APA PRESIDENT PASSES AWAY

Word spread quickly throughout the U.S. and the world following the unexpected July 23 death of Captain Michael R. Watson, President of the American Pilots’ Association (APA) and immediate past President of the International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA). Shortly after Captain Watson’s passing, the APA began receiving scores of phone calls and emails expressing condolences from the offices of Congressional members and federal agencies—including the Coast Guard and the NTSB, State governments, as well as the leaders of pilots’ associations not only in this country, but in countries from every corner of the globe.

The impact that Captain Watson, who was 72 years old, had on pilotage and the broader marine industry during his five decades as a pilot and maritime leader came clearly into focus.

Most telling, however, about the true effect and influence of Captain Watson’s life work were the numerous inquires the APA received from “rank and file” pilots from APA and IMPA member pilot groups. These men and women, many of whom had never personally met Captain Watson, nonetheless recognized they had benefited from his years of work on their behalf and wanted to pay their respects.

Captain Watson was born in Washington, D.C. and raised in McLean, Virginia. He was the son of Richard L. Watson Sr., a farmer and federal government official, and Lois Hogan Watson. Captain Watson was a 1965 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy at Kings Point. Following graduation he was commissioned as an Ensign in the U.S. Naval Reserves, and later began his sailing career on Military Sealift Command ships that provided critical supplies to U.S. troops in South Vietnam.

After sailing for several years with Farrell Lines and earning his unlimited tonnage masters credential, Captain Watson joined the Association of Maryland Pilots. He became a full licensed pilot in 1974 and quickly rose through the ranks to be elected president of the group in 1983. He was later elected Vice President of the APA’s North Atlantic Region in 1992, and in 2000 was elected President of the APA. He was unopposed during his re-elections in 2004, 2008, and 2012.

Captain Jack Sparks, APA President from 1992-2000 and Captain Watson’s immediate predecessor offered these thoughts. “Mike Watson loved piloting. But more than that, he loved representing pilots and doing everything possible to ensure that pilots received the respect, the standing, and the recognition they deserve. He will be dearly missed.”

(See “Captain Watson” continued on page 3)
IMO ELECTS NEW SECRETARY GENERAL

Mr. Ki-tack Lim (Republic of Korea) has been elected Secretary General of the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

He will take office effective January 1, 2016 for an initial term of four years. The vote took place during the 114th Session of the IMO Council, which met from June 29 through July 3.

Mr. Lim, who is a graduate of the Korea Maritime and Ocean University and former naval and merchant marine officer, is currently president of Busan Port Authority. He served as the Republic of Korea’s Deputy Permanent Representative to IMO from 2006 to 2009 and was Chairman of the IMO Sub-Committee on Flag State Implementation (FSI) from 2002 to 2004.

CURRENT AND FORMER IMO SECRETARIES GENERAL PAY TRIBUTE TO CAPTAIN WATSON

In yet another sign of the world-wide impact Captain Watson had on the maritime sector, APA was contacted by IMO Secretary General Koji Sekimizu and Secretary General Emeritus William A. O’Neil. Both of these gentlemen took the time to express sincere condolences and to praise the dedication and commitment Captain Watson displayed not only for the piloting profession, but also for the broader IMO objectives of enhancing marine safety, maritime security, and environmental stewardship. Excerpts from the these correspondences follow.

On behalf of the entire Membership of the International Maritime Organization, the Secretariat and on my own behalf, I write to convey to you our deepest sympathy and condolences at this sad time and would request that you pass our sentiments of compassion to his family and his former colleagues. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.”

William A. O’Neil: “Captain Mike Watson was a most respected pilot who was dedicated to ensuring pilot and maritime navigation safety. He worked tirelessly on behalf of pilots worldwide. He was also a staunch supporter of the IMO and participated actively in our international discussions to which he contributed fully with his vast knowledge of piloting and other seafaring matters.

Above all on a personal basis, Mike was a devoted husband and father and a true friend of ours. He was much appreciated by those who had the pleasure to know him. His sudden passing is a great loss for his dear family, APA members and the maritime community as a whole.”

