

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD

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Investigation of: *

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GROUNDING OF TOWING VESSEL *

Accident No.: DCA22FM035

CC PORTLAND ON AUGUST 8, 2022 *

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Interview of: GORDON A. SCOTT, Master

CC Gregory

Aboard the *CC Gregory*

Friday,

August 12, 2022

APPEARANCES:

LCDR [REDACTED], SIO
United States Coast Guard

R. JON FURUKAWA, Investigator in charge
National Transportation Safety Board

CWO [REDACTED], IO
United States Coast Guard

RICHARD GORDON, Marine Coordinator
Cheniere Corpus Christi LNB Facility

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I N T E R V I E W

(2:01 p.m. Central)

1
2
3 [REDACTED] So this is Lieutenant Commander [REDACTED]
4 [REDACTED]. It is Friday, August 12th at 1401 Central Time. We're
5 onboard the *CC Gregory* in regards to the *CC Portland* grounding
6 incident. I'm here with the captain. Please state your name.

7 MR. SCOTT: Gordon A. Scott.

8 [REDACTED] And do I have your permission to record this
9 interview?

10 MR. SCOTT: Yes.

11 [REDACTED] And I also have present --

12 MR. FURUKAWA: Jon Furukawa, National Transportation Safety
13 Board.

14 [REDACTED]: CWO [REDACTED], Coast Guard.

15 MR. GORDON: Richard Gordon, Cheniere.

INTERVIEW OF GORDON A. SCOTT

17 BY [REDACTED]

18 Q. All right. And we're just going to ask a couple more
19 questions for the investigation primarily focused on the training
20 aspect of mate Timothy Thorsen. So if you want to go ahead and
21 tell me a little bit about your experience with him as a mate.

22 A. I only worked with him one hitch. I believe it was two
23 weeks. From what he told me, he came from the river boat cruise
24 line up and down the Mississippi, which were Z-drive powered. So
25 he claimed to have Z-drive experience. Like any other new mate, I

1 put him on the wheel driving lightboat. I noticed immediately
2 that when he had a drive that was out of position, like trying to
3 dock the boat or whatnot, he'd have to drive out of position, oh,
4 I got that one right wrong. He'd turn it around but never pulled
5 back on the thrust. So the whole time that drive is swinging
6 around it's thrusting. And he just never comprehended that to me.
7 And then he, of course, made the boat way out of position.

8 Q. Okay. So I have his tractor tug training program document
9 here that has the different maneuvers that he needs to accomplish
10 and signatures. And I just want to go through -- we have the
11 section two is where I first saw your initials for G.A.S. And
12 section one -- oops, section two is for lightboat handling. And
13 from February 23rd through February 26th he has tug vessel *Gregory*
14 and your signature, from section B, is maneuvering lightboat
15 course close quarters from February 26th through February 27th
16 with your signature. And I just want to see, could you verify
17 those dates? It's going to be here.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Here.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. And then this top section of this page.

22 A. Uh-huh.

23 Q. Okay. And then I have, with your initials, section C,
24 maneuvering lightboat with working line and winch. Are these your
25 initials?

- 1 A. Yes.
- 2 Q. Those ones are your initials --
- 3 A. No, those are --
- 4 Q. -- your signature --
- 5 A. -- not, those are not.
- 6 Q. Okay.
- 7 A. No.
- 8 Q. And then, I have right here on emergency maneuver training,
9 the first two on April 9th on the *Gregory*. Is that your
10 signature?
- 11 A. No.
- 12 Q. Okay. Let me see. We have section three, evolution one,
13 element one on April 16th onboard the *Gregory* assisting the
14 *Cole* (ph.) *Discoverer*, G.A.S. Is that your signature?
- 15 A. No, it's not. 0020
- 16 Q. Okay. And on element two under evolution one, section three,
17 I have the *Gregory* from February 28th through April 25th. Are
18 those five items your signature?
- 19 A. No, ma'am.
- 20 Q. Okay. On evolution two, element one, April 9th through the
21 20th, these three lines, is that your signature?
- 22 A. No, they are not.
- 23 Q. Okay. On evolution number three, element one, April 16th, is
24 that your signature?
- 25 A. No, ma'am.

