



National Transportation Safety Board

Washington, D.C. 20594
Office of Marine Safety

Interview Summary – DCA21FM032

Interview of: Stan Reider – pilot of the bulk carrier *Jalma Topic*
Date/Time: July 14, 2021 – 1100 to 1220 CDT
Location: Pivach, Pivach, Hufft, Thriffiley & Dunbar, LLC Conference Room, Belle Chasse, Louisiana
Interviewed by: CWO3 [REDACTED] – USCG and Adam Tucker – NTSB
Attendees: Mark Pivach – Pivach, Pivach, Hufft, Thriffiley & Dunbar, LLC (representing New Orleans Baton Rouge Steamship Pilots Association),
Accident: July 12, 2021 Contact of the Liberian flag bulk carrier *Jalma Topic* with the Crescent Towing office barge fleet at mile 93.5 lower Mississippi river, (NTSB No. DCA21FM032). New Orleans, Louisiana.

This interview summary has been compiled based on Coast Guard and NTSB investigator notes taken during the interview of Mr. Stan Reider, the pilot of the bulk carrier *Jalma Topic*.

- Mr. Reider has worked as a NOBRA pilot for 25 years, including a 6-month initial apprenticeship. Before that, he worked 17 years at Crescent Towing on a harbor tug with about 12 to 13 of those years as captain.
- Mr. Reider was the pilot on board the *Jalma Topic* at the time it struck the Crescent Towing/Cooper T Smith fleet at mile 93.5 on the lower Mississippi river on July 12, 2021. His radio identity is NOBRA 11.
- Mr. Reider said the *Jalma Topic* was going to the ADM Ama grain terminal at mile 117 on the right descending bank.
- Mr. Reider's duty schedule is from 0400 on Wednesday to 0400 the following Wednesday on a one week on one week off rotation. He usually works one ship per day but things have been slow lately.
- His last job before the *Jalma Topic* was on Saturday morning (July 10). He got off a southbound ship at about 0815 and was home about an hour later where he had the remainder of that Saturday off. He also had all of Sunday off but knew he was going to get a ship for early Monday morning (July 12). NOBRA pilots get 3 hours' notice to when they are to be on a ship, so about 0001 he received a call for a northbound ship, the *Jalma Topic*, for a 0300 boarding.
- Mr. Reider said he slept from about 2100 Saturday July 10 to about 0700 Sunday July 11. He went to sleep about 1830 on July 11 knowing he was going to get a call for a job in the early morning. He received a call from their dispatch about midnight and went back asleep until about 0130 when he woke up. He then got transport to the Portship dock (about mile 98) where he was to meet the launch and got there about 0230. He boarded the *Jalma Topic* on time around 0300 at the general anchorage. He said he was well rested and felt good.

- On the *Jalma Topic*, he went to the bridge where he relieved the Crescent River Pilot. At that time the vessel traffic light was red and they were held up below the point at a half bell waiting for a southbound tow. At some point VTC called them and told them to start up so they went to full ahead on the *Jalma Topic*.
- Mr. Reider then made a passing agreement with two Stone boats which he recalled were the *Olga* and *Madison Stone* for which they would pass on two whistles (starboard to starboard).
- The larger southbound tow was the *Justify* with 9 loads. He made a two-whistle passing arrangement with him as well.
- When he relieved the Crescent pilot, the *Jalma Topic* was at a half bell, and once VTC cleared them to continue upriver, he requested a full bell on the vessel.
- Mr. Reider said he set up his portable pilot unit (PPU) and did the passage arrangements with the southbound tows before beginning a master/pilot exchange with the master of the *Jalma Topic*. The master informed Mr. Reider that all equipment was in good working order. He asked the master if the engine room was manned, and the master told him that it was.
- The master informed Mr. Reider that there was one steering pump in operation. Mr. Reider asked if they could use two, to which the master replied that by design they could only use one at a time but the second one was in standby and ready for emergency use.
- After that, Mr. Reider asked the master if the anchors were ready for use and if there were men forward, to which the master replied that they were ready for use and there was a man forward. Mr. Reider then tested the whistle and went to the radar and adjusted it.
- The *Jalma Topic* met the two southbound tows (the *Olga* and *Morgan Stone*) with no problems.
- Mr. Reider recalled issuing a helm order of steady as he was finishing with the radar. He then looked down at the pilot card to look at the particulars of the *Jalma Topic*. When he looked out the window, he noticed a slight drift to port. He looked at the rudder angle indicator and saw the rudder was on port 10. He ordered the rudder midships, to which the helmsman responded midship. He then went back to looking at the pilot card. Looking back out the window, he saw the ship was still swinging to port to which Mr. Reider ordered starboard 10, then starboard 20. He looked at the rudder angle indicator and saw the rudder angle was still showing port 10. That was the point when he knew there was a problem.
- The swing to port continued to increase. Mr. Reider saw they were heading straight for the Crescent towing barge which he was familiar with. He ordered the engine stopped, grabbed the VHF and called VTC and asked them to call Crescent to warn them they were approaching. He then ordered dead slow astern, full astern and then ordered the starboard anchor let go, followed by the port anchor let go. He asked the mate to sound the danger signal on the whistle.
- Mr. Reider knew that there were two dispatchers on the Crescent Towing barge, but they don't monitor channel 67. That is why he asked VTC to get in touch with them. He recalled the engine orders given were stop, dead slow astern, slow astern and full astern.

