

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of:

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M/V *CONTI PERIDOT* COLLISION WITH

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THE M/T *CARLA MAERSK* IN THE

*

HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL

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MARCH 9, 2015

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Docket No.: DCA-15-MM-017

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Interview of: CHRIS REESER

Houston, Texas

Saturday

March 14, 2015

The above-captioned matter convened, pursuant to notice.

BEFORE: ROB JONES

Senior Marine Investigator

APPEARANCES:

ROB JONES, Senior Marine Investigator
Deck Operations Group Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board

ERIC STOLZENBERG, Investigator in Charge
National Transportation Safety Board

BARRY STRAUCH, Ph.D., Supervisory Investigator
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DAVID ANDERSON
(On behalf of Maersk Tankers)

JIM BROWN, Esq.
(Attorney on behalf of Chris Reeser)

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1 I N T E R V I E W

MR. JONES: My name is Rob Jones, with the National Transportation Safety Board. I'm the Deck Operations Group Chairman for the investigation into the collision between the *Conti Peridot* and the *Carla Maersk*. With me today is --

DR. STRAUCH: I'm Barry Strauch from the NTSB.

MR. BETTS: Captain David Betts, flag state Liberia.

MR. PULMER: Henning Pulmer from BBG.

MR. REESER: George C. Reeser, Jr., Houston pilot.

MR. BROWN: Jim Brown, counsel for Captain Reeser.

MR. USHER: Mike Usher on behalf of the Board of Pilot Commissioners for Harris County Ports.

MR. MORRIS: Mike Morris, Houston Pilots.

MR. ANDERSON: David Anderson, owners rep for Maersk Tankers.

MS. BELL: Carrie Bell, NTSB.

MR. STOLZENBERG: Eric Stolzenberg, NTSB.

INTERVIEW OF CHRIS REESER

BY MR. JONES:

1 Q. Okay. Good morning, Captain. We are taping this
2 interview. We will provide transcripts to the parties and
3 Mr. Brown at a later time, as soon as they get them done. I just
4 wanted to acknowledge that it was okay to make this recording.

5 A. That's okay.

6 Q. Okay. Thank you very much. And your attorney,
7 Mr. Brown, has, thankfully, provided a lot of documentation with
8 regards to your background and everything, but I would like to
9 just get a feel for it, so the group can feel for it, and I'll
10 just start with some preliminaries. Can you just give me a brief
11 background of your maritime career, when you started going to sea
12 or --

13 A. I graduated from Texas A&M University in August of 1975
14 with a degree in marine transportation and a third mate's license.
15 Went to work for Sabine Towing & Transportation out of Groves,
16 Texas in September of 1975 as AB quartermaster. Spent 16 years
17 with Sabine. Worked my way up from AB quartermaster to master. I
18 left Sabine in June of 1991 and became a Houston pilot in July of
19 1991.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And I've been there ever since.

22 Q. And there's a deputy portion of that time with the
23 Houston Pilots. When did it become a full branch?

24 A. '91. I started in July the 25th, 1991, 2 years deputy
25 program.

1 Q. So you were a full branch in '93?

2 A. Yes, sir.

3 Q. And describe the full branch. What does that mean?

4 What does that qualify you for?

5 A. It just means I'm a full partner, and we have a 3-year
6 deputy program today, but when I started we had a 2-year deputy
7 program.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And during that deputy program, we have certain
10 requirements that you're to meet during that program, and after my
11 2 years, I became a full pilot, you know, and bought into the
12 association my full share.

13 Q. Okay. Well, I was kind of looking at the size of the
14 vessel. When you're a full pilot --

15 A. Well, actually, before you graduate, you have gradual
16 steps. Like today when you became -- you get -- you become a
17 deputy pilot, you start out at 12,000 gross tons and 25 feet, and
18 then they work -- you work your way up on your tonnage and your
19 draft during the 3-year period.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. And then at certain points during the 3-year program,
22 then you do extra work on different size vessels over your
23 tonnage.

24 Q. All right. So as a full branch, then, that -- it's
25 unlimited to the vessel?

1 A. Unlimited. Yes, sir.

2 Q. No restrictions?

3 A. No restrictions.

4 Q. And on the day of the accident, full -- same thing?

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. Okay. I'd kind of like to just go right to the day of
7 the accident. If you could just take us through either when you
8 woke up or when you were called to the job?

9 A. I was called at 6:00 in the morning to bus to Galveston
10 for a 9:30 boarding.

11 Q. Okay. And take me through that, just getting out to the
12 vessel, getting aboard.

13 A. Left the house at about 6:20. Got to the office at
14 7:20. Took a private jitney down to the -- to Galveston to the
15 pilot boat. Got aboard the pilot boat, (indiscernible) about 8:30
16 8:45, and boarded at 9:30.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. So it takes about -- total time from the time I left the
19 house to the time I boarded the pilot boat, about 3 hours.

20 Q. And the ship was underway at the time?

21 A. Underway at the time.

22 Q. So you boarded from the pilot boat and then --

23 A. From the pilot, yes, sir.

24 Q. Okay. Just describe to me the boarding. What went on,
25 on the bridge?

1 A. Boarding went fine. I mean, boarded alongside. It was
2 a gorgeous day, you know, except for a little -- 100 percent
3 chance of rain, but visibility was unlimited. Nice day. It was,
4 you know.

5 Q. Okay. Do you receive any weather reports before you
6 board?

7 A. I checked the weather before I went to bed the night
8 before. I checked the weather, you know, on the radio coming in
9 to work and I checked the weather on the pilot boat, and all of
10 them said the same thing, 100 percent chance of rain, you know.
11 There was no forecast of fog in the forecast.

12 Q. Okay. And was that --

13 A. When I boarded at 9:30.

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. Okay.

16 Q. So that was the weather you were expecting --

17 A. Yes.

18 Q. -- from when you boarded to your dock?

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. And what was the dock you were --

21 A. Sea dock 24. I was going to go up to Brady's Stop, turn
22 around and back to the dock, port side to.

23 Q. Okay. So, now, just -- and I don't want to keep
24 interrupting. I'd rather let --

25 A. Okay.

1 Q. Okay, I'd rather let, you know, just you tell me the
2 story. You get up to the bridge and go through the master pilot
3 exchange.

4 A. Conducted all the protocol, I'm asking -- find out, you
5 know, air draft, his draft, everything's working properly. Went
6 through the whole gamut that was required by the master/pilot
7 conference, okay? And after going through all that, called the
8 Coast Guard, inbound Channel 5. Told them where I'm going, I'm
9 going to do an air draft. And I set my computer up, laptop, and
10 started inbound. And I was going to tell you, I double-check on
11 my worksheet when the deckhand handed me, he says, Captain Reeser,
12 you've got -- the vessel highlighted, so that means there's
13 something about it.

14 So I looked that up and Captain Cooper had some notes
15 about that ship 2 years ago on his handling characteristics. It
16 was loaded with 35 feet at that time, and she stated that the next
17 time that ship comes to Houston, it should have a trim of a foot,
18 foot-and-a-half, and maybe get an escort tug. She didn't say in
19 her notes where, but she just mentioned those things. So that
20 perked my ears up. I said, I need to take a look at this.

21 So we boarded -- after I boarded up and got things
22 settled down, got into the channel moving, you know, inbound, the
23 first turn, usually get a pretty good idea of how the ship's going
24 to handle, all right, at 8 and 9. So I made my turn there and I
25 said, oh, yeah, this is okay. It might be a long day, but it's

1 all right. You know, we can handle this. 31 feet even keel, kind
2 of a little sluggish, but, you know, we can work with it. The
3 visibility, no issues.

4 So inbound, they boarded two pilots astern of me,
5 Captain Matthew Glass and Captain Mike Phillips. They were both
6 doing better speed-wise, so I asked Matt did he want to get by.
7 He said, oh, yes. So he first agreed on two whistles, so I moved
8 over to the right. And then he says, no, I'm going to come around
9 you on your haunches, so I went back to my left. He overtook me
10 around Buoy 16; had no problems. There was no problems with the
11 ship handling characteristics when he overtook me.

12 Got into the Houston channel there at 18. Inbound still
13 handling okay, no issues. Still unlimited visibility. Inbound
14 present -- next outbound ship was Captain Hickman on a loaded gas
15 ship. I met her around 47, 48, somewhere in that ballpark.

16 Q. And I'm sorry to interrupt, but 47, 48, is that north?

17 A. Beacons.

18 Q. Is that north of Bayport or is it south?

19 A. No, no. It's above the Intracoastal Waterway.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. 25 and 26 are there at the ICW --

22 Q. Right.

23 A. -- right there at Texas City Dike. Now you're inbound.
24 And then that's an 8-mile reach, and right before you get to 51
25 and 52, it's your next turn.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. So I met Captain Hickman just below that turn. And
3 unlimited visibility and the ship handled okay, all right, no
4 problems.

5 Q. And I'd like to go back to what you just asked -- stated
6 about notification of the ship. Well, this is -- you had some
7 notification about the *Conti Peridot*.

8 A. Yeah, on the worksheet -- we have a worksheet --

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. -- and I always ask for a worksheet, and on that
11 worksheet you'll get a ship that's highlighted. And what we did a
12 couple years as an organization was to inform a pilot of issues on
13 that ship. We needed to have a better system so if there was a
14 problem, at least the pilot new about it. So when I saw that, I
15 said, "okay, I'll take a look at it," and I reviewed her notes at
16 that time, okay, and we were 2012. So I took that into
17 consideration. That's why I was paying attention at the first
18 turn to see how the ship was going to handle. All right?

19 Q. And what was that first turn? Was that 16?

20 A. No, no, no. It's at 7 and 8 is your first turn.

21 Q. Oh, okay.

22 A. 7 and 8.

23 Q. Thank you.

24 A. So no problem there at 7 and 8, okay.

25 Q. Okay. So we can go back to where you were on that --

1 A. Now, up the channel or, say, on the first reach
2 approaching 70 -- 47, 48, and I'm meeting Captain Hickman on a
3 loaded gas ship. Okay. Six-tenths of a mile I break to my right
4 a couple degrees. I go around her. I'm watching the rate of
5 turn, because we're now in the narrow channel. Watching the
6 ranges and the beacons to see how the ship's going to handle, and
7 just -- she handled really well, right on back -- right
8 centerline.

9 By the time I get to 51 and 52, the visibility has gone
10 from unlimited to 2 miles. I've got 2 miles' visibility now.
11 Okay. I make my turn; no problem with the turn. Report in to
12 vessel traffics and tell them I'm at Redfish, we got visibility
13 about 2 miles and diminishing, you know.

14 My next outbound ship is Captain Teeter. He's also on a
15 loaded gas ship, and I meet him up around -- right above Redfish.
16 About 61, 62, somewhere in that ballpark, I meet Ricky. All
17 right. And I'm meeting Ricky in zero visibility. So we've gone
18 from -- let's see. I made my turn. Let's see, I met Sherri at
19 11:14. Turned at 11:22. So in approximately 12 minutes, it's
20 gone from 2 miles of visibility to zero. That quick.

21 So I meet Ricky. When we met, I braked a little bit for
22 him, okay, and I come back to my left. Or, actually stop my swing
23 and I bring her back to my left, get back into position. When she
24 senses that void, it's astern of Captain Teeter, because he's got
25 draft. She dives to the void, and I'm using rudder to counter

1 that, and I brake her back and she smells the bank and we go from
2 the left to the right, and I'm doing everything I can to control
3 this movement with the weather. I'm doing about 10 knots. All
4 right? So I get to this position and I realize that she's coming
5 off this bank, and the next ship I'm going to meet is Captain
6 Schendel. And I tell Ted that I'm coming off the bank, to pay
7 attention, to watch me. All right?

8 So I'm coming left, and about the time I see him, he
9 sees me. He says, Chris, we got -- we can make this work. So we
10 make it work and then I get around him. Because about the time I
11 need my rudder -- you know, with the rudder power, the propeller
12 wants to dig in and do its job; it did its job and it brought my
13 bow around to the right, and I got around Captain Ted.

14 And then I got to this position and then she's off bank
15 and back to the left I went again. And it took me nearly -- from
16 the time I met Captain Teeter with the load till I got back into
17 position was almost 2 miles.

