

Interview of Angela Bongiorno
Director of Personnel- Staten Island Ferries

Two (2) pages total including this cover

ANGELA BONGIORNO-Director of Personnel-Staten Island Ferries

Richard Smith's regular hours were from 1330 to 2130 for at least the previous month. Records will indicate schedule for the times before that, but Angela indicates that he had been working those hours for a year. The Tuesday before the accident, October 14, he had worked 1 ½ hours of overtime, until 2300.

Captain Gansas worked the same shift. On the day of the accident he was filling in for Capt. Cavella.

Capt. Smith talked to her in April or May about his request for a voluntary downgrade from Captain to Assistant Captain. The Ferry organization had announced that they would be cutting back from four ferries per hour in rush hour to three, and consequently, they would be laying off 32 employees among the various operating levels. Since Captain Smith was an "out of title" captain (a NYC civil service title), he was facing a lay off from the captain position. By voluntarily downgrading to his permanent position, he would not be downgraded, and would gain in seniority by going to a reduced rank.

Angela told him that by voluntarily stepping down, he could not automatically go to his Captain's position. The only way he could regain that position would be through the formal application process for a vacancy or from the promotion list. In other words, he would be just like another internal applicant and his previous employment in that position would not make a difference.

When he talked to her he seemed calm about it. He told her why he was doing it, and added another reason, that by voluntarily stepping down he would save another captain from lay off (that captain was Michael Gansas, who was acting as an "Out of Title" captain, a classification unique to the Staten Island Ferry). Someone acting in a "provisional" position gets the pay of that position while working in it, and while on his days off. Someone working as an "out of title" position gets the pay of that position only while working in it. On days off and otherwise, he gets the pay of his permanent title.

The layoffs lasted only 30 days. After that time the 4th ferry was restored and the laid off crewmembers called back. All but two, who had taken other jobs in the interim, were called back. Captain Smith had been the only crewmember to request the downgrade.

Morale was poor in May when the layoffs occurred, and when the crew was called back a month later, moral was improved, and was good.