

The braking effect of the port anchor caused my vessel to sheer to port, fortunately towards a tributary of the river up which we were proceeding. Sadly, there was a swing-bridge at the entrance to this tributary. The bridge operator showed great presence of mind by opening the bridge for my vessel, but in his haste he did not think to stop the vehicular traffic, the result being that the partly-open bridge deposited a Volkswagen, two cyclists and a cattle truck on our foredeck. Most of my ship's company are at present attempting to round up the contents of the latter, which from the noise I would say were pigs.

The Third Officer showed commendable initiative by dropping the starboard anchor in an attempt to slow the progress of the vessel. Sadly, this was of little practical use, as the anchor fell on the bridge operator's cabin.

After the port anchor had been let go and the vessel started to sheer, I gave a double ring "Full Astern" on the telegraph and personally rang the engineroom to order maximum astern revolutions. I was informed that the sea temperature was 53 degrees and was asked whether there was a film tonight. My reply would add little constructive substance to this report.

Until now, I have confined my remarks to activities at the forward part of the vessel. Back aft, other problems were being experienced. At the moment that the port anchor was let go, the Second Officer was supervising the making-fast of the after tug and lowering the towing spring down to the tug. The sudden braking effect of the port anchor caused the tug to run in under the stern of my vessel, just at the moment when the propeller was answering the double "Full Astern" order. The prompt action of the Second Officer, in securing the inboard end of the spring, delayed the sinking of the tug by some minutes, allowing the safe abandoning of that vessel.

Strangely, at the very moment of letting-go the port anchor, there was a power blackout ashore. The fact that we were passing over a "cable area" at the time may suggest that we may have touched something on the riverbed. It is certainly lucky that the high-tension cables brought down by the foremast were not energized, replaced perhaps by the underwater cable, but due to the shore blackout it is not possible to say where the pylons fell.

The actions and behaviour of foreigners in moments of minor crisis never fail to amaze me. The pilot, for instance, is at this moment huddled in a corner of my dayroom, weeping after having consumed a bottle of gin in a time that is worthy of inclusion in The Guinness Book of Records. The tugmaster, on the other hand, reacted in a more violent manner and has had to be handcuffed in the ship's hospital, where he is telling me to do impractical things with my ship and my person.

I enclose the names and addresses of the vehicle drivers and details of their insurance companies, collected by the Third Officer after his hurried evacuation of the forecastle after we grounded amidst the barges moored just upstream of the swing-bridge. These insurance particulars will enable you to claim for the damage that the vehicles caused to the paintwork on No. 1 hatch coamings.

It is sad to reflect that, had the apprentice realised that there is no need to fly pilot flags after dark, none of these events would have happened.

I must close this report now, as I expect the rest of the night to be rather busy, and feel rather tired from the incessant shouting and banging on my cabin door, the wailing of sirens, and the flashing of police-car lights.

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Ed. Note: This sounds almost like something that could happen in the Cuyahoga River, or perhaps in the river at Buffalo...