18 Q. And what ship was he on that you met there?

19 A. Which one?

20 Q. With Captain -- Ted?

21 A. Okay. He was on the *Stolt Span*. Captain Schendel was
22 on the *Stolt Span*. It's a small tanker, small Stolt tanker.

23 Q. I'm sorry. That's Captain Ted?

24 A. Ted Schendel.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. Yeah. Ted Schendel.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Okay. So I get her back into position. Now I'm inbound
4 and the fog's getting thicker, and I mean really getting thick. I
5 mean just -- I could see Rick when I met him, you know, probably
6 maybe 1,000 feet.

7 Q. And Rick is on --

8 A. He was on that first load -- second load. He was on the
9 *Caroline N.* All right? And I can see him maybe 800, 900 feet.
10 Okay? Same thing, same thing with Captain Schendel. But after I
11 met them, it just got really, really thick. It got down to about
12 400 feet. In fact, that ship I was on only 600, so I could barely
13 see the bow. In fact, sometimes I couldn't see the bow of my
14 ship.

15 Q. And whereabouts are you now in the channel?

16 A. I'm about, oh, gosh, around 69, 70, maybe 71, 72. All
17 right? I'm still below the turn. Okay?

18 Q. And when you say "turn," which turn are we talking?

19 A. 75, 76. Okay. Now, after I meet Ted and get her back
20 into position, I look at what's taken place and then I up my scale
21 to see where my next outbound ships are at, and I'm seeing that
22 this whole scenario is falling in place again. I've got Captain
23 Conkay (ph.), followed by Captain Evans, followed by Captain
24 Parker, and they look like they're all about the same distance
25 apart, about a mile and a half. And I'm going, gosh, this is the

1 same scenario. I've got a loaded ship -- actually,
2 Captain Conkay's not on a loaded ship, but he's on a car ship
3 which has a great deal of displacement. You know, it's like
4 62,000 tons, all right, even with 25 feet.

5 And then I see Captain Evans, Larry. He's got 39 or 38
6 feet, okay, on his ship, on his Maersk ship. And then the deputy
7 has no draft at all. He's on a small deputy-size ship, the third
8 one in the line.

9 So I figured if I stayed closer to the centerline with
10 this ship, that I'd have a better capability of controlling it,
11 all right, the way she's handling. So I make 75 and 76, and I'm
12 looking at my laptop, and I see the *Lincoln L* ahead of me and I'm
13 going, man, he's not making any speed; I need to take him out of
14 this equation; I don't need to run over him. So what I did was I
15 pulled back on my speed. As soon as I cleared the flare at
16 Bayport, I pulled my speed back to half ahead, giving him time to
17 move forward or move out of this. All right?

18 So I'm approaching Captain Conkay -- Jim -- on the car
19 ship. He's not in the center; he's right of center. So I really
20 -- I hate to say it, but I squeeze him. I didn't move much at all
21 to my right, anticipating that this thing's going to take a run
22 off that bank, a sheer. So --

23 Q. Your ship?

24 A. My ship, yes. So I break just a little to my right and
25 then I started to bring her back to the left, a little bit left

1 rudder. But then she senses that big void behind Jim's ship, and,
2 man, we're off to the races. And if you look at the rate of turn
3 indicator on my laptop, man, it's just like a bullet. I mean, I'm
4 now falling to the left, falling to the left hard and strong. So
5 I've got counter-rudder on it, trying to slow this down, and man,
6 it's not slowing anything down. So I go to the left and then back
7 to the right, and then back to the left, and now I'm coming back
8 to the right and I've got the *Lincoln L* out of the picture and I'm
9 telling Larry that I'm coming -- it looks like I'm going to -- I'm
10 coming at him.

11 So when I come back to the right, I go full ahead,
12 because I notice my speed coming off, you know. I'm at half
13 ahead, and half ahead was posted at 8.4 knots, and I'm down now
14 below 7. I'm going, "Oh, my gosh." So I realize that I've got to
15 put wheel wash -- I've got to put some power on that rudder to
16 make that rudder work for me. So I go full ahead, and I know
17 she's coming to the right and she's smelling that bank, and I know
18 I'm coming to my left and coming back strong. But I get a hard
19 over and full ahead and she's --

20 Q. Hard over which way?

21 A. To the starboard, and she's not responding at all.
22 Nothing. She's not -- she doesn't respond until we get almost to
23 the point where I -- right below the collision, right there, and
24 she comes to the right, starts coming to the right. Okay. And
25 that's it.

1 Q. Well, as long as we're right there with the collision,
2 do you remember the engine orders you gave or were carrying you
3 into the collision? Were they --

4 A. I was hoping that the rudder -- I mean, I had it on full
5 ahead.

6 Q. Right.

7 A. And I was hoping that she'd catch and pull away from the
8 ship, you know. And when we collided, that's when I stopped in
9 and put her full astern.

10 Q. Okay, okay. So stop and full astern came after --

11 A. Yeah.

12 Q. -- impact?

13 A. Right.

14 Q. And but the rudder was still hard starboard?

15 A. Right. Rudder was still hard starboard.

16 Q. Okay. Well, thanks for that description. With that
17 workbook you were talking about -- or the notebook about the ships
18 -- the worksheet.

19 A. Yeah, the worksheet.

20 Q. Okay. Is that standard throughout the Pilot Association
21 with regards to, you know, all the pilots?

22 A. Yes, sir, it is.

23 Q. Okay. So this -- has this vessel been in here before or
24 have you ever been on it?

25 A. I've never been on it, but it was in here in 2012 in

1 Reedsport (ph.) with 35 feet even keel.

2 Q. Okay. And this one had -- this was even keel for you?

3 A. Even keel at 31 feet.

4 Q. And that was made known to you when you got on board?

5 A. That's correct.

6 Q. And up to the point -- so it was handling fine at the
7 start?

8 A. Yes. This ship handled -- the ship handled well in zero
9 -- in visibility. Okay? Let me make that clear, is that this
10 ship, you know, handled all right because you could see. You
11 could see everything taking place. You could see the beacons, you
12 could see the ranges, you could take care of the swing, how much
13 you needed to do, how much to take off, all of that. But when
14 that ship went into zero visibility, you know, it was real
15 difficult to stay in control of this thing that was going bank to
16 bank to bank, you know, and just wasn't responding to the rudder
17 and to what you wanted it to do. And it was -- because you
18 couldn't see. I mean you couldn't see your reference points to
19 give you a better idea on the true head of the vessel.

20 Q. So not to put words in your mouth, but it's the
21 perception? Because the visibility doesn't have any impact on the
22 vessel mechanically, right?

23 A. No. There's nothing -- there was nothing mechanically
24 wrong with, you know, the -- everything was working properly.

25 Q. Right.

1 A. It's that to bring this ship -- some -- certain ships,
2 certain classes of ships, don't like shallow water and don't like
3 narrow channels like ours, and this class of ship is one of those.
4 And when you load it to even keel, it's a bear of a vessel to
5 handle even in good visibility.

6 Q. Have you been on a lot of similar vessels like this?

7 A. Yes, sir, I have.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. They're all steel ships and when they're even-keeled at
10 30 -- if they're over 30 feet, they're just a handful to -- you've
11 got to keep your eye on it all the time.

12 Q. So comparative to the other vessel -- other vessels, can
13 you -- better? Worse? Same?

14 A. Better, much of them better. Except for this -- like I
15 said, this class of ship is really notorious for being a poor
16 handling ship.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. You know, the 624s, 625s, but a 106, you know, that
19 class.

20 Q. All right. While we're talking --

21 A. That bulk ship class, you know. The bulkers, okay?

22 Q. All right.

23 A. Right.

24 Q. Well, staying with the handling, up to the collision was
25 all the orders you gave responded to by --

1 A. Oh, yeah.

2 Q. -- the helmsmen and the engine?

3 A. I have nothing to say bad about the crew. The crew did
4 their job.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. They may not have known, you know, what was going to
7 happen, but they were doing their job. Okay? Because the simple
8 reason is, you're in zero visibility. You can't see, so you don't
9 know. You really don't even -- unless you look at the radar or
10 the ECDIS or one of the other electronic devices, you don't even
11 know where you're at in the channel.

12 Q. You know, being here a few days now, we've heard a lot
13 of the fog that definitely prevails in the area. Is there any
14 contingency plans that you can have with the master prior to
15 getting underway if fog sets in? Do you stop? Can you go
16 anywhere? What do you do if fog closes in completely?

17 A. Well, we close the bar. There's no more sailings and
18 there's no more rivals. And most pilots that get caught in a fog
19 usually proceed to the dock or to the sea buoy, you know, that
20 handful of pilots, you know, because -- you know, you've got the
21 laptop, and beyond that -- and if you're on, say, a ship that
22 handles well, all right, and your confidence level is pretty high,
23 because the laptop gives you a great deal of information, and it's
24 only when you find yourself in a situation which I found myself in
25 where I've got this great aid, but I've got a poor-handling ship

1 where I need to see the head of the ship to safely navigate this.
2 Without seeing the head and the true motion -- I mean, I've got
3 these electronics. I mean, radar, ECDIS, all this, this is all
4 wonderful equipment. But when you get a ship that handles poorly,
5 it's real difficult to, you know, get this thing up to the dock
6 safely. All right?

7 And then you're asking contingency plans. I probably
8 could have anchored, but then I'd have had to get the pilot behind
9 me to coordinate him to anchor and the three ships ahead of me to
10 coordinate all that, and you're in motion, so you'd have to deal
11 with all that, you know. And I felt after meeting Captain
12 Schendel that I could probably do this. I felt I could do this,
13 all right, safely. All right? But when I got past Captain Conkay
14 on that half bell and my speed started coming down, I realized
15 that my -- that was another factor along with the fog, was my
16 speed wasn't enough to make this happen. And then when I went
17 full ahead, it just didn't move, you know. I didn't get that push
18 that I was looking for on the rudder.

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. Did that answer your question?

21 Q. It did. No, no, it did. I appreciate it. That part of
22 the channel where the accident occurred, what's that true course
23 to the north that you were to be following?

24 A. 341, I believe.

25 Q. 341?

1 A. I think it was on -- yeah.

2 Q. And were you making passing arrangements over the
3 radio --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- with the vessels that you were meeting?

6 A. Yes. Everybody knew where I was at. Everybody, push
7 boats, tugboat, on the radio, telling them where I was at, what I
8 was doing. You know, making sure that everybody knew that I was
9 here. All right? I may have forgot to blow the fog signals, but
10 everybody knew by radio where I was at and what I was doing, and I
11 was in communication with the push boats, inbound and outbound,
12 and the outbound ships.

13 Q. Okay. When you say you may have forgot, were you doing
14 it sometimes or you hadn't or were they on automatic? The fog
15 signals.

16 A. Don't know and I didn't ask --

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. Right.

19 Q. All right. And specifically did you call the pilot on
20 the *Carla Maersk* and ask for a one-whistle meeting arrangement?

21 A. Yeah. We had a one-whistle arrangement.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And then as we approached each other -- and I told
24 Larry, was there any way to see me on two, and he says, no, I'm
25 committed already. So there was no way for him to go from one

1 whistle to two whistle. And at the point at that time, if he'd
2 had gone to two whistles, then he may have hit my living spaces,
3 okay, with his ship. All right? So we just left it like it was,
4 you know.

5 Q. Okay. And that was over which radio? Was that your
6 handheld?

7 A. Handset. Channel 13.

8 Q. 13? All right. And the Safety Board, because we have
9 possessions of the VDRs, the voice data recorders -- voyage data
10 recorders from the two vessels, been able to preliminary just
11 scratch through it, but eventually we'll make a transcript of the
12 entire thing. So I did hear portions of it with regards to your
13 conversation with the pilot. When you were asking the pilot on
14 the *Carla Maersk* to come left -- do you remember that?

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. Okay. What were you trying to get him to do?

17 A. I was trying to get him to come to his left.

18 Q. To pass to your starboard?

19 A. Two whistles.

20 Q. Two whistles. Okay.

21 A. Yes. Come to his left.

22 Q. All right.

23 A. Two whistles. But he said he was already committed for
24 the one.

25 Q. After reflecting on that, do you think that was -- could

1 he have done it or do you think that he did what he could do?

