

LINDIWE MANAGUA

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Place: Agulhas
Interviewer (Q): Lize-Marie van der Watt | History Department | Stellenbosch University
Respondent (A): Lindiwe Managua | Second Officer | SA Agulhas | 2010

- Q :** Are we still in the fifties?
A : Yes, 52
Q : 52?
A : Yes.
Q : Almost entering the forties.
A : Yes.
Q : Good, okay. How did you become a navigator?
A : Okay. Initially I wanted to work ashore, like as a ship's agent or any of the ship shunting companies. But then like when you go to tech, you got two options. In S1 you've got shore-based students and sea-going students and you all do the same thing, but then in S2, which is the second semester...
A : Then you choose whether you want to do, continue with the shore course, or if you want to continue with sea-going course. But then like during the course of the lecture you get, like an idea of what it is like at sea and ashore and things. So when I was like just out of high school and it was like a new thing that I really wanted to try out, so I decided to go with the sea-going thing.
Q : And, okay. And this particular voyage, how did it happen that you came to Agulhas?
A : Well, this particular voyage actually I... Before this voyage in October there was a women's boat, I don't know if you heard about it?
Q : Yes, yes.
A : There was a group of ladies that sailed from Cape Town to Durban, I was one of those ladies, and I met the crewing officer, Smith. I used to work here before I worked for SAMSA. So I asked her if she could find me a spot on the SA Agulhas for the Antarctic voyage, simply because I needed to catch up on my sea time so I can go for my mates tickets. So like three weeks before she called me, she said yes, I can come and...
Q : Your mate ticket, what is that?
A : Chiefs mate ticket, like [Shelton]...
Q : Ja.
A : You get a chiefs mate ticket.
Q : What does that mean?
A : It is a qualification, it is a next qualification. It is like a next stripe.
Q : Ja.
A : Ja.
Q : And does that give you more power, can you do more things?
A : Yes, yes. It is more responsibility, a higher rank which means more responsibility. You are basically in charge of the gate of the vessel, especially the cargo work and the stability and the training of the cadets.
Q : Okay, so...
A : The crew, you are basically in charge of the crew.
Q : But currently, are you allowed to see, to fare on any kind of vessel?
A : Yes, any kind of vessel.
Q : What do you call that kind of qualification?
A : It is a deck, the one I have now?
Q : Ja.

A : It is a deck officer's ticket.

Q : A deck officer's ticket.

A : Yes.

Q : And then the highest qualification I assume is a master's ticket.

A : Yes.

Q : And that means you can do whatever you want.

A : Exactly!

Q : So you are not actually currently hired by any employers?

A : No, I am not employed, I am on contract right now, I work with SAMSA.

Q : So SAMSA, South African Marine...

A : The South African Maritime Safety Authority.

Q : Okay.

A : I am employed at SAMSA as a ship surveyor.

Q : The ship surveyor, what does that mean?

A : It entails doing the ship inspection when the ship is alongside, SAMSA is the port state authority of this country, and we basically overview the legislation and all the regulations. They must be implemented on ships, whether they are foreign or South African. If they are in our coast we can actually do ad hoc inspections to check if they comply with the regulations...

Q : Yes.

A : And also on the vessel we will have a Safety Certificate and a Cargo ship Safety certificate.

Q : Yes.

A : We will have certain inspectors or surveyors who will come to inspect if your vessel is actually alright. If it is South African-registered, SAMSA or be in charge of making sure that the ship is certificated correctly.

Q : And I suppose an Antarctic voyage is a great way to get sea-time, because you are at sea for a three months.

A : Exactly. It is not just sea time; it is the experience as well.
Because I mean not many seafarers get to see this.
It is just a certain kind of experience that, you know...

Q : So have you...

A : That you don't get anywhere.

Q : Have you heard about the Southern Oceans voyages before?

A : Yes, of course.

Q : Or is it something that? What kind of reputation does it have? Is it something that all the cadets and all the officers want to do, go South sometime?

A : Well, I think it depends, for the first time it is like; I used to work for this company.
I did want to go to Antarctica, not because of like I wanted to see what is going on there, but I was interested in the ice...
And I mean I have never been to a place like that.

Q : Yes.

A : I have been to Europe, but you cannot compare.
So you cannot compare, so I did want to go before and all the other officers in the beginning want to go because of the adventure, they want to find out what it is like.
But then the second or third time around, everyone is like tired, it is too cold, it is too long.

Q : Do you think you will do it again?

A : Yes, I would actually. I was just telling my cadet on watch that, if they ask me to do this at the end of the year, I would do it.

Q : You would do it?

A : Ja, I would.