1 Q. Element two, evolution number three, April 20th and 25th of
2 the *Gregory*, are those your signatures?

3 A. No, ma'am.

4 Q. Okay. Element one, evolution number four, April 20th onboard
5 the *Gregory* assisting the *GasLog Warsaw*, is that your signature?

6 A. No, ma'am.

7 Q. Okay. I think it might be all of them, let me just confirm.
8 Yeah, that's all of them. All right. So can you just tell me a
9 little bit about this tractor tug training program and your
10 familiarity with it?

11 A. It is for new mates that have gotten their towing license.
12 And it's a company, from what I understand, it's just a company
13 that came up with that to make sure that the management is
14 comfortable with them being signed off to drive the tug, do jobs,
15 being ship assist. I know it's not official for the Coast Guard
16 as far as, like, a TOAR or anything like that. It's just for the
17 company.

18 Q. It's internal.

19 A. Yeah --

20 Q. And what guidance do they provide the captains that are in
21 charge with that training program?

22 A. It's pretty self-explanatory. I mean, you watch the person
23 being evaluated to do the maneuvers that are on the ship. And all
24 the ones I signed off are the ones I saw him do.

25 Q. Is it based on your comfort level, or is it they just have to

1 do it once.

2 A. It's based on the master's comfort level.

3 Q. Okay. So with the one's that you signed off, did it take him
4 more than one try to get your signature?

5 A. Probably.

6 Q. Okay.

7 A. To be honest, I can't remember that far back --

8 Q. Okay, that's fine.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Indiscernible) honest opinion --
10 (Crosstalk)

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- repeat several times --

12 MR. SCOTT: Yeah --

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: -- in order to gain your trust.

14 MR. SCOTT: Yeah. And I had let him do -- like in the number
15 two and number three spots, I would let him maneuver the boat.
16 But that was after I'd already come alongside and put the line up.
17 So the boat was secure to the ship, so it really wouldn't go
18 anywhere. And then, I would put him in the chair, then he just
19 followed the direction --

20 BY [REDACTED]

21 Q. And how did he handle open water?

22 A. Well, he got fixated on the ECDIS system using it as its sole
23 purpose for navigation. He's coming down the channel, he was
24 relying on the ECDIS. And the ECDIS lost the signal from our
25 DGPS. And he called me. I was back there in that chair. He

1 called me and said, I think there's a buoy out of position. And I
2 walked up and looked. He was in the middle of the channel
3 according to the ECDIS. I saw a green buoy and said, there's a
4 green buoy in the middle of the channel. And I looked up, and the
5 range lights are way off. And I said, no, stop. Stop the boat.
6 He stopped. I said, look at your range lights. They're way off.
7 That's a guide only. Everything on the boat is of your radar,
8 your ECDIS, everything is just a guide. You have to take
9 everything into account.

10 And he was relying solely on the ECDIS to drive down the ship
11 channel and put the ECDIS on that screen, which is there is three
12 different -- each screen has its own program. He was way off the
13 channel so got him back in the middle of the channel, reset the
14 screen. I said follow your range lights. Those don't move. And
15 he continued on.

16 Q. Did he ask you for your signature on the ones that you did
17 sign off or --

18 A. Well, I knew I had to sign him off on aspects of the
19 evaluation. What I signed off is what I saw him do and due to,
20 okay --

21 Q. Your comfort level --

22 A. Yeah, he'd got this --

23 Q. Okay. So the ones that are not your signature --

24 A. I cannot answer for that.

25 Q. Okay. Working through that program, is there a step -- is it

1 supposed to go step by step, complete one section evolution before
2 you move to the next evolution when it comes to signoffs?

3 A. To be honest, I don't know. As far as they do what's on the
4 sheet, and I see that they do it safely and are confident in it,
5 then I'll sign it off. It's not start at the top and work down
6 step by step.

7 Q. Okay. So it's just as you come across that maneuver --

8 A. Sure --

9 Q. -- or something, hey, you're good to go. I'll sign you off
10 on that.

11 A. Sure.

12 [REDACTED] Jon, do you have some questions?

13 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

14 Q. The ones that you didn't sign off on and (indiscernible)
15 initials, if he came back afterwards and said, hey, captain,
16 (indiscernible), I did this for you but wasn't able to get your
17 initials, so I just initialed by it and put your initials over
18 here. Can you go ahead and initial it officially?
19 (Indiscernible).

