
17 you know it was that boat?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Because it said that's
19 where I was supposed to meet on the muster
20 sheet.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So it said
22 starboard boat?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No, it -- it said No.
2 1 boat, I believe.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

4 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

5 MR. [REDACTED] And that's the
6 starboard boat?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Because I
9 always get that confused --

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

11 MR. [REDACTED] -- myself. I don't
12 understand why they don't just say starboard
13 boat. All right. So we're out at sea and do
14 you recall when like the first safety meeting
15 was?

16 MR. SKORAPA: Two days after I got
17 on.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And when did
19 you first hear the alarm go off for the fire and
20 emergency drill?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Sometime around
22 midday.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. [REDACTED] On the second day --

2 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

3 MR. [REDACTED] -- that you were
4 aboard?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

6 MR. [REDACTED] And Brian didn't have
7 the opportunity, but the other Brian did. We
8 were on the *El Yunque* and we saw in the crew
9 mast they had sort of flip signs where they
10 could announce when a drill was.

11 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

12 MR. [REDACTED] They were laminated.
13 Was that how they --

14 MR. SKORAPA: They used whiteboards.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you'd walk
16 in the galley and you knew that there was going
17 to be a drill that day?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

20 MR. SKORAPA: They -- they also
21 announced arrivals and departures on the
22 whiteboards as well.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So who told you
2 what you were going to do for the drill?

3 MR. SKORAPA: My station bill did.

4 MR. [REDACTED] But was there any
5 crewman that said you're new on the ship; I'll
6 show you what to do?

7 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And what about
9 the coasties on there?

10 MR. SKORAPA: They went to drills,
11 too.

12 MR. [REDACTED] No, no, I'm saying
13 when they would come into the galley, did they
14 know to look up on the -- did they know what
15 their stations were?

16 MR. SKORAPA: I would assume so.

17 MR. [REDACTED] And that first drill
18 that occurred, you heard the alarm go off?

19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Did the coasties know
21 as well as you did where to go when that alarm
22 sounded?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So was the deck
3 cadet, just out of curiosity -- I think I looked
4 at paperwork. He was on there longer than you?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, he had to be an
6 extra month.

7 MR. [REDACTED] And why was that?

8 MR. SKORAPA: Because in order to
9 meet Coast Guard requirements for sea time his
10 cadet shipping had to be 90 days instead of 60.

11 MR. [REDACTED] So I'm going to ask
12 you just -- we'll take a break in a minute. In
13 fact, you want to take a break now?

14 MR. CURTIS: Sure.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Let's take
16 about a five-minute break.

17 MR. SKORAPA: All right.

18 MR. [REDACTED] All right.

19 MR. CURTIS: Thank you.

20 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

21 MR. CURTIS: We'll just press pause.

22 (Whereupon, the above-entitled

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 matter went off the record briefly and resumed
2 at 10:00.)

3 MR. [REDACTED] All right. So it's
4 about 10 minutes to 10:00 and we're back on the
5 record.

6 Victor, this is [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I
7 was asking Victor some questions.

8 So I want to just go back to the
9 initial drill and the safety orientation. If
10 you couldn't get to your room in an emergency,
11 if you were halfway between the engine room and
12 the bridge, where would you get a life jacket?

13 MR. SKORAPA: I would say somewhere
14 on the deck probably. I would look in -- there
15 would probably be a -- I don't remember if there
16 was on the *El Faro*, but I know on the training
17 ship there's bins full of life jackets for
18 people in case they can't get to their cabins
19 before a drill, or an emergency.

20 MR. [REDACTED] And in the same token,
21 like if you couldn't get to your emersion suit,
22 where would you get another one?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember that.

2

3 MR. [REDACTED] And even though you
4 might not recall it, do you remember -- that
5 orientation that you had, that safety
6 orientation, did someone ever walk you through
7 step by step, you know, this is boat 1, that's
8 boat 2, here are the life rafts, here's how they
9 operate?

10 MR. SKORAPA: They didn't walk me
11 through where the lifeboats were, but what they
12 did do is they told me how to operate the
13 lifeboats, or how to start the engine on the
14 diesel and --

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And was that a
16 hydraulic start?

17 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And how about
19 like if you picture like just behind I believe
20 on the *El Faro* aft of the lifeboats there were
21 the life rafts. Did anybody talk to you about
22 how to launch the rafts or so forth?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No, because I think
2 they would assume I knew from taking nautical
3 science class and ocean survival here at Maine
4 Maritime.

5 MR. ██████████ And one think I
6 noticed, I haven't been around gravity lifeboats
7 for a long time, but do you know if like when
8 you had the boat drill if there were dedicated
9 people assigned to the jobs, or were they just
10 sort of randomly --

11 MR. SKORAPA: No, there were
12 dedicated people as far as -- like every so
13 often they would have somebody else practice
14 lowering the lifeboat just so that in case the
15 -- in case of an emergency they could just have
16 somebody else do it. Like the -- there was a
17 dedicated person in charge. And the second mate
18 was in charge of my lifeboat.

