FLORIDA CONVENTION A HIT

By all accounts, the 2006 APA Biennial Board of Trustees Meeting and Convention held October 22 - 27 at Walt Disney World's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa was one of the most successful and productive ever. Over 400 pilots, family members, guests, and exhibitors enjoyed the week's meetings, information sessions, and social events.

The festivities got underway on Sunday, October 22 with the 8th Biennial APA Golf Tournament and the opening of the convention registration. Monday was a full day, with the Attorneys Meeting in the morning, a luncheon provided by the convention hosts, the Florida State Pilots, for the APA trustees and officers, and committee meetings in the afternoon. The Convention business meetings officially began Tuesday morning. Rear Admiral Craig E. Bone, United States Coast Guard's Assistant Commandant for Prevention, provided a keynote address discussing Coast Guard programs of importance to pilots as well as the longstanding cooperative relationship between the Coast Guard and the APA. Captain Geoff Taylor, president of the International Maritime Pilots' Association, followed with a talk. Captain Mike Watson then gave his APA President's Report, and the remainder of the day's meeting featured the start of regional reports by the APA Vice Presidents, which continued throughout the rest of the week.

Wednesday speakers included Victoria Robas, chairperson of the Florida State Board of Pilot Commissioners, and Bernard Groseclose, President and CEO of the South Carolina Ports Authority and current chairman of the American Association of Port Authorities. Allen Thompson, Jr. (USCG Capt. Ret.), Executive Director of the Tampa Bay Pilots, offered some reflections on pilots and the Coast Guard -- from both of his vantage points. The APA Navigation and Technology Committee met in the afternoon. Wednesday also featured the opening of the exhibition/trade show with over 25 vendors showing off their products and services.

Thursday was another full day of speakers and presentations. Each of the four outside Convention sponsors, the Masters, Mates and Pilots; Gladding-Hearn Shipbuilding; Port Revel Manned Model School; and the Maritime Pilots' Institute, addressed the meeting. John H. ("Jack") Dunnigan, head of NOAA's National Ocean Service, talked about the various NOS programs of value to pilots, including PORTS. Joseph J. Angelo, Director of Regulatory Affairs and the Americas, INTERTANKO, gave a very interesting talk on ways to strengthen the relationship of his organization and pilots. Christian Hempstead, a professor at the United States Merchant Marine Academy discussed ECDIS and other wheelhouse electronics subjects.

As always, Friday was a closed, pilot-only meeting to conduct the business of the APA. Remaining regional reports were given as well as reports from the various APA Committees. The Trustees reviewed the activities and operations of the association and approved a budget for the 2007-2008 period. Finally, the Hawaii Pilots provided information on the 2008 Convention to be held in Kauai during the month of October.

Additional Convention information and photos are provided inside.

The Editor and staff of ON STATION wish all APA Members and their families a very happy Holiday Season and A Prosperous New Year.
MSC MEETS IN ISTANBUL

Because of renovations to the IMO building in London, the 82nd session of the Maritime Safety Committee, November 29 – December 8, was held in Istanbul. Captain Watson attended the meeting as a member of the US delegation.

Among the actions taken by the Committee was approval of a proposal in a joint paper by the US, Brazil, and IMPA calling for a review of the current requirements for pilot ladders and other aspects of pilot transfer arrangements contained in SOLAS regulation V/23 and Resolution A.889(21). Captain Watson introduced the paper in the plenary session.

Agreeing with the recommendation in the paper, the Committee referred the matter to the Subcommittee on Safety of Navigation (NAV) and the Subcommittee on Ship Design and Equipment (DE) and set a completion schedule of two sessions. In acting on the US/Brazil/IMPA proposal, the Committee also considered a paper submitted by Liberia proposing that an MSC workgroup at the session take a separate look at regulation 23 in accordance with a new IMO directive to review all IMO instruments to ensure that ergonomic factors are taken into account. Rather than have the workgroup undertake its own review of regulation 23, the Committee directed NAV and DE to consider Liberia’s recommendation for considering ergonomic factors.

In another action of interest, the Committee adopted US-proposed changes to the existing traffic separation scheme for the approaches to Boston. Those changes had previously been approved by NAV last summer and would narrow the width of the lanes and shift them away from areas where right whales have reportedly concentrated in the past. In adopting the changes, the Committee declined to take action on a letter submitted by the Boston Port Authority and the Boston Pilots opposing the changes and complaining that they and other local stakeholders had not been consulted before the US submitted the proposal to NAV. The Committee explained that such an issue is an internal matter between the national government and the Port and the pilots.

The Committee also placed on the work programme of NAV a “high priority item” on “Measures to minimize incorrect data transmissions by AIS equipment” with a completion schedule of two sessions, in cooperation with the Flag State Implementation (FSI) (with regard to port State control-related matters) and the Radiocommunications and Search and Rescue (COMSAR) Subcommittees.