- Q :** What are the challenges specific to an Antarctic voyage?
- A :** I think the biggest challenge is the type of area that you are navigating, because normally it would just be the sea, and you've got other vessels and other things, but here it is ice. And I mean if you are navigating and you've got vessels around you there is rule of the road, you have got collision regulations.
- Q :** Yes.
- A :** Another vessel is supposed to take action in a particular way, and you are supposed to do something, but when it comes to the ice, they move their own way and they...[laugh]
- Q :** *Ja, ja.*
- A :** So you actually have to try and manoeuvre around them, and sometimes there is the pack- ice and no space to go around it, you can even be stuck for days before you...
- Q :** Yes.
- A :** Actually get where you want to go. Sometimes you will be working in a place where you don't really want to, simply because that is the only, the safest place where you can work cargo or anything you really want to do.
- Q :** So do you think you learned a lot on this...
- A :** No, definitely, definitely.
- Q :** Really?
- A :** No I, definitely.
- Q :** What is the relationship between the officers and the crew like on a ship like the Agulhas is it different from other vessels you worked on?
- A :** Not really. I would say in general South African vessels, because I also worked for another company, Southern Marine. The relationship between the officers and the crew is very similar on South African vessels, very, very similar.
- Q :** And what is that relationship like?
- A :** It is like, you have got the officers, and you have got the crew. [laugh]
- Q :** [laugh]
- A :** The officers at the top and you have got the crew.
- Q :** The crew, okay.
- A :** *Ja*, so. I mean you talk...
You discuss things like if you are on watch for example, on watch you have an Officer-of-the-watch, a crew member at the lookout, and you have a cadet.
- Q :** Yes.
- A :** You all three can have a conversation and that is fine, but there are certain limits which are not supposed to be broken.
- Q :** Okay, and in terms of, and I have to ask this because of our particular social culture context. Do you think it is more difficult for women to be at sea than for men?
- A :** I think so.
I think so simply because as a woman, if you want to have a family you can't, I don't think you can do both.
Some women try, but what I have seen most do, is they will go to the top, they will get their masters ticket, maybe sail as a master, but few years after that, they will retire and go have a family...
And raise their own family, I think for me that is the most difficult part, but in terms of the work...
I don't think it is any different for a woman than a man, because we do not do much physical labour, especially on this vessel.
- Q :** Yes.
- A :** I don't see why...

Q : Well especially not as an officer.

A : Not as an officer, not at all.
Not at all. I mean you can assist here and there, but it is manageable. *Ja*.

Q : Did you get time, or at all any, could you get off the ship, get you go to shore now during this voyage?

A : Unfortunately, the only time we went ashore was South Georgia, that is the only time. Unfortunately we did not get an opportunity to get on the ice because of the schedule; I mean the weather was not so great...

Q : Yes.

A : And we did not have much time to work, and even less time to just go and, you know?

Q : [laugh]

A : Because of the ice.

Q : Would you like to do that?

A : Of course I would! I mean imagine coming all the way to Antarctica and not walking on the ice.

Q : Ice. [laugh]

A : I wanted to keep the ice for myself actually and put it in the freezer and take it home with me.

Q : [laugh] How would you describe Antarctica to your husband?

A : Well I would I think it is a very serene place, a very serene environment, very clean...
And I think it is just one of those, what do they call it? Those protective sites...
Where everything is just natural. I think I will just explain it like that, I don't know.

A : Beautiful.

Q : And cold? Was it cold for you, or not?

A : Well. [laugh] Because of the nature of my work.
My nature and responsibility on the ship.
I don't go out on deck much.

Q : Okay.

A : Yes, most of my work is inside the vessel, so I go on deck now and again. Think people who would know much about the cold, is the shipmate and the crew. [laugh]

Q : [laugh] Okay, I will ask them.

A : He will know more about the cold than myself.

Q : Okay. What are the duties of the officer on watch?

A : Well, if you are on watch...

Q : On the duty, Sorry.

A : Okay, of any officer on watch. If you are on watch, your main responsibility is to make sure the ship is safe at all times, that is why you have an extra lookout, especially when the weather is not so good, or if it is dark, because you want an extra pair of eyes to make sure there is nothing around the ship that can damage the ship in any way. And then the second thing, you also just want, is for example you are now going to Cape Town, and you want to make sure the ship is actually going to Cape Town... [laugh]

Q : And not somewhere like South America or...

A : Exactly! You want to make sure the ship is going where you are supposed to go, and that everything, all the equipment is working, and you basically update everything as you go along. And you've got targets that you pick up on the radar. Any movement around you like ships...
Or ice, and you need to acquire those and see how they are going to pass you, and just to make sure the vessel is safe and you pass these things at a safe distance.

Q : Just for interest sake. Have we passed any vessels?

A : No we have not.

Q : Except the Polarstern?

A : No we have not.

Q : Okay. So it is lonely seas then?

A : *Ja*, especially down South.

Q : What would you say makes a good master?

A : Make a good master?

Q : Of a vessel.

A : I think a good master is someone who can easily communicate with the officers and crew. A master should be approachable

A : He should you know, sometimes you have masters that you are scared to even talk to. I don't think a master should be like that, a master should be approachable, because if you have any concerns...

A : Or you are not sure about something, you should just be able to tell him straight, and not fear that he will think, you are supposed to do this, and you are supposed to know what to do.