19 MR. ██████████ And just a small
20 detail, but do you remember if there was any
21 conversation about how the last man would get in
22 the lifeboat? Because you had to lift up a

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 lever --

2 MR. SKORAPA: Right.

3 MR. [REDACTED] -- to release the boat
4 to the water.

5 MR. SKORAPA: Right.

6 MR. [REDACTED] And then the last man
7 had to somehow --

8 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. I don't
9 remember. My -- I -- I would assume that they
10 -- they assume that you know to drop a ladder
11 over the side and climb down to the lifeboat.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you don't
13 recall any specific training like given to the
14 group, to the whole crew, to the people that are
15 riding the ship relating to the life rafts
16 themselves during the time you were on there?

17 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember.

18 MR. [REDACTED] All right. So did you
19 have any like -- we call them supernumeraries or
20 supercargo aboard, like people that were just a
21 long for the ride? Was there the Flemings
22 (phonetic)? Was there like a couple that was

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 just riding the ship?

2 MR. SKORAPA: When we shipped cows
3 in a trailer, there were some ranch hands that
4 would come on board to take care of the cows,
5 but I never actually interacted with them or
6 even saw them.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Do you remember if
8 they were at -- when the emergency alarm went
9 off for that first drill, an other drills, did
10 you see the cowboys there?

11 MR. SKORAPA: I did not see them,
12 but they might have just been assigned to the
13 other lifeboat.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Did everybody
15 muster at the same spot or did you muster up by
16 your boat?

17 MR. SKORAPA: For just an emergency
18 people would muster in the two different mess
19 decks. For the event of an abandon ship, every
20 one will muster at their respective lifeboat.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So you didn't
22 see them by your boat?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I'm just going
3 to ask you some general questions. And a little
4 earlier you said you'd take a class in cargo and
5 stability.

6 MR. SKORAPA: Ship structure and
7 stability, yes.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Do you recall
9 anything, any discussions you had with any of
10 the ship's personnel about the ship's stability,
11 structure, cargo?

12 MR. SKORAPA: About loading cargo
13 and stability?

14 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

15 MR. SKORAPA: No, I don't remember
16 talking about that.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Did you have any
18 personal concerns about any of the officers on
19 board the ship?

20 MR. SKORAPA: No.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Now about the crew and
22 their capabilities?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Did you bond closely
3 with anybody in particular on board?

4 MR. SKORAPA: The engineer that --
5 or the third engineer that went missing, or that
6 went with -- down with the ship, Mitch
7 (phonetic) -- I can't pronounce his last name,
8 but --

9 MR. [REDACTED] Shonely (phonetic)?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. He -- he taught
11 me a lot and mentored me a lot.

12 MR. [REDACTED] So Brian had asked you
13 about the ship's problems. And he also asked
14 you about the schedule, and you'd said that
15 nothing came to mind with the exception of what
16 you mentioned to Brian. So that voyage that you
17 said -- there was one voyage you talked about
18 and you mentioned that it took longer, a day
19 longer.

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] And you don't recall
22 anything about the route? You just knew it took

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 a day longer?

2 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I just remember
3 it took an extra day. That's it.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So at any point
5 was the crew to your knowledge notified like why
6 is it going to take an extra day?

7 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember a
8 memo going out, but I remember hearing them
9 talking it's because there's a hurricane out
10 here.

11 MR. [REDACTED] And I think that would
12 have been, if you remember, late August,
13 sometimes toward the end of August?

14 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Yes, I remember.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

16 MR. SKORAPA: Or --

17 MR. [REDACTED] You weren't on --

18 (Simultaneous speaking)

19 MR. SKORAPA: -- actually I wasn't
20 there in August. No, it wasn't -- it wouldn't
21 be in August. It would be one of the -- it
22 would be like sometime in July or June.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. ██████████ And did you keep as
2 part of your project -- it'd maybe help refresh
3 our minds -- did you keep like a diary or a
4 journal?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I kept a log.

6 MR. ██████████ And that's part of
7 your project?

8 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

9 MR. ██████████ So you could identify
10 that voyage?

11 MR. SKORAPA: I don't think I could
12 identify that -- that voyage in particular
13 unless I made mention of the storm, and I don't
14 know if -- I don't think I would have because it
15 really didn't have anything to do with the work
16 I was doing.

17 MR. ██████████ Do you remember them
18 running at reduced speed, RPMs?

19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

20 MR. ██████████ Okay. Do you recall
21 when you were on board the vessel, was Captain
22 Stith sailing as chief mate?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Stith?
2 MR. [REDACTED] Young guy, black hair.
3 MR. CURTIS: Kevin Stith.
4 MR. [REDACTED] Kevin Stith.
5 MR. SKORAPA: Was he kind of bald?
6 MR. [REDACTED] No, he had full head
7 of hair. He was --
8 MR. SKORAPA: Oh.
9 MR. [REDACTED] -- breaking in.
10 MR. SKORAPA: Oh.
11 MR. [REDACTED] I think that was after
12 you got off.
13 MR. SKORAPA: Was he from -- was he
14 from Puerto Rico?
15 MR. [REDACTED] No.
16 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, no.
17 MR. [REDACTED] I think you had gotten
18 off before that.
19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I -- I would have
20 gotten off before he boarded.
21 MR. [REDACTED] Did you hear any
22 mention on the ship while you were on there

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 about another captain, Captain Axelson
2 (phonetic)?

