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P R O C E E D I N G S

12:40 p.m.

MR. CURTIS: Good afternoon. It's October 16, 2003 at 12:40 p.m. We're here to do an interview regarding the accident on the Andrew J. Barberi with Chief Engineer Charlie Covella. Thanks for coming in, sir.

THE WITNESS: I'm glad to be here.

MR. CURTIS: This investigation is a safety investigation, not a legal investigation. We're not here to lay blame to any party or person, just to get the facts and see what happened and hopefully prevent something like this from happening again in the future.

The forum we'll use here is I'll open up the questioning, we'll go around the table and identify ourselves, just so the transcriptionist knows who is speaking and as each person speaks in turn, we'll identify ourselves to make it easier for the transcriptionist.

We'll go around the table asking questions. One person will ask questions at a time so we don't interfere with one's questions and if we need to, we'll go around a second time, which I may well have to do, there may be a few follow up questions. If you're ready, we'll get started.

1 THE WITNESS: Okay. So it's going to be
2 you're going to ask me questions based on what you
3 know, rather than have me give you what I know?

4 MR. CURTIS: No. We're going to give you the
5 opportunity to give us what you know.

6 THE WITNESS: Okay.

7 MR. CURTIS: First we'll identify ourselves.
8 I'm Brian Curtis with the NTSB, Marine Engineering
9 Accident Investigator.

10 MR. PARKER: Dave Parker, Vessel Inspections,
11 U.S. Coast Guard.

12 THE WITNESS: I'm Charles Covella, Chief
13 Engineer. I was the Chief Engineer on the A.J. Barberi
14 during the accident.

15 MR. MCDERMOTT: Sean McDermott, Staten Island
16 Ferry, Chief Engineer.

17 MR. CURTIS: Okay. We'll get started.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. CURTIS:

20 Q Mr. Covella, your background, what licenses
21 do you hold?

22 A Chief Engineer, wide open diesel, oceans.

23 Q How long have you been with DOT?

24 A I started here the end of May 1988.

25 Q You started as?

1 A I started here as a Marine Oiler.

2 Q Just a little of your background prior to --

3 A I was a Chief Engineer on the outside, prior
4 to coming here. There was a strike and I didn't cross
5 the picket line. My brother happened to be working
6 here and he told me to put in for a job, but the only
7 way I was able to start here was through coming in as a
8 Marine Oiler.

9 There was a rapid referral for Chiefs, that
10 wasn't open, so I came in as a Marine Oiler. I think I
11 was a Marine Oiler for about 11 months and then I
12 became a Marine Engineer and then when the rapid
13 referral civil service came up, I was chosen off that
14 list.

15 Q Okay. So you've been a Chief ever since?

16 A Since -- I'm not 100 percent, I would say '90
17 or '91.

18 Q Are you always on the same vessel or do you
19 go to various vessels?

20 A various vessels.

21 Q You've been on the A.J. Barberi numerous
22 times?

23 A Yes.

24 Q What do you work for a schedule, days on,
25 days off and hours?

1 A Well, I just started this schedule Tuesday,
2 the 1:30 to 9:30. I had just come off the night boat
3 and the Chief Engineer that that's his bid job is
4 Richie Rizzo (phonetic). I bid his vacation. I wanted
5 to go afternoon, so I took that job for two weeks and
6 that was my second day on it.

7 Q What I'd like to have you do is just go
8 through when you came on watch yesterday and then right
9 through the routine of the watch and then into the
10 accident, any detail you can give us involving the
11 accident.

12 A Crew change, the saw the boat was tied up, I
13 think it was over in 69th Street, getting ready for --
14 they were doing a pre-Coast Guard, I believe. They
15 come around around 13:00 to a running slip. I was
16 waiting for the boat to come into the slip to relieve
17 the watch, the morning watch.