20 A. No. No, I wouldn't do that. He would just have to find the
21 time even if he's on another boat, he could just walk over here
22 and ask me to sign.

23 BY [REDACTED]

24 Q. Okay. I don't have too many questions on this one. What's
25 your opinion on the number one position?

1 A. That's a tough one. Personally, I don't like it. But when
2 it's my turn, I don't shy away from it because that's what I'm
3 being paid to do. The only incident I had with the number one was
4 up there at (indiscernible) level, we saw it dropping and
5 dropping. The pilots left anyway. And they got around the corner
6 of that (indiscernible), and it slammed down. And I could see
7 about five feet of my line outside of the staple. And that was
8 it. I lost sight of the ship. I couldn't even see the water.
9 And I couldn't rely on the ECDIS because that information is a
10 separate (indiscernible).

11 So I have no physical reference of where I was to the ship.
12 And we almost touched the ship twice. So I got within that five
13 feet, ones was on the starboard side, ones was on the port side.
14 And our winch, we lost an O-ring on the winch. And we
15 (indiscernible). So I started losing hydraulic fluid. So I had
16 the pilot cut me loose. And after that, I came back to the dock.
17 And then, we spent the day fixing that. But even Tim said once he
18 got out to the jetties -- because I was released at that point.
19 Once they got out to the jetties, he said it was still -- he
20 couldn't even see over the bow, it was so thick. In my opinion,
21 the pilot should've never left. But when they did, visibility was
22 half a mile. It wasn't until they were on their way and halfway
23 down La Quinta Channel --

24 Q. In your opinion, do you feel the number one position's
25 necessary for these maneuvers?

1 A. Honestly, no. But if that's what it calls for, it's what we
2 do.

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: And why would you say no? Do you feel
4 like you're going too fast --

5 MR. SCOTT: No. Well, at some points they do seven and a
6 half almost eight knots. Anything really over five knots, you're
7 really ineffective because you're spending all of the ship's power
8 just to maintain position. You're not putting enough forces onto
9 the ship.

10 MR. GORDON: (Indiscernible) so to maintain his position at
11 that speed, uses 70, 75 percent --

12 MR. SCOTT: Sometimes 80, 85 percent.

13 MR. GORDON: -- and so you never want to max out because you
14 don't have any (indiscernible) to get out, and you're using the
15 rest, the 15, 20 percent just to do what needs to be done on the
16 job.

17 [REDACTED] I see.

18 MR. GORDON: So when you're percentaged out, meaning you're
19 at 85 percent just to maintain the position and really have no
20 power to work --

21 MR. SCOTT: Yeah. In a fully loaded a thousand-foot ship, 15
22 tons ain't going to do anything.

23 BY [REDACTED]

24 Q. Is that your (indiscernible), 15 tons?

25 A. (Indiscernible) 85 --

1 Q. Eighty-five --

2 A. -- it's all depending on power, percentage. A hundred
3 percent is 85 tons.

4 Q. So my understanding so far has been the purpose of this
5 number one position is kind of a emergency position. It's a
6 bailout if they need to turn the vessel before La Quinta Channel.
7 Like, what's your understanding of that position and the reasoning
8 behind why we have it?

9 A. To be honest, I don't know. I've only been here about ten
10 months.

11 Q. Oh, okay. What's your history with what you were doing
12 before you were working for --

13 A. I was the master on the FORTE for ten years, which is the
14 (indiscernible) big ocean-going tug. And they stacked it end of
15 last summer and kind of took the crew and dispersed them
16 throughout the fleet. And I ended up here. And while I was
17 here -- before I actually got a job down in Guyana. But I wasn't
18 able to take it down there because my dad is very ill right now,
19 and I can't be 2100 miles away if something happens to him so --

20 Q. So what's your experience with Z-drives?

21 A. I started on Z-drives in 2000.

22 Q. Okay. And how long have you been working for Chouest?

23 A. Going on 17 years.

24 Q. Seventeen years. Okay. How long have you been a captain
25 with Z-drives.

1 A. Z-drives and (indiscernible), over 20 years.

2 Q. Okay. So when you moved from the one vessels ten months ago,
3 did they make you do any sort of training or competency refresher?