3 MR. SKORAPA: They didn't speak a
4 lot about him.

5 MR. [REDACTED] His name was Bror
6 (phonetic)?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, I don't --

8 MR. [REDACTED] It's an interesting
9 first name, isn't it?

10 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember
11 hearing about him at all.

12 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

13 MR. SKORAPA: I didn't hear about
14 him.

15 MR. [REDACTED] So I know you weren't
16 around Captain Davidson a lot, but how would you
17 characterize his style of leadership, if you had
18 to?

19 MR. SKORAPA: He -- his style of
20 leadership, he wanted to make sure that
21 everybody was doing as they were supposed to.
22 At safety meetings he always made mention that

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 -- how important that it was that all the rules
2 and things regarding safety were followed. He
3 was very concerned. He said when everyone was
4 in port, especially in Puerto Rico, because he
5 said he couldn't -- he would be a little worried
6 until everyone got back on the ship safely.

7 MR. [REDACTED] So you mentioned the
8 safety meeting. If I was trying to recreate a
9 safety meeting, like make a movie --

10 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

11 MR. [REDACTED] -- could you help me
12 understand how these safety meetings took place,
13 like as vividly as you can?

14 MR. SKORAPA: After drills we would
15 discuss how the drill went and what went wrong
16 with the drill, if anything. And then they
17 would always have a different thing they'd go
18 over every week, like how to properly use
19 personal protective equipment, or how to perform
20 CPR, or what to do in the event that we have to
21 abandon ship, just discussing things that might
22 not have been covered in the lifeboat drill.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. ██████████ Okay. So I can
2 understand this, so I could sort of recreate
3 this in my mind, if you look at the abandon
4 ship, try to tell me what you talked about in
5 that safety meeting.

6 MR. SKORAPA: Just regarding
7 abandoning ship?

8 MR. ██████████ Yes, in order words
9 you've had the drill.

10 MR. SKORAPA: Oh.

11 MR. ██████████ Now we're going to
12 walk into somewhere and talk about it.

13 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, how -- how they
14 wanted to -- like people's different
15 responsibilities such as who was going to stay
16 in the engine room just long enough to keep
17 things running so they could safely abandon
18 ship, or who was going to be staying on the
19 bridge just long enough so they could coordinate
20 the whole abandoning ship.

21 MR. ██████████ You recall anything
22 else?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Did anybody talk about
3 like who would recover the emergency position
4 indicating beacon, the EPIRB?

5 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember if
6 there was anything regarding who would recover
7 the EPIRB.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Anything else you can
9 recall?

10 MR. SKORAPA: Not really.

11 MR. [REDACTED] Did they ever talk
12 about the decision to stay with the ship versus
13 leave the ship?

14 MR. SKORAPA: I don't recall ever
15 talking about that.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Did anybody talk
17 anything about anything related to like if the
18 seas were worse or if the seas weren't worse, or
19 was it simply, hey, you're going to keep the
20 engines running until we tell you to leave the
21 room, and you're going to stay on the bridge or
22 --

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Does that pretty much
3 sum it up?

4 MR. SKORAPA: That -- that sums it
5 up.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Did you notice
7 -- because I'm involved on something hard to
8 quantify, the human factors, did you notice any
9 like change of the mood of the people aboard the
10 ship?

11 MR. SKORAPA: No.

12 MR. [REDACTED] The Coast Guard ship
13 riders said basically there seemed to be some
14 resentment because some people were going to the
15 new ships and some people were staying with the
16 old ships. Did you notice any conversation
17 about who was getting assigned to the new TOTE
18 ships?

19 MR. SKORAPA: No, not -- not really.
20 Not -- not in particular.

21 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. The new ships
22 are going to be LNG-powered.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Yes.

2 MR. [REDACTED] And then they were
3 going to convert some of the existing ships --

4 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

5 MR. [REDACTED] -- to LNG also.

6 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

7 MR. [REDACTED] So was there any of
8 the engineers that had been selected maybe to go
9 to the new LNG ships or anything like that?

10 MR. SKORAPA: I really wasn't paying
11 attention to which engineers were going to work
12 on the LNG ships.

13 MR. [REDACTED] And then you had
14 talked about -- I found that interesting,
15 because I saw a sign on the *El Yunque* on the gym
16 door that said, hey; it's like from the captain,
17 keep the noise down, boys, because people are
18 trying to sleep.

19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

20 MR. [REDACTED] And then, so you had
21 opened up this engine room door and the noise
22 permeated through the officer quarters or the --

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. [REDACTED] -- crew quarters. So
3 I know that the engine room down below on the *El*
4 *Faro* and the *El Yunque* are really hot.

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Did they do anything
7 to try to reduce the temperature down there?

8 MR. SKORAPA: In places where people
9 would have to stand in order to run machinery
10 like the -- on the bus, or in front of the
11 control operation station, or in the machine
12 shops, they had vents that people could stand
13 under when they were working so they wouldn't
14 get too hot.