18 I boarded the boat after it was secured and
19 the engineering crew was coming up on the main deck and
20 I had done a lot of work the day before on the day
21 before on the boilers and reach rods for the pre-Coast
22 Guard and I asked them was everything all right and
23 they were real satisfied that everything was completed.

24 So they were talking about the bid that I'm
25 on now and we discussed me taking another bid over the

1 weekend, things like that. As they were departing, I
2 asked them, I said is everything all right down below.

3 He goes everything is fine, everything is in perfect
4 shape and I says all right.

5 So I go down there, I assume the watch and I
6 read the log, checked things around and the routine is,
7 you know, I do the log sheet and the time sheets and
8 look at some work orders, if they've wrote them, but
9 there was none.

10 My crew, meantime the Oilers go out and they
11 do their thing, they check the oil levels in all the
12 engines and check levels of the water, they check the
13 generator, they go to the Voyt-Schneider rooms and
14 check that.

15 The Marine Engineer, he checks the
16 generators. This is all between 13:30 and say 14:30.
17 You know, meantime there's always somebody coming in
18 after they do something, because I always want to know
19 where they are, like I could see them in the engine
20 room, you know.

21 I did the log, I remember filling out the
22 time for the 14:30 trip leaving and I never got a
23 chance to do the arrival. I think I wrote down 14:00,
24 14:30, I'm not sure what I did.

25 But anyway, we're in the control room. We

1 didn't have -- usually somebody will make coffee and
2 both Oilers that are assigned to that were out sick, so
3 I had guys on overtime and nobody had a key for the
4 locker, so they were working on that, to make some
5 coffee, they were taking the lock off.

6 And then they come over, Trevor was standing
7 in front of me or one of the Oilers, we were talking
8 about something and I started feeling like we went
9 aground, like the boat was shaking. I looked up and I
10 said what the -- we're going aground and he's still
11 going full speed ahead, I couldn't figure it out.

12 So I jumped up off the settee and I went over
13 to the controls to check and I says what's going on,
14 how come nobody is giving me a bell to take controls,
15 why are they still going full speed. I know something
16 was wrong. At first I thought we went aground, but
17 that was like a split second. Matter of fact, it was
18 long enough for me to mention. I said what, are we
19 going aground and then my next thought was that we ran
20 over a little boat. That's what -- because that's what
21 the rumbling felt like from underneath.

22 So I told -- I tried calling the pilot houses
23 and there was no response and nobody picked up the
24 phone and I said what the hell is going on, so I sent
25 -- I gave one Oiler instructions to go up and find out

1 what happened and the other Oiler I sent up to the
2 pilot house to tell the Captain I have no
3 communications.

4 But in the meantime, as he was leaving, the
5 -- what happened was as they were leaving, that's when
6 the debris fell into the engine room, so I said oh, my
7 God. We were -- you know, I thought we were broad
8 sided by a ship. So they came back in. You know, they
9 never left. They were on their way when that stuff
10 fell into the engine room and I says all right. I says
11 let me call and then the phone rang.

12 I picked it up, nothing, so I called back,
13 called back, nothing. Phone rang again, picked it up,
14 said Chief, you know, control room, and nothing and
15 several times I tried both pilot houses, I got no
16 response. The phone was ringing a lot and it was from
17 the bridge, because there's a different ring from
18 anywhere on deck compared to the pilot house. It's a
19 much louder ring, so I knew it was the pilot house
20 trying to call me.

21 I was waiting. In the meantime the engines
22 had slowed down and the pitch was taken off. So now
23 then I told them, I said run up to the Captain and tell
24 him I have no communication with him. So they went out
25 and they came back, their faces were ashen and he

1 couldn't even talk.

2 So I said all right, here's what we're going
3 to do. So Trevor went out and -- he went out and he
4 came back a couple of minutes later and I said listen,
5 you guys stay in here. Trevor, stay in front of this
6 control thing. I don't know what's going on, I'm going
7 to find out. I have to get in touch with the Captain
8 to find out what's the next -- what are we going to do.