IMPA HONORS CAPTAIN WATSON

In July the IMPA Executive Committee adopted a Resolution honoring Captain Watson for his 8 years as IMPA President, his 15 years as President of the APA, and also for his “lifelong commitment” as a “tireless and outspoken advocate of safe maritime transportation and the role of marine pilotage therein.”

The complete text of the Resolution is available on the APA’s website at www.americanpilots.org under “Items of Interest.”
CAPTAIN WATSON (continued)

Captain Watson’s impact, however, was not limited to the piloting profession in the United States. In 2002, he was elected as an IMPA Vice President, and at the 2006 IMPA Congress held in Havana, Cuba, he became the first American in more than three decades to be elected IMPA President. He was re-elected as IMPA President in 2010 and completed his second term before stepping down in 2014.

As the President of both APA and IMPA, Captain Watson was the leading U.S. and international figure in pilotage for much of the past two decades. He worked collaboratively at the International Maritime Organization and with Congress and State legislatures, as well as with the Coast Guard, NOAA and Army Corps of Engineers on legislation, policies and initiatives that not only enhanced pilotage, but also increased navigation safety and facilitated the safe and efficient flow of maritime commerce.

APA Executive Director-General Counsel, Paul Kirchner, who worked side-by-side with Captain Watson during his 15 years as APA President, reflected on Captain Watson’s tenure. “Captain Watson was always focused on not just protecting pilotage, but enhancing it.” Kirchner added, “He would travel anywhere, meet with anyone, and undertake any effort if he thought it would benefit State pilotage. He was proud to be a pilot and until the very end worked tirelessly on behalf of his fellow pilots.”

Paul Kirchner
Executive Director-General Counsel

CAPTAIN WATSON’S THOUGHTS ON PILOTS

While Captain Watson did not have the opportunity to deliver, as he had planned, a departing address as APA President during the 2016 APA Convention, he had given numerous speeches during which he clearly expressed his thoughts about piloting and his beloved profession. Below are just a small sampling of his remarks.

“We need to remember who we are and why we formed ourselves into local, national, regional, and international associations. We are pilots. Independent professionals who board ships, stand on the bridge, work with…but never become subservient to…the bridge team, and direct the navigation of ships into and out of port. Our citizens and the authorities that issue our licenses count on us to keep commerce moving, but also to keep the maritime environment safe. This is our job and this is who we are. We must never allow anyone to diminish our vital role in navigation safety, nor should we allow uninformed or dishonest interests to relegate us to mere observers, monitors, or managers.”

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“While we face challenges – and we always will – being a pilot is still the best job in the world. We are part of great profession with a proud history. Compulsory pilots are the most highly trained and proficient mariners in the world. Thousands of times each year, you and your partners use in-depth local knowledge, seasoned navigational and shiphandling expertise, and informed independent judgment to guide ships of all sizes and types into and out of the most challenging ports. The overwhelming majority of goods our fellow citizens consume are transported by ship – and these goods are transported safely and efficiently because of you. You are the front line of marine safety. You make a real difference every day.”

“When I first joined my pilot group at home – the Maryland Pilots – in 1970, I could not have imagined that one day I would have the honor of representing not only pilots in the United States, but pilots from around the world. It is humbling for me when I consider that I have earned the professional trust of my fellow pilots.”

Hundreds of mourners attended the August 1 funeral and memorial services for Captain Watson. In addition to family, friends, fellow pilots from around the country and the world, services were attended by former and current members of Congress (including House Minority Leader Steny Hoyer), the Vice Commandant of the Coast Guard and other senior State and federal government officials.

Captain Watson is survived by his wife of 45 years, Geraldine Pitts Watson, two daughters, Natalie and Alicia Watson, a son-in-law, Charles Walker, a grandson, Alexander Watson, a brother, Richard Watson, and a sister, Patricia Lewis.
FEDS ISSUE REQUEST FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON DGPS

On August 18, the U.S. Coast Guard, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Department of Transportation issued a request for public comment on a proposal to reduce the coverage provided by the Nationwide Differential Global Positioning System (NDGPS). The controversial proposal calls for the shutdown and decommissioning of 62 DGPS sites, leaving 22 operational sites available to users in coastal areas. Public comments must be submitted by November 16, 2015.