15 MR. [REDACTED] So do you recall when
16 the ship was in port or at sea if you -- up
17 forward on the port side of the engine room
18 space, you could either go into the No. 3 hold
19 --

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] -- or if you went aft,
22 you could go into the after hold. Do you

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 remember going in port into the No. 3 hold ever
2 from the engine room?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

4 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And so you went
5 through a watertight door?

6 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, there was a
7 watertight door there.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So at sea do
9 you remember opening the watertight door and
10 going into No. 3 hold ever as part of your job?

11 MR. SKORAPA: The watertight doors
12 to the cargo holds, or to the No. 3 hold was
13 kept open.

14 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Why was that
15 kept open?

16 MR. SKORAPA: I really don't know.

17 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Do you remember
18 like when you walked through that space like
19 there's a draft coming through?

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

21 MR. [REDACTED] And do you remember
22 ever closing that door?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And just in
3 general the watertight doors on the ship -- most
4 ships -- I spent a lot of time on military
5 ships, and every time you opened a watertight
6 door, you had to get permission and you had to
7 log it and all that. And I'm not -- I was never
8 on a ship such as the *El Faro*, but I was on
9 other commercial ships in my jobs as a deck
10 officer. So what did you guys do when you had a
11 watertight door open or closed? Did you notify
12 the bridge, or did you log it, or --

13 MR. SKORAPA: As part of routine
14 maintenance every so often we -- the -- one of
15 the third engineers and I would go around and
16 check the oil levels and make sure that the big
17 watertight doors between holds could open and
18 shut correctly.

19 MR. [REDACTED] Those are the 20 by 20
20 foot jobs?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

22 MR. [REDACTED] Now speaking of that

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 watertight door that goes from the engine room
2 up into the No. 3 hold, was there another
3 watertight door that went aft that was kept
4 open? In other words, through the after engine
5 room bulkhead into the after cargo hold. Was
6 that open also?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

8 MR. YOUNG: Excuse me. This is
9 Brian Young.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Yes.

11 MR. YOUNG: This is the one that
12 opens up to a ramp, right, out the port side --

13 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

14 MR. YOUNG: -- by the machine shop
15 kind of?

16 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, the aft one opens
17 up to a ramp. The --

18 MR. YOUNG: Right. That's the one I
19 think [REDACTED] is talking about.

20 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. The next one
21 didn't have a -- the forward one didn't -- the
22 No. 3 didn't have a ramp. It -- it just went

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 straight to a -- if you wanted to get a vehicle
2 down there when the ship was being loaded, you
3 had to use an elevator.

4 MR. YOUNG: But you go through the
5 watertight door from the port side engine room
6 and walk directly in to see all those brand new
7 cars?

8 MR. SKORAPA: I could walk directly
9 through there, yes, although the forward one
10 normally didn't have cars on the same deck.
11 They could enter through the engine room. It
12 normally had trailers.

13 MR. YOUNG: But typically that was a
14 good place to get some good breezes, right?

15 MR. SKORAPA: It was cool in there,
16 but we really didn't hang around there much
17 unless we were doing work.

18 MR. YOUNG: But I know what [REDACTED] is
19 asking, and I have pictures of *El Faro* -- of *El*
20 *Yunque* which shows the same exact --

21 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, it's the same
22 setup.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. YOUNG: -- same setup. But
2 typically that was left open?

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

4 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

5 MR. [REDACTED] When you were on your
6 -- [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again. When you were on your
7 voyage, do you remember at any time -- you
8 mentioned you were in a -- the ship rode pretty
9 good and it was in a storm. Do you remember any
10 cargo breaking loose? You hear anything about
11 vehicles or --

12 (Simultaneous speaking)

13 MR. SKORAPA: No, vehicles stayed
14 exactly where they were parked.

15 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I just have a
16 couple final -- and I just want to thank you
17 very much. You paint a pretty good portrait of
18 what went on on the ship, so I thank you for
19 that.

20 But I guess my final question is we
21 asked you about crew, overtime issues and stuff.
22 Is there anything that you recall related to

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 crew fatigue?

2 MR. SKORAPA: No.

3 MR. [REDACTED] Everybody seemed like
4 they got enough rest?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, yes. The only one
6 I really remember being all that fatigued was me
7 --

8 (Laughter)

9 MR. SKORAPA: -- when they had me
10 working the 4:00 to 8:00 watch, but that's
11 because I hadn't gotten up to the mess deck to
12 have coffee yet. So --

13 MR. [REDACTED] Did they make coffee
14 in the engine room?

15 MR. SKORAPA: They had it in the
16 engine room, but I didn't really want it because
17 it was really hot down there.

18 MR. [REDACTED] Right. So I know
19 we're wrap up, but from my side, from the human
20 factors side, the things that people do and the
21 things that affect people, have I missed asking
22 you an appropriate question? Is there something

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 that I -- you know, I had thought of all these
2 things to talk to you about -- that I might have
3 missed that might have been something to do with
4 how the ship was lost?

5 MR. SKORAPA: I -- I really couldn't
6 -- can't think of anything that anybody doesn't
7 -- wouldn't already know, get from the reports
8 and stuff, like -- yes, I -- I can't think of
9 anything.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. I may have a
11 question based on what they ask, but thank you
12 very much.