9 When I went out onto the main deck, I thought
10 it was a bomb. Because of the destruction, my first
11 reaction was a bomb. Then when I looked and I saw,
12 then I could see that we had hit the concrete pier,
13 because we were just coming off it and then I saw the
14 carnage there and I started helping people.

15 People were crying out for help, the ones
16 that had had their legs ripped off and things and I was
17 trying to -- I couldn't do anything, I was looking for
18 people that might have been bleeding profusely, but
19 they weren't. I was amazed that there was very little
20 blood.

21 So I helped this one woman whose legs were
22 ripped off because she must have recognized me, because
23 I see these people all the time. One of the other
24 things that I seen that you should mention to
25 investigate is the construction workers that were on

1 there, they're regular passengers. They're real big
2 guys and they sit outside of the engine room, they sit,
3 going towards the Staten Island end, a little bit
4 forward of the Staten Island end. That's usually where
5 they sit. There's usually about four or five of them
6 sometimes.

7 They were drastically trying to get one of
8 their friends out of the wreckage and -- because I
9 asked a couple of them to help me, you know, to take
10 the debris off some people and -- but they were trying
11 to get their friend out, so I went about doing it.

12 Then I realized I had to get up to the
13 Captain. So I told the people that were begging for
14 help, I said I'll be back, I'll be back, I promise. So
15 I ran up to the pilot house, I couldn't get up to the
16 Staten Island end, so I went around and went up to the
17 New York end and I was surprised.

18 I was like stunned when I hit the saloon deck
19 and I saw all those passengers. You know, they didn't
20 have a clue what had happened, what the carnage was
21 down below and for a minute I was going to grab some
22 big guys to help me, but then I decided I have to get
23 to the Captain, so I ran up to the Captain and good
24 thing I did, because he was in the Staten Island pilot
25 house and he said Charlie, I need help. His words were

1 that Richie Smith had lost it and he was -- he couldn't
2 focus. He was pacing up there in a daze.

3 I don't know, you're going to have to ask the
4 Captain, I'm not sure whether they had control in the
5 Staten Island end or whether he chose -- because
6 obviously he couldn't land the boat Staten Island end,
7 it was destroyed, so maybe the Captain made the
8 decision at that time to transfer to the New York end
9 so he could go in that way, so I had to make the
10 transfer for him, because you need two people to do it.

11 So he ran over to the New York end, he rang
12 me the bell, so I transferred the power. In the
13 meantime, John Walden was calling me. I picked up the
14 radio, because I knew the Captain wasn't there yet and
15 I saw there was two ambulances and I thought -- you
16 know, it didn't dawn on me that they couldn't have been
17 there already, but when I saw the ambulance, I said
18 John, you need more than two ambulances, it's really
19 bad, it's bad.

20 Then he was trying to give me instructions to
21 do something, I think it was about a tug boat, but that
22 wasn't my -- that was up to the Captain to make those
23 decisions and once he got into the pilot house, then
24 the Captain rang me the bell, I transferred and he was
25 about to communicate with everybody.

1 BY MR. CURTIS:

2 Q I guess you had gone down below trying to
3 help out the others.

4 A I knew the extent of our damage was the Voyt-
5 Schneider area. I saw the staircase that caved in on
6 top of that. I can't have access to that and I figured
7 maybe that's what happened, you know, a ram or an air
8 line or something might have got damaged, but I never
9 got down there, I couldn't get down there.

10 In the engine room we had an air line break
11 or a tank, something ruptured and the debris that fell
12 really didn't hit -- there was a big, heavy box it
13 looked like that went down, it really didn't hit
14 anything vital. It landed on the main deck between the
15 engines.

