Oral with Captain Irwan - Fremantle

Chief Mate <3000GT / Master <500 / Deck Watchkeeper – Pass 1hr 40min

My Oral was for 0900hrs, and I arrived at 0845hrs on a cold winters morning in June to 9deg and raining. I was thinking it can only get better from here. Another student walked in just after me and asked me if I was sitting an oral as well, and I said I am at 9am. Then he just realised that he had the 1400hrs time slot so he was a bit embarrassed and flustered at the same time. I hope he gathered his thoughts for the afternoon session!

He started the Exam by saying just relax, take off my suit jacket and undo tie, and have a drink of water. Calmed the nerves a bit.

I was Chief Mate on a 2900GT bulk Carrier- Australian flagged, departing from a Singapore anchorage to Dampier

- Ask what I knew about Statutory Certificates on board, and so I rolled off a few...
  1. Loadline, Cargo Ship Safety Radio(R), Equipment (E), Construction, Min manning, DOC DG’s, and when I started talking about Marpol cert’s he stopped me and moved on.
- I had joined the ship and asked for what goes into the Handover with the going off C/O
  1. Handover notes, any Ships Cert coming up for survey, Standing Orders, ships SMS, any cargo loaded, etc
- Loadline Survey – What is involved and what validity of certificate? What is Conditions of assignment?
- What is Materials handling Register? What Marine Orders is that come under? What is required to maintain it?
- What are some of the conventions? Which ones are Australia signatory to?
- Pilot has boarded- what is relationship between me as OOW, Master and Pilot?
  1. Explained how I was in charge of safety of navigation, Master still overall command, and Pilot was an adviser and with local knowledge.
  2. Mentioned BRM Principles, and then he moved on
- He then said C/E had M/E issues and so was unable to depart, so had to find a suitable anchorage. What to look for?
- We then departed and I was to take over watch at 0400hrs from 2nd mate. How to takeover watch? STCW Code, MO28
- IR was reading night orders and asked what ‘Proper lookout’ meant? I recited Rule 5
- What is difference between Standing Orders and Night Orders?
- Then asked if I could use this chart, was it updated? It wasn’t
- Went through some light characteristics, call reporting points-VTS Singapore, MO64, TSS separation zone- could you navigate in it? NO, only in emergency, and fishing vessel. Tidal Diamond, chart datum.
- How would you take position fixes on this chart? Conspicuous objects, fixed markers, cliff faces. Use GPS? NO
- Pointed to compass rose, asked what variation was? Then Deviation? How do you know what to steer? How often do you check compass error? How often in compass log? When does magnetic compass need to be re-swung?
- How can you check Gyro Compass Error? Transits, Azimuth, Amplitude
- 2nd mate was unable to do the passage plan, so I had to do it. Explain steps? Explained Appraisal in full, so we moved on
- Then swapped charts to a routing chart – what is it used for and what’s on it? Explained this, especially each month.
- He pointed to the seasonal zone line on routing chart? What does this mean? I looked at what latitude it was, and said it was line separating tropical and summer loadline affecting your immersion.
- Had to draw a loadline on stbd side. What is freeboard?
- He then asked where the marks should be at tropical and summer seasonal zones, and how to load from Singapore.
- How would I load up a river with Dockwater? I wrote down both FWA/DWA formulas and explained with TPC. Have to remember to convert SW TPC to DW TPC for calculation.
- Showed me a photo of draft marks on a ship. Pointed to the weld mark and asked me what draft is that? 3.6m
- What is AOL? I explained it and also diagram
- He then drew a GZ curve, and asked me to fill in everything I knew about the curve. After I explained a couple IMO criteria. What is min. GM for Grain? I said 0.3m and then he moved on. I studied Grain Stability calculation just in case.
- What is X-band and S-band Radar? When is best to use and what for SART’s?
- Then asked what other bridge equipment is there? I said AIS. Asked if you could use for collision avoidance? NO, explain