13 MR. SKORAPA: You're welcome.

14 MR. CURTIS: Thanks, [REDACTED] Brian
15 Curtis. Victor, I just had a few -- we had some
16 scripted questions. We covered a lot of the
17 areas. Just a few I wanted to go through, so
18 bear with me as I check my notes.

19 One thing, you mentioned you worked
20 with both first assistant engineers. And if you
21 could just speak to what you perceived as to
22 their competency and comfort in the plant,

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 knowledge of the plant, organizational oversight
2 for the engineering crew in the plant.

3 MR. SKORAPA: Okay. They were both
4 very competent engineers. They both knew their
5 plant very well.

6 MR. CURTIS: Did they seem to have
7 the respect of the other engineers and
8 engineering crew members to follow the
9 directions and maintenance orders and
10 operational orders?

11 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, they would always
12 do as the engineers -- or the first engineers
13 said. And the first engineers would always
14 follow the maintenance and work schedules and
15 work orders given from the chief.

16 MR. CURTIS: Okay. (inaudible)
17 talked about your watch. Could you just give a
18 picture of -- I guess you stood watches on a
19 daily basis for your --

20 (Simultaneous speaking)

21 MR. SKORAPA: For the first half of
22 the -- the cadet shipping, yes. But really I

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 was more there to observe and practice doing
2 watch tasks such as making a round. Normally
3 they didn't have me do any actual work on the
4 watch.

5 MR. CURTIS: Okay. And is it one
6 watch, or did you rotate through the watches?

7 MR. SKORAPA: They had me do the
8 4:00 to 8:00 watch and the 8:00 to 12:00 watch,
9 but as far as actual watches that's all they had
10 me do. Everything else I did was a work -- like
11 a -- a maintenance and work session. And when
12 the first -- when Keefe (phonetic) was the first
13 engineer, he would have me help at maneuvering.
14 And the other first engineer, Chris (phonetic)
15 had me do it for awhile as well. But they
16 didn't have me do anything too hard there. They
17 just had me turn burners on and off and run the
18 throttle.

19 MR. CURTIS: Okay. From the aspect
20 of operability of the plant, did they have a
21 separate room of -- a bank of batteries in the
22 event they lost emergency power?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, there were
2 batteries in the -- on the bridge. There were
3 batteries in the emergency generator room. I
4 think there might even have been batteries
5 somewhere in the engine room to help keep
6 important electronics going.

7 MR. CURTIS: And whose
8 responsibility was it as far as you know to
9 check and maintain and log the battery
10 conditions?

11 MR. SKORAPA: It was -- I believe it
12 was the Engineering Department, but I can't say
13 for certain who -- which engineer.

14 MR. CURTIS: Was there any
15 discussion of problems with the battery bank --

16 MR. SKORAPA: No.

17 MR. CURTIS: -- that you were aware
18 of?

19 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember there
20 being anything wrong with the batteries.

21 MR. CURTIS: Earlier on we talked
22 about the routing, and you say that the -- I

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 think you mentioned the master commended them
2 for those input to allow them slow down. If you
3 could just identify who the "them" might have
4 been.

5 MR. SKORAPA: The first engineer and
6 the chief engineer.

7 MR. CURTIS: Not the company, but
8 the on-board officers?

9 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. Yes.

10 MR. CURTIS: It's interesting, you
11 mentioned ocean survival class. If you could
12 tell us a little bit about that, I know --

13 MR. SKORAPA: It was a class down in
14 the gym down there where we would meet in a
15 classroom and talk about good practice and
16 theory. And then what we would do is we'd go
17 put on swimsuits and practice doing different
18 ocean survival things in the swimming pool such
19 as using a life raft or using emersion suits or
20 learning how to do the heat escape lessening
21 position.

22 MR. CURTIS: Was part of that course

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 a discussion of how to determine when it's best
2 possibly to stay with the vessel as opposed to
3 abandoning it to a life raft or emersion suit?

4 MR. SKORAPA: In that class and
5 nautical science they always said it's the
6 master's discretion.

7 MR. CURTIS: I think that's all I
8 have. I certainly appreciate your answering all
9 my questions. And we'll do a follow up to see
10 what Brian or ██████ may want to follow up with.
11 So, Brian?

12 MR. YOUNG: Yes, thanks. It's Brian
13 Young with the NTSB again.

14 And like Brian and ██████ had said,
15 we all started with very generic questions, but
16 you've given us such good detail it makes us ask
17 some little deeper questions.

18 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

19 MR. YOUNG: So just a few probably
20 easy questions for you to answer, but ██████ was
21 talking a lot about the watertight doors. And
22 we know they have giant cargo doors for the

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 equipment. Then they have the watertight doors
2 to get between the engine room and the cargo
3 holds.

4 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

5 MR. YOUNG: But when we were on the
6 *El Yunque*, they had what they called scuttles.

7 MR. SKORAPA: Oh, like holes in the
8 deck that ladders went through?

9 MR. YOUNG: Yes. Did you ever go
10 through any of them?

11 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, but they were
12 kept shut when they weren't being used and when
13 we were underway. And the reason for that was
14 in the event that the ship took on water in the
15 bottom part of a cargo hold, maybe they could
16 stop it from flooding other parts of the cargo
17 hold by having that scuttle shut.