16 Basically, the controls, the Captain had
17 complete control of the vessel. Even after the
18 accident he was able to get in and he did real well.
19 As they were taking him to the hospital yesterday, I
20 knew he was in a state of -- I don't know if shock is
21 the word or what, but he didn't know, because I asked
22 him had he been on the main deck and he said no and I
23 advised him not to go because there was still -- this
24 was after we were in and the rescue workers were on the
25 boat and somebody had told him that up in the police

1 station and he was -- he went into -- he got upset and
2 he had to be taken to the hospital.

3 Not that I saw he was that upset, but
4 obviously somebody else diagnosed it and before he left
5 I hugged him and I says you did everything you could, I
6 said you did the right thing, you got the boat in, you
7 got the rescue workers on. You know, as was as I was
8 concerned, he did what -- after what happened, I don't
9 know exactly what happened before the accident except
10 what the Assistant Captain told me, he passed out, I
11 couldn't understand why we hit at such a -- you know,
12 full speed, and that sort of -- you know, that would
13 answer the question.

14 But the thing that bothers me is the rumbling
15 that we felt, it felt like it lasted at least long
16 enough for me to tell my crew we're going aground, how
17 come he didn't slow down and I had time to jump up to
18 look at the situation, our pitch, thinking that maybe
19 he can't, maybe he lost control and he's going to ring
20 me a telegraph to take control, so we were standing by.

21 Then I told one of my Oilers, go see what
22 happened and as he opened the engine room door -- how
23 many seconds am I talking here, right? He went out and
24 that's when the debris came into the engine room, so
25 now that's mid ship.

1 What bothers me is how did people get killed
2 beyond that. That bothers me. They found three bodies
3 there and it was beyond the engine room, so that was
4 three-quarters of the way and why couldn't they get out
5 of the way. That's troubling me right now.

6 The same thing with the construction workers.
7 They were about mid ship and they even got hit. I
8 don't know how the vessel actually hit the concrete. I
9 don't know if it hit it on an angle or how it did, but
10 it took everybody on that side. They couldn't get out
11 of the way.

12 I imagine -- here's what I think you should
13 do is get in touch with those construction workers, if
14 you can find out who they are, because they know the
15 boat and they know the situation and they could tell
16 you how much time they had, you know, why their friend
17 didn't make it out of the way and they did.

18 Q I have a few questions, Charlie, then we'll
19 go around the table. Regarding the plant, you went
20 over it, but no abnormalities in the plant?

21 A Nothing. Even right now it's probably
22 functional. Both ends, I would think.

23 Q After you hit, you don't remember any power
24 being lost?

25 A Nothing.

1 Q No unusual alarms?

2 A No alarms, no -- that's why my first reaction
3 was we went around, because nothing was wrong. Nothing
4 blinked, nothing. And the Staten Island rudder,
5 propeller, was still turning well after we were into
6 the slip.

7 We shut it down. Well, Sean was down there
8 when we shut them down because the firemen wanted to go
9 in the shaft alley and both shafts were turning, so
10 they said shut down the engine. That's when I went
11 down there with Sean and Eddy Mattigan was down there
12 and they secured the engines immediately to the Staten
13 Island end.

14 We kept the New York end running to work
15 ahead, he had 50 percent pitch on at that time working
16 ahead on the dock and once they secured the boat with
17 lines and all, that's when I stopped those engines.

18 Q Does your company employ a safety management
19 system, ISM?

20 A Well, Sean -- he was the safety officer here
21 for a long time and he was doing a real good job doing
22 things that we had to know and getting safety
23 procedures, any equipment that we have, you know, like
24 that if contacted bypass, he did the parameters when to
25 do it and investigation. He's very good at that.

1 Now I don't know what you're doing. I guess
2 you're just involved in the new boat, right Sean?

3 MR. MCDERMOTT: This is Sean McDermott.
4 Donny Westley and Brian Walsh are handling safety.

5 BY MR. CURTIS:

6 Q But as far as -- okay, I'll leave that alone.
7 You mentioned the log fill outs, you don't do that --
8 you do that per trip when you arrive or how do you do
9 it?

