THE PILOTING SYSTEM IN FLORIDA

Climbing rope ladders up to 30 feet high is common. The pilot must then walk up six to eight flights of stairs to get to the ship's bridge to meet the captain and take navigational control of the ship.

The Pilot's view from the bridge is not as good as one thinks. These cargo containers block all visibility of recreational boaters nearby.

Florida's ports and harbors are full of recreational boaters, and pilots must deal with their unpredictable behavior constantly.

Cross-currents in the harbor - those dark curved lines seen ahead of the ship - can overpower a ship if the pilot does not anticipate them.

Large hydrodynamic forces are at work when two ships pass each other. Here, the pilot on the cargo ship must pass at a very slow speed with powerful tugs.

Most cargo ships and some cruise ships must use powerful tugboats to maneuver in very tight confines of Florida's seaports. The pilot is always directing the use of the tugboats to and from the dock.
Pilots maintain around-the-clock service for all ships, like this oil tanker approaching the dock.

Years of specialized training in ship handling in narrow channels allow pilots to manage the risks of larger ship traffic.

Seaports never sleep. The majority of ships move at night, like this cruise ship passing a cargo ship that unloads containers.

Pilots work as a team when multiple ships are underway. The independent judgment of pilots ensures that ships are moved safely, without regard to the commercial pressures that ship captains are constantly subjected to by their employers.

The pilot stands on the 'bridge wing' of this cargo ship with the captain and officer while maneuvering alongside the dock under large cranes.

Seaports and shipowners rely on the expert, real-time local knowledge of a team of pilots to manage safe and efficient ship traffic.