2 A. He was -- if he'd have moved his rudder over -- and like
3 I said, the chances of him clearing me were not -- I don't think
4 he would have cleared me. Even if he could have, of moving the
5 rudder from hard -- he was already hard right -- to hard left and
6 get the response that he was looking -- that he was going to need,
7 two whistles, I don't think there was enough time there for that
8 to take place. Because he would either hit on my starboard side
9 he would've come right into the house.

10 Q. Okay. So if I understand you correctly, and don't let
11 me put words in your mouth, whatever he did, a collision still
12 would have occurred; it just would have been where it would have
13 occurred?

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Okay.

16 A. Yes. And I have nothing to say bad or against Captain
17 Evans. He did everything he could to avert the collision. Yeah,
18 because, you know, when he was looking on the radar and his
19 computer, you know, he did everything he could in his situation.

20 Q. Okay. Well, while you said that -- do you know that
21 pilot pretty well?

22 A. Captain Evans?

23 Q. Yeah.

24 A. He's a member of my group. Yes, sir.

25 Q. So could he sense in your voice and you could sense in

1 his voice just the commands and what could be done --

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. -- or not be done?

4 A. When he told me, "Chris, I can't do what you're asking
5 me," I understood that.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Oh, good.

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. Thank you.

11 A. Right.

12 Q. At any point as this situation started unfolding, do you
13 think the captain on your vessel should have done anything
14 different? Could he have stepped in and --

15 A. I don't think they knew we're -- I don't think they knew
16 what was happening.

17 Q. Um-hum.

18 A. For the simple reason, they were doing their jobs. But
19 when you can't see out the window, you don't know what's going on.

20 Q. Right.

21 A. They didn't know that ship was outbound. They didn't
22 know we were going bank to bank, you know. They just really
23 didn't know.

24 Q. Well, they do have ECDIS.

25 A. They have ECDIS.

1 Q. And --

2 A. But you have to go over and look at it.

3 Q. Yeah.

4 A. Same way with the radar. All right?

5 Q. Yep.

6 A. But no one member of the bridge team came up to me and
7 said, "Captain Reeser, why are you over here? Why are you over
8 there?" Nothing like that.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. But I have had that. I've had that asked on many ships,
11 you know. Bridge teams asking me why I'm over here or why I'm
12 over there, and I explain to them what I'm doing.

13 Q. Are there any reasons or different type reasons why you
14 think some bridge teams do that and some don't?

15 A. It's got to be the training. That's all I know of. All
16 right. That's all I know. All I know is like some bridge teams
17 -- I'll give you an example. Those ships that have the Indian
18 officers, I mean, they're on you. On you all the time, yes.

19 Q. Okay. You were using your portable unit?

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Where were you located? Where were you standing and
22 where was your unit located?

23 A. It was in -- we're at midship, right there by the gyro
24 stand, right -- and the gyro repeater was here in the center of
25 the ship and my laptop was right here and I'm right there, and

1 there's the rudder indicator right there.

2 Q. Okay. I did see a table off to the port side --

3 A. Yep.

4 Q. -- outside and forward of the console.

5 A. Correct.

6 Q. But you weren't using it?

7 A. I was there for a period of time, but anytime I met, I

8 unplugged it and moved it right over to the center.

9 Q. Okay.

10 A. Right there.

11 Q. You were plugged into the pilot plug?

12 A. I was plugged in pilot plug.

13 Q. Which radar were you using?

14 A. The port side one.

15 Q. And did you have that set to any --

16 A. Three-mile scale, fixed ring, but it was hard to adjust

17 because of the rain. All right?

18 Q. Clutter?

19 A. A little bit, yes.

20 Q. Did you ask the mate to help you?

21 A. Yes, sir, I did, you know. And they did their best.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Right. It was a decent picture. Not as good as my

24 laptop, you know.

25 Q. Okay. Was there a piece of instrument you were using

1 primarily with the situation you found yourself in and the fog?
2 Between the ship handling that you described to us and the fog,
3 was one piece of equipment better than the other or a combination?
4 Just tell me what you feel.

5 A. The two, the gyro, because that's your heading, heading
6 of your head, okay, and my laptop. Those are the two pieces of
7 equipment that I used.

8 Q. Laptop over the radar?

9 A. Laptop over the radar. The laptop, no interference from
10 the rain. Beautiful picture, go down scale, you know -- go up
11 scale, I mean. The radar got some influence from the rain.
12 You've got to use some adjustments to get rid of it, so you're,
13 you know, reducing your sensitivity. Okay?

14 Q. All right. After the collision, can you just describe
15 what went on there just generally? You can make a quick summary
16 of it. I know -- how long were you on board the vessel?

17 A. The collision took place at 12:35 or -- yeah, somewhere
18 in the ballpark, 12:30- -- 12:35, and I was relieved by Captain
19 Hossinger at 2100.

20 Q. Okay. Just the first immediate efforts after the
21 collision, you know, what did you do; what did the captain do,
22 that you can remember?

23 A. With that done, I said, drop the starboard anchor. One
24 shot. And then she come off the ship. I said, stop the engine,
25 drop starboard anchor. Dropped the starboard anchor. She fessed

1 up on it and we rolled back to the left and laid against the bank
2 and we were there. I presume they were there till they got
3 underway.

4 Q. And it's been a few days now and you know the vessel
5 that was struck had some type of release of their cargo.

6 A. Correct.

7 Q. Was there any notification to you about what that cargo
8 was from any authority?

9 A. Not for a while. It wasn't until sometime -- oh, my
10 notes in my logbook, I wrote that like at 1450 the Coast Guard
11 asked me to secure the VDR. I did. And at like at 1500 they
12 asked me to sound the tanks, which I'd already done, and have drug
13 testing done on the bridge crew -- and there was one more item; I
14 can't remember what it was, but we'd done all that stuff.

15 And I want to say it was right before that 1450 that we
16 got some kind of information stating that it was MTBE or some
17 chemical and that they needed to pull the crew off the deck. All
18 right? So we did. But we never smelled anything on my ship, all
19 right, for the simple reason the wind was blowing away from me,
20 and the wind was blowing from the southeast. So it was carrying
21 it over towards Morgan's Point, so you had to shelter in place for
22 Morgan's Point because that's where the fumes were at. We smelled
23 nothing. In fact, the only time I smelled fumes is when I got off
24 at 2100 and we went over to the ship and picked up Captain Evans,
25 the Coast Guard. That's the only time I smelled any fumes.

1 Q. And do you remember where you heard from -- the
2 information at 1450?

3 A. It was -- well, the information got --

4 Q. About shelter in place.

5 A. About -- yeah, it was from the captain. I want to say
6 the captain either told me -- if it was his agent or somebody that
7 said, you know, that they got fumes and they want us to shelter in
8 place. So we pulled the crew off the deck. And I don't know who
9 was out there. All right? I don't know how far they -- because I
10 asked them were they sounding tanks, and they said yes. So I
11 don't know if they completed their sounding or if they were --
12 what was going on out there. I didn't ask --

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. -- you know.

15 Q. Just one question about, you know, the collision with
16 your bow, now, into the *Carla Maersk*. Is there any thought of
17 just staying there or, you know, pushing in, leaving the vessels
18 like that?

19 A. Oh, I had -- I had, as I say, I had no -- they would
20 have come out anyway. I mean, the way the -- the way, you know,
21 like, I would have had to kept ship full ahead to stay in that
22 position, and I don't think you'd want me to do that, all right,
23 causing them additional damage.

24 Q. Yeah.

25 A. So I just let her come full astern and then stopped her,

1 then dropped that anchor and let the momentum -- because there was
2 so much force there. You know, you've got my vessel doing 7 knots
3 and Captain Evans was doing about that. When you have two vessels
4 like that, there's a great deal of force there. When I say a lot,
5 just a tremendous amount of energy right there. Okay?

6 So you see where Captain Evans ended up at.

7 Q. Yeah.

8 A. And that was because he was up on the bank and that
9 force -- that's what direction he went to, settled in -- finally
10 settled down. When both vessels settled in place, I'm on the
11 green side of the channel. He's over here on the red side of the
12 channel. Okay.

13 Q. Okay, Cap.

14 A. But that was the safest thing to do, to pull them apart.

15 Q. All right, just one final question I have right now
16 about the shelter. Any other recollection of notification from
17 any other source other than -- in the now from 1450 to when you
18 got off? Just from the captain that one time about the shelter in
19 place?

20 A. That's right, and after that we did, we sheltered in
21 place. Nobody else was allowed on the deck after that was -- that
22 information was brought to my attention by the captain. And I
23 said, that's fine, Captain. So nobody else --

24 Q. You didn't hear anything over 16 or traffic -- from
25 vessel traffic?

1 A. Yes. Later on we did, yes.

2 Q. About what time?

3 A. Oh, gosh. Probably been around -- at the same time that
4 the -- 1500, 1504, something in that ballpark, you know, when they
5 realized that they were leaking product or leaking something. At
6 that time we really still didn't know what was going on.

7 Q. And you heard that from where and over what source?

8 A. That was by the Coast Guard, you know, over 13 or tell
9 me to go to 12 or -- and contact them. But I know it was in that
10 ballpark frame.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. They felt, you know, we're in the fumes. You know, they
13 realized that the -- you know --

14 Q. All right. Okay, Captain. That's all I have right now.
15 Thank you.

16

17

18 Q. Captain, you gave us a sheet here and some timelines on
19 it and --

20 A. Yeah. My notes.

21 Q. Yes. You said that you had experienced handling issues
22 when you met Captain Teeter. Can you kind of expand on the
23 handling issue?

24 A. That was in zero visibility that I met Captain Teeter.
25 All right? And he was loaded. All right? And I come around him,

1 normal break, you know, and as I come around his stern, man, she
2 follows in behind and I'm doing everything I can to control the
3 vessel to bring her back to the middle, and she's still going to
4 the left and you can see from, let's say, the video, you notice
5 that I went left and then right, and then here comes Captain
6 Schendel, you know, and I'm telling Ted that I'm coming back at
7 him, you know. All right. And I'm doing everything I can with
8 the rudder. I was lucky I was making 10 knots because I still had
9 a great deal of flow around that rudder to -- actually to have the
10 rudder work, you know, properly. And I was able to catch it and
11 come around him. But, you notice I'm in the middle, but I'm still
12 at an angle towards him, all right, before that rudder catches and
13 I come around, and then she smells the bank and then back to the
14 left and finally back to the center. Almost 2 miles to get that
15 ship settled back down to the middle.

16 Q. Was that a port-to-port passing on that particular one?

17 A. Yes. It was one whistle. They're all one whistles.

18 Q. What do you think caused the handling issues, then?

19 A. Handling issue?

20 Q. Yes. Was it the hydrodynamics between the two ships?

21 A. Well, it was the hydrodynamics on the first ship, okay,
22 the loaded ship. All right? And then as I come around his stern,
23 like I said, without being able to see, I can't see the true
24 vector, the true -- the heading of that ship, you know, to help me
25 out, and so I'm just using my laptop, you know, and I'm watching

1 the rate of turn, using the rudder, trying to stop that rate of
2 turn and watching how far off the centerline I'm coming. All
3 right? And then to bring her -- and then she fetches and brings
4 back -- and now I'm going back to my right and I -- midship and
5 then she's screaming across the channel, you know, back to the
6 right. So I put the left rudder on to try to stop that, you know,
7 move it, over she goes and she (indiscernible) that back and then
8 I'm in a position to tell Ted to watch out and I've already -- she
9 fetches up, stops. All right. I go midship and then she goes
10 back to the right. And like I said, it's -- without the ability
11 to see on a ship that has these characteristics, it's awful hard.
12 I mean, you know, really it is. I mean I'm using my laptop, all
13 right, to try to stop this swing and these forces, and it's takes
14 a while and it took my 2 miles. All right?

15 Q. What I'm getting at, though, is it was the passing that
16 actually, let's say, triggered the handling issues. Because
17 earlier you said that the ship was handling a little sluggish, but
18 okay?