10 A Sometimes I don't, sometimes I do and
11 sometimes I'll miss a trip, then I'll have to call up
12 and say what time was it. You know, I do that, I call
13 the AC and say what time did you get for departing or
14 something like that. I try not to get it too far where
15 I have to bring my log up there and copy his, but
16 normally I do it.

17 I don't like any of the crew members touching
18 the log or writing in the log except for the numbers
19 that they take, the readings. Anything on the right
20 side, that's my business.

21 Q In comment section, you're the only one that
22 makes the comments?

23 A Right.

24 Q One thing I'd like to get is from a human
25 standpoint, over the last 72-hour period, three days,

1 just your wake/sleep cycle.

2 A I worked overtime Friday, Saturday, Sunday
3 and Monday I was off at home and I was working on the
4 roof over my deck, my porch. I put a roof in and I was
5 sealing the seams, painting, you know, things like
6 that. That's all I was doing for those three days.

7 Q Wake up roughly, go to bed roughly?

8 A I went to bed probably around midnight and
9 was getting up 8:00, 7:00 or 8:00.

10 Q Your engine room crew, as far as their
11 demeanor, was there anything abnormal that day?

12 A No. I was glad I had the guys I had.
13 Everybody handled it without panic, that's what I like.
14 There was no panic. They followed orders, when I said
15 stay put, do this, they did it and that's what I like.
16 That's what you need.

17 MR. CURTIS: That's all I have right now.
18 I'll pass the questioning on to Dave Parker.

19 MR. PARKER: Dave Parker, Coast Guard.

20 EXAMINATION

21 BY MR. PARKER:

22 Q I just wanted to just get in my mind the
23 communications between the communications and the
24 engine room.

25 A Yes. This phone system went out. I found

1 out that probably the cable got cut to the sound
2 powered phone because it hit on that end and probably
3 opened up that line, because a sound powered phone is
4 on the Staten Island end, so obviously when we hit,
5 probably the cable got damaged. The bell was able to
6 ring, but that's independent of the sound powered
7 phone. It's not on the hand crank, it's a separate
8 bell.

9 Q Right.

10 A But the sound powered phone didn't work.

11 Q The New York end was working still but the --

12 A Once he got into New York I didn't call him
13 anymore.

14 Q All right.

15 A So I didn't check it out.

16 Q The sound powered phone, is that the normal
17 way of communication between the bridge and the engine
18 room?

19 A Yes. Unless there's an emergency where he
20 doesn't have time, he'll ring the cow bell and start
21 giving me telegraph commands and that means I'll have
22 to take the power.

23 Q That would be like kind of a reaction kind of
24 way of --

25 A Yes. That's what I was expecting.

1 Q And there was nothing like that at all?

2 A There was nothing like that, no.

3 Q Nothing. Okay.

4 A You know, we drill, we have steering drills
5 and that's one of my pet things that I'm -- I get a lot
6 of static from different people, but my theory is I'm
7 convincing the Captains, and they're all for me,
8 because normally on a steering drill the engineers like
9 to take all the full power, the throttles and the
10 steering and propulsion.

11 Where I -- I'm not in favor of that. I
12 believe the Captain should have some control of the
13 boat. The throttles are totally independent of the
14 steering and propulsion system, so why not let them
15 have the throttles, this way if something -- they could
16 give it more or cut back if they want. We can't see
17 what's going on.

18 My Marine and I had a discussion the day
19 before for the steering drill. He says we should take
20 -- I said you're not touching that throttle. I said
21 I'm the Chief now, that's it.

22 Q The engines never slowed down, never stopped?

23 A Never slowed down.

24 Q Never nothing until whatever it was that you
25 were hearing or feeling --

1 A Until -- well, they slowed down before I left
2 the engine room.

3 Q Yes, but --

4 A Because I was wondering, waiting for that to
5 happen or to find out what happened. I was curious, I
6 didn't know what happened.

