

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD
OFFICE OF MARINE SAFETY

ANDREW J. BARBERI
DCA 04 MM 001

INTERVIEW OF JOSEPH SELCH

Department of Transportation Office
Staten Island Ferry
New York City, New York

Friday, November 7, 2003

APPEARANCES:

On behalf of the National Transportation
Safety Board:

MORGAN J. TURRELL
Marine Accident Investigator, MS-10
Office of Marine Safety

On behalf of the U.S. Coast Guard:

CHARLES KOMP
U.S. Coast Guard Activities, New York

CHRISTINE JUDIA
Special Agent
Coast Guard Investigative Service

NICK DI STEFANO
Coast Guard Investigative Service

On behalf of the New York Police Department:

CAPTAIN ANTHONY HODY

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

2

3 MR. TURRELL: Good morning. It's Friday,
4 November 7th. We're in the City DOT office of the
5 Staten Island Ferries interviewing Mr. Joseph Selch,
6 who was deck hand on the Staten Island Ferry October
7 15th.

8 This is Morgan Turrell, NTSB Operations Group
9 Chairman.

10 To my right is?

11 MR. KOMP: Charles Komp (ph), Coast Guard
12 Marine Investigations, New York.

13 DETECTIVE HODY: Detective Anthony Hody (ph),
14 NYPD.

15 MR. DI STEFANO: Nick Di Stefano (ph), Coast
16 Guard Investigative Services.

17 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Christine Judia (ph),
18 Coast Guard Investigative Service.

19 MR. SELCH: Deck Hand Joseph Selch.

20 MR. TURRELL: And Mr. Selch, could you please
21 spell your name? Your last name.

22 MR. SELCH: S-E-L-C-H.

23 MR. TURRELL: And your age, sir?

24 MR. SELCH: Sixty-three.

25 MR. TURRELL: And please acknowledge this is

1 being recorded.

2 MR. SELCH: Yes.

3 MR. TURRELL: Mr. Selch, how long have you
4 worked at the Staten Island Ferries?

5 MR. SELCH: One year.

6 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And were you a deck hand
7 on the Andrew J. Barberi on October 15th?

8 MR. SELCH: Yes, sir.

9 MR. TURRELL: What was your assignment on the
10 Barberi that day?

11 MR. SELCH: I was the lookout from Manhattan
12 to Staten Island, and then my job after that is to open
13 up on the New Jersey side to let the people off and on.

14 MR. TURRELL: On the Staten Island end?

15 MR. SELCH: On the Staten Island end.

16 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

17 MR. SELCH: Also on the New York end, too.
18 If you work the saloon deck, you gotta open on both
19 ends.

20 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And before working at
21 the ferries, where -- where did you work before that?

22 MR. SELCH: I -- I was a launch operator for
23 the sanitation at Fresh Kills Landfill.

24 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And will you refresh our
25 memories now about when you were working the shift you

1 were working for that period of that week -- had you
2 just returned to work on Tuesday or Wednesday -- what
3 your work cycle was October 15th? Had you just
4 returned to work or had you been at work for a few
5 days?

6 MR. SELCH: I believe I worked for a couple
7 of days. It was Thursday?

8 MR. TURRELL: The accident was on Wednesday.

9 MR. SELCH: Wednesday. One day.

10 MR. TURRELL: You returned to work on
11 Tuesday?

12 MR. SELCH: Yeah, Tuesday was the start of my
13 week.

14 MR. TURRELL: Now, the weekend before was
15 Columbus Day weekend. Do you recall what you did
16 Columbus Day weekend?

17 MR. SELCH: Columbus Day weekend. I think I
18 had a nice weekend that weekend. We did some shopping
19 and traveling. We drove around.

20 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

21 MR. SELCH: My wife and I, we go into New
22 Jersey a lot and drive around.

23 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And typically, when
24 you're -- when you're on -- on leave or not working,
25 what's your sleep cycle like? What's your -- when you

1 go to bed?

2 MR. SELCH: Basically about the same. I go
3 to bed around 10 to 11.

4 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

5 MR. SELCH: Normally get up around 7 in the
6 morning.

7 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And that was pretty much
8 true the day of the accident?

9 MR. SELCH: Yes.

10 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And you were on the 1:30
11 to 9:30 shift that day?

12 MR. SELCH: 1:30 to 9:30.

13 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Joseph, please take us
14 back to October 15th, and just give us, if you would, a
15 narrative description of what happened from the New
16 York to Staten Island run.

17 MR. SELCH: All right. After the passengers
18 boarded, closed the gates. We opened chain. And I
19 walked to the other end of the -- to the Staten Island
20 end of the boat. I had a door that I had tied up
21 earlier because it was broken. Just made sure it was
22 tied because it was a windy day and that's why we tried
23 it, because it was -- afraid somebody would get hurt
24 with it. And it was tied.

25 Then I went up to the pilothouse. I got into

1 the pilothouse roughly just before the assistant
2 captain was ready to make the turn heading down towards
3 Staten Island. I got there just, you know, a hair
4 later than I usually do because I checked that rope.