- Mr. Reider ordered the starboard anchor let go and then let go the port anchor. He also asked the danger signal be sounded.
- Mr. Reider then went back to the radio and checked with VTC about the call to Crescent. They managed to get one of the anchors down on the *Jalma Topic* which helped turn the ship and bring the bow down lower than he had anticipated, to where they hit the lower end of the Crescent barge where the *Jalma Topic* then stopped. He asked the master how many shots of chain were out on the starboard anchor. He recalled hearing the master say that only the port anchor was let go before they hit the Crescent Towing barge and that there were 4 shots of chain out on the port anchor.
- After the *Jalma Topic* was stopped, Mr. Reider looked again at the rudder angle indicator and it was still at port 10 degrees. Mr. Reider then asked the port anchor to be heaved up to three shots noting that he did not want the *Jalma Topic* to fall down on the tow that was moored up on the bank downriver of them and not being sure of whether or not the *Jalma Topic* had suffered any bottom damage.
- Mr. Reider said before the impact he saw the mate and the helmsman at the steering stand, and it looked like they were trying to switch to another pump after he noticed the rudder was stuck. They were at the starboard side of the helm wheel at the steering stand.
- Mr. Reider spoke with the master after the impact with the barge and the master told him he had no idea what had happened. The mate also said he had no idea what went wrong. Mr. Reider recalled the mate saying he tried to switch pumps, they tried everything, but nothing worked.
- Mr. Reider called for tug assistance on channel 77. He received a response from one that said he was coming but had to make sure the Crescent barge was settled first. That was the tug *Mardis Gras* which was tied up at the upper part of the Crescent fleet.
- Mr. Reider understood the fleet got pushed up into the river. The *Mardis Gras* came to the *Jalma Topic* and got on the starboard bow and held the ship to the bank where they remained until he was relieved by another pilot at about 0530 so that he could be drug and alcohol tested. He recalled arriving at the testing facility about 0645 and stated that he was contacted by NOBRA on 7/13/2021 to confirm the test results were negative.
- When asked about the master/pilot exchange, Mr. Reider said the captain was fine and friendly. There were no issues with the bridge team at all. The bridge responded well and adequately to any helm or propulsion order requests he made. The master told him there were no deficiencies with the vessel. When he relieved the Crescent Pilot, he too told him that all was fine, and he experienced no problems taking the ship in.
- When asked about the weather conditions, Mr. Reider said the weather was nice and clear when he boarded the ship by the sugar refinery at the general anchorage; mile 90.5. It was a beautiful night. The winds were light.
- When asked if he had piloted empty bulkers like the *Jalma Topic*, Mr. Reider replied yes, many times. He has piloted about 4000 ships in his tenure at NOBRA. Northbound bulkers in ballast are an ideal job that pilots like to take. The trip to ADA Ama should have been about 2.5 to 3 hours.