19 A. Yes, because I could see and I could react to that
20 sluggishness by using, you know, less, more rudder, okay, and
21 actually watching my rate of turn on my laptop and working with
22 the ship to get the ship where it belongs in the center.

23 Q. Okay. At this point, though, you knew you were going to
24 have another port-to-port passing --

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. -- down the route. Were you concerned at that point --

2 A. Yes, I was.

3 Q. -- that you were going to have some -- another serious
4 issue with the handling?

5 A. That's correct. I did. That's what I said. When I met
6 Ted, I immediately went to the laptop and went upscale to see
7 where my next meeting was going to be at, and we've got a -- it's
8 really nice. We have -- you know, part of the package is that you
9 can highlight the vessel and see where you're going to meet. So I
10 highlighted all three to see where I was going to meet at and see
11 where the till was going to be at, and I realized that I had to
12 take something out of the equation, so I slowed down after Bayport
13 to pull the tug out -- tow out. All right. But I knew exactly
14 how this thing was unfold -- I mean soon as I met Captain
15 Schendel, I knew what the next situation was going to look at,
16 luckily, and I said it was going to look just like this one. I've
17 got a car ship with a lot of tonnage and a void, you know, a void
18 space, all right, behind him and I'm going to be in the same
19 scenario, same situation.

20 Q. Okay. And then how about the *Carla Maersk*? You said
21 you plotted three ahead, but you --

22 A. Yeah. And he was over -- a little over a
23 mile-and-a-half. We try to keep a mile-and-a-half separation, you
24 know, in our meeting situation just to do just that, is you meet,
25 brake, get back in the middle, and you're hoping that

1 mile-and-a-half is enough to get yourself back in position. You
2 know, that you're handling -- the ship's handling all right to get
3 you back in there.

4 Q. Did you ever tell the *Carla Maersk*, "Hey, listen, I'm
5 having some handling issues when we're doing passing and I've got
6 to pass a car carrier here. It took me 2 miles to straighten out
7 the last time"? Did you ever have the conversation with him about
8 that?

9 A. No, I didn't.

10 Q. All right. When you said you had the zero visibility, I
11 know you said that, and then you defined it as 400 feet. Was that
12 zero visibility to you?

13 A. Oh, yes.

14 Q. In other words, you couldn't see the bow of your ship?

15 A. Right.

16 Q. All right.

17 A. Most pilots will probably say anything less than a
18 quarter of a mile is zero, all right, to you.

19 Q. And when you were having the steering problems, why
20 didn't you inform the captain of the boat that you were having
21 steering issues, you know? We spoke with the captain --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- and we'll be right up front with you.

24 A. Right.

25 Q. He said that he was not aware of any steering issues.

1 And, of course, you're telling a decidedly different story here.
2 Why didn't you inform him, "Listen, we're having some problems
3 here"?

4 A. I don't know if he could have addressed them, you know.

5 Q. Well, that's --

6 A. I could have told him. I could have -- true, I could
7 have told the captain at that time that we were having issues, but
8 I don't know what he could have done to correct them or help me.

9 Q. No. I was just going to the point, do you think he was
10 entitled to know that since it was his ship? That's all.

11 A. Oh. Yes, sir.

12 [REDACTED] Okay. I don't have any --

13 MR. REESER: That's true.

14 [REDACTED] -- further questions right now.

15 MR REESER: All right.

16 MR. BETTS: All right. Captain David Betts, Liberia.

17 BY MR. BETTS:

18 Q. Just so you know, I have been up and down the ship
19 channel many, many times. I have two questions, and it's going
20 back to the steering. Captain Cooper had a note saying the vessel
21 should either have a one -- was it 1.5 foot trim or 1.5 meter
22 trim?

23 A. 1.5.

24 Q. Feet or meters?

25 A. Feet.

1 Q. Feet. Okay.

2 A. A foot. Yes, sir.

3 Q. So basically as you're even keel, you're actually by the
4 head when you seat and do the squat?

5 A. Ahhh, got to say, well, you know, do you believe in
6 squat, you know, in a channel, and I don't. No, sir.

7 Q. Okay. But would it not have improved things if you
8 might have known about this problem before and the pilots could
9 have said, "Okay, we want you to make sure you have astern trim"
10 --

11 A. Well --

12 Q. -- knowing there was a problem?

13 A That was noted in the ship of concern notes that were
14 given 2 years ago, all right, and I don't know where it's moved
15 from there. All I know is it's an aid. We thought we needed to
16 help the pilots if there was a problem with a ship in the past,
17 that they should know about it, but I don't know if it goes any
18 further --

19 Q. So why --

20 A. -- you know. Okay?

21 Q. But if you'd have known that, you could have -- before
22 moving you could have said --

23 A. Oh.

24 Q. -- to the captain, "Just ballast off the
25 (indiscernible). I want astern trim."

1 A. Yeah.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. Yeah. I don't know about that either. Okay?

4 Q. Well, all right.

5 A. Sure.

6 Q. Next question. You were saying that, you know, you have
7 this problem of how to anchor and control all the vessels, which I
8 fully appreciate. Would it not be better if VTS could have been
9 more proactive and you could just call VTS and say, "Look, I'm
10 having a problem. There's zero visibility. Can you take control
11 and anchor every vessel?" But you don't have to do it, because
12 you're so involved in maintaining your vessel. If the VTS were
13 more proactive, they could just take charge of it and say anchor
14 for every ship, like they do in other places. Just, would that
15 have helped you?

16 A. I don't think so.

17 Q. No?

18 A. No. I think it would have been more pilot to pilot,
19 because each pilot has control of their vessel and they know what
20 they can do and what they can't do, you know? All right? So --

21 Q. But --

22 A. -- in the situation where you don't want to cause any
23 additional problems -- all right? Okay?

24 Q. Hugh Stacey (ph.), --

25 A. All right?

1 Q. -- one of the gents (indiscernible) "Could you have
2 anchored?," and he said, "Yes, but --

3 A. Yes, but --

4 Q. -- all of the other vessels, trying to coordinate it
5 would be a problem."

6 A. You'd have to coordinate with the other pilots.

7 Q. But VTS could take charge of that and leave you alone to
8 just take care of your own vessel.

9 A. I don't know about that.

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. That's my question.

12 MR. BETTS: No more questions.

13 MR. REESER: I don't know about the VTS getting
14 involved.

15 MR. BETTS: Okay.

16 MR. REESER: Yes, sir, unless they have their hands
17 full.

18 MR. JONES: Henning.

19 MR. PULMER: Henning Pulmer from BBG.

20 BY MR. PULMER:

21 Q. I just have a small question. I do not know what this
22 laptop is about. What kind of data do you see on your laptop?
23 What data feed do you get?

24 A. Because of PBU and its system we've been working on for
25 about probably 12 years, maybe more, here in Houston, it's a

1 (indiscernible) unit, comes out of Austin, Texas, and we've
2 refined the program. It's our program and it's (indiscernible).
3 It's a really nice aid. Really is. It's like the Captains
4 program. The Captains program or one of the other navigational
5 programs, these navigational programs out there. This is one that
6 we've had and we've used for years and we fine-tuned. It uses 12
7 -- 8 to 12 satellites. It's real-time positioning.

8 Q. Okay.

9 A. And it updates every 8 seconds. It's a really nice aid.

10 Q. Okay. So it displace your positioning? Does it receive
11 any radar image or --

12 A. No.

13 Q. -- and AIS information?

14 A. Gyro heading from the ship, AIS positionings of other
15 vessels, you know, and then if the pilots show up on your screen,
16 they show highlighted, so you're seeing the other pilots, okay,
17 with that -- even if you had no AIS input, you still see your
18 other pilot, okay, on the screen.

19 Q. So you see actually the other laptop, the other
20 (indiscernible)?

21 A. Yes. You see the other pilot, the unit, --

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. -- correct, on there, and you see all the tows and the
24 other vessels on it, too.

25 MR. PULMER: Thank you.

1 MR. JONES: Is that all, then?

2 MR. USHER: Mike Usher, Houston Pilot Commission.

3 BY MR. USHER:

4 Q. Thank you, Captain Reeser and Mr. Brown, for being here
5 tonight. Captain Reeser, you said that a major turn coming up at
6 75, 76. Were you experiencing any handling problems as you made
7 your approach to 75, 76?

8 A. Just a little one. I went wide a little bit there when
9 I made my turn, but I got back in the middle (indiscernible).

10 Q. Did you complete a successful turn --

11 A. Turn. Yes, I did.

12 Q. -- at 75, --

13 A. Right.

14 Q. -- 76? And then you straightened up. You went back to
15 center channel --

16 A. Right.

17 Q. -- before you met Captain Conkay?

18 A. Correct.

19 Q. Okay. That was negotiated fine? No issues?

20 A. Yeah.

21 Q. You had passing arranged with Captain Conkay?

22 A. One vessel right, and as soon as I cleared -- or I say
23 as soon as I cleared Captain Conkay is when she went hard at it or
24 hard right, but she went -- she started moving to the left on her
25 own. Okay?

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Right behind her. Okay. But it took a while. It took
3 a few minutes. It's amazing. If you look at the -- at my laptop
4 recording, you see where I meet Jim and then all of a sudden it's
5 like the whole ship finally starts moving to the left, you know,
6 and I've got right or hard starboard on it. But my speed is
7 slowing down all the time. I don't know if you noticed that on
8 the lap -- the recording. During the time I was going from bank
9 to bank, my speed had been reduced. I just did it drag on the
10 rudder, going back and forth.

11 MR. USHER: Okay. Thank you, Captain Reese. That's all
12 I have.

13 MR. MORRIS: I'm Mike Morris, Houston Pilots.

14 BY MR. MORRIS:

15 Q. Just one question, Chris. If my math is correct, if the
16 ships are really spaced a mile-and-a-half apart, you're meeting
17 every ship about every 4 1/2 minutes if you're going 10. You were
18 going a little less, so it might have been every 5 minutes. Do
19 you think you could have done a safe anchoring in the channel, or
20 would it have been some type of emergency full of stern anchoring
21 if you tried to go to anchor in 4 1/2 minutes?

22 A. It would have taken -- it would have taken some, let's
23 say -- to go from 10 knots to zero, we've taken some issues. We
24 may have gone all over the place to do it, but, you know, it could
25 have been done. You know, it could have been done, but it

1 wouldn't have been pretty.

2 MR. MORRIS: Thank you.

3 MR. JONES: All done?

4 MR. MORRIS: All done.

5 BY MR. ANDERSON:

6 Q. Captain, Dave Anderson, owners rep from Maersk Tankers.
7 After passing before you tucked back in behind the ship
8 (indiscernible), is there a standard distance that you usually
9 tuck back in center once you do the pass port to port?

10 A. Usually you're back in the center within that
11 mile-and-a-half.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. It depends upon the handling characteristics of the
14 ship.

15 Q. All right.

16 A. All right? You get a poor handling, like -- you know,
17 you had poor handling, but then you had the complication of the
18 fog. Okay? If we hadn't had the fog, I would have been able to
19 handle this vessel appropriately. Okay? Bring her back in the
20 middle. You know, it might have taken me a little bit more with
21 the rudder and everything else, but I felt confident when I
22 boarded that even with Captain Cooper's notes, I could get this
23 ship to the city dock safely. I did not anticipate fog. There
24 was nothing in the visibility -- I mean, no news reports or
25 weather that said fog. Okay? So when the fog set in, I knew I

1 had my hands full with this ship, you know. That is the
2 characteristics. But usually we say a mile-and-a-half separation,
3 you know, below Morgan's Point for that one reason, to give the
4 other pilot -- and if you meet, time to get back into position.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Because that's part of our training, is that you always
7 train deputies to work from the center.

8 Q. All right.

9 A. Back to the middle, back to the middle.

10 Q. All right.

11 A. Position, position, position.

12 Q. All right. So let me -- so when you're coming down
13 center, you separate, pass and you're back to center.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. So do you think --

16 A. Brake 4 to 6 degrees to your right.

17 Q. So when you come back to center, do you feel that the
18 cavitation -- prop cavitation from the ship you just passed is an
19 influence on the handling of the rudder?