5 And we -- I sat in my seat, and they have a
6 stool up there for the lookout. And I was talking with
7 Captain Smith, and we were talking about wind and the
8 weather. And I was telling him about work -- when I
9 was working on the oil rigs, how some of the bad
10 weather that we had there and everything. We just
11 talked back and forth like that.

12 And then when we got to the KV Buoy, I went
13 downstairs. I told Captain Smith, see you later, I'm
14 going -- I'm going down and make some money for the
15 company. I say silly things like that to him, you
16 know. I gotta earn my pay, you know, things like that
17 I tell him. And he says, okay, see you later.

18 And I went down -- I went down. And as I was
19 untying the -- the door, I'm looking and I see that
20 we're not heading for the slips and we haven't -- then
21 I realized we didn't slow down. And I said to myself
22 -- even if he did throw it in reverse now, we're
23 going to have a problem here. So I started telling the
24 people, get back. So I was chasing the people to the
25 other end of the boat as fast as we could.

1 At the -- when I realized we were going to
2 hit, there was one gentleman that was up there but ran
3 up there with me. And I grabbed him and I held onto
4 the banister railing there. And we didn't come to a
5 stop. We just kept going. I says -- so then I got --
6 I saw that we didn't -- because I was afraid we were
7 going to get thrown off the front.

8 So then we ran and got him down the stairs
9 and we just kept chasing people down. Just keep
10 chasing people to the back. They kept wanting to go
11 there because they -- that's the end they get off.
12 That's what they were thinking; they're getting off.
13 I'm telling them to get to the other end.

14 And I turned around and I looked and I --
15 wow, oh my God, the whole staircase was gone. I
16 couldn't believe it. And it was all wreckage and one
17 body there and a lady with her head torn off. And I
18 just kept trying to keep the people back. I had a
19 couple of passengers that wanted to stay on the side
20 there and help me because -- going back and forth. And
21 then some people were coming down from upstairs. So I
22 had to keep them moving.

23 So I guess most of my job there was just
24 keeping the people away from looking down that
25 staircase or going down it because there was no

1 staircase.

2 And at one point there when I turned around I
3 saw the Captain Richie Smith going down the ramp, down
4 the -- there was one piece of staircase that was left,
5 a little piece of it, and the rest of it was wreckage.

6 And he was going down there, and I told him to be
7 careful, don't go down there. I thought he'd get hurt.

8 But he just looked -- he looked at what was the damage
9 and what not like that, and he had to see the lady
10 because she was right there. And then he went down the
11 -- climbed down the rest of the wreckage and went
12 around the side, and I didn't see him after that.

13 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

14 MR. SELCH: And the rest of my time was
15 involved with just keeping people from walking up
16 there. People were panicking, putting on life jackets
17 and everything.

18 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

19 MR. SELCH: That's about it.

20 MR. TURRELL: Now, let's go back to when you
21 were on the bridge and you were talking to Captain
22 Smith. Did Captain Smith ever relate to you he was
23 having any difficulties or having any medical problems?

24 MR. SELCH: No, sir.

25 MR. TURRELL: Did he relate to you that he

1 was having any sort of seizure or a slurred -- was
2 there anything about his speech that was slurred or
3 anything?

4 MR. SELCH: No.

5 MR. TURRELL: So from what you're -- your
6 experience, it was a fairly normal trip up to the time
7 you left the bridge?

8 MR. SELCH: It was a normal trip, yes.

9 MR. TURRELL: Were -- was there anyone else
10 on the bridge that day from Whitehall to Staten Island?

11 MR. SELCH: Somebody was sitting in the seat,
12 in the settee, whatever they called it. But when I got
13 up to leave, I never looked down into the seat and I
14 don't know who was sitting there.

15 MR. TURRELL: So when the person that was
16 sitting on the settee, when they came to the bridge,
17 they never announced their presence?

18 MR. SELCH: I don't remember. I don't -- I
19 really truthfully don't remember.

20 MR. TURRELL: And do you recall what the
21 person may have been doing there on the settee?

22 MR. SELCH: Reading.

23 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Were they -- do you
24 recall if they were reading a book, reading a magazine?

25 MR. SELCH: No.

1 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Do you recall ever
2 seeing Captain Michael Gansas on the bridge?

3 MR. SELCH: No, I can't swear to it that he
4 was there.

5 MR. TURRELL: Well, let me ask you this. Did
6 you have any conversations with Captain Gansas when you
7 were on the bridge?

8 MR. SELCH: No, sir.

9 MR. TURRELL: Can you tell me what Captain
10 Smith was wearing that day, what you recall Captain
11 Smith wearing?

12 MR. SELCH: He was wearing his white shirt,
13 black pants. He -- no tie. He had to be wearing black
14 shoes.

15 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So Captain Smith was
16 wearing a white shirt, black pants, and no tie, is that
17 correct?

18 MR. SELCH: No tie.

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

20 MR. SELCH: And he had his -- on his shirt.

21 MR. TURRELL: Can you tell us if -- when you
22 went down to saloon deck and then later the main, can
23 you give us an estimation from your experience how many
24 people were on board the ferry that day?

25 MR. SELCH: It's -- it's really hard to say

1 because when you're on the deck and they first come on,
2 it always seems like a lot. But then when you go to
3 your deck, you know, it's not that -- it's not -- it's
4 not really that many people.