7 Q Could you see the pitch indicators from where
8 you were?

9 A Yes.

10 Q Do you remember what they were?

11 A It was 100 percent.

12 Q Really? Both ends? And they never changed
13 either?

14 A Not during the shaking. They did afterwards.
15 I guess the Captain took control at that time.

16 MR. PARKER: Thanks. That's all I wanted to
17 ask, thanks.

18 EXAMINATION

19 BY MR. MCDERMOTT:

20 Q Charlie, my purpose here is to help them
21 understand, sort of mediate, provide them information
22 and my questions are just directed to try and help them
23 understand the system.

24 A Yes.

25 MR. CURTIS: This is Sean.

1 MR. MCDERMOTT: Sean McDermott.

2 BY MR. MCDERMOTT:

3 Q Charlie, I need some clarification here. The
4 sound powered phone, do we have a dedicated line and do
5 we also have a sound powered phone? Are they different
6 and are there different hand receivers in the pilot
7 house?

8 A As far as ringing me and --

9 Q Well, okay. We have the button that has the
10 dedicated line, but we also have another set of sound
11 powered phones, correct? Are there two distinct
12 phones, Charlie?

13 A Yes. The other ones that you plug in, it did
14 not plug in at the time, you know, it would take time
15 to do that and the Captain would have to -- he didn't
16 know that we lost the sound powered. When I made it to
17 the pilot house, his first reaction was that he was
18 happy to see me, because he thought we were killed. So
19 when he was ringing --

20 Q Which end?

21 A That was Staten Island end. When he saw me,
22 he thought my crew was wiped out and that's why we
23 weren't answering the phone, so it didn't occur to him
24 to get the hand set and plug it in and try that.
25 That's why that wasn't used.

1 Q Charlie, just correct me if I'm wrong, you
2 have a dedicated phone where you have the electric push
3 button, but you also have another hand set for the
4 pilot house where you would also have a crank which is
5 the other sound powered phone?

6 A Yes. No, it's not the other sound powered
7 phone, it's the same one.

8 Q It's a different hand set though, is it not?

9 A No. Even if -- I know that if something
10 happened, like say I didn't work with a particular
11 Captain and he didn't know, we didn't have a discussion
12 coming on watch saying I worked overtime, they would
13 know that if I didn't hear the cow bell, they would
14 give the telegraph signal anyway and that bell you
15 can't miss.

16 If I saw that telegraph go, I will call and
17 at the same time, be ready to take power. I wouldn't
18 do it without calling, because people do lean against
19 it in the pilot house and set it off. That's why I
20 wouldn't do it without calling. That's what I was
21 trying to do, I was punching, calling the pilot houses
22 together and nobody was answering.

23 But obviously he probably was answering, but
24 we couldn't -- there was no communication.

25 Q Charlie, did you speak to the pilot house

1 from the engine room to the Staten Island end during
2 the course of the watch?

3 A No. Oh, during the course of the watch?

4 Q Did you communicate with the pilot house?

5 A I'm trying to think. No. I don't think so.

6 Because there was only one or two trips that we made.

7 I saw both the Captain and the AC coming on and I knew

8 -- I was expecting my brother to be Captain, so I

9 waited and watched who went on. If my brother was on,

10 I would have probably called up and says Andy, welcome

11 back, you know, because he was gone for over two weeks.

12 But I didn't call and they didn't call me.

13 MR. PARKER: Dave Parker.

14 EXAMINATION

15 BY MR. PARKER:

16 Q Hitting both buttons on the phone, that's

17 ringing the bells in both pilot houses?

18 A Yes.

19 Q And even the New York end didn't answer?

20 A No, they didn't answer.

21 Q Is that manned on the way coming this direct,

22 that wheel house?

