Two Houston Pilots who defied fire to bring a burning ship to safety, averting a major maritime catastrophe, received the 2017 International Maritime Organization (IMO) Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea during the 2017 IMO awards ceremony, held in London on Monday, November 27.

Captain Michael G. McGee and Captain Michael C. Phillips were recognized for their role in averting a major tragedy in September 2016. The ship the two were piloting, the 810 foot-long tanker AFRAMAX RIVER, suffered a major propulsion casualty in the middle of the night while in the Houston Ship Channel causing the ship to allide with a mooring dolphin and burst into flames.

Captain McGee and Captain Phillips were surrounded by a towering wall of burning fuel as the raging fire quickly spread across the channel, threatening other tank ships and nearby waterfront facilities. Both pilots remained at their stations on the bridge of the ship during the fire. Captain McGee managed to maneuver the stricken and blazing vessel away from surrounding ships and facilities. Captain Phillips coordinated communications and firefighting efforts with the Coast Guard and numerous local fireboats. Captain Phillips also rushed to man a fire hose and put out fires burning on the port bridge wing.

The inferno was finally extinguished after 90 minutes, leaving both pilots exhausted and burned. Captain McGee, using tugs, was then able to bring the damaged tanker safely to a mooring facility.

McGee and Phillips were nominated by the International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA), with support from the APA. The Award was decided by a panel of judges and endorsed by the IMO Council at its 118th session in July.

Presenting the pilots with medals and certificates, IMO Secretary General Kitack Lim said the two had been faced with a challenge which was not one that occurred in routine piloting duties.

Accepting the Award, Captain Phillips agreed that the incident on the night of September 6, 2016 was not something that they encountered in routine piloting duties.

See page 2 for more on the 2017 IMO award ceremony.
MORE FROM THE IMO AWARD CEREMONY

During their time in London while accepting the 2017 IMO Award for Exceptional Bravery at Sea, Captain McGee and Captain Phillips were interviewed by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) and asked to recount their harrowing experience aboard the AFRAMAX RIVER.

The full BBC interview is available at: www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/w3csvqp2

At the award ceremony, Captain Phillips gave the following brief acceptance speech on behalf of Captain McGee and himself:

Secretary-General Lim, Chairman Lantz, Excellencies, members of the Assembly, distinguished guests, ladies and gentleman, Captain McGee and I thank you, the Council, and the members of the Panel of Judges for this tremendous honor. We also want to thank the International Maritime Pilots’ Association for nominating us, and the Houston Pilots and the American Pilots’ Association for their support.

Obviously, what happened on the night of September 6, 2016 was not something that we encounter in our normal piloting duties. It’s also not something that we train for or practice. Frankly, we didn’t have a lot of time to even think about what we needed to do. We just did it.

We’d like to think, however, that we did what we did in large measure because we’re state pilots. We’re used to taking control when we climb aboard a ship. Pilots don’t sit back and wait for others to tell them what to do. We also feel a deep responsibility for protecting our port. We are proud to be state commissioned pilots and proud of what state pilots do in safeguarding their respective ports. In that respect, we accept this award on behalf of our fellow pilots in Houston, the U.S. and everywhere else in the world.

PILOT LADDER SAFETY

The photo below, sent by Captain Jonathan Samuell (Houston Pilots), demonstrates several failures of pilot transfer arrangements to meet U.S. pilot ladder regulations, as well as SOLAS regulation V/23 and IMO Assembly Resolution A.1045(27), which provides: side ropes should be continuous; lower platform of the accommodation ladder should be secured to the ship’s side; ladder should be rigid immediately adjacent to the lower platform; and steps of the pilot ladders should be equally spaced...

APA strongly encourages member pilots to report pilot ladder deficiencies to federal and State authorities whenever encountered.

The annual IMPA safety survey, conducted from October 1-14, is critical in efforts to improve pilot transfer arrangement safety. The survey results, which are submitted yearly to IMO, are essential for assessing vessels’ compliance with international and national standards for pilot ladders.

CAIRNS REPRESENTS APA AT IALA eNAV MEETING

The International Association of Marine Aids to Navigation and Lighthouse Authorities (IALA) held the 21st meeting of its e-Navigation Committee (ENAV) at IALA HQ, from September 18-22.

The APA is an Associate Member of IALA, which gives member pilots another voice at IALA to complement that of IMPA.

Navigation Technology Director, Bill Cairns, participated for the APA, and representing IMPA was French pilot, Captain Jean-Daniel Gilles.