5 MR. TURRELL: Can you tell me which deck had
6 more people on it?

7 MR. SELCH: It's usually the saloon deck and
8 the bridge deck that has the most people on it, except
9 for rush hour. Rush hour, like the 5:15 will have a
10 lot of people downstairs.

11 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So when you came out of
12 the bridge and you looked on the bridge deck, was the
13 bridge deck full or busy or not so busy?

14 MR. SELCH: It looked like it would be
15 something normal, be maybe -- maybe 100 people up there
16 --

17 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

18 MR. SELCH: -- because people like to look at
19 the, you know, the one side, the Jersey side because
20 they could see the Statue of Liberty, is what most of
21 the tourists take that ride for.

22 MR. TURRELL: And then, so the saloon deck
23 was the busiest of the three decks?

24 MR. SELCH: I would say the saloon deck was
25 the busiest.

1 MR. TURRELL: So when you left the bridge --
2 or if you can think back, when you were just talking to
3 Captain Smith about, I'm going to make some money for
4 the company, or whatever you said, can you tell us
5 where the vessel was headed?

6 MR. SELCH: It was heading normal.

7 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

8 MR. SELCH: I would say normal.

9 MR. TURRELL: Had the -- had the vessel
10 turned at the KV Buoy yet or was it shaping up for its
11 approach, do you recall any?

12 MR. SELCH: It looked like he was making, you
13 know, a normal --

14 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

15 MR. SELCH: -- approach.

16 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Can you tell us where
17 the KV Buoy was? Did you visually see the buoy?

18 MR. SELCH: Yes.

19 MR. TURRELL: So the vessel abeam of the buoy
20 when you left?

21 MR. SELCH: When I left it was just -- well,
22 by the time I -- got down to the -- I slide down the --
23 the staircase. It was just -- just passing it, so it
24 had to be just off our stern by the time I got down to
25 the bottom.

1 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And from your
2 recollection, was it in the normal place it usually was
3 when you passed the KV Buoy? Was it off the same
4 distance? Was it further away?

5 MR. SELCH: I would say it was normal.

6 MR. TURRELL: Normal.

7 MR. SELCH: Because there was no traffic.
8 Normally, if there's traffic, sometimes they cut inside
9 of it, sometimes they go way around it. But there was
10 no traffic because I looked out both -- both sides
11 before I went down. The -- was clear. Going down to
12 make some money for the company, and he said, okay, see
13 you later. And then I shot down the stairs.

14 MR. TURRELL: And when you left the bridge,
15 the vessel was proceeding at normal speed, or transit
16 speed?

17 MR. SELCH: It was, yes.

18 MR. TURRELL: And the visibility was good
19 that day?

20 MR. SELCH: Excellent.

21 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

22 MR. SELCH: Just sun glare, but you know.
23 And windy.

24 MR. TURRELL: Did Captain Smith, when you
25 were talking about the wind and -- and departing

1 Whitehall, did he express any difficulty steering --

2 MR. SELCH: No.

3 MR. TURRELL: -- or have any problems with
4 the wind at all?

5 MR. SELCH: No. He made a landing before
6 that. There was a trip before that. There was no
7 problem with the landing at all.

8 MR. TURRELL: Do you recall if Captain Smith
9 on the short time you were on the bridge there, about
10 15, 10 minutes about, perhaps. Do you recall if there
11 was any radio transmissions, any -- any calls, or did
12 Captain Smith use the radio?

13 MR. SELCH: I can't remember any for sure.

14 MR. TURRELL: Do you recall if anyone else
15 was on the bridge that day as far as coming up or back
16 or was there anyone else to your recollection on the
17 bridge that day?

18 MR. SELCH: No.

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay. I'll -- I'll allow Mr.
20 Komp to ask you questions now.

21 MR. KOMP: You -- the conversation you were
22 having with him in the pilothouse was pretty much
23 centered around the weather that day?

24 MR. SELCH: Yes. I was telling him about --
25 I had a job working a stand-by boat for the oil rigs

1 that were off New Jersey there. They were working like
2 100 miles offshore.

3 MR. KOMP: Mm-hmm.

4 MR. SELCH: And telling him about some of the
5 weather, how the, you know, how the weather was nasty.

6 The boat I was on, it was 100-foot, so we had wind
7 sometimes there 70, 80 miles an hour, 90 miles an hour
8 a couple of times. One time it was 120. We took a
9 pretty good beating, you know, in a 100-foot boat.

10 MR. KOMP: Mm-hmm.

11 MR. SELCH: And you know, he's -- you know,
12 then he told me some tugboat stories, you know, about
13 the wind, you know. We were just having a regular
14 conversation.

15 MR. KOMP: So when you left the saloon deck
16 or you left Whitehall on the saloon deck, you went down
17 to the Staten Island end and made sure that the doors
18 were tied shut because they were --

19 MR. SELCH: Yeah. The one door.

20 MR. KOMP: The one --

21 MR. SELCH: -- two doors. I tied them
22 through the handle bar.

23 MR. KOMP: How long had you been -- how long
24 had you been doing that?

25 MR. SELCH: That was the -- that was the

1 first time. Mate Rush gave me a piece of rope when I
2 was going to Manhattan because I told him about it. So
3 he went down to look at it, and then he came back with
4 a piece of rope that he had, I guess, in a locker or
5 something up there. And he told me, he said, just tie
6 it shut. He says, the maintenance men will come on
7 when we get to Staten Island and they'll check it.
8 They'll either fix it or whatever they do.