PILOT-FRIENDLY NAVIGATION BRIDGES?

A Correspondence Group established by the NAV Subcommittee is continuing its development of performance standards for Integrated Navigations Systems (INS) and Integrated Navigation Bridges (INB) and looking at ways to make them user-friendly. As reported in past editions of ON STATION, the latter consideration is the result of a NAV directive proposed by the US in 2005 that the group take into account the requirements of SOLAS chapter V, regulation 15. The regulation provides that decisions made as to the design, arrangement, installation, and operation of required navigation equipment should be taken with the aim of, among other things, “facilitating the tasks to be performed by the bridge team and the pilot ... and promoting effective and safe bridge resource management.”

Despite its name, the Correspondence Group met in Bonn, Germany November 6-8. While the main part of the group attempted, unsuccessfully, to reach final agreement on a draft of the INS standards, a subgroup produced a draft of a separate document of BRM guidelines for both the INS and IBS standards. The intent of the guidelines is to provide details on applying bridge resource management principles to navigation equipment and bridges in order to meet the requirements of regulation 15. The guidelines address such familiar topics as support to bridge team and pilot tasks, human error prevention and detection, traffic situational awareness, and operational mode awareness.

Nick Cutmore, Secretary General of IMPA, was the chair of the BRM guidelines subgroup, which also included Paul Kirchner of the APA and George Quick of the MM&P. Another meeting of the Correspondence Group is tentatively scheduled for February in Bonn.
IMPA CONGRESS PICKS WATSON AS NEW PRESIDENT

A PA president Captain Michael Watson was elected president of the International Maritime Pilots’ Association at its XVIIIth Congress held in Havana, Cuba November 20 to 24. He becomes the first US president of IMPA in over 30 years and will serve a four-year term. He succeeds the retiring Captain Geoff Taylor from England.

Over 200 pilots from 38 IMPA-member nations participated in the Congress. The four days of meetings featured presentations from a number of pilot speakers as well as invited guests on a wide variety of topics. Several of the presentations by invited guests were of particular interest or notoriety.

Captain Nick Cooper, a serving ship master speaking on behalf of the Nautical Institute, was invited to address “The Master/Pilot Relationship” and took the opportunity to share with his hosts a number of anecdotes from his personal experiences illustrating some of his complaints about pilots. Taking a more constructive and less confrontational approach, Captain Alan Coughlan, president of the International Harbour Masters Association and current Harbour Master of the port of Shannon, Ireland, discussed the relationships of pilots and harbour masters and gently suggested some ways that those relationships could be improved.

IMPA member pilots offered reports on pilot safety; piloting practices; pilotage operations and equipment; the use of quality management systems for pilot groups; and navigation technology. For example, Captain Jorge Vviso, chairman of the APA Navigation and Technology Committee, gave a well-received presentation on “Future Navigation Technology.” In particular, he showed several examples of innovative uses of lasers for such things as vessel positioning, aids to navigation, and personal safety devices.

Friday’s session was devoted to country reports, elections, and other business matters. The delegates approved a resolution expressing IMPA’s opposition to the recent decision by Danish authorities to introduce competition into its pilotage system. That move, ironically enough, followed the submission of a paper to IMO last year by Denmark documenting the 100% safety record of Danish pilots operating in the then non-competitive system and urging ships transiting the Danish Straits to use the non-competitive pilots.

In addition to the election of Captain Watson as president, Captain Otavio Fargoso, Brazil, was elected senior vice president for a four-year term. Captains Rudolphe Striga, France; Cahit Istikbal, Turkey; Jon Martin Cobeaga, Spain; and Gweek Bok Lee, Korea, were elected vice presidents, with Captains Striga and Istikbal having four-year terms and Captains Cobeaga and Lee having two-year terms. Current vice president Captain Steve Pelicans, Australia, remains in that position with two years left on his term.

Over 25 APA members attended the Congress, having complied with the restrictions imposed on US citizens traveling to Cuba by the State Department and by Cuban authorities.

--

DON'T FORGET THE APA PAC FUND
Send your voluntary contributions to:
APA Political Action Committee
499 SOUTH CAPITOL ST., SW
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20003
UPDATE ON USCG MEDICAL REVIEW PROGRAM

As this edition of ON STATION was being sent to the printers, the USCG notified the APA that the December 27 deadline for submission of pilots’ annual physical reports would be extended for an additional 120 days. A notice will be published in the Federal Register announcing the extension and possibly clarifying some issues that have arisen about exactly what must be submitted and the process for doing so.

For example, when APA members and their associations began submitting copies of the reports, several RECs said that only originals could be accepted. That would have created a significant, and unnecessary, burden on many pilots who submit the originals to their state authorities. After discussions between the APA office and the NMC, the NMC issued instructions to the RECs to accept copies, as clearly permitted in the original September 28 Federal Register notice announcing the submission requirement. The NMC and the USCG are also considering expanding the submission requirement to include documentation showing that the pilot had either passed a drug test as part of the physical exam or within six months prior to it or had been part of a random drug test program meeting USCG/DOT standards. On December 7, the APA sent a letter to the NMC objecting to the drug test documentation requirement as unnecessary and excessive. That issue will most likely be addressed in the upcoming Federal Register notice.