- When asked of the current, Mr. Reider said he estimated about 2 to 2.5 knots but noted the current varies depending on the side of the river they are on. The strongest current would be more to the middle of the river than where they were transiting and would be more upstream closer to the bank.
- When asked about the Crescent/Cooper T Smith fleet, Mr. Reider said they had a smaller barge there for their line boats as well. Below the fleet there was a tow that was tied up to pilings. He explained, that is why they heaved the anchor up because of the concern of the *Jalma Topic*'s proximity and risk of drifting down on that tow.
- When asked of any lighting on the barges and the pilings, Mr. Reider could not recall. Some of the barges sit behind the office barge. There was a floating dock there, with another barge and the office barge. Some tugs tie up to the smaller barge. All he could see was that he was going to make contact with the fleet and eventually, he lost sight of the barge as it went under the bow of the *Jalma Topic*. After the contact with the barge, the *Jalma Topic* slid down from where it initially went in.
- When asked if he had any medical conditions or was taking any medications, Mr. Reider said that he had no medical conditions and was taking no medications. He was wearing glasses at the time of the incident and keeps an extra pair with him when on ships.
- When asked of the radio frequencies in the area, Mr. Reider said that VTS was on channel 12 and the bridge-to-bridge frequency was channel 67.
- When asked to recap when he first noticed there was a problem and where the mate was, Mr. Reider said he was not sure. The helmsman was at the steering stand and the mate was on the starboard side somewhere. The mate then ran to the steering stand and was on the starboard side of it doing something. The master went there too. The master was originally on the starboard side of the bridge somewhere, and he was on the bridge the whole time. After the barge was struck the mate told Mr. Reider, "we tried everything".
- When asked about any requests for lighting post casualty, Mr. Reider said he did not make any requests for lighting on the ship.
- When asked about his experience with ships having one steering pump available during river transits, Mr. Reider said it is more common for vessels to be running two pumps and not just one. Most ships run two pumps at a time in the river.
- When asked if he heard any alarms prior to the contact with the barge, Mr. Reider said he heard no alarms.
- When asked to clarify what anchor he requested let go, Mr. Reider said he asked for the starboard anchor to be let go. He did not hear any noise or vibration from the anchor being let go. He thought the master was the one who relayed the order to let go the anchor.
- When asked if the *Jalma Topic* went astern, and if he felt any vibration commonly felt in astern propulsion, Mr. Reider said he did not see or feel the *Jalma Topic* going astern, noting that although he heard the bell for dead slow astern, it didn't get to that point before they struck the barge. He ordered the engine stopped after the contact.
- The chief engineer came on the bridge after the contact, and Mr. Reider asked him what happened, and the chief engineer said he didn't know.

- When asked his reference for the current and river stage, Mr. Reider said he was using MRTIS (Mississippi River Traffic Information System). The mean surface velocity of the river was there.
- When asked what type of PPU Mr. Reider was using, he said it was a Trelborg unit and it was plugged into the AIS port for the *Jalma Topic*. When asked if it was capable of recording track history, Mr. Reider said it probably was saved to a cloud drive.
- When asked if he noticed any problems with the handling or steering of the *Jalma Topic* after he boarded, Mr. Reider said he noticed no problems. He noted the bridge team spoke English, but after the accident they began speaking in their primary language.
- When asked of the Crescent pilot he relieved, Mr. Reider said the pilot's name was Mr. Abe Strickland and he had an apprentice pilot with him, Mr. Connor Cornic. There were no issues reported from the Crescent river pilot to him. The Crescent pilot had the *Jalma Topic* for about 6 to 7 hours from Pilottown and there were no problems with the steering or propulsion when he relieved him.
- When asked if he recalled the curtains being drawn separating the chartroom on the *Jalma Topic*, Mr. Reider recalled when he entered the bridge there was a dim light in the back, but nothing that would have affected his sight forward. He had no problems with any light on the bridge affecting his night vision.
- When asked if the mate went behind the curtain at any time, Mr. Reider said he did not recall anything.
- When asked what radio he used to call VTS prior to the *Jalma Topic* hitting the Crescent fleet barge, Mr. Reider said he used the ship's radio which he had set to channel 12.
- When asked if he physically used the ship's telegraph, Mr. Reider said no, the crew handled the telegraph, and he did not touch it. When he relieved the Crescent River pilot, the *Jalma Topic* was at a half bell.
- When asked what radar he adjusted, Mr. Reider said it was the one on the port side. He set it to head up mode.
- When asked about his dialogue with the master about only one steering pump able to be used, Mr. Reider said the master told him that was the design and that only one pump could be used. He recalled no problems with the rudder being slow to move.
- When asked his last helm order given prior to noticing something was wrong, Mr. Reider said it was a steady order, which means the helmsman has to use the rudder to keep the course the ship was currently on. He did not recall the exact course.
- When asked to recall again what he was doing just before he noticed something was not right, Mr. Reider said he looked at the pilot card after the steady order to the helmsman. He then looked up and saw the ship was drifting to port. He saw the rudder angle indicator had port 10 rudder. He called midship and then looked down at the pilot card again. He then looked up and saw the rudder angle indicator was still at port 10 and that the rate of turn was picking up to port. He then ordered starboard 20 and saw the rudder didn't move from port 10. He could hear the ticking from his PPU. From that point on, he went into emergency mode and asked for the engine to be stopped, called VTS, then ordered the vessel astern, let go the starboard anchor, and then full astern.

- When asked why he asked for the starboard anchor, Mr. Reider said that it would drag down the starboard side and he was hoping it would minimize the impact and maybe put the bow of the ship below the Crescent fleet.
- When asked of the impact he felt, Mr. Reider described it as if it were just like a boat ran up on a beach. It was soft and then the ship stopped. He then ordered the engine stopped once they were aground. The *Jalma Topic* then slid back and paralleled the bank where it remained until he got off the ship.

End of summary