Q : *Ja, ja. Ja.*

A : Like for example. This master, I mean...
He is so young.
But I think he is a good leader, simply because he has got a relationship with his officers and the crew, and he is able to manage everyone, and he is just able to show you how to do something right, even if you have done something wrong.

Q : Yes.

A : He must be a leader, or rather a master, must be able to correct you and show you the right way of doing things so that next time you know exactly what to do and how to do it.

Q : And relationship between the officers and the passengers, what would you describe it as?

A : I don't see much of a relationship going on actually; I think it is like; everyone is busy with their own thing. I mean the passengers really have their...

Q : Drinking. Doesn't look like they do much else.

A : [laugh] There is not much, they are down there most of the time. And if we are busy up there, we do not allow passengers on there because we don't want any disturbances that could lead to distractions...
Or damage or anything like that, but also the officers, they are overworked in a way...
Because I mean you do your 8 hours on the bridge, and you still have to do your overtime which is like 3 hours a day, so all in all you do like, how much?

Q : 11 hours of work at least.

A : *Ja*. At least, at least. So most of the time officers are tired. If they log off they want to sleep.
[laugh]
And sometimes they seem to be antisocial, but...
It is just probably because they just want some time...
You know?

Q : Okay. The *Agulhas* would you describe her as a cargo vessel, passenger vessel or a research vessel. What is she?

A : That is a good one. [laugh]

Q : A little bit of everything?

A : Okay. For me it would be in-between general cargo and passenger vessel. *Ja*. General cargo and passenger vessel, because we do carry quite a lot of general cargo, but we also carry quite a lot of passengers.

Q : Passengers.

Q : A last thing. Would you like to go to Marion and Gough as well?

A : Yes, I would actually. I have been there before, and I would like to go again.

Q : You have been there before on the *Agulhas* or other vessels?

A : No, on the *Agulhas*.

Q : Oh you have as deck, first mate...

A : As the third mate, it was 2005.

Q : To Marion?

A : Yes.

Q : And what was Marion like, did you go ashore?

A : Marion, I also went to Tristan. *Ja*, I think I went ashore in Tristan da Cunha.

Q : Not Marion?

A : No, not Marion, no.

Q : Okay, so would you like to go again?

A : Yes I would

Q : And on the new vessels?

A : Ah! I would love to go on that one! [laugh]
But I don't think I will get a chance, especially because I am not even from this company. I can imagine how many people from this company are on a queue to get on that vessel!

Q : [laugh] Really?

A : I am not even going to start bargaining for a place there

Q : Would you say there is some kind of, I don't want to say prestige, but you know people want to sail on the Agulhas, it is something you would like to do.

A : The Agulhas is the vessel, especially in this company, and it is also a South African-registered ship, so it is a special kind of vessel.

Q : Yes.

A : Out of all the vessels in this company, it is the one that, it is bigger...

A : And it is the one that goes further...

A : Than most of them...

Q : And it has to do the most dangerous things, in a way

A : Exactly.

Q : [laugh]

A : *Ja*.

Q : Why do you think it is that South Africans don't go to the sea much?

A : To sea much, I think it is lack of knowledge, I really think it is, people are not aware...
Of what is actually going on.

Q : Because you have a huge coastline

A : We have a huge coastline and there is huge companies as well, that can take people, but I just think that, but the things that are changing I think. Slowly the media and people who know from other people now who have been to sea, or thinking of going to sea. That there is something called the sea, and there is a career at sea as well.

Q : Do you have family at sea that work at sea?

A : No, I am the only one.

Q : What made you decide to go to tech to go to sea? I mean somebody must have told you at some stage.

A : It was a friend of my uncle's actually. Yes, but he was talking about NPA [Port Net] at that time. *Ja* and he was telling me they want ladies... but I did further research on my own and I found out there is also maritime studies that I can actually study and...

Q : Would you like to study further?

A : I have studied further in terms of maritime studies, but that is because I got all my, I got all my up to S4 which is up to master, and now I just need to get all the required time and get my masters ticket.

Q : Do you want a master ticket?

A : Of course I do.

A : I mean for me I think it will be worthless to come to sea and leave with a deck officer's ticket or a chiefs mate ticket, yes.

Q : Ticket, yes. You have to sort of go for the top-spot.

A : All the way, and if I am bound to leave, I know that I have done it, you know?

A : And then there are better opportunities ashore as well.

Q : And what does your husband think of you going away for months at a time?

A : [laugh] Well since we have been married I haven't been going away...

Q : Yes.

A : Because I am now working for SAMSA, but this is basically the first time since we have been married that I went away, but he also travels a lot with work, so he understands that this is something I must do.

Q : Yes, must do, okay.

A : *Ja*, something that he knew when we first met, I told him, hey this is what is going on and at some point I might have to go back to sea, so.

A : Something that we agreed on.[laugh]

Q : Thank you so much Lindiwe.

A : No problem!