20 A. No. It's not the prop cavitation. It's the
21 displacement.

22 Q. All right, okay.

23 A. It's the hole that's left. If you've got a ship like
24 that car carrier, 25 foot of draft, --

25 Q. Yeah.

1 A. -- 62,000 tons, there's a big hole behind that ship or a
2 big load, whatever you want to call it.

3 Q. Right.

4 A. And if you've got a ship like the one I was on that's
5 had some issues, you know, it' -- here we go into that void.

6 MR. ANDERSON: Okay, okay. Thank you. No more
7 questions.

8 MR. JONES: Gary.

9 BY DR. STRAUCH:

10 Q. Captain, this is Barry Strauch. I'm the, quote, human
11 factors guys, unquote, with the Safety Board, and I say that
12 because my questions may kind of seem like all over the place and
13 they're not going to be as pointedly marine-oriented as the other
14 questions, so I'll ask you to bear with me. I also want to thank
15 you for completing the 96-hour history. I appreciate it. It
16 makes my job much easier. But I just have one question regarding
17 the 96-hour history. The day before the accident you took three
18 naps?

19 A. Yes, sir. Because of the way that -- you know, the way
20 that -- I take advantage of everything I can take when I'm
21 working. Like if I'm on a two-pilot job and I have an ability to
22 lay down for a nap, I lay down to nap. And if you do any kind of
23 research on the pilot boats, in my 24 years -- I'm on the 24-year
24 -- you'll find that Captain Reeser goes to sleep on the boat. And
25 I have been blessed by God to have this knack to go to sleep, and

1 I can lay down right now on this floor and go to sleep. I have no
2 problem sleeping, and I take really (indiscernible). And also,
3 like one day there, I got home like at 2, 2 in the morning. Went
4 to sleep and got up like at 9, you know, and I knew I was going to
5 work till -- I laid down at 4:30 and I slept really good till
6 about 8:30, you know.

7 Q. Yes, sir.

8 A. But I do. I take full advantage of it and I sleep
9 really well, very good.

10 Q. And these naps the day before, you slept well in those
11 naps?

12 A. Oh, yes, sir. I sleep good in the naps. True.

13 Q. Now, you started napping on the day before at 5:30 till
14 about 7, and then you're on duty from about 7 to 7:30?

15 A. But now (indiscernible).

16 (Simultaneous speaking.)

17 DR. STRAUCH: That was the Golden --

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Can I see one of those, please?

19 Well, I'll give one back. Gave one to the Coast Guard.

20 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I gave mine to Barry.

21 BY DR. STRAUCH:

22 Q. I was kind of curious that you were on duty at one point
23 for, it looks like, about 15 minutes; is that correct?

24 A. What time of day?

25 Q. That would be about between 7:15, it looks like. 07:15

1 and 7:30, if I read it correctly.

2 A. That's on the "A"?

3 Q. Yes. And on the Golden Sun, were you second pilot?

4 A. Yeah. That was -- I got off the Nile and I laid down on
5 the pilot boat for about an hour and 20 minutes.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. And then -- in fact, it was like 5:30 till 6:50, and I
8 boarded back on a two-pilot job and I got things set up, my
9 computer, and I laid down around 7:30 and I think I got up at
10 9:50.

11 Q. Right. Okay.

12 A. All right? And then I worked and then I went home and
13 had a nap that afternoon. Got up for dinner and went to bed about
14 -- yeah, about 22:45, 22:50, and slept till they called me at 6 --
15 at 5:55 to go to work.

16 Q. Okay. So the nap from about 5:30 to 7, that was on the
17 pilot boat?

18 A. On the pilot boat, yes. That was on the pilot boat.

19 Q. Then the nap from, it looks like, 7:30 to 10, that was
20 on --

21 A. That's on the ship.

22 Q. -- the Golden Sun?

23 A. Correct.

24 Q. So when you were on duty from 7:30 to -- looks like to
25 8, that was on the Golden Sun?

1 A. Yes, sir. We boarded like at 7:10 and I'm setting my
2 computer up in the wheelhouse, all right, for the number 1 pilot.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. And after I set everything up and got it set up, I laid
5 down.

6 Q. Okay, all right. That explains it.

7 A. Yeah. Yes, sir.

8 Q. I was curious why you would only be on duty for --

9 A. Well, usually that's how we do it. The number two pilot
10 sets his laptop up for the number 1 while the number one's
11 navigating, getting things set up.

12 Q. Now, what were your duties as the second pilot on that
13 vessel, the Golden Sun?

14 A. On our two-pilot wide-bodies, we have one pilot -- two
15 pilots, all right, and when one pilot's working, the other one
16 doesn't have to work. He's resting.

17 Q. So your duties are --

18 A. He's resting, yes.

19 Q. So your duties are to serve as pilot when the other
20 pilot is resting?

21 A. That's correct. So I rest and he navigates, and then I
22 drive or I work and he rests.

23 Q. Okay. And your duties also include helping to set up
24 the PPU and all that, the --

25 A. The number 2. Usually the number 2, right.

1 Q. Okay. What made this vessel a two-pilot vessel?

2 A. Size. Size. I think it was 800-some feet long and 130,
3 140, something like that. I don't have my logbook with me, but
4 yes, sir.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. My work rules. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Okay. Your work rules mean the work rules of the
8 Association?

9 A. Yes, sir. The Association, correct.

10 Q. Okay. Now, you've referred to the pilots by several
11 names.

12 A. Okay.

13 Q. Capts. Teeter, Tindall (ph.), Jim.

14 A. Okay.

15 Q. Could you just kind of walk us through which pilot --
16 you know, by their name -- was on which vessel?

17 A. Yes, sir. Okay. On the first one that I met was
18 Captain Sherri Hickman, and she was on the BD Cato --

19 Q. Okay.

20 A. -- along with Captain Conway, who was the number 1 pilot
21 there. She was number 2.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And then the second ship I met was Captain Rick Teeter
24 on the Caroline Anne.

25 Q. Okay.

1 A. The third ship I met was Captain Ted Schendel, and he
2 was on the *Stolt Span* (ph.). The next ship I met was Jim Conkay
3 on the Gayla Leader (ph.) car ship. And then the last one I met
4 was Captain Larry Evans on the *Carla Maersk*.

5 Q. Okay. Thank you.

6 A. Yes, sir.

7 Q. Now, you said you checked the weather the night before,
8 the morning of, and then on the pilot boat.

9 A. Correct.

10 Q. Each time there's a forecast of rain, but no forecast of
11 fog.

12 A. Correct.

13 Q. So you were kind of -- not expecting the fog?

14 A. Oh, yes. I was not expecting fog. The fog was a
15 surprise.

16 Q. Okay. Had you expected the fog --

17 A. Oh, I may have just said forget it; I don't do it. If
18 there's in a channel, I would have probably said put him back to
19 anchor, especially after reading the note from Captain Cooper.

20 Q. You would have said that before the ship --

21 A. Before I boarded. Before I boarded the ship, I'd have
22 turned -- if they were forecasting -- if they said the fog was
23 coming in or the fog was developing on the upper channel, I'd have
24 sent him back to anchor. I wouldn't have boarded him after
25 reading Captain Cooper's notes.

1 Q. Okay. Now, you also say that once you were in the
2 channel and the fog -- you encountered the fog, and there were
3 ships behind you and ships about to -- you were about to meet, and
4 I'm paraphrasing here, but it sounds like you didn't have a lot of
5 options. Option of going to the dock or anchoring was not viable
6 because there were ships moving at the time, and then you had to
7 take into their movements as well; is that correct?

8 A. Correct. There's no docks and ship movement that you
9 have to be -- you have to deal with. Correct.

10 Q. And Captain Betts asked you about the possibility of
11 asking VTS for assistance maybe in stopping all the vessels, and
12 you said that just -- that's something you considered.

13 A. Yes. (indiscernible)

14 Q. In your 25 years of working on the Houston ship channel,
15 have you ever encountered a situation where somebody asked VTS to
16 stop the traffic because of the weather?

17 A. No. I don't remember -- I don't remember the VTS
18 stepping in and stopping anything. (indiscernible) I don't
19 remember anything like that.

20 Q. You don't remember --

21 A. Them stepping in and saying, you know, they taking
22 control and saying, "We're shutting everything down."

23 Q. Do you remember anybody ever asking VTS to shut things
24 down because they were in a situation such as the one you were in?

25 A. No, sir. Usually it's the pilots that shut things down.

1 Right.

2 Q. Okay. Captain Betts also when he asked that question
3 said that that's the way it is in other ports.

4 A. Yes, sir. Right.

5 Q. Can you name any ports where VTS would be asked to stop
6 the traffic?

7 A. I don't know of any here in Texas. I don't know of any
8 like that in Texas. I don't know about anywhere in the States.

9 Q. Okay. So in your experience, that's just not done?

10 A. No, no.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. I don't know about the rest of the (indiscernible). I
13 know here in Texas we don't do anything like that.

14 Q. Okay. And we asked yesterday Captain Morris and he told
15 us about fog and sometimes it comes in, sometimes it doesn't. But
16 it sounds like in Houston fog just happens.

17 A. Some years we have good years, no fog, limited fog. And
18 some years we have terrible fog. Can't remember what year that
19 was where we literally -- the port was closed for a week.

20 Q. Now, had you known about the fog -- and you said you
21 would have been -- and known about the vessel's handling
22 characteristics from Captain Cooper's notes, upon boarding you
23 would have told --

24 A. Well, no, I wouldn't have even boarded. If there was
25 fog in the channel, I wouldn't have boarded.

1 Q. Okay. And had you decided not to board, what kind of
2 reaction would you have expected from the master of the vessel,
3 from the Association, from the Commission?

4 A. Nothing. That's my decision and I would say it was a
5 safety decision.

6 Q. Have you ever made that kind of decision before?

7 A. Yes. I've walked down to the ship. I've been
8 dispatched to a job where I just went down to the cabin, we've got
9 fog in the channel; I don't think it's safe to go. You don't go.

10 Q. Have you ever been questioned making that kind of a
11 decision?

12 A. No, sir, I haven't.

13 Q. When you encountered the fog and the visibility went to
14 zero or a quarter mile, whatever, about how -- where was that?
15 Where was your vessel at the time?

16 A. I made 51 and 52 and I had 2 miles -- in fact, let me go
17 back a little bit. When I met Captain Hickman at 11:14, I had
18 unlimited visibility, and then 12 minutes later I made my turn at
19 51 and 52 and then it was 2 miles, and then 12 minutes later I met
20 Captain Teeter and zero. (indiscernible) less than a quarter of a
21 mile.

22 Q. Okay. So at that point when you met Captain Teeter,
23 visibility was --

24 A. Zero.

25 Q. -- zero? Where were you at the time?

1 A. Just around 61, 62, just above Redfish.

2 Q. Okay.

3 A. You know, you go right to (indiscernible). You know,
4 61, maybe at the ballpark.

5 Q. Okay. And what's the distance from there to where the
6 point of the collision was?

7 A. See, it would have been about 5, 6 -- about 10 miles.
8 Ten miles, just roughly, or so. It's 4 miles to the turn. It's
9 5, another 4 -- maybe 9. About 9 miles.

10 Q. Okay. In terms of time, about how -- what was the
11 interval between that point and the collision, in your estimation?

12 A. About 40 minutes, it looks like.

13 Q. Okay.

14 A. Maybe -- right there, a little bit less than 50, 55
15 minutes.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. Okay?

18 Q. So from that point, 9 miles or so from the point of
19 collision, 55 minutes from the time of the collision, did you
20 remain in essentially zero vis' conditions or were they variable?
21 Did they change?

22 A. It got worse.

23 Q. It got worse.

24 A. It got worse.

25 Q. Never got better?

1 A. Never got better.

2 Q. And in that interval, how many vessels did you pass or
3 passed you until the collision?

4 A. Push boats and stuff like that, I can't remember right
5 offhand. Probably one or two, you know, that I have may have --
6 maybe overtaken one and maybe net two, push boats. And I didn't
7 see them until they were right beside me.