23 A It could be. You know, it's up to the

24 Captain how he does that. Sometimes he'll stay in that

25 end and sometimes he'll be in the other pilot house.

1 It's up to the Captain how he does it. I don't know
2 their procedures.

3 Q It's not always the same, right?

4 A No. But my brother, he told me that after
5 911 he makes it point to separate the Captain and the
6 AC so that if there's a terrorist attack they couldn't
7 get both pilot houses, he'd be able to transfer power
8 or the AC could transfer power to him and they would
9 maintain control of the boat. That's my brother's
10 scenario.

11 MR. CURTIS: Brian Curtis again.

12 EXAMINATION

13 BY MR. CURTIS:

14 Q Charlie, you mentioned you saw the Captain,
15 Mike, and when you asked him what happened, what was
16 his response again?

17 A No, I didn't ask the captain that. I asked
18 that to Richie Smith.

19 Q And he responded by saying --

20 A He says -- he bowed his head and he said he
21 passed out.

22 Q Did you ask the Captain what he thought
23 happened?

24 A No.

25 Q You never asked.

1 MR. MCDERMOTT: This is Sean McDermott.

2 EXAMINATION

3 BY MR. MCDERMOTT:

4 Q Charlie, just previous I must have
5 misunderstood. Did Mike Gansas say that he had lost it
6 or when did that happen?

7 A When I made it up to the pilot house, Mike
8 was in the Staten Island pilot house and I didn't see
9 Richie on the hurricane deck, but I guess he was trying
10 to communicate with Richie to get in and transfer
11 power. I don't know, but he just told me that Richie
12 had lost it and he needs help to transfer the power, so
13 I said okay, just tell me what you want me to do.

14 He showed me what to do and he ran over there
15 and I was waiting for his buzzer to hit the button to
16 transfer the power to the New York end. While I was
17 waiting, because he was running over there, I saw
18 Richie, because my back was -- when I picked up the
19 ship to shore, because John Walden was calling the boat
20 and I saw the tug boat trying to grab us and John was
21 trying to -- I don't know what John was saying, I
22 really was -- you know, at that time I wanted to get
23 back down on the main deck.

24 That's what I did. As soon as I transferred
25 the power, I went and confronted Richie and I didn't

1 question him after he said that, I just left.

2 Q Charlie, do you have any idea what he meant
3 by "he lost it"?

4 A I guess he -- I don't know, he didn't go into
5 detail. He just said he lost it. Looking at him, you
6 could see that he wasn't coherent, because he had come
7 from the main deck and saw the injured and the dead and
8 he had saw that and then from there he went probably up
9 there and he became incoherent I guess after seeing
10 what had happened.

11 EXAMINATION

12 BY MR. CURTIS:

13 Q Just for clarification, normally there would
14 be the Captain in one pilot house and the Assistant
15 Captain in the other pilot house?

16 A And a look out for the pilot house that was
17 in command.

18 Q Okay. Who would have been in the pilot house
19 that was docking the vessel?

20 A That would have been the Assistant Captain
21 and a look out.

22 Q When you ran up to the bridge, was there
23 still power? He'd already tried to pull back at that
24 point?

25 A At the time we were drifting, so he zeroed

1 everything up and cut back on the throttles and he
2 zeroed everything up and we were just drifting there,
3 sliding off the pier and the tug boat was right near
4 us. I don't know if he made contact with us or not,
5 you know, with his bow front. I don't know.

6 Q So you assisted him in transferring
7 propulsion to the other --

8 A Yes. Right. And once he got that, the boat
9 handled well. He got it in beautifully. I didn't see
10 anything wrong with the controls, which I was concerned
11 about, because I said let me know if you want me to
12 take controls down below.

13 But when I saw how he backed out and turned
14 the boat around perfect right into the slip, I knew
15 that everything was working all right and I still went
16 down and I informed my crew to stay put and stay in the
17 control room just in case.