APA plans to prepare and submit broad-based, general comments, noting the importance of DGPS in piloting waters and the widespread use of DGPS by APA-member pilots. Pilot groups should consider submitting individual comments that reflect local concerns and specific references to DGPS sites and their impact on port and waterway navigation safety.

The full notice and instructions for submitting comments can be found at:

MARINE BOARD HOLDS “FUTURE OF NAVIGATION” CONFERENCE

On September 11, the Marine Board of the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine and the U.S. Coast Guard held a conference to update waterways users on the progress of the "Future of Navigation" outreach campaign and provided information on other government navigation-related initiatives. Bill Cairns, Navigation Technology Advisor, attended for the APA.

The purpose of the event was to share the results of last year’s “Future of Navigation” public listening sessions and implementation efforts and to maintain a dialogue with stakeholders on continuing government efforts in this area. Participants were also notified of the upcoming series of large area Waterways Analysis and Management System (WAMS) studies that the Coast Guard is conducting at the national level, starting with an evaluation of the East Coast Sea Coast System. The APA will continue to follow these efforts and keep member pilots apprised.

CAPTAIN PETER McISAAC NAMED ACTING APA PRESIDENT

Following the July 23 passing of Captain Watson, Captain Peter McIsaac, President/Port Agent for the San Francisco Bar Pilots Association and APA Vice President for the Pacific States, was elected by the Regional Vice Presidents, in accordance with APA By-Laws, as Acting President. Captain McIsaac will serve out the remainder of Captain Watson’s term of office, which expires December 31, 2016.

“Captain Watson was a tremendous leader and advocate for the piloting profession – his passing was a great loss to all of us.” said Captain McIsaac. “I am honored to have been chosen to complete his term and carry on his work.” Captain McIsaac continued, “I want to assure all APA member pilots, pilots’ associations around the world, and our partners in government and industry, that the important efforts of the APA will continue uninterrupted. I will work with APA officers and staff to vigorously represent the interests of pilots and advance compulsory pilotage standards.”

The maritime career of Captain McIsaac began in 1977 in the tug boat industry on the Great Lakes. He later advanced to Tug Captain and Senior Port Captain while working on vessels throughout Southwest Alaska and the San Francisco Bay area. He joined the San Francisco Bar Pilots Association (SFBPA) in 1992. He was later elected President of the SFBPA, serving terms from 2000–2004, 2006–2010, and 2012 to present.

Captain McIsaac was elected APA Vice President for the Pacific States in 2006. In this position he represents APA-member pilots in Alaska, California, Hawaii, Oregon and Washington. He has also been active with the International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA), serving on APA delegations to a number of IMPA Congresses.

Captain McIsaac, a native of Michigan, was educated at the University of Alaska. He and his wife Virginia currently reside in San Mateo, CA. They have three sons.
NMC ANNOUNCES SERIES OF CHANGES TO CREDENTIALS AND FORMS

The National Maritime Center (NMC) announced significant changes regarding Merchant Mariner Credentials (MMC) and to the forms used during the MMC application and renewal processes.

MMC Improvements: According to the NMC, MMCs are currently created using “a labor-intensive process,” but soon the NMC will use a more modern automated printing process that will “significantly improve the quality and security of the credentials.”

All currently issued and active credentials will remain valid until their printed expiration dates. There will be no change in the way endorsement labels are issued and applied to MMCs.

In the coming months, the NMC will also introduce an updated MMC booklet that, while retaining the same form, fit, and function, will include new security graphics on the credential pages. Additional information will be provided prior to their issuance.

Updated Mariner Credentialing Program Forms: The NMC also announced that it will introduce new credential application forms, including the CG-719B (Application for an MMC) and the CG-719K (Merchant Mariner Credential Medical Evaluation Form). These forms are expected to be released to the public by October 1. According to the NMC announcement, information collected on the new forms is “nearly identical” to that collected on the previous forms. The new CG-719K form does, however, reflect the introduction of the “Medical Certificate” and will also have fewer medical conditions to be checked by the examining medical practitioner.