8 Q. Okay. Now, I imagine if you're going to be a pilot for
9 25 years in the Houston ship channel, you will be -- operating
10 vessels in zero vis' conditions is not something that rarely
11 occurs. I imagine you've done it before; is that correct?

12 A. Yes. We've done it before, but over the years, you
13 know, we've come to -- when we close a bar, nothing moves.

14 Q. Right.

15 A. All right? And that's, you know, the pilots themselves.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. But before we had the computers, before the laptops, we
18 would sail ships when the fog opened, and if you got caught in the
19 fog, you might be out there with -- I've seen the fog lift and
20 seen 15 ships at anchor between Redfish and 5 miles, or actually
21 Morgan's Point, all different directions. All right? And I've
22 seen a tugboat and get everybody going in the right direction, and
23 I mean you -- when you anchor up, you hope that you're not going
24 to get up on top of, you know, your brother or your sister.
25 Right. Yes, sir. So the laptops have done one thing. They've

1 boosted the confidence of the pilots, all right, because of the
2 accuracy, you know. But fog is still -- it's not a good thing.
3 It's not a friend of pilots. It's not a friend to industry. You
4 know, (indiscernible) all of this.

5 Q. All right. But even with the PPUs, if you leave
6 anchorage or leave the port or wherever and you encounter fog and
7 you're in the channel, it sounds like you have to keep going. And
8 with the PPUs, it's probably safer than it was before the PPUs.

9 A. Correct. It is.

10 Q. How do you --

11 A. (indiscernible) If you're on a ship that handles well,
12 it's no problem. But if you have a ship that has a problem, then
13 you've got problems, --

14 Q. Okay.

15 A. -- because you need to see.

16 Q. So my question is, you've been in fog before with PPUs
17 before. Have you been in fog before with a PPU on a vessel that
18 had the handling characteristics of this particular vessel?

19 A. No, I haven't, and probably because just the -- it was
20 the luck of the draw. The luck of the draw, if you want to call
21 it that. Over the years I've been real fortunate that I've never
22 -- this is the first time in my career that I've been on a ship in
23 zero visibility that we had this -- such terrible handling
24 characteristics, you know.

25 Q. So if --

1 A. I've been in many ships in unlimited visibility with
2 this type of -- you know, that are just -- you know, just a bear,
3 and you just fight it all the way, but you can see. But I've
4 never been on one in zero visibility before.

5 Q. So I'm sure you've thought about this incident. It's
6 natural. In your mind, what made this situation unique to you,
7 other than the collision, in terms of -- because you've operated
8 in visibility before with PPU. So what was different about this
9 particular voyage than all the other voyages you've done on this
10 ship channel in vessels with restricted visibility?

11 A. It's just the handling characteristics of that ship. I
12 mean it was -- everything that I trained and have learned I
13 applied, and I could not get anything to work the way it should
14 work, you know. And without seeing, without actually visually
15 seeing the beacons, the ranges and my position and the true
16 heading of that ship, true was blind. Okay? All right? And I've
17 never had that situation before in my career. I've handled 4,957
18 ships as of today, you know, as a full pilot, and that doesn't
19 count the 600 I was on as a deputy, and I've never had a situation
20 like this happen with me. Okay?

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Just one pilot. There may have other been -- other
23 pilots that had this happen, but I've never had this happen to me.

24 Q. So, you know, coming out of this investigation, if all
25 of us have put our heads together and said we want to learn some

1 lessons from this accident, what lessons would you want us to
2 learn so that the next pilot on a vessel with similar handling
3 characteristics that encounters fog doesn't get the same situation
4 that you got?

5 A. I'm just one voice. I'm just one pilot, you know, but
6 if I had a magic wand, you know, and could change things, I'd tell
7 all my brothers and sisters that if it fogs in and you're out
8 there, stop. Just stop and drop the anchor, as safe as you can.

9 Q. What about the ships that are moving behind you?

10 A. Get everybody on the same page. We monitor 74, which is
11 the companies' here, you know, pilots' channel. Get on that radio
12 and coordinate and say, "Guys, I'm stopping," and just stop.
13 Because you've already -- by closing the bar, you've already
14 stopped all the arrivals and the sailings. The only thing you
15 haven't stopped are those vessels in transit, and if you want to
16 make the whole channel safer, you stop them, too. And that's how
17 you prevent collisions. That's how you -- all that. But then
18 it's just coordinating that movement.

19 Q. Well, in your experience, how many times has a pilot on
20 a vessel with vessels behind him, moving, stop traffic and say,
21 "I'm not going. I'm anchoring because this ship just isn't
22 handling very well and I need the visibility"?

23 A. It still happens today.

24 Q. It still happens?

25 A. Occasionally. Yes, sir. Occasionally you will have a

1 pilot that says, "I've had enough," and gets on 74 and says, "I'm
2 here. I've had enough. I'm stopping." And then you go ahead and
3 slow down your ship and drop the anchor, too.

4 Q. Um-hum. So it could be done?

5 A. Yes, it can be done. Yes.

6 Q. Um-hum. Okay. We are in the process of working on
7 another investigation of another accident that happened here
8 involving a vessel called the Summer Wind, --

9 A. Um-hum.

10 Q. -- and I think Captain Pizzitola was the captain on
11 that. And during the course of the investigation, he said that he
12 had difficulties with his PPU. Were you aware of that?

13 A. Yes, I had heard that. True. Like all electronics, you
14 sometimes can get a glitch, all right, and over the years,
15 (indiscernible) had a couple of those over the years, a glitch.
16 You know, it freezes or something like that and you can't use it
17 and turn it in and they'll figure out what's wrong with it. All
18 right.

19 Q. So when you get a glitch, that's what you do? You turn
20 it in?

21 A. Yeah. You take it to the office and they send it to
22 Austin and they go through it in Austin and figure out what's
23 wrong with it. And you've got a spare. We've got two or three
24 spares on standby, and you grab a spare and you go.

25 Q. How often does that happen to you?

1 A. Let's look. I think it's happened to me twice. That's
2 about it, you know. One was a -- they had gone in for a
3 re-certification and somehow it got a bug, a virus, and it was
4 doing all kinds of crazy stuff. So, I took it back and dropped it
5 off, and that's what it was. It was somehow -- when they were
6 re-certifying, it got some kind of virus.

7 Q. And you used your spare?

8 A. I used a spare, right.

9 Q. Okay. How did you learn of Captain Pizzitola's issue
10 with his PPU?

11 A. Just word of mouth, pals talking.

12 Q. Okay. Was there any message sent out, any formal
13 announcement from anybody regarding his PPU?

14 A. I don't remember any formal documentation. I do
15 remember that they sent it to Gravin (ph.) in Austin, but I don't
16 think they really figured out what was wrong with it, what
17 happened to it, why it happened to it, you know. It was nothing
18 that Mike could have done. They said it was way above his pay
19 grade, whatever took place there in the equipment.

20 Q. And when you learned about it and the other pilots
21 learned about it, it was just informal word of mouth?

22 A. Yeah. Just talking, right.

23 Q. Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And, Barry, when you hit a good
25 spot -- we've been going over an hour -- can we take a break?

1 DR. STRAUCH: We can do it now if you want.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Okay.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Are you done?

4 DR. STRAUCH: No, but I just have a couple more
5 questions, so why don't we take a break now.

6 MR. BETTS: I have one more when (indiscernible).

7 DR. STRAUCH: Okay.

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Well, we're here all day. I just
9 want to take a break.

10 DR. STRAUCH: Sure.

11 MR. JONES: Yeah.

12 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Get up and stretch.

13 MR. JONES: We're going off the record right now for a
14 break.

15 (Off the record.)

16 (On the record.)

17 MR. JONES: We're back on the record.

18 BY DR. STRAUCH:

19 Q. Captain, just a couple more questions, and if you need
20 another break, you know, just --

21 A. Okay. Thank you.

22 Q. Anytime, just say so. In zero vis' you said you lose
23 your visual reference point. What do you do as a pilot when you
24 lose your visual reference point?

25 A. When you lose it?

1 Q. Yeah.

2 A. You try to get it back as quick as possible, you know.
3 Using the laptop and the radar and other electronic needs to you.
4 You try your best to get back into the middle of the channel and
5 back into position, you know, using what means you have, you know.
6 I mean as you're trying to get back into position, okay, that's
7 what you're trying to do. You may not be able to see it because
8 of the fog, but using the laptop and the gyro and the radar and
9 ECDIS, whatever you've got, using all that equipment to get you
10 safely back to the middle. All right? You're doing everything
11 you can to get back in the middle. It's not like you go just
12 abandoning it or, you know, surrender. You continue to work to
13 get that vessel back in position.

14 Q. Okay. At what point in this sequence did you lose your
15 visual reference point?

16 A. Gosh. When I entered the fog.

17 Q. Okay.

18 A. And that's when you're in fog and you can't see. All
19 right? You lose all of that perspective. You lose everything.

20 Q. And you said that was about 9 miles from the collision
21 and about 55 minutes from the collision?

22 A. That was when I met Captain Teeter. I met Captain
23 Teeter at 11:34. That was an hour.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. An hour.

1 Q. Were you able to gain visual reference point at any time
2 thereafter?

3 A. Oh, not really. I could say when I hit Captain Evans I
4 did. I could see his bow. I couldn't see his house.

5 Q. Okay.

6 A. Right.

7 Q. What vessel was that, Captain Evans'?

8 A. The *Carla Maersk*.

9 Q. Okay. So until the accident, for an hour you didn't
10 have visual reference?

11 A. Nothing.

12 Q. Has that happened to you before?

13 A. Yes, it has.

14 Q. But again, is it safe to say the difference then was
15 that you were on a ship that had adequate handling
16 characteristics?

17 A. Correct.

18 Q. So what's the difference in terms of gaining visual
19 reference, your visual reference on a ship with adequate handling
20 and without adequate handling characteristics?

21 A. A vessel that handles better and will respond to your
22 commands, all right, you don't have -- I hate to say challenge,
23 but it works with you. It works with you, I mean when you're
24 adding the inputs to it, your engine orders, your rudder orders.
25 You know, when you're looking at -- you're looking at your laptop,

1 rate of turn. And what you apply, works. When you -- in my
2 situation, when I applied all of that, it wasn't working, you
3 know. So I really needed to see the head of that vessel. I
4 needed to see the beacons to get a reference point to deal with
5 this vessel. Other vessels that when you apply rudder and it
6 comes around and you take a rudder off or put rudder against it
7 and it stops, fetches up, all right, and does what you ask it to
8 do, all right, you don't have that problem. You know, you don't
9 have that -- you know, struggle. Where on this one, I mean it was
10 just -- we were working continuously to gain control of the
11 vessel.

12 Q. Okay. I see you brought glasses with you.

13 A. My reading glasses. Cheaters. Cheaters, yes, sir.

14 Q. You use them to read?

15 A. Yes, sir.

16 Q. Do you use them for distance at all?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Okay. Were you wearing glasses at the time of the
19 accident?

20 A. These, the cheaters, probably on my face like this.

21 Q. Okay, okay. So you could look up and see
22 (indiscernible) --

23 A. Yeah, and the rudder indicator.

24 Q. -- if you need to?

25 A. Yes, right.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. Yeah.

3 Q. I see also you're wearing a black wristband.

4 A. Yeah.

5 Q. What is that for?

6 A. Oh, that's -- I got that a couple years ago. It's a
7 Fitbit, and I was just curious to see how they work, see how it
8 tracked my resting and stuff like that. It does pretty good. It
9 tells me all the good stuff, you know. It tells me that I sleep
10 better when I'm on vacation 2 weeks. It tells me I eat better
11 when I'm on -- all right. It really does.