18 MR. YOUNG: And do you remember,
19 because they might be different between the
20 ships, how you would close that scuttle?

21 MR. SKORAPA: Well, it was really
22 heavy, but what you'd do is you'd carefully

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 lower it down, because it opened kind of like
2 the lid of a box on hinges. You'd lower it down
3 and then you'd twist the wheel on top of it
4 shut.

5 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So there was
6 definitely a wheel on top?

7 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

8 MR. YOUNG: Could you open the wheel
9 from underneath if you were climbing up? Was
10 there a wheel at the under side of the cover?

11 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember that
12 because whenever I would climb down a scuttle, I
13 would -- or for maintenance, I would open it and
14 then climb down and leave it open until I was
15 through working because they didn't run fans if
16 we were just going to run down there to inspect
17 the watertight doors, because that would take
18 five minutes.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

20 MR. SKORAPA: But whenever the ship
21 was in port, fans would be running. But then
22 again, all the -- all the watertight doors would

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 be open because they were loading cars and
2 trailers.

3 MR. YOUNG: Yes. And you look like
4 a pretty strong guy, but do you think you could
5 open that hatch if you were on the ladder? Was
6 it weighted at all? Do you remember having like
7 a counterweight that would assist it in opening,
8 or a spring, or was it really heavy?

9 MR. SKORAPA: No, it was just a
10 piece of metal. There was no counterweight.
11 All it had was the dogs and the wheel. I -- I
12 -- I probably could, but I never had to do it.

13 MR. YOUNG: Now when you say it had
14 dogs and a wheel --

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, like a wheel that
16 would drive the dogs to move them.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay. So maybe
18 underneath there were four?

19 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, something like
20 that.

21 MR. YOUNG: Okay. But there were no
22 screwed dogs on the outside that would -- other

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 than --

2 MR. SKORAPA: No.

3 MR. YOUNG: -- one wheel, that was
4 the only --

5 (Simultaneous speaking)

6 MR. SKORAPA: No, it was just a
7 wheel.

8 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Do you remember
9 if they were oval shape or round?

10 MR. SKORAPA: They were round.

11 MR. YOUNG: Perfectly round?

12 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, circular.

13 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And here's a
14 really tough question: Do you remember if they
15 were located opposite each other in every hold?
16 Was there one port, one starboard? Two port,
17 two starboard?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, that's how it
19 went.

20 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Great. And if
21 you did go down there, would you have to do
22 anything to notify anybody that you did have an

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 open scuttle?

2 MR. SKORAPA: No.

3 MR. YOUNG: No? Was there a sign or
4 anything maybe you would --

5 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, you'd put up a
6 sign to warn people not to -- that -- not to
7 shut it. I'm guessing it was probably openable
8 from the bottom, but it was probably hard to do
9 because you were balancing on a ladder.

10 MR. YOUNG: So there would be some
11 sign that maybe you would rotate?

12 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, it would say
13 personnel inside.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Great. And I
15 apologize because I'm jumping around from cargo
16 hold to engine room, but these are just things
17 that you very well explained. Back in the
18 engine room on the main engine on the *El Yunque*
19 they had these two foot pedals that were like a
20 speed limiter or an overspeed trip that was on
21 the starboard side. And it was right in front
22 of the high-pressure turbine.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember any
2 sort of foot pedals.

3 MR. YOUNG: No foot pedal?

4 MR. SKORAPA: No.

5 MR. YOUNG: No? Did you ever hear
6 them testing the overspeed or the speed limiting
7 device for the turbines?

8 MR. SKORAPA: Not that I know of.

9 MR. YOUNG: Okay. When you guys
10 were in port in either Jacksonville or Puerto
11 Rico, was there any free times that you guys
12 could all go out and say go to a restaurant or
13 go out to -- or was it --

14 MR. SKORAPA: If I went out, it
15 would be either with the other cadet or by
16 myself. I didn't hang out with the crew. They
17 were busy working or they would go out while I
18 was working.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. I understand,
20 too, that there were a lot of -- say a safety
21 meeting after drill. Did the Engine Department
22 ever have their own safety meetings?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No, it -- it was
2 everybody on the ship together.

3 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And were you ever
4 instructed or shown a system called SMS, Safety
5 Management System?

6 MR. SKORAPA: Is that a computer
7 system?

8 MR. YOUNG: It probably is on the
9 computer and it probably has a bunch of
10 checklists and how to use PPE and a lot of
11 documents and checklists.

12 MR. SKORAPA: Does -- does it keep
13 track of work lists?

14 MR. YOUNG: No, that's AMOS.

15 MR. SKORAPA: Oh. No, I -- I -- I
16 learned how -- how AMOS worked. I was never
17 shown SMS.

18 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And in AMOS,
19 that's the system that's a preventative
20 maintenance system that tells the first every
21 day what to do, every month what to do, the
22 jobs.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

2 MR. YOUNG: Would you maybe help
3 them put some of the maintenance -- enter the
4 maintenance --

5 (Simultaneous speaking)

6 MR. SKORAPA: I wouldn't enter that
7 into the computer. They would just open up
8 AMOS, see what the week and the days work load
9 included. And then they would tell me what we
10 were going to do and tell me what to do to help
11 get that job done.