9 Usually, if something breaks, the maintenance
10 men will come on and ride the boat to Manhattan and
11 back, you know, to bring tools and stuff that they'll
12 need to fix it.

13 And that's it. I just tied that door up.
14 And then I went up to the pilothouse.

15 MR. KOMP: Okay. And so would you say you
16 got to the pilothouse a little later than you normally
17 would have?

18 MR. SELCH: Yeah, a couple of minutes later.

19 MR. KOMP: Okay. And then, when you went to
20 leave to go down to open the doors, open the gates, get
21 ready for your docking, you normally -- where's the
22 point where you decided, it's like time for me to go
23 down?

24 MR. SELCH: From the KV Buoy, and sometimes,
25 you know, I'll -- I'll stay there a little longer, you

1 know, till we get like almost halfway in, you know.
2 And then sometimes -- most of the time I go down right
3 away.

4 MR. KOMP: Mm-hmm.

5 MR. SELCH: That -- that particular run, it's
6 usually clear. The traffic going in and out of the
7 kills is, you know, usually clear.

8 MR. KOMP: Mm-hmm. So the KV Buoy is
9 generally -- it's like where you begin to think about
10 going down?

11 MR. SELCH: Right.

12 MR. KOMP: And this particular run you went
13 down right at approximately the KV Buoy?

14 MR. SELCH: Yes. I -- I -- yes. When the
15 buoy was abeam of me, that's my -- I was looking out
16 that New Jersey side, and then I said goodbye to Richie
17 and I slid down the stairs.

18 MR. KOMP: Okay. And one person up there,
19 not sure who it was. How long had they been up there?
20 Do you recall?

21 MR. SELCH: I don't -- I don't remember. I
22 don't recall.

23 MR. KOMP: Okay. That's all I have.

24 MR. SELCH: They're telling me it was --
25 somebody -- they told me it was Rush that was up there,

1 the lawyer for the -- but I can't -- I can't -- I don't
2 remember him coming up there. I think I was into my
3 stupid story with talking with the captain.

4 MR. KOMP: Mm-hmm.

5 MR. SELCH: And I didn't realize that he came
6 up there.

7 MR. KOMP: And he was -- he was talking, too,
8 though, was he?

9 MR. SELCH: I really don't remember. I swear
10 I don't remember.

11 MR. KOMP: Okay. That's all I have.

12 MR. TURRELL: Detective Hody?

13 DETECTIVE HODY: After the accident, you said
14 you were on the staircase on the Staten Island end?

15 MR. SELCH: Well, in the middle. I was in
16 the middle of the boat. There's a long, big staircase
17 going down to the main deck. And that was all gone, so
18 I didn't want -- people were trying to come to the
19 front. They -- because they -- that's the end they get
20 off. And couldn't get it through their heads that if
21 they're going to get off, they're going to get off on
22 the other end, you know. And I didn't want them to see
23 the wreckage and I didn't want them to see the body.

24 DETECTIVE HODY: So then you stayed at the
25 top of the stairs, which would be the saloon deck then,

1 right?

2 MR. SELCH: I was on the saloon deck at the
3 top of where the stairs were going down to the main
4 deck, yes, sir.

5 DETECTIVE HODY: And that's where you seen
6 Smith go down?

7 MR. SELCH: Yes. When I was talking -- some
8 lady just wanted to go up and get off. I told her,
9 she's not getting off over there. And I was talking to
10 her and told her, I said, if you're going to get off,
11 you've got to go to the other end of the boat and
12 you'll get off. And then that's when I turned around
13 and I saw Smith going down the stairs.

14 DETECTIVE HODY: Did Smith come back up again
15 after a short while?

16 MR. SELCH: I don't know. I -- running back
17 and forth. A couple -- like I said, a couple of people
18 came down from upstairs and there was still people
19 trying to come up that way.

20 DETECTIVE HODY: When Smith went down, did
21 you observe any blood on him?

22 MR. SELCH: No, sir.

23 DETECTIVE HODY: And Gansas you never seen
24 after the accident, either?

25 MR. SELCH: I seen Gansas at the -- he was on

1 the -- on the dock. The police had the rest of the
2 crew because by the time the people finally got up, I
3 was just making sure everybody got off. I was walking
4 back and forth.

5 DETECTIVE HODY: Oh, that's when the boat was
6 at the slip?

7 MR. SELCH: Yeah. We were tied up into the
8 slip already, and they had the crew on the side there.
9 And I was asking, you know, is everybody all right,
10 you know, you know. And they said, yeah, everybody was
11 okay.

12 DETECTIVE HODY: You didn't feel the engine
13 shut down once you went downstairs after the --

14 MR. SELCH: No, sir. No, sir. I just -- I
15 just automatically, you know, take it for granted that
16 he's doing his thing, you know. And I talked to a
17 couple of customers -- the passengers, I mean. Do what
18 I do, you know. It's something that's so routine it's
19 -- it's -- it was silly, you know.