12 Q. Okay.

13 A. Yeah.

14 Q. And you track it on a --

15 A. Yeah, daily basis.

16 Q. Okay. Do you exercise also?

17 A. Oh, yes.

18 Q. What kind of exercise do you do?

19 A. I walk. Walk with the wife. She walks twice a day with
20 the dog. My wife. Try to walk with her at least once.

21 Q. How long --

22 A. Try to do 10,000 steps a day.

23 Q. Okay.

24 A. Right. And I average -- I think I average about that.
25 Maybe 9,000, maybe 10,000 steps a day.

1 Q. Okay. And about how long are your walks?
2 A. About a mile, mile-and-a-half.
3 Q. Okay.
4 A. Okay.
5 Q. How long does it take you?
6 A. About 30 minutes with the wife and the dog.
7 Q. Okay.
8 A. Um-hum.
9 Q. Now, if we were to look at your 719K, would there be
10 anything about medication or medical conditions that would pique
11 our interest?
12 A. Just explain, what is a 7 --
13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: That's a Coast Guard physical
14 exam form.
15 MR. REESER: Oh, you don't find anything. You'll find
16 -- and I've got to [REDACTED] and you'll find I
17 take [REDACTED]
18 BY DR. STRAUCH:
19 Q. Okay.
20 A. And then that's about all -- that's all you'll find.
21 Q. Okay.
22 A. And it's done, you know.
23 Q. Over-the-counter medications?
24 A. None.
25 Q. Okay, okay. That's it for me now, Captain. Thank you.

1 A. Well, when you say over-the-counter, I take
2 [REDACTED] like that. Okay, all right, but I
3 don't take like Tylenol, stuff like that on a regular basis. No,
4 none of that stuff.

5 Q. That's good.

6 A. Yeah.

7 DR. STRAUCH: All right. Thank you, Captain.

8 BY MR. JONES:

9 Q. Captain, Rob Jones again with the Safety Board. Just a
10 few follow-up questions. Did you have a cell phone on the bridge
11 with you that morning?

12 A. Yes, sir, I did.

13 Q. Were you using it at all?

14 A. I think the office called me once or twice, okay, but no
15 -- nothing -- maybe got a text from somebody, but no.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. If it comes to using it, no, I didn't.

18 Q. All right. And how about any of the bridge team from
19 the vessel? Did you notice anyone up there, any one of them using
20 a cell phone at the time?

21 A. I can't remember. The captain may have had a few phone
22 calls from the agent or something like that, you know, that he
23 took, but I wasn't really paying attention to the --

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. -- guys on the phone.

1 Q. Possibly anywhere between 10 and 15 minutes before the
2 accident, or was it before that --

3 A. No, sir.

4 Q. -- that you got the --

5 A. No.

6 Q. Okay. Do you have a pilot number?

7 A. 133.

8 Q. 133. And you had mentioned about the pilot -- the notes
9 for this vessel, the 1.5 meters by the stern.

10 A. One-and-a-half feet.

11 Q. I'm sorry. One-and-a-half feet. We're using meters and
12 feet.

13 A. That's a lot, man.

14 Q. Meters and feet. All for this job.

15 A. Yes.

16 Q. All right. One-and-a-half feet. Do you think that
17 would have made a difference in what happened in this accident?

18 A. I don't know if it have made a difference or not. Okay?
19 I really don't know, the way that this thing handled, you know,
20 the foot-and-a-half by the stern. It might have helped a little
21 bit. All right? Okay?

22 Q. And what's the (indiscernible) by the stern going to do
23 for the handling characteristic of it?

24 A. It gives you a little bit more -- your handling ability.
25 You know, that's all it is. You know, the trim.

1 Q. The notes that you were talking about, is that a running
2 -- like if something else -- like you now encountered a issue with
3 the fog, is that --

4 A. Yes. I would --

5 Q. -- something that would be added to the notes?

6 A. I will eventually sit down and pull that form up, Ship
7 of Concern, and I'll write my, you know, notes and have it
8 submitted, you know, to the office. We've really -- over the
9 years we've -- it's one of those things to improve our system to
10 help pilots, all right, and it'll show up highlighted on the
11 worksheet. You go over there and click that ship, and then all of
12 a sudden pops up the Ship of Concern form and you'll see the notes
13 and you'll see who the pilot was, and there's one or more. You
14 just go through the pages. You know, there might be one, there
15 might be two.

16 Q. And do you write them yourself?

17 A. Yes, sir. You do.

18 Q. So what would your notes say now about this ship with
19 regard to fog?

20 A. Same thing. It'll be, you know, in reduced visibility
21 this ship should not be moved, period, you know.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. Especially -- and I'll make little notes like "loaded,"
24 all right. I'm going to say anything over 30 feet, even keel, you
25 know, if there's restricted visibility on a channel, this ship

1 should not be moved.

2 Q. Okay. And I've got one final question, Captain. Did
3 you initiate the one-whistle pass with the *Carla Maersk*?

4 A. Yes, sir, I did. I called Captain Evans and said one
5 whistle. Yes, sir, I did.

6 Q. Did you have control of the vessel at that time?

7 A. Yes, sir, I did.

8 Q. All right. And you thought the pass would be --

9 A. Correct. I did.

10 Q. And whereabouts would you -- I know we've had the
11 collision, but whereabouts did you figure you'd pass him on the --

12 A. Meet him?

13 Q. Meet him. Where would you meet him?

14 A. My computer kept saying 89 to 90 where I had designated
15 (indiscernible). Right there.

16 Q. Right at (indiscernible)?

17 A. Yes, sir. Right there at those beacons. That's where
18 -- you know, when I hailed Larry, the location where we'd meet, it
19 was -- it all kept going back to that position right there.

20 Q. And we had some indication from the crew -- I know I
21 said one more question, but --

22 A. Okay.

23 Q. We had some indication from the crew about the car
24 carrier that passed by.

25 A. Um-hum.

1 Q. But what was the distance off hull to hull when the car
2 carrier passed by, if you could estimate it?

3 A. Seventy-five, 80 feet.

4 Q. Is that what's normal for passing?

5 A. It's always close. It really is, you know.

6 Q. So it changes, but what would be average?

7 A. When you've got, you know, channels 500 and, you know,
8 30 feet wide, you know, it's going to be close, you know, all the
9 time.

10 Q. Was this closer this day due to the fog and the
11 handling, or was it close regards to average, average close?

12 A. It was close. I mean I didn't give him much room, you
13 know. Tried to stay close to the middle as I could. So, yes,
14 sir, it was closer than --

15 Q. Oh, that's right.

16 A. Yep.

17 Q. I remember now you said --

18 A. Right.

19 Q. -- that you were hugging the middle.

20 A. Yes.

21 MR. JONES: Okay. That's all I have right now, Captain.
22 Thank you. We'll go back around the room one more time.

23 MR. REESER: Okay.

24

25

1 Q. We've talked about the consideration of anchoring a few
2 times, and you've told us, you know, why it would probably have
3 been inadvisable. But during the course of the time that you had
4 the steering difficulties, did you ever run through your mind a
5 procedure in which you considered anchoring and then discounted
6 it?

7 A. Yes, I did, and I'll be honest with you. I didn't --
8 there was a lot of things that went through my mind, you know,
9 after I met Captain (indiscernible). One was anchoring, one was,
10 you know, actually reaching out there and letting Larry know and
11 Jim know that I was having a problem. Okay? But I felt that I
12 could make this maneuver safely, all right, if I kept close to
13 Jim. All right? I just felt I could do that. All right? But it
14 was the speed, by the reduction of the speed and that reducing the
15 flow of water across that rudder that -- you know, that. That was
16 the other variable along with the fog, you know.

17 Q. Okay. In the vessel notes that the NTSB just talked
18 about, you said you would advise that the ship not be moved in
19 restricted visibility.

20 A. If it's loaded, yes, sir.

21 Q. If it's loaded.

22 A. Um-hum.

23 Q. My question is, though, what would you advise if you
24 were moving the ship and you ran into a fog such as you did? What
25 would your advice be in a --

1 A. Go to anchor safely, if you can. You know, go to anchor
2 safely, if you can. All right?

3 Q. Do you plan on putting that note in there?

4 A. Yes, I do. (indiscernible) my notes, yes. If you're
5 inbound -- if this ship comes back again and this same scenario
6 takes place again, you know -- and I hope the pilots, whoever has
7 it, looks at my notes -- that they think about it, that if they're
8 in restricted visibility, fog, physically fog, that they think
9 about going to anchor if they're -- got even keep over 30 feet.

10 Q. And the other questioning concerning, though, is ship
11 notes or -- well, it was ship notes. Is the Coast Guard made
12 aware of those ship notes, like VTS? Are they -- and you may not
13 be the person to ask that, but to your knowledge are you aware
14 that the VTS, Vessel Traffic Service, and the Coast Guard's made
15 aware of ship notes that ships that are transiting Houston channel
16 have difficulty in some way?

17 A. I don't know that. All I know is this was an aid that
18 we had developed for the pilots, so I don't know if they have the
19 opportunity to, because we do pass this information along to other
20 organizations, but I don't know if they have that privilege to
21 review it or not. I don't know.

22 Q. Well, an opinion question. Do you think it may be
23 helpful if the vessel traffic service was aware of some of these
24 ships that are difficult handling?

25 A. It might. It might be, yes, sir. It might help,

1 because, just as a note, that's what they are. They're ship
2 concerns or a note to basically be aware; be aware this is what
3 happened to me last time. All right? And I reviewed them and I
4 felt very confident I could get this ship safely up here in the
5 conditions at the time.

6 [REDACTED] Okay. Thank you.

7 DR. STRAUCH: I'm done.

8 MR. BETTS: No, thank you.

9 MR. PULMER: No more questions. Thank you.

10 MR. USHER: Mike Usher, Houston Pilot Commission.

11 BY MR. USHER:

12 Q. Captain Reeser, you said when you reviewed those notes,
13 are they -- do they go to you by your dispatcher or when you're
14 ordered out for a job on your -- by computer, e-mail or --

15 A. Yes. They're in the worksheet itself.

16 Q. Okay.

17 A. And the ship will be highlighted, and you go and
18 highlight it. You know, move your cursor over it, click it, and
19 up comes the notes on that vessel, and then you renew them, okay,
20 but that's how it's displayed on our worksheet or --

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. -- shipping --

23 Q. Is that the dispatch sheet?

24 A. Your dispatch sheet.

25 Q. Vessel name, pilot.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. And the notes will be attached to each --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- screen's vessel?

5 A. Like I said, where it's got the ship's name, --

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. -- it'll be underlined and highlighted.

8 Q. Okay. So that's updated information and it's available

9 at each call-out?

10 A. Correct.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Okay, good. I understand you boarded the *Conti Peridot*

14 at anchorage?

15 A. No, no. Underway.

16 Q. Oh, it was underway?

17 A. Underway there right around 1 and 2 (indiscernible).

18 Q. Okay. That's correct. I'm sorry.

19 A. Underway. Yes, sir.

20 Q. When we interviewed the *Conti Peridot* crew, they said

21 that they made anchor --

22 A. Underway, yes, for me to get --

23 Q. -- and then came to the pilot station --

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. -- to pick you up. That's correct. And it's my

1 understanding you were going to City Dock 24?

2 A. Correct.

3 Q. And how long of a transit would you have expected that
4 to have lasted?

5 A. It's about 6 1/2 hours.

6 Q. 6 1/2 hours.

7 A. Right. From the time I boarded till I get up there,
8 stopped the ship at Brady's (ph.) and back at the 24 and put all
9 the lines up, the gang would have docked about 6 1/2, 7 hours.

10 Q. What is your experience on how many -- just an estimate,
11 how many vessels do you think that you would have passed from your
12 point where you boarded inbound all the way to City 24?

13 A. On an average day, a minimum of three. Meeting
14 situations?

15 Q. Meeting, passing, those type of thing.

16 A. Meeting, yeah. Meeting? On the average, three. Same
17 thing in the outbound (indiscernible). Meeting, about three, I'd
18 say, I'd average.

19 Q. That would probably be a conservative average?

20 A. Yes, it would be.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I mean if you're averaging, you know, 55 on a -- when
23 we're back on a normal day and you're moving 55, you know,
24 vessels, it spikes to 60, you know. Yes, sir, I do. I mean at
25 least a minimum of three coming and going.

1 MR. USHER: Okay. Thank you. That's all I have.

2 MR. MORRIS: No further questions.

3 MR. ANDERSON: Dave Anderson, owner's rep from Maersk.

4 BY MR. ANDERSON:

5 Q. The captain in his interview the other day mentioned
6 that he noticed that the ship (indiscernible) about 5 knots below
7 his limited to zero steerage on the vessel. Was that indicated in
8 the pilot -- no, sir?