4 A. I want to say yes. Yeah, because I was evaluated just to
5 make sure that I could do it. Really, this tug is very easy to
6 drive to me. The old C-Tractor tugs are harder to drive than
7 this. This is a Damen 3212 class, drives like a dream. I've
8 never had an issue with this boat.

9 Q. Did they make you work through that same training program --

10 A. No, ma'am --

11 Q. -- that packet that I showed you --

12 A. No, ma'am.

13 Q. Okay. So who were you evaluated by?

14 A. I can't remember his name. He was here, he's now one of the
15 masters on the same class of tug that's in Sabine.

16 Q. Okay. So what did that evaluation entail? Did they make you
17 do all the positions or --

18 A. Oh, yeah.

19 Q. They made you do everything.

20 A. One through four, did every position twice so that
21 (indiscernible) can do it. When I came over here, driving the
22 boat was not the issue. It was just learning the job. So once I
23 learned the job, cut me loose, and I was the relief master between
24 here -- excuse me -- in the Aransas. And Robert Grabear (ph.) was
25 the master of this boat. When he left, I took over as master.

1 And that was February or March of -- February of this year.

2 [REDACTED] Okay. Jon, did you have a question?

3 BY MR. FURUKAWA:

4 Q. Why did Robert (indiscernible) left Chouest?

5 A. From what I understand, he was let go. Why, you'd have to
6 talk to management.

7 Q. So when your (indiscernible), is that also a Z-drive?

8 A. No, it's a Voith Schneider.

9 Q. Voith Schneider, but at Chouest.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. Was there any training program for that? You went through a
12 simulator or --

13 A. No. They just took my experience that I had on me, a lift
14 responder, if you're familiar with that big tug. It's Voith
15 Schneider, same drive system. (Indiscernible) I was master on
16 that boat and went from there to relief master on the FORTE when
17 it was brand new and took it out of the shipyard at
18 (indiscernible).

19 Q. How many years of maritime experience --

20 A. Thirty-five.

21 Q. Thirty-five years.

22 A. Shit, I'm old.

23 Q. You worked for Chouest for 17 years.

24 A. Yes, sir.

25 Q. Did you go to one of the maritime schools or --

1 A. Texas A&M at Galveston.

2 Q. What year?

3 A. I started in '89, would've graduated in '93 --

4 [REDACTED] I was going to say, were you classmates? He's
5 '93 --

6 MR. SCOTT: Did you --

7 [REDACTED] -- he just told us that, yeah.

8 MR. SCOTT: At A&M.

9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yeah. (Indiscernible).

10 MR. SCOTT: I know Butch.

11 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: (Indiscernible).

12 MR. SCOTT: I don't remember you.

13 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't either --

14 (Crosstalk)

15 [REDACTED] Small industry.

16 MR. SCOTT: That's a whole other story I tell you about.

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't remember you (indiscernible).

18 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I used to drive a 1949 green Chevy
19 pickup. No, it was the only one there, it's '49.

20 MR. SCOTT: Oh, I believe you.

21 BY [REDACTED]

22 Q. I don't really have anything else. I just wanted to kind of
23 see if those were actually your signature and get your take on the
24 training program. Do you have any suggestions based on this
25 *Portland* incident that you would recommend for training or --

1 A. I definitely review it with new trainees. This is what not
2 to do.

3 Q. Do you think there's a way the process could be improved?

4 A. No, ma'am, I really don't, not off the top of my head. I
5 mean, the process is fine. It was just the operator. Pure
6 operator error.

7 [REDACTED] All right. Did you have a question? No. All
8 right. Well, pretty short one. It's 1423. This is Lieutenant
9 Commander [REDACTED] on August 12th. And this concludes our
10 interview.

11 (Whereupon, at 2:23 p.m. Central, the interview was
12 concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the attached proceeding before the
NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD


IN THE MATTER OF: GROUNDING OF TOWING VESSEL
 CC PORTLAND ON AUGUST 8, 2022
 Interview of Gordon A. Scott

ACCIDENT NO.: DCA22FM035

PLACE: Aboard the *CC Gregory*

DATE: August 12, 2022

was held according to the record, and that this is the original,
complete, true and accurate transcript which has been transcribed
to the best of my skill and ability.


Janet Deal
Transcriber