

MARINE ENGINEERS' BENEFICIAL ASSOCIATION (AFL-CIO)



"On Watch in Peace and War since 1875"
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In this issue//Final Voyage: Art Hemmings//Lawmakers Look to Rejuvenate WSF Fleet//New Contract for CMA Summer Cruise//SANDY GROUND Mariners Honored at S.I. Ceremony//Labor Lobbies for Su at DOL//Applicants Seeking Membership Should Forward Docs//

FINAL VOYAGE: ART HEMMINGS

Longtime Tampa Representative Art Hemmings sailed into the sunset on Saturday, April 15 at the age of 86. He first suited up with the Union in 1969 and enjoyed a successful shipping career. Grateful for the opportunities provided to him by the M.E.B.A. and eager to give back, Art was appointed as our Tampa Union hall Representative in 1980, a position he served ably and enthusiastically for almost 24 years. He was an extremely strong advocate of M.E.B.A.'s Political Action Fund and staged many events and raffles to drum up P.A.F. support. He was elected as a Delegate to the National M.E.B.A. Convention multiple times and was active with local labor and maritime groups.

Art retired as Tampa's Rep. in November of 2004. He resided in St. Petersburg, FL, but still stayed involved with the Union, even filling in at the hall as needed. Details of a possible memorial service were not yet established at the time of this writing.

WALLA WALLA BEACHING MAY SPARK STRONGER PUSH TO REJUVENATE FLEET

No one was hurt, and in the early stages, it appears that human error was not a cause in the soft-grounding of the Washington State Ferry WALLA WALLA on Saturday. Around 5 pm, the 50-year-old vessel reportedly lost propulsion after a generator went down leading to a temporary loss of steering. The ferry was carrying almost 600 passengers through Rich Pass headed to Seattle from Bremerton when the incident occurred. Excellent reaction and communication by the crew kept passengers informed and prepared when the vessel came to its rest in the sand of Bainbridge Island, a gentle beaching that reportedly resulted in no injuries, no real damage to the vessel and no pollution. Passengers were shuttled to Bremerton in other boats, and tugboats eventually pushed the WALLA WALLA into Bremerton where the cars left on the ferry could be claimed by their owners. The incident continues to be investigated.

The aging 21-boat WSF fleet includes 11 ferries over 40 years old. WALLA WALLA is 1 of 5 boats in the fleet that have already passed the half century mark, but it's not the oldest. That honor goes to the 64-year-old TILLIKUM, which should have been retired by now but is still in service until a replacement can be found. The ongoing maintenance and costs needed to keep the ancient fleet

operating has been a continuous headache for the State and mariner shortages have made the system less reliable.

Immediately after the WALLA WALLA news broke, Washington State Governor Jay Inslee acknowledged that the age of the ferries is a real problem. He said, “Look, we have a very old fleet and we desperately need new boats. We’ve known this for a long time.”

Money has been budgeted to both build new boats and convert other existing vessels to electric. But stalled negotiations and concerns over construction costs have so far prevented the State from being able to bring the age of the fleet down. State lawmakers have been scrambling in the aftermath of the WALLA WALLA incident to make headway on ferry construction by perhaps seeking a lower cost bidder out-of-state, something that hasn’t been done in 50-years. State Senator Marko Liias said, “It was clear that our current model wasn’t working. We can’t pay double for every single boat from here on out...As we look at the landscape, unfortunately, there’s not a guarantee we can find an affordable boat in Washington. I’m hopeful we can, but we can’t wait.”

M.E.B.A. INKS CONTRACT FOR CMA SUMMER CRUISE

M.E.B.A.-contracted company Blue Point Engineering has inked an agreement with California Maritime to provide engineers to operate the Training Ship GOLDEN BEAR for Summer Cruise 2023. The Union put out a call to fill the 1st, 2nd & 3rd engineer positions on the vessel for the 75-day trip which is soon approaching. These positions include full M.E.B.A. Pension, Medical, Training benefits, and Money Purchase Benefit. For more information or to send résumés contact Executive Vice President Claudia Cimini (ccimini@mebaunion.org) or Oakland Patrolman Max Alper (malper@mebaunion.org)

Philly Shipyard is hard at work constructing maritime academy training ships to replace aging training vessels at five academies. The first National Security Multi-Mission Vessel (NMSV) is due to replace the 60-year-old SUNY training ship EMPIRE STATE VI later this year. CMA is slated to be fifth in line for their NMSV. Construction for the CMA vessel will begin this year and delivery is set to take place in 2026.

SANDY GROUND MARINERS HONORED AT STATEN ISLAND CEREMONY

The crewmembers of the Staten Island Ferry SANDY GROUND whose actions following an engine room fire saved the vessel and all passengers were formally recognized for their heroism at a New York ceremony last week. The M.E.B.A. hosted an event in Staten Island’s St. George neighborhood to honor the 16 crewmembers who successfully evacuated all 868 passengers from the vessel following the fire during the holiday rush hour on Thursday, December 22. During the incident, engine officers sealed off the engine room and deployed the Novac system to snuff out the flames. The crew acted quickly, strictly adhered to protocol, and extinguished the fire even before first responders arrived on the scene.

The event was attended by the SANDY GROUND crewmembers, New York politicians and many others, as well as M.E.B.A. President Adam Vokac and Secretary-Treasurer Roland Rexha. The crew was presented with “Certificates of Valor” from the M.E.B.A. and proclamations were read from the New York State Senate, New York State Assembly and New York City Council.