- IR came to bridge and said aft mooring winch was vibrating and was getting a shock when using it. What to do?
  1. Isolate winch, get C/E to tag it out, submit hazard card, inform master and all crew about it, get looked at asap
- Then said that the IR was a HSR and wasn’t happy with response from C/E, so what can he issue? PIN, valid for 7 days. I then went on about AMSA being the OSHMI inspectorate in Australia. They can issue IN and Prohibition notices if they see fit that is a breach of OHS regulations
- What about Statutory Drills? Where do you find this? OLBD, MO21, MO25. Explain frequency? Went through all I knew, especially lifeboats and confined space is 2 monthly (Australian standard). Em. Steering testing and drills?
- What else is in Official Log Book?
- What are the other Log books found on the Ship? Named about 5 and moved on.
- 2nd mate didn’t know how to inspect a BA set? What is the demand valve? High pressure and Low pressure tests?
- He said agent rang and said we were to loading? What can you do? He said agent rang and said we were to loading?
- Berthing day/time, cargo quantity, load plan, ship/shore checklists, manifest.
- Mentioned refer to IMSBC code, Blu code, MO32, MO34, MO35
- Shear forces, Bending moments
- How to load high density cargo
- What is a 'competent' and ‘responsible’ person? MO32
- He showed me the flip card with ‘Red star shells’ and said what is this? What do you do? You are obliged to go and help
- What can you tell me about the IMDG Code? I went through the 2 volumes, chapters, how to find UN, PSN in Vol.2, then he asked about stowage and segregation? Must know these.
- What are Marpol Annexes? Can you throw anything overboard? Refer to Annex 5
- What are Distress/Urgency/Safety messages?
- Where can you find SAR patterns on the ship? Iamsar Vol.3, must have publication on board
- He pointed to NW of Australia and asked what conditions and anomalies would be here in January? Wet season, intense low depressions, possible cyclones forming between 5-15° S.
- What about ISPS? What would your ship security level be if ports level was heightened? Ship would match Ports level.
- What do you know about Firefighting equipment? Named what we had on my last vessel.
- Can you put an electrical fire out with foam or water? NO. Both have electric current through them. CO2, Dry powder.
- To finish off we attacked the ROR with 4 scenarios. He said if I failed 1 of these then I wouldn’t pass.
- I was a PDV;
  1. Simple Head-on with another PDV...just to see basics I suppose. Make sure you mention signals as well.
  2. Stand-on scenario at 8nm. I mentioned parts of rules 17,16,8. Then said I would keep standing on until it was less than 1-2nm, and if still no action was taken by other vessel, I would manoeuvre, alter to stbd using signals
  3. Overtaking situation – how do you know you are overtaking vessel? What if you are in doubt? If in doubt then always give way and keep clear until well past. Do not make it a crossing situation
  4. Last one was moving into Fog – what are your actions? Named 5 actions; Call Master, Nav.lights, Fog Signals, extra lookouts, proceed at safe speed. The a PDV on stbd bow, what actions? I recited rule 19, altered course to stbd, with signals
- He then moved to buoyage and put these in front of me and wanted to know characteristics and my actions;
  1. Cardinal markers, isolated danger, Port lateral marker, preferred channel marker in IALA A
- He showed me 4 flip cards, and they were from the pack I had at home, so I was all over them;
  1. Had to name length of vessel, tow, lights, shapes and fog signals

That was the end of the oral, and he said that everything was covered, he was happy with my answers and he leant over the table, said congratulations and shook my hand. I was stoked and relieved at the same time. There was no indication of whether I was through or not until right at the end.
- The biggest advise I can give to future students is to study like there is no tomorrow, but take scheduled breaks as well, because otherwise your brain gets cooked and you will not remember anyway.
- Download the Oral Checklist from the AMSA website, and copy the past 2years orals papers from the library and you will succeed! Good luck to you all!