20 I untied the rope, I realized that the boat
21 didn't slow down. I'm looking; I said, oh my God. You
22 know, I knew something was going to happen, so the main
23 thing was to get the passengers back, I felt.

24 DETECTIVE HODY: That's all I have.

25 MR. TURRELL: Mr. Di Stefano?

1 MR. DI STEFANO: Now, do you recall Captain
2 Smith making any passing arrangements? Well, when he
3 -- during the transit --

4 MR. SELCH: If I say something -- if I say
5 something, I don't remember exactly.

6 MR. DI STEFANO: Did you alert him to any
7 traffic that he would have to make passing arrangements
8 (inaudible)?

9 MR. SELCH: No, but there's a couple of
10 things that stick in my head but it's not -- it's not
11 for sure. We had a crossing. I don't know what was
12 the day before or if we had a car -- train -- tugboat,
13 a barge with trains on it cut across. And I think we
14 had to slow down. We slowed down for them to get
15 (inaudible) but I can't remember if it was that trip.

16 And we also had a tug coming out of the back
17 channel, and he -- he wanted to -- he wanted to stay on
18 the Statue of Liberty side. And we just gave him a
19 little bit of room. Now, I don't know if it was that
20 day. I -- I really can't say.

21 And this is all around that 27 -- the tug
22 that went -- came from the 28 crossed to the 27, and
23 you go into the back channel there. And the other guy
24 came straight out of the back channels and went north.
25 And I can't remember if it was that trip, though.

1 MR. DI STEFANO: So a tug with a train barge
2 and a tug coming from Staten -- from the Statue of
3 Liberty, but you don't know if that -- that was --

4 MR. SELCH: I can't remember (inaudible.)

5 MR. DI STEFANO: (Inaudible.)

6 MR. SELCH: I don't know if it was the day
7 before or that day.

8 MR. DI STEFANO: Do you remember, though, if
9 it was Captain Smith, though, that was at the helm --

10 MR. SELCH: Yes.

11 MR. DI STEFANO: -- when this was going on?

12 MR. SELCH: Yes.

13 MR. DI STEFANO: When you went down from the
14 pilothouse to your station and you first noticed that
15 the vessel was -- that there was a problem, it wasn't
16 slowing down and that there was going to be a problem
17 where were you standing? Where exactly where you?

18 MR. SELCH: Right in the front -- right by
19 the doors. The --

20 MR. DI STEFANO: Were you outside?

21 MR. SELCH: No, I was untying the door. I
22 untied the door, and then when I opened it up, I saw
23 that we were heading away from the slip.

24 MR. DI STEFANO: Okay. So you never went out
25 on the -- on the --

1 MR. SELCH: Yes, to get the people back.
2 When I realized we were going to hit, I told the people
3 --

4 MR. DI STEFANO: -- there were people --

5 MR. SELCH: -- there were people standing out
6 there.

7 MR. DI STEFANO: -- already out there.
8 That's right. You're right. That's where they go.

9 MR. SELCH: They were standing out there.

10 MR. DI STEFANO: And you got them back?

11 MR. SELCH: Yes.

12 MR. DI STEFANO: And then, just for my own
13 clarification, I know you told Morgan that the KV Buoy
14 was abeam of the vessel. Was that starboard side?
15 What do you mean exactly? Like, when you were sitting
16 in the stool in the pilothouse and -- and you see --

17 MR. SELCH: It was the New Jersey side.

18 MR. DI STEFANO: It would be the -- the
19 starboard side. At what point was it, just even with
20 the -- even with the bow, mid-ship?

21 MR. SELCH: It was even -- it was even with
22 the pilothouse door when I -- when I made my exit.

23 MR. DI STEFANO: When you made your exit.

24 MR. SELCH: By the time I got downstairs it
25 had to just clear it.

1 MR. DI STEFANO: And that's the normal time
2 -- normal -- that's pretty much -- that's normal time
3 when you would go --

4 MR. SELCH: Yes.

5 MR. DI STEFANO: -- below?

6 And I had just one other question. The
7 person who was sitting reading, did you know -- if that
8 person was already there when you went up to do your
9 lookout duties or came in with -- you know, when you're
10 walking up, as you're going to that stool which is on
11 the same side --

12 MR. SELCH: Right.

13 MR. DI STEFANO: -- as the settee is, it's
14 just in front of it, you -- you'd have to pass in front
15 of the -- in front of the settee to step up on the
16 platform --

17 MR. SELCH: Right.

18 MR. DI STEFANO: -- to sit in the stool. Do
19 you recall if that person was already there in the
20 seat?

21 MR. SELCH: I -- I think it's somebody there,
22 but there was -- there was -- there could have been
23 nobody there. There could have been nobody there at
24 that time then.

25 MR. DI STEFANO: Okay. I think that -- that

1 person came up after you were already in the stool?

2 MR. SELCH: I know there was somebody sitting
3 there when I left.

4 MR. DI STEFANO: When you left.

5 MR. SELCH: But I never looked at the person.

6 MR. DI STEFANO: You -- you recall the person
7 was -- was not there, though, when you -- when you went
8 to step (inaudible)?