Beginning October 1, 2015, these forms will be available electronically in a fillable PDF format by selecting the forms link on the National Maritime Center website (www.uscg.mil/nmc/). Implementation of the new forms will commence on October 1, 2015. With the exception of the CG-719K form, the Coast Guard will no longer accept outdated forms after April 1, 2016. Any CG-719K form signed by a physician after December 31, 2016, must be the new form version.

The notice concludes “Mariners and other providers should contact the NMC Contact Center using our chat function, e-mailing IASKNMC@uscg.mil, or calling 1-888-IASKNMC (888-427-5662) with any questions regarding these forms.”

CAPTAIN CAROLYN KURTZ SELECTED TO CHAIR NAVSAC

During the September 9-10 meeting of the Navigation Safety Advisory Council (NAVSAC) in Arlington, VA, Captain Carolyn Kurtz of the Tampa Bay Pilots was selected by the U.S. Coast Guard to serve as Chair of the Council. Captain Kurtz said, “My career as a pilot is focused on ensuring navigation safety, so I am honored to have been chosen to lead this important council.”

Among the topics taken up by NAVSAC during the September meeting were use of Electronic Chart Systems on non-SOLAS vessels and improving Coast Guard procedures for obtaining public input prior to changing or discontinuing an existing aid to navigation. NAVSAC members, which include other APA-member pilots and staff (see picture below), were also given a briefing on the NTSB’s ongoing study of Vessel Traffic Systems in the U.S.

NAVSAC was established by Congress to advise the Coast Guard on matters relating to the prevention of collisions, rammings and groundings, including, the Rules of the Road, navigation regulations and equipment, and aids to navigation systems.
FLORIDA HARBOR PILOTS ANNOUNCE MILESTONES

Captain Michael Buffington of the Tampa Bay Pilots Association has retired, completing his last assignment in May 2015. During his thirty three year piloting career, Captain Buffington served as President of the Florida Harbor Pilots Association and as a commissioner on the Florida Board of Pilot Commissioners. Captain Buffington dedicated a number of years to the Florida Boating Advisory Council as well. He also represented the Tampa Bay Pilots in several navigation safety forums. He was presented with a Meritorious Service Award by Captain Greg Case, Sector Commander, Sector St. Petersburg (see picture above right).

Captain Michael McDonnell of the Biscayne Bay Pilots Association has retired, also completing his last assignment in May. After a fifteen year career with Exxon, Mike moved to Miami to start his piloting career in 1994. Mike served in various leadership roles for the Miami Pilots, including Chairman for three years.

Captain John Fernandez, Biscayne Bay Pilots, completed his last term as a commissioner on Florida's Board of Pilot Commissioners. He served for eleven years, culminating in two years as Chairman. John continues piloting full-time in Miami.

SABINE PILOTS HONORED FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

As announced by Mr. Henry de La Garza (Sabine Pilots’ public information officer), on August 27 political and maritime industry leaders around the Port of Beaumont, Texas gathered to honor a veteran Sabine Pilot and to recognize the Sabine Pilots Association for their service and contributions to the local community.

Captain Mark D. Taylor was presented with the Tom Jackson Sabine Neches Waterway Outstanding Service Award by the Seafarers’ Center of Beaumont. The award is named after Thomas Edgar Jackson, who was a key figure in the area’s maritime history, and is bestowed for outstanding contributions and support for the waterway system.

Captain Taylor began his maritime career as an ordinary seaman in 1982 with a tug company. In 1997, he was selected to enter the Sabine Pilots training program and earned his Texas State pilot commission in 1999.

Captain Ellen Warner, the current President of the Sabine Pilots, accepted the sponsor’s award for the many contributions the Sabine Pilots have made to navigation safety and to the local community.

2016 BIENNIAL APA CONVENTION

October 23-28, 2016
Fairmont Kea Lani
Maui, Hawaii

ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

♦ The Southeast Alaska Pilots’ Association has announced their new officers for 2015-16: Captain Paul Merrill (President), Captain Ed Sinclair (Vice President), and Captain Kathleen Flury (Secretary).
♦ The Puget Sound Pilots have announced that Linda Styrk has been named the association's next Executive Director.