12 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And while you
13 were talking about AMOS or listening to the guys
14 talk about it, did they ever mention that, boy,
15 we have a lot of overdue jobs, that we're not
16 going to get to this?

17 MR. SKORAPA: No. No, work, from
18 what I know, always was getting done on time.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And I know [REDACTED]
20 asked a lot about the leadership style of the
21 captain. How about the chiefs? I know you
22 worked with both Jimmy (phonetic) and Rich. I

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 know you probably dealt with the first a lot,
2 because the first kind of runs the day to day
3 operation, but was -- did the chiefs come down
4 to the engine room much and --

5 MR. SKORAPA: Chiefs were always
6 going down into the engine room, but they were
7 also doing a lot of paperwork at the same time.
8 For example, during bunkering they would just
9 make an appearance to make sure there was
10 nothing seriously wrong that nobody else would
11 have missed. But then they had to get right
12 back to doing paperwork because they had to do
13 paperwork regarding the -- the -- how much oil
14 you're getting and the -- looking at the samples
15 of the oil.

16 MR. YOUNG: And I know you were
17 involved with bunkering --

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

19 MR. YOUNG: -- and fuel, but did you
20 ever get involved with ballasting at all?

21 MR. SKORAPA: No.

22 MR. YOUNG: No?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: That was the -- I
2 might have walked by when they were doing some
3 work with ballasting, but that was mostly the
4 Deck Department, I think.

5 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And in any of
6 your reports or diaries did you ever record how
7 much ballast was aboard the ship --

8 MR. SKORAPA: No.

9 MR. YOUNG: -- or capacities? Okay.

10 MR. SKORAPA: I might have in the
11 project written down what the capacities were,
12 but that would -- it -- it wouldn't have said
13 how much was on board at the time.

14 MR. YOUNG: Okay.

15 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember if
16 that was a question on the sea project or not.

17 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Probably three
18 more questions and you'll be done with me.
19 Okay? You know what happens: everybody says
20 this is my last question, but then I ask a
21 question. He's writing down, so [REDACTED] going
22 to have another question.

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

2 MR. YOUNG: You're doing great,
3 though. During any training or any safety
4 meetings did you ever hear of any casualty
5 control? Like what would we do if -- scenarios
6 for engine room casualty control.

7 MR. SKORAPA: What -- what kind of
8 casualty control?

9 MR. YOUNG: Well, sometimes if
10 there's like a training session, they say, okay,
11 get the engineers together. If we lose the
12 boiler, this is what the first engineer would
13 do, this is what the second engineer's job is to
14 do. Was there any sort of training sessions
15 like that that you were aware of -- casualty
16 control?

17 MR. SKORAPA: I -- I learned about
18 stuff like that through the sea project. I had
19 asked the engineers what would -- like if -- if
20 for some reason the feedwater to the boiler was
21 cut off or it was overflowing, what would I do?

22 MR. YOUNG: Exactly. But was there

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 ever kind of a meeting of the engineers that
2 would -- maybe the chief or the first would tell
3 his guys exactly what you just told me?

4 MR. SKORAPA: They might have had
5 that up in the chief's office, because they --
6 the actual engineering officers would meet there
7 every morning, but I wasn't part of those
8 meetings. I would just go straight to the
9 engine room and be told what we were going to do
10 from there.

11 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And I know [REDACTED]
12 asked about passengers on the ship, the other
13 Coast Guard riders. Did you ever see any other
14 workers, like a riding gang aboard doing work
15 that weren't part of the crew?

16 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, there was a --
17 somebody that the company brought on board and
18 his job was to just inspect machinery and
19 perform -- like connect his sensors up to stuff
20 like the turbines or whatever and then just
21 inspect for vibration.

22 MR. YOUNG: The vibration analysis

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 guy, right?

2 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, that guy.

3 MR. YOUNG: He put a magnetic sensor
4 on it. He watches a computer that would tell
5 him if the machine was vibrating?

6 MR. SKORAPA: Yes, but as far as
7 riders go, him, the ranch hands and the -- the
8 Coast Guard people were the extent of it that I
9 know of.

10 MR. YOUNG: No Polish riding gang or
11 anybody working in the cargo holds, right?
12 Extra welders or machinists?

13 MR. SKORAPA: No, they didn't not
14 while I was there.

15 MR. YOUNG: Okay. And the last
16 question I -- oh, two last questions: There's a
17 term we call in the industry "lose the plant,"
18 where everything goes black. Did it ever happen
19 --

20 MR. SKORAPA: No.

21 MR. YOUNG: -- when you were there?

22 MR. SKORAPA: No, they kept the

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 plant going just fine while I was there.

2 MR. YOUNG: Good. And from the crew
3 and from you maybe having coffee with the
4 engineers or the oilers or the wipers, did
5 anyone ever complain about the condition of the
6 ship, saying this is an old rust bucket or I
7 hate this ship, I worried about it? Did you
8 ever hear anybody complain about the condition
9 of the ship?