9 MR. SELCH: I'm almost positive now that
10 there was -- there was no -- nobody sitting there.

11 MR. DI STEFANO: That's all I have. Thanks.

12 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Mr. Selch, do you have
13 any knowledge of any standard operating procedures
14 requiring that two people be in the pilothouse when
15 docking?

16 MR. SELCH: It's supposed to be a rule. I
17 believe that's what they said; both captains are
18 supposed to be in the room.

19 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Who said that?

20 MR. SELCH: I -- just general knowledge that
21 I thought was supposed to be, you know, what it's
22 supposed to be.

23 MR. TURRELL: Prior to the accident, is that
24 correct? Prior to the accident?

25 MR. SELCH: Prior to the accident.

1 MR. TURRELL: Right.

2 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Okay. And general
3 knowledge. Just try to remember where you got this
4 information from.

5 MR. SELCH: Just the fact that they're
6 usually back and forth there all the time. You know,
7 the regular captain that's on there is always in and
8 out, you know. He's always in there. I know Smith is
9 always up at the other end.

10 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: But were you ever
11 issued anything in writing or a memorandum from DOT?

12 MR. SELCH: No. No.

13 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Okay.

14 PARTICIPANT: I've got one.

15 MR. SELCH: Not that I believe, you know.

16 PARTICIPANT: Joe, do you recall a year --
17 when you were hired a year ago, would that be October,
18 November?

19 MR. SELCH: October 28th.

20 PARTICIPANT: October 28th. Do you recall
21 who -- who trained you?

22 MR. SELCH: Who trained me?

23 PARTICIPANT: -- your duties? Yeah. Who was
24 your -- who was -- who trained you in what you have to
25 do?

1 MR. SELCH: We were put on different boats.
2 They -- there was five -- five of us? -- five of us.
3 And we'd go onto one boat for a while, and then we'd --
4 you know, they'd send us back and forth --

5 PARTICIPANT: All five of you together?

6 MR. SELCH: The first day, yes. We launched
7 a boat, we rode the boat, we all took turns rowing. It
8 was on the Kennedy, I believe, and one of the -- one of
9 the deck hands that was on -- an experienced deck hand,
10 he -- he went in the boat with us and we did the
11 rowing, the two men, and we had the extra man and about
12 -- him just to make sure that, you know, we knew what
13 we were doing.

14 PARTICIPANT: What about, you know, duties as
15 lookout, deck hand, and the difference -- the different
16 deck hand assignments that we would -- that you would
17 have on the various ends of the vessel?

18 MR. SELCH: Each boat has a different -- wait
19 a minute. I was given something. I was given papers.
20 I was given something. The Kennedy class and the
21 Barberi class and I think the Austin class. And it
22 told you what my duties were as a deck hand. What my
23 duties were as a deck hand. I didn't read nothing
24 about a mate or a captain. It was my duties as a deck
25 hand, where I'm supposed to be each --

1 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Was it that?

2 MR. SELCH: (Pause) No.

3 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: Or maybe that?

4 MR. SELCH: (Pause) I don't believe it was
5 this, either. No, all it -- all -- no, it wasn't this,
6 either. I remember it was more of a -- it didn't have
7 like an official cover on it. It had like an -- maybe
8 something like this, but it wasn't -- it definitely
9 wasn't this, either.

10 PARTICIPANT: But the content of the form, if
11 you look at your position, which is the deck hand.

12 MR. SELCH: (Pause) Deck hand.

13 PARTICIPANT: Can you tell us if the content
14 is similar to what you saw?

15 MR. SELCH: No, because I even told them
16 today this is wrong.

17 PARTICIPANT: Okay.

18 MR. SELCH: Deck Hand 2 is the deck hand on
19 the Jersey side, and Deck Hand 3 is on the Brooklyn
20 side. This -- I signed for this today. I got that --

21 (Interruption)

22 MR. TURRELL: Go ahead.

23 MR. SELCH: It was something like this. And
24 it said Deck Hand 1, Deck Hand 2, Deck Hand 3, Deck
25 Hand 4.

1 (Interruption)

2 MR. TURRELL: Go ahead.

3 MR. SELCH: And it told you that the -- where
4 your fire station was, and Deck Hand 1 was -- he had to
5 report here and here, and he manned the hose in the
6 fire tank and all this. Deck Hand 2 brought down the
7 fire extinguisher and, you know, like that.

8 PARTICIPANT: Okay.

9 MR. SELCH: And it didn't have anything about
10 -- I don't believe it had anything about a lookout. It
11 was just normal. Matter of fact, my first lookout, I
12 had to get called up to the pilothouse. The captain
13 called me up. You know, I didn't realize it was my job
14 on my first trip.

15 PARTICIPANT: And, Joe, do you recall who it
16 was who assigned you to this group, who it was that you
17 dealt with in the -- in the operation here -- the new
18 -- the new employees and -- and directed them what
19 their training was and told them how it would work on
20 the vessel and told them who to report to? Who was it
21 that -- that handled -- handled that?