The effort of most import to pilots is the working group on the Maritime Service Portfolio (MSP). The Pilotage Service was among the sixteen maritime services identified by IMO as providing e-Navigation service to ships. IMPA has the responsibility for this MSP and will develop it when the guideline is again considered during the next IALA work program beginning in September 2018. APA continues to work closely with IMPA in this effort.
APA OFFICERS MEET IN THE NATION’S CAPITAL

The officers of the American Pilots’ Association met in the APA offices on October 16. The President, Regional Vice Presidents, the Secretary-Treasurer and the APA staff discussed national and international matters, as well as APA business. Each Vice-President provided a comprehensive report on issues, concerns, and topics of general interest from his region.

APA President, Captain Jorge Viso; Executive Director-General Counsel, Paul Kirchner; Deputy Director-Associate General Counsel, Clay Diamond; and Navigation Technology Director, Bill Cairns, then reported on national and international items. The APA report included the following: a federal legislative overview; an update on USCG and NTSB matters; an overview of activities with IMO, IALA and IMPA; and an update on the status of planning for the 2018 APA Biennial Convention in Savannah.

ANNUAL BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING FOLLOWS OFFICERS MEETING

In accordance with the APA By-Laws, the Board of Trustees met in Washington on October 17-18. The meeting was attended by Trustees from each coastal State and from the three Great Lakes districts, as well as the Secretary Treasurer, and the Regional Vice Presidents. APA President, Captain Jorge Viso presided over the meeting. In addition, the APA Navigation and Technology Committee (NAVTECH) held its annual meeting in the afternoon of the first day of the Trustees’ Meeting.

The Trustees’ Meeting began with addresses by two senior officials from agencies with which the APA has key partnerships. Rear Admiral John Nadeau, Coast Guard Assistant Commandant for Prevention Policy, and Mr. Brian Curtis, Director of the NTSB’s Office of Marine Safety, provided overviews of their respective agency’s latest initiatives and priorities. The two also gave updates on the ongoing EL FARO marine casualty investigations.

Captain Viso delivered the President’s Report, during which he summarized past, current and planned APA work, and discussed his views on technology and the piloting profession. Trustees gave a report on pilotage matters within their respective States, including pilot operations, port activities, and political updates. Clay Diamond gave a presentation on recent credentialing matters, and the meeting concluded with Paul Kirchner providing the annual Executive Director-General Counsel Report.

On October 17, Captain Paul Amos conducted his inaugural meeting as NAVTECH Chairman. He was assisted by Vice Chairman, Captain Jonathan Samuell, and Navigation Technology Director, Bill Cairns. Of particular note, NAVTECH unanimously adopted an updated resolution on Emerging Electronic Navigation and Control Technologies, which was later approved by the Board of Trustees. The resolution is available at www.americanpilots.org.

NAVTECH also considered the impacts of hurricanes Harvey and Irma, with robust discussions on pilot association efforts to restore shipping operations during the recovery period. Representatives from NOAA discussed its Under Keel Clearance Workshop held in September and charting Category Zones of Confidence, which define the accuracy of the underlying data used to build a chart.

Bill Cairns gave an update on eNavigation efforts at IMO, IALA, and RTCM, reporting that IMO had agreed to conduct a regulatory scoping exercise for autonomous shipping; identifying IMO regulations that could impact unmanned ships. He also reported that the S-Mode concept had moved away from its original concept of pushing one button on a device to return to a standard point of reference, and is now focusing on standardization of symbols, menus, and hotkeys.

Captain Jonathan Samuell discussed the PPU Survey on the types of hardware, software, training, etc., being used by member pilot groups and presented the preliminary results of the survey. NAVTECH also heard views from several pilot groups on the use of PPU’s when maneuvering Ultra Large Container Vessels in their pilotage areas, with the majority of groups employing two pilots on these jobs.

The Committee concluded with a discussion of group updates and changes to their PPU systems, as well as new equipment purchases.
APA BOARD OF TRUSTEES MEETING

APA Trustees listen to a speaker at the October meeting

Secretary Treasurer, Captain Whit Smith, gives his report

Captain Howard McVay, Northeast Pilots (left) and Captain Danny Gallagher of the Lakes Pilots’ Association

Paul Kirchner, Executive-Director-General Counsel

APA Trustees listen to a speaker at the October meeting

The NTB’s Mr. Brian Curtis (right), listens as Captain Viso introduces him to the Trustees

From left to right, Linda Styke, and Captains Rick Casas and Joe Long

APA Regional Vice Presidents

Clay Diamond, Deputy Director-Associate General Counsel

Captain Whit Smith (left) and Captain Trey Thompson

Captain Eric von Brandenfelds (left) gives his report to the other Trustees

Rear Admiral John Nadeau speaks to Trustees
OFFICE OF COAST SURVEY COMES TO THE APA OFFICE

On 7 September, the APA hosted Ms. Rachel Medley, Chief of Customer Affairs, and Mr. John Nyberg, Chief of the Marine Chart Division from NOAA’s Office of Coast Survey. Captain Jorge Viso, APA President, Clay Diamond, Deputy Director, and Bill Cairns, Navigation Technology Director, participated for the APA.