9 A. No, sir. That was never mentioned to me --

10 Q. Okay.

11 A. -- on my worksheet over the last -- I wrote everything
12 down that was on his pilot card, and there was nothing mentioned,
13 you know, and I write everything down, and there was nothing
14 there. It said dead slow was 4.1 knots, and there was nothing in
15 there saying it doesn't steer on the pilot card. There was
16 nothing there, and he didn't tell me.

17 Q. So you didn't have any verbal communication?

18 A. No. He didn't say that the ship handled poorly at dead
19 slow.

20 MR. ANDERSON: Okay. Thank you. No further --

21 DR. STRAUCH: Just a couple questions, --

22 MR. REESER: Yes, sir.

23 DR. STRAUCH: -- Captain.

24 This is Barry Strauch from the NTSB.

25 BY DR. STRAUCH:

1 Q. Was there a point in the voyage where you thought that
2 the accident's going to happen?

3 A. Yes, sir. When the ship came off that bank that last
4 time and I put the ship full ahead, I was so far to the right that
5 I knew that the -- she would take a sheer off that bank, and I was
6 hoping that there would be enough increase in revolutions from
7 half ahead to full ahead, enough water thrust on the rudder, when
8 I come off the bank she would fetch up and come away from Captain
9 Evans, but it didn't happen. Right there, that 5 minutes, 4
10 minutes, 2 minutes before the collision.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. Right. Yeah.

13 Q. So at that point you knew.

14 A. Oh, yeah. I knew it was -- yeah, I'm going to hit him,
15 yeah.

16 Q. Okay. Have you been involved in other incidents or
17 accidents?

18 A. No, sir, have not.

19 Q. First one.

20 A. Yes, sir.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. Let's say I've had people run into me; wasn't my fault,
23 you know.

24 Q. Okay.

25 A. But I haven't been involved in a collision.

1 Q. Okay. I think [REDACTED] asked you about using VTS,
2 informing them of ship handling characteristics. Let me ask you a
3 broader question about VTS, and I guess this sort of sums up all
4 the questions you've been asked about VTS. If you could, if you
5 had complete control over VTS, what would you want to see VTS do
6 differently as a result of this accident that would prevent a
7 similar accident, given everything you know about what happened in
8 this accident and your experience on the vessel and what you know
9 VTS can do?

10 A. I mean we (indiscernible) impact weather to give us an
11 idea what the weather is going to do. I mean they're a government
12 agency. I mean you'd think they'd have all the resources in the
13 world to come up with a, you know -- if they said, hey, you know,
14 it looks like we've got a situation where the fog's developing,
15 all right, they could broadcast that as a warning. Okay? I mean
16 it just seems that, you know, if you're looking at how to help the
17 mariner, all right, okay, if -- they broadcast all kinds of stuff,
18 everything from, you know, channel closures to, you know, all
19 kinds of stuff, all right, moving pipelines. If there was a way
20 that they -- and if they help that part out -- I don't know if
21 they could or not, you know -- say, you know, we've got -- we see
22 this developing, you know, or they've got the weather division,
23 you know. Say, you know, "It looks like we've got fog developing
24 on the channel pretty quickly, you know. We need to broadcast
25 this out quickly," you know, no hesitation. But now, quicker

1 response, I don't know if you want to call it that or not, that's
2 about it. Okay? I mean they do a really good job on everything.
3 So I think I may report in, they tell me about all the outbound
4 traffic, you know, what's going on, tugboat traffic, stuff like
5 that. I mean when I'm sailing, getting off a dock, I mean I
6 report in and I tell them where I'm at and they inform me of
7 everything taking place. So I don't have anything bad to say.
8 Absolutely nothing. They do their job. But if you're asking what
9 they could do to make it better, gosh, I mean if there was some
10 way that, like all of us, you know, you could handle a phone.

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. That one we could do.

13 Q. Is there a system in place now where mariners such as
14 yourself will encounter fog, broadcast that information to other
15 vessels so they know --

16 A. Oh, yeah. I'll get -- like when I got to Redfish and
17 checked in with the Coast Guard, I told -- it was reducing. I was
18 losing visibility, okay, and tell them to make that note and
19 they'll pass that information on to the next group of mariners.

20 Q. Okay.

21 A. Right. Okay. But I always do that. I always make sure
22 that, you know, VTS knows that I'm losing my visibility wherever
23 I'm at, you know, in the channel, trying to put the word out. Let
24 them have the knowledge and then re-broadcast that knowledge out.

25 Q. So mariners are -- they sort of honor the system and

1 they provide their own --

2 A. Yeah, right. You hear it all up and down the channel.
3 Someone will say (indiscernible) river that, you know, the fog's
4 setting in and they'll -- you know, it'll pass on.

5 Q. Okay. Had any observations been made the morning of the
6 accident regarding the location of the fog that you encountered?

7 A. Impact weather. Okay. Mike just sent out an e-mail. I
8 thought it was interesting. He said, you know -- it explained how
9 it happened and what -- why it took place so quickly. But they
10 want forecasting now. But after reviewing what took place, you
11 know, they -- I know, after the fact, they said this is what took
12 place, this is why we had the fog, and this is why it happened so
13 quickly. Right. All these events took place.

14 Q. Did any mariners report encountering fog along the
15 locations where you encountered fog that morning?

16 A. Oh, yeah. People were talking fog, I mean, as it was
17 happening. As it was -- I mean it was forming that quickly, that
18 fast. I mean you could see it right in front of your eyes
19 reaching the dew point and then just -- there it is. It's just
20 forming.

21 Q. So when you encountered it, had you been warned by other
22 mariners?

23 A. No, no. I hadn't been warned by anybody. I said it was
24 just happening right then, you know. I had heard a few folks up
25 above, up above where my location, said, "We're starting to see a

1 little fog form." All right? But it was all just boom, boom,
2 boom.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. Right.

5 Q. And that's why you didn't learn of it, because mariners
6 hadn't encountered it. It happened that quick.

7 A. That's correct. It was happening real time, that quick.
8 And it does. It happens. It's amazing. It really is.

9 Q. How often does that happen?

10 A. Some years we have bad fog seasons. Sometimes we have,
11 you know, none of the fog. But this year we have a really bad
12 fog. This is the second time I've seen this happen. The last
13 time that I watched it happened was approaching the ICW, you know.
14 It was out about at 41 and 42, and I sat there and watched the dew
15 point meet and it went from unlimited visibility to zero in just
16 seconds. Just amazed me.

17 DR. STRAUCH: Okay. Thank you, Captain.

18 BY MR. JONES:

19 Q. Captain, it's back to me. I'm just going to follow up
20 and this will be the end of the interview. I just want to get
21 your recollection as to where the bridge team was located. The
22 helmsman.

23 A. The helmsman was at his station. The captain was -- I
24 think I'm going to back just -- see, it was the center console,
25 the quartermaster was here, and then there was another lookout or

1 the other quartermaster as a lookout was there in the wheelhouse,
2 and then there was a mate, I believe, back here on the starboard
3 side somewhere in this vicinity. This is --

4 Q. If you draw it, we'll --

5 A. Yes, sir.

6 Q. We'll initial it and --

7 A. Right. Yes, sir. This is the way it was. There's the
8 helmsman. His quartermaster was here, and I'm -- here's the gyro,
9 here's my laptop and here's me. That's where I was at. I think
10 the captain was back here. There was a console here and there's a
11 computer here. I think the captain was somewhere in this ballpark
12 right here. I think the mate was over here, and the other
13 quartermaster was right here.

14 Q. And do you know if he was the quartermaster or just
15 another member of the crew?

16 A. He might have been just another member of the crew. I
17 thought he might be the relieving quartermasters.

18 Q. Do you remember --

19 A. And that the --

20 Q. -- if he Filipino or --

21 A. Yeah. They were all Filipino.

22 Q. Okay.

23 A. And, in fact, this bridge team was all Filipino, but I
24 believe the chief mate was Eastern European.

25 Q. And was he up there at all?

1 A. No, sir. He wasn't there. He was there after the
2 accident, but he wasn't there before.

3 Q. Okay.

4 A. He may have come up just to visit and left, you know.
5 But, no, I believe -- yes, I think that's -- because most of them
6 were on the starboard side, the rest of the crew members, except
7 for the quartermaster. There was no one over here on the port
8 side, that I remember.

9 Q. When you started running into reduced visibility, was
10 any of the bridge team manning -- sitting in front of a radar,
11 watching the radar?

12 A. This mate was right here. There's a radar here. I said
13 I wanted my radar here at 3 mile as a presentation next to the
14 ECDIS, and he was over here monitoring this radar, right about
15 here somewhere.

16 Q. Okay. Was the captain in that radar?

17 A. No, sir.

18 Q. Okay.

19 A. The captain wasn't in that radar. The captain, like I
20 said -- the captain was walking around during most of the inbound
21 voyage, but a lot of it was over here, checking e-mails. I
22 presume that's what he's doing. All right.

23 Q. And how about from the time after the car carrier, --

24 A. Correct.

25 Q. -- after you met and passed the car carrier, do you have

1 any recollection of the heading swing? You said the channel --
2 the main course up the channel was 341?

3 A. Right.

4 Q. And that's the true course? Remember the heading swing
5 that your vessel encountered prior to the collision?

6 A. It was a -- no. It was interesting. It wasn't a
7 diving. It was a bodily movement. All right? And then it kind
8 of flattened out and then it went towards the bank, which I don't
9 really understand what really -- when I met Captain Conkay, I was
10 like probably maybe 344, 345, and then I thought, oh, yeah, I'm
11 okay, I got it. Then all of a sudden she just started moving to
12 the left and I'm going, you know, maybe she's falling into that --
13 behind Jim. But it was delayed. I mean that's where we went,
14 okay, and I had her hard over to get her back over, you know.

15 Q. But then it drove back to the right.

16 A. Yes. We're doing back to the right and then back to the
17 left.

18 Q. As it was going to the right -- and again, I'm not --

19 A. Yep.

20 Q. -- trying to make you guess. You've got your computer.

21 A. Don't know the heading.

22 Q. Right. And we've got the --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. We've got the data. We'll see it.

25 A. Right.

1 Q. But at any point did the mate or the captain ever
2 comment?

3 A. Say anything?

4 Q. Yeah.

5 A. No, sir. Nothing was said. That's why I said earlier
6 was that I don't think they knew what was going on.

7 Q. But that would be evident -- and that would be visual on
8 the ECDIS or --

9 A. Oh, you would get vision on a radar, the ECDIS and
10 everything, --

11 Q. Okay.

12 A. -- that movement. It wasn't easy movement, --

13 Q. No.

14 A. -- I mean. Yes, I mean when you move across a channel
15 200 feet one way and then 200 feet back the other way, that's 400
16 feet of movement. That's a great deal of movement in just a short
17 time. You see that.

18 Q. When the visibility started to reduce, did the captain
19 ask you at any time, "Is there a possibility of anchoring?"

20 A. No, he didn't.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. But like I said before, they did their job. I mean we
23 had boatswain -- an ordinary in the bow. We had lookouts. I mean
24 we were doing all that stuff. Okay. Everybody was doing their
25 job.

1 Q. Okay.

2 A. They may not have had their head in the radar, all
3 right, or -- you know, but -- yes, sir.

4 Q. No. I appreciate you --

5 A. Right.

6 Q. -- saying they did everything that you asked them to do.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. I was just wondering (indiscernible).

9 A. Everybody was polite, courteous, respectful.

10 MR. JONES: All right. Thank you, Captain. That's all
11 I have. That'll conclude this interview. I appreciate your time.
12 Thank you for being here.

13 MR. REESER: Yes, sir.

14 (Whereupon, the interview was concluded.)
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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF: M/V *CONTI PERIDOT* COLLISION WITH
 THE M/T *CARLA MAERSK* IN THE
 HOUSTON SHIP CHANNEL
 MARCH 9, 2015
 Interview of Chris Reeser

DOCKET NUMBER: DCA-15-MM-017

PLACE: Houston, Texas

DATE: March 14, 2015

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

Karen L. Banks
Transcriber