22 MR. SELCH: I believe it was --

23 PARTICIPANT: At the beginning.

24 MR. SELCH: -- a combination of Joey Cock
25 (ph) and --

1 PARTICIPANT: He's a fore captain?

2 MR. SELCH: Yes, sir. And John Walden. He
3 would say, you know -- a couple of times he would say
4 -- you know, when he came in, you usually had to go
5 into that office, the dock office, and they would tell
6 you, well, go here and -- and you'll take a ride on
7 this boat and you'll see what, you know, what it is,
8 and like that.

9 One day they had us stay at the dock and use
10 the bridges and aprons and, you know -- a thing -- they
11 had you try all the -- they had you doing all the
12 different jobs.

13 PARTICIPANT: All the different jobs?

14 MR. SELCH: All the different jobs.

15 PARTICIPANT: Would you say that during your
16 period of training -- which, by the way, how long was
17 the period of training before you were on your own?

18 MR. SELCH: I'm not sure. I think it was
19 four or five days.

20 PARTICIPANT: And during that time, did --

21 MR. SELCH: It was four days. It was regular
22 work -- regular type work week.

23 PARTICIPANT: Four days?

24 MR. SELCH: Yeah.

25 PARTICIPANT: And during that time, you

1 weren't on your own; you were assigned to work with the
2 other deck hands or observe?

3 MR. SELCH: Yeah. A deck hand would either
4 show you or, you know.

5 PARTICIPANT: And during that four days, you
6 rotated all the different deck hand positions at
7 different --

8 MR. SELCH: Yes, sir. Well, not -- yeah.
9 Just about. You know, you got a rough idea on the
10 boat. You know, how you --

11 PARTICIPANT: Plus the terminal operation?

12 MR. SELCH: Plus the terminal operation.

13 PARTICIPANT: Main deck and saloon deck?

14 MR. SELCH: Yeah, and then they --

15 PARTICIPANT: Hookup and --

16 MR. SELCH: And they had us do a few -- a
17 fire drill. They had us man a hose and, you know, like
18 I said, put a life boat in the water and row.

19 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Christine, any more?

20 SPECIAL AGENT JUDIA: (Inaudible)

21 MR. TURRELL: Can you give us a rough time
22 from your -- from your understanding what time this
23 accident occurred? The time?

24 MR. SELCH: The time?

25 MR. TURRELL: When you felt the collision --

1 allision.

2 MR. SELCH: No, I couldn't.

3 MR. TURRELL: Okay. Do you recall the
4 bridge, if the windows were open or closed? It was a
5 windy day. Do you recall if the bridge doors or
6 windows were open?

7 MR. SELCH: It wasn't closed. Sometimes the
8 -- the pilothouse front window, he opens it a little
9 bit. I can't -- I can't remember if it was shut all
10 the way or if it was still cracked a little bit.

11 MR. TURRELL: Do you recall if the bridge was
12 its normal temperature or stuffy or hot?

13 MR. SELCH: I find the whole boat to be hot,
14 myself. You know, I find -- even in the wintertime I
15 wear a very light -- like a wind breaker, kind of like
16 a coach's jacket in the winter.

17 MR. TURRELL: When you were talking with
18 Captain Smith, do you recall if he was sitting or
19 standing?

20 MR. SELCH: He was sitting.

21 MR. TURRELL: Was he comfortably seated? Was
22 he --

23 MR. SELCH: Very comfortable.

24 MR. TURRELL: Was he -- do you recall if he
25 was sitting backwards or was he sitting sort of

1 forwards?

2 MR. SELCH: Sitting normal. Sitting --

3 MR. TURRELL: Upright?

4 MR. SELCH: -- normal. Matter of fact, when
5 I ride with him, I usually move my stool up closer --
6 closer to him.

7 MR. TURRELL: And does he normally have his
8 hands -- both hands on the controls, or is he kind of a
9 one-handed person?

10 MR. SELCH: There's no controls, just a
11 steering --

12 MR. TURRELL: Steering.

13 MR. SELCH: That's all he actually has to do.
14 He just reaches. Pretty easy.

15 MR. TURRELL: Could you read a book and steer
16 at the same time?

17 MR. SELCH: No.

18 MR. TURRELL: You didn't see him reading a
19 book at all or --

20 MR. SELCH: No, but he does read. I know he
21 does read. Usually takes his -- he's got a -- he
22 usually has a book with him and he usually takes it to
23 the other pilothouse with him. Or he'll read a
24 newspaper or something like that.

25 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So in his normal -- when

1 he was not piloting, he might be at the pilothouse with
2 the captain reading or something?

3 MR. SELCH: Yes. He usually sits in the
4 settee right in the corner.

5 MR. TURRELL: Okay. And can you tell us
6 again from your recollection where exactly you were
7 when you realized the ship had hit the pier?

8 MR. SELCH: I was holding onto -- to the
9 railing on my -- by my station up by the aprons, where
10 the aprons would come down.

11 MR. TURRELL: And that was on the saloon
12 deck?

13 MR. SELCH: Saloon deck.

14 MR. TURRELL: Do you recall just -- I know
15 you said you pushed some people back. Do you recall if
16 everyone had left that area and it was just yourself
17 and another crew member? Do you recall who was there?