The original reason for the meeting was to clarify the various surveys being performed by NOAA and the US Army Corps of Engineers. Ms. Medley and Mr. Nyberg discussed briefly the Category Zones of Confidence for charts. It was agreed that this was a subject that would be of interest to pilots and a presentation to the October NAVTECH meeting was planned. In addition, Mr. Nyberg noted some variations in chart presentations for different ports. Coast Survey would like to get pilot feedback on preferences for harbor chart presentations. Noting that Coast Survey was active in the IHO S-100 Standard rollout, they offered their assistance to APA in its ongoing participation at IALA in the e-Navigation implementation of S-100.

This was a very productive meeting that gave the APA some insights into the charting efforts by NOAA and strengthened the already strong relationship with this key NOAA office.

NOAA WORKSHOP ON UNDERKEEL CLEARANCE AND PRECISION NAVIGATION SYSTEM

On September 8, Bill Cairns, APA Navigation Technology Director, participated in a NOAA Technical Workshop on Underkeel Clearance (UKC) and Precision Navigation Systems at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD. The main feature of the workshop was a presentation by a UKC developer on its Long Beach Underkeel Clearance Project.

The intent of the workshop was to better understand the data that modern navigation and under keel clearance systems require. NOAA used this as an opportunity to bring together NOAA environmental data observation and forecast managers with mariners and UKC system developers to discuss their needs and requirements for these systems and the data that drives them.

NOAA presentations covered water level and current observations, remote sensing and high resolution laser scanning, bathymetry, coastal modeling, and marine weather and nearshore wave prediction.

The 17th annual eNavigation Conference was held December 6-7 in Seattle. Unlike the scores of other eNavigation meetings that are largely steeped in academic or theoretical discussions, this conference focuses on technology advances that impact vessel operations and the mariners who navigate the vessels.

At this year’s meeting, topics included Technical Developments in Automation, Navigation and Cybersecurity – moderated by Captain Jorge Viso, APA President; Automation in the Operational Environment - moderated by Captain Paul Amos, Columbia River Pilots; Regulations, Standards, and Policies for e-Navigation, Automation, and Cybersecurity – moderated by APA Navigation Technology Director Bill Cairns; Applied Cybersecurity and e-Navigation; The Impact of Automation on Bridge Resource Management; Dynamic Underwater Keel Clearance Project Update; and Advances in Data Collection and Dissemination.

With the assistance of Captain Wayne Bailey, Bay and River Delaware Pilots (recently retired), the conference organizers were fortunate to secure as a speaker the newly confirmed Maritime Administrator, RADM Mark Buzby, USN (ret).

With its real world focus, this conference always draws significant participation from pilots. Of the more than 100 attendees, nearly 40 were APA and CMPA member pilots. The APA is a key supporter of this conference and member pilots are encouraged to put this on your calendar for 2018.

DON’T FORGET THE APA PAC FUND
Send your voluntary contribution to:
APA Political Action Committee
499 South Capitol St., SW—Suite 409
Washington, DC 20003-4023
On October 21, the Houston Pilots christened two new SWATH design pilot boats - the HOUSTON and BAYOU CITY. A local television news anchor served as master of ceremonies for the christening ceremony, which was held at the San Jacinto College Maritime School in La Porte, Texas.

Captain Robert M. Shearon, Presiding Officer for the Houston Pilots, hosted various port, Coast Guard and local elected officials at the ceremony.

Captain Jorge Viso, APA President, also attended the christening. The actual christenings were handled by Port Houston Chairman Janiece Longoria and Mrs. Kerry Taylor, wife of Texas State Senator Larry Taylor.

**KEEPING UP INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS...OR WHO’S THAT IN THE LEderHOSEN?!**

During a recent trip to Germany, Captain Joe Brown, St. Johns Bar Pilots’ Association (left) and Captain Eric Nielsen, Association of Maryland Pilots (right), visited with Captain Hans-Hermann Luckert, IMPA Senior Vice President and President of the German Pilots’ Association.

The Pilot Boat HOUSTON on the Houston Ship Channel. Photo: Henry de La Garza

**ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.**

The following APA-member pilots associations recently announced new officers:

- Houston Pilots: Captain Mark W. Mitchem (Presiding Officer), Captain Greg J. Brown (Executive Committee), and Captain Robert C. Roberts (Executive Committee).

- Southeast Alaska Pilots Association (SEAPA): Captain Kathy Flury (President), Captain Frank Didier (Vice President), and Captain John Herring (Secretary).