Rexha, a former shop steward at the Staten Island Ferry, expressed his gratitude to the Ferry officers and crew and noted that, “Our members and the crew of the SANDY GROUND are true first responders and today they absolutely deserve to be heralded as such.”

However, he couldn’t let his podium time expire without reminding officials that Staten Island Ferry crewmembers have been woefully underappreciated by the City which has been driving away Ferry crews by requiring them to work for much less than industry wages. It has been 12 years since they had a pay increase and the NYC Department of Transportation continues to offer below-market compensation for its mariners.

“After the SANDY GROUND fire,” Rex noted, “a passenger quipped that the crew saved him from ‘shark infested waters.’ I agree with that passenger, but the ‘sharks’ were not in the cold frigid waters of New York - but sitting in their offices at 55 Water Street and 1 Bay Street. The rudderless direction of the NYC Department of Transportation and the mismanagement from Staten Island Ferry brass have led to staffing shortages at almost every position at Staten Island Ferry, not only our own titles. Staffing shortages that have led to a degradation of Ferry service and safety culture...”

Councilwoman Kamillah Hanks (D-North Shore) expressed her pride in honoring the Staten Island Ferry crew for their calm and bravery during the incident. State Sen. Jessica Scarcella-Spanton (D-North Shore/South Brooklyn) acknowledged the crew's heroic actions and emphasized the need for the City to resolve the longstanding contract dispute. She said, “It’s not enough as elected officials to just say thank you and show up to these things and hand out awards. It’s also important that you know your elected officials are here for you in supporting the fair contract that you all deserve.”

The 16 heroes of the SANDY GROUND include: Captain Joseph Ajar; Assistant Captain Shane Thomas; Mate Keith Carney; Mate Thomas Ho; Mate Robert Wallen; Chief Marine Engineer Trevor Gherardi; Marine Engineer Alex Wood; Deckhand Tom Tellefsen; Deckhand Ken Fernandez; Deckhand Javon Prince; Deckhand Juan Dones; Deckhand Roberto Maranon; Deckhand Owen Drakes; Deckhand Allen Bitokhov; Marine Oiler Ed Tingling; and Marine Oiler Steven Adams.

LABOR MOVEMENT CALLS FOR SU CONFIRMATION FOR TOP DOL JOB

The AFL-CIO hopes to help push Julie Su over the goal line as a Senate Committee addresses her nomination as Labor Secretary this week. Su, the current Acting DOL Secretary, was nominated for the permanent post after former Department head Marty Walsh left in March to head up the National Hockey League’s player union.

AFL-CIO pushed ahead with its “Stand with Su” campaign proclaiming her most qualified for the position and someone “who will fiercely defend working people.” The Federation noted that, “She has made a career out of representing not only workers, but the most vulnerable workers in America. The problem is that well-heeled lobbyists and corporate special interests are spending big to block her confirmation...”

The Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee held a confirmation hearing earlier today. Her nomination must be confirmed by the full Senate before taking office. Following the hearing, AFL-CIO President Liz Shuler’s opinion hadn’t changed: “Julie Su’s testimony today before the Senate HELP Committee reinforced what the labor movement has always known: Su has

the necessary experience, values and leadership qualities to be our secretary of labor. Her record of standing up for working people and marginalized communities is stellar and unimpeachable. She is the right person for the job. We call on the U.S. Senate to swiftly vote to confirm Julie Su.”

Before joining the DOL, Su was the secretary for the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency. She was the California labor commissioner from 2011 through 2018, enforcing the state's labor laws and previously served as the litigation director at Asian Americans Advancing Justice-Los Angeles.

APPLICANTS SEEKING MEMBERSHIP SHOULD FORWARD DOCUMENTATION

Qualified applicants trying to make membership in June must make sure they provide Headquarters with required documentation to ensure their inclusion on the next District Investigating Committee (DIC) report. The DIC meets twice a year to review applicants for membership and are finalizing their report that will be voted upon by members during the regular membership meetings that begin the week of June 5th.

To make membership, an applicant needs the required sailing days or specified years of employment with a particular bargaining unit, must be current with service charges and must complete other necessary requirements which may include an initiation fee and/or letters of recommendation. Applicants should know that they are responsible for providing their local Union hall/Headquarters with the documentation demonstrating their fulfillment of the application requirements.

Once they submit the requisite amount of sea time (or documented years of service) to Headquarters and have otherwise fulfilled the needed requirements as stated in the application packet they signed, they may be eligible for membership. Applicants who have fulfilled the necessary requirements should forward their information to Headquarters. Qualified applicants who fail to make the deadline will have to wait another six months – until the December report – to make membership. For further information you can visit your local union hall or contact the HQ Membership Department at (202) 638-5355 or membership@mebaunion.org

NEXT MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS *(All times are local)*

Monday, May 8 – **Boston@1200; Seattle (Fife)@1300.**

Tuesday, May 9 – **CMES@1430; Charleston@1400; Houston@1315; Oakland@1230.**

Wednesday, May 10 – **Jacksonville@1300; New Orleans@1315; Online HQ “Town Hall” Meeting@1300 (No Voting) – Register by emailing mebahq@mebaunion.org**

Thursday, May 11 – **L.A. (San Pedro)@1230; NY/NJ@1300; Norfolk@1300; Tampa@1300.**

Friday, May 12 – **Honolulu@1100.**

-----FINISHED WITH ENGINES-----



***M.E.B.A. does not tolerate assault, or harassment of any kind.
If you see something, say something – The M.E.B.A. Emergency Hotline
can be reached at 1-888-519-0018.***