18 MR. SELCH: It was -- as far as I can
19 remember, I chased everybody -- everybody was out of
20 the front. I don't know if anybody could have come
21 down from the bridge. There's a door on the side,
22 there's a wall. I don't know if anybody came down from
23 the bridge deck on that side. But I got everybody back
24 and they -- up the ramp on the bridge deck, just
25 telling everybody to get back. And there was one guy

1 that I grabbed because he was trying to hide behind a
2 pole and I knew if we -- you know, if we went forward,
3 he --

4 MR. TURRELL: Sure.

5 MR. SELCH: So I grabbed him and I held onto
6 the rail, and when we didn't stop, you know, I just --
7 I got him down the stairs quick and we got everybody
8 running forward as fast as they could.

9 MR. TURRELL: Was this person a young person?

10 MR. SELCH: He was an older man.

11 MR. TURRELL: So there weren't any brave
12 souls that you could see hanging out at the bow there
13 holding on?

14 MR. SELCH: No, sir.

15 MR. TURRELL: Did you ever hear any alarms,
16 whistles, or any warning signals whatsoever?

17 MR. SELCH: No, sir.

18 MR. TURRELL: And did you -- when -- when you
19 looked out and you realized the ship was going to hit
20 the pier, can you tell us, if you look straight out on
21 the bow, if the pier was coming at an angle or coming
22 straight on to the ship?

23 MR. SELCH: An angle.

24 MR. TURRELL: Okay. So can you tell us where
25 the pier was in relation to --

1 MR. SELCH: It just was a pier. We were
2 coming at it like this, at an angle.

3 MR. TURRELL: Okay.

4 MR. SELCH: Matter of fact, at one time it
5 looked like we were going to hit the center of it. I
6 thought we were going to hit the center of it. That's
7 when I grabbed that guy and I held on, because I was
8 afraid we were going to all get -- you know, we were
9 going to come to a dead stop and we were all going to
10 get thrown. And I figured that gate and everything is
11 not going to stop us, either, you know. We'll go right
12 -- right over it or through it or whatever.

13 MR. TURRELL: So it looked, when you looked
14 out, that it was actually going to hit -- if this is
15 the middle --

16 MR. SELCH: More to the center, yes.

17 MR. TURRELL: So the only time you saw
18 Captain Gansas, to your recollection, was on the deck
19 after the accident, is that --

20 MR. SELCH: After the accident, and in -- in
21 the New York pilothouse when we were going to New York.
22 I was the lookout there, too.

23 MR. TURRELL: I have no further questions.
24 Anyone else?

25 MR. DI STEFANO: Yeah, just a couple.

1 MR. TURRELL: Nick.

2 MR. DI STEFANO: Do you recall what part of
3 the bow struck first? Was it direct, or was it to the
4 right?

5 MR. SELCH: I would say it was almost center,
6 but just favoring to the right a little bit.

7 MR. DI STEFANO: And when you left the
8 pilothouse to go downstairs, was Smith still sitting?

9 MR. SELCH: I believe he got up. I believe
10 he stood up because that's what he usually does. He
11 stands up. I believe he did get up; I believe he did
12 get up, stand up.

13 MR. TURRELL: And that's -- he stood up to
14 acknowledge you leaving, to talk to you?

15 MR. SELCH: I -- I don't know.

16 MR. TURRELL: But you believe he stood up?

17 MR. SELCH: I believe he stood up.

18 MR. DI STEFANO: You said that he said --
19 when you left, the last thing he said was -- and he was
20 the last to speak. He said, okay, see you later.

21 MR. SELCH: Okay, see you later.

22 MR. DI STEFANO: Were those his exact words
23 as you recall? And then, at that point, was he
24 standing or sitting?

25 MR. SELCH: I'm trying to remember. I went

1 to the rail -- I think he got up. I believe he stood
2 up; I believe he stood up.

3 MR. DI STEFANO: And when he was piloting the
4 boat across prior to that and he was sitting, did he
5 have his feet up on the control panel? I know some of
6 the --

7 MR. SELCH: Sometimes they do, sometimes they
8 don't. He might --

9 MR. DI STEFANO: Do you recall --

10 MR. SELCH: -- he might -- he might have had
11 them up there, you know, up and down. He is a little
12 fidgety, you know. He's a little fidgety type of guy.

13 MR. DI STEFANO: Do you recall the motion of
14 the vessel on that day? I know it was windy. Was it
15 very -- was there any motion, any side-to-side with the
16 wind and all -- in the pilothouse?

17 MR. SELCH: No, no --

18 MR. DI STEFANO: Or was it just flat, calm,
19 steady?

20 MR. SELCH: It was -- it was a wind shop, but
21 not -- not --

22 MR. DI STEFANO: (Inaudible)

23 MR. SELCH: -- not to disturb the boat, no.

24 MR. DI STEFANO: There was no rocking?

25 MR. SELCH: No.

1 MR. DI STEFANO: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. TURRELL: Mr. Selch acknowledged that
3 he's being recorded, and that concludes the interview.

4 MR. SELCH: I realize this has been recorded.

5 MR. TURRELL: Thank you.

6 (Whereupon, the proceedings were concluded.)
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