10 MR. SKORAPA: No.

11 MR. YOUNG: I'm all questioned out.

12 MR. SKORAPA: Okay.

13 MR. YOUNG: Thank you. Great job.

14 MR. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] again.

15 Just a couple follow-ups. And this is a follow-
16 up to Brian's question. Did they ever have any
17 like simulated engineering casualties where
18 they'd say today we're going to simulate we just
19 lost steering, or we lost some other component
20 of the ship's equipment?

21 MR. SKORAPA: No.

22 MR. [REDACTED] And you did a lot of

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 tracing out and stuff. Do you remember where
2 the bilge alarms for that ship were?

3 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember
4 looking for bilge alarms.

5 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Do you remember
6 where the watertight door panel was that showed
7 the status of the watertight doors?

8 MR. SKORAPA: I don't remember where
9 that was.

10 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. And so you're
11 looking at a career in the Merchant Marine. Do
12 you remember any of the TOTE shoreside people
13 coming aboard, like going down in the engine
14 room --

15 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

16 MR. [REDACTED] -- while you were on
17 it?

18 MR. SKORAPA: Yes. The port
19 engineer would go down and just have a look at
20 things.

21 MR. [REDACTED] You don't remember his
22 name, do you?

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 MR. SKORAPA: No, I don't. I never
2 interacted with him.

3 MR. [REDACTED] And was that in
4 Jacksonville
5 and --

6 MR. SKORAPA: That was only
7 Jacksonville.

8 MR. [REDACTED] Do you remember
9 anybody else coming down from TOTE to the ship
10 and shaking your hand and saying hello?

11 MR. SKORAPA: Not to the engine
12 room. To the -- just the ship in general they
13 had people from the company come on board, but I
14 don't remember anybody else going to the engine
15 room.

16 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. But how about
17 when they -- when you say "coming aboard," do
18 you remember anybody that you met from TOTE?

19 MR. SKORAPA: I'm trying to remember
20 what his job was, but there was this guy who
21 would come on board and speak with I think maybe
22 the captain and the mate. And I think he might

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 have oversaw helping to load and unload cargo.

2 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. So if you had
3 to characterize it, would you say that for cargo
4 ops kind of stuff?

5 MR. SKORAPA: Probably.

6 MR. [REDACTED] Okay.

7 MR. SKORAPA: I never really talked
8 very much with him.

9 MR. [REDACTED] All right. Well,
10 thank you very much, Victor. I can't thank you
11 enough for the help you've given us.

12 MR. CURTIS: Do you have any
13 questions for us?

14 MR. SKORAPA: No.

15 MR. CURTIS: We've fired hundreds of
16 questions at you. Now it's your turn. You got
17 anything? Any comments, any questions, anything
18 we forgot to ask you?

19 MR. SKORAPA: I don't think so.

20 MR. CURTIS: No?

21 MR. YOUNG: Victor, I just have one
22 last question. It's more -- you went to sea and

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 you were on there to observe and to learn about
2 how to go to sea.

3 MR. SKORAPA: Yes.

4 MR. YOUNG: So if you could just
5 paint us a picture, your takeaway from having
6 worked on that TOTE vessel what you were --
7 looking down the road in your career what your
8 takeaway was from being on there for two months
9 interacting with the crew and actually having
10 been at sea.

11 MR. SKORAPA: I -- I thought that
12 the run between Jacksonville and San Juan was
13 great. San Juan's a great city. I didn't care
14 that much for Jacksonville because the -- the
15 town is really far away from the port. But I
16 liked working the rail row. I thought that was
17 really cool. I -- I don't know what else to
18 say.

19 MR. YOUNG: Okay. Well, thank you.
20 I think that's all we have.

21 MR. [REDACTED] You had to do that,
22 didn't you? [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Just a final. If

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS
1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701

1 TOTE had asked you to go to work for them later
2 on the *El Faro* or on the *El Yunque*, would you
3 have?

4 MR. SKORAPA: As far as the
5 condition of the ship, yes, because they -- they
6 were nice ships.

7 MR. [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

8 MR. YOUNG: Well, I think that
9 concludes our interview. Thank you very much,
10 Victor, and we certainly appreciate it.

11 MR. CURTIS: It's 10:30 and we'll
12 conclude the interview.

13 (Whereupon, the above-entitled
14 matter went off the record at 10:30.)

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

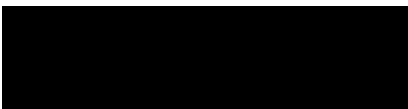
22

C E R T I F I C A T E

MATTER: Interview of Victor Skorapa

DATE: 11-03-15

I hereby certify that the attached transcription of page 1 to 109 inclusive are to the best of my professional ability a true, accurate, and complete record of the above referenced proceedings as contained on the provided audio recording; further that I am neither counsel for, nor related to, nor employed by any of the parties to this action in which this proceeding has taken place; and further that I am not financially nor otherwise interested in the outcome of the action.

- 

NEAL R. GROSS

COURT REPORTERS AND TRANSCRIBERS

1323 RHODE ISLAND AVE., N.W.

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20005-3701