18 Once we were in and the hooks were out, they
19 still were there. They didn't come up.

20 Q You mentioned earlier when you hit you
21 noticed that the pitch was still at 100 percent. What
22 about the thrust, was that --

23 A Yeah. That's the thrust. That was for
24 forward. When I say 100, you know, it was bouncing.
25 It could have been -- it went from 175. When it hits

1 an overload, it does do that.

2 MR. CURTIS: That's all I have right now.

3 Dave?

4 MR. PARKER: No. I'm all set. Thank you.

5 EXAMINATION

6 BY MR. MCDERMOTT:

7 Q Charlie, to get back away from the pier, do
8 you think that the Captain when he was in the Staten
9 Island end might have given it a little bit of astern?

10 A He could have. Like I said, I had left the
11 engine room.

12 MR. MCDERMOTT: That's it.

13 MR. CURTIS: I guess that's all the questions
14 we have right now.

15 THE WITNESS: I have a question that's
16 bothering me. I can't understand how people got killed
17 way back at the end of the -- there was three bodies
18 there and I can't understand how it reached them, why
19 they were still there. That's bothering me. Could I
20 make a recommendation?

21 A recommendation for this is that that look
22 out not leave that pilot house to tend to the apron, he
23 stays in there until that boat is made fast. That's my
24 recommendation.

25 MR. CURTIS: As a follow up to that, what are

1 the duties of that look out?

2 THE WITNESS: I don't know their 100 percent
3 duties, but I know that they do have to go around and I
4 think they tend to one of the aprons, the gates, and
5 they have to leave because they wouldn't be able to get
6 out of the pilot house when the passengers come
7 forward.

8 He wouldn't be able to get to the aprons, so
9 they leave as the boat is approaching.

10 CONTINUED EXAMINATION

11 BY MR. MCDERMOTT:

12 Q Charlie, you're saying that that is a
13 collateral duty of that deck hand?

14 A Yes. So either put another deck hand on
15 there, a permanent look out or I don't know.

16 Q But the look outs, Charlie, do they rotate
17 during the watch?

18 A I believe they do.

19 Q So the main deck hand would do it one shift
20 and then --

21 A I really don't know how their routine is, who
22 does it. I think it might even be the bridge deck
23 guys, I don't know who does it. I never really
24 followed that, but I do know the routine, I see it, and
25 there should be -- because if he said he passed out, if

1 there was a guy in there, that would have prevented
2 this.

3 EXAMINATION

4 BY MR. PARKER:

5 Q I can appreciate the time it would take for a
6 person to get out of the pilot house to beat the crowd
7 just because of the numbers of people on board that
8 thing, but just so it's clear, there's a period of time
9 when the fellow in the pilot house in command would be
10 alone up there then?

11 A Yes.

12 Q Just taking a wild guess, would you be able
13 to say how long?

14 A No, because I rarely go up to the pilot
15 house. I do occasionally, I go up there, check for
16 things and maybe I'll make a trip up there and that's
17 how I observe this.

18 Usually when they're coming in and the
19 Captain is shaping up, that means he's taking some
20 pitch off or slows up, that's when they get up.

21 Q So some time in the final stages of the
22 approach is when the fellow is outside?

23 A Right.

24 Q Is that common, for all the boats to do that?

25 A Well, like I said, I'm not up there, there's

1 only certain times I'll go up and visit and sometimes
2 I'll check, they call up, they have light bulbs out
3 with the pitch indicators or something, I'll check it
4 out. Rather than send my Marine, I'll do it. That's
5 basically -- I try to stay in the control room most of
6 the time, so I don't know all the boats or all the
7 procedures.

8 MR. CURTIS: Thank you, Mr. Covella. We
9 appreciate it. It's now 1:35 and this concludes the
10 interview with Chief Engineer Charlie Covella. We
11 appreciate your time today.

12 (Whereupon, at 1:35 p.m. the interview was
13 concluded.)

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