In a related, but not connected, matter, the APA submitted comments on November 27 on the USCG’s draft Navigation and Inspection Circular outlining its revised, expanded program for reviewing the medical condition of mariners. The USCG maintains that the NAVIC is not intended to expand or tighten medical standards but rather to clarify existing standards and make the review process more efficient and transparent.

Echoing comments by many other maritime industry stakeholders, however, the APA stated that its own review of the new list of “potentially disqualifying” medical conditions and medications suggests that significantly more medical information and waivers could be required under the new program. If that assessment is correct, the increased processing workload could overwhelm the resources that the USCG has indicated will be devoted to the program. The APA recommended, among other things, that the USCG expand the proposed “Medical Evaluation Branch” to be established at the NMC’s new headquarters in West Virginia and develop contingency plans for dealing with a possible logjam in processing medical reviews. The APA also objected to the decision to exclude from the NAVIC the evaluation criteria for issuing waivers.

CONGRESS: OUT WITH THE OLD; IN WITH THE NEW

In answer to a number of questions to the APA office recently, the Democratic Party takeover of both the House and Senate should have very little substantive impact on pilot matters. Fortunately, there is rarely a partisan divide on pilotage issues, or even on most maritime matters. The state pilotage system has friends and supporters on both sides of the aisle. There will obviously be changes, however, in the leadership, members, and staff of the committees of special importance to pilots. The membership of the committees and the leaders of the subcommittees will not be set until the new 110th Congress convenes on January 4, 2007, but at least it is understood that Rep James Oberstar (D-MN) will become the new chairman of the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI) will be chairman of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation.

One significant rumor making its way around the Hill is that the House Democratic leadership is considering transferring jurisdiction over Coast Guard matters from the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to the Committee on Homeland Security, which already has some oversight of Coast Guard security activities. Such a shift had been considered at the start of the last Congress but was ultimately abandoned by the Republican leadership.

As the 109th Congress wound down, the prospects for passage of the 2007 Coast Guard Authorization Bill disappeared. The House had passed its version, HR 5681, in September. After the November elections, however, the Senate was not inclined to take it up, preferring to wait for the new Congress. The House-passed bill contains a provision requiring terminals and other facilities to include in their security plans a system for pilots and other individuals assigned to a vessel to “board and depart the vessel through the facility in a timely manner at no cost to the individual.”

IN MEMORIAM...

Captain Robert G. Cordes of the Boston Pilots lost his life on October 24 in a fall from a pilot ladder. He was boarding a docked ship from a barge alongside (shoreside). The ship was in ballast at the time. Captain Cordes reportedly had made the long climb to near the top of the ladder when he fell backwards onto the barge below. The incident is still under investigation by the Coast Guard.

Captain Cordes, age 60, was a native of Winthrop, Massachusetts, where he was living at the time of his death. He attended Winthrop High School there. His father was a Boston pilot, and Captain Cordes came up through the ranks to become a Boston pilot in 1974. His fellow pilots describe him as a graduate of the pilot schooner. He was very active in local community affairs and was an avid collector of automobiles.

He is survived by his former wife, Rose Diaz of Buxford; a son, R. Zachary Cordes, also of Buxford; and many aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews. A brother and a sister predeceased him.

Captain Cordes is the third APA member pilot to lose his life in the line of duty in 2006.
Captain Jorge Viso, President of the Florida State Pilots, addresses the Convention.

Captain Gary Maddox, APA Vice President, gives his report from the South Atlantic States Region.

Rear Admiral Craig Bone, Assistant Commandant for Prevention, gives the keynote address.

Author, humorist, and riverboat (federal) pilot Mark Twain gives an address on Tuesday night on the qualities of pilots -- and of curious Convention attendees.

Captain Geoff Taylor (left) accepts a signed limited edition print of the painting "Sunset over the Thames in 1895" by noted maritime artist John Stobart from Captain Mike Watton. The print, which will hang in the IMPA office on the HQS WELLINGTON in London, was presented by the APA in honor and appreciation of Captain Taylor's service as IMPA president. Paul Kirchner is holding the print.

Captain Steve Baker, Hawaii Pilots, wearing his normal island attire, enjoys the Thursday night Pirate Adventure Party at Disney's Pleasure Island Rock & Roll Beach Club®. Captain Neil Keating, Jr., Sandy Hook Pilots, is in the right background.
McISAAC NEW VP

During the APA Convention in Orlando, the West Coast pilots selected Captain Peter McIsaac, Port Agent for the San Francisco Bar Pilots Association, as the new APA vice president for the Pacific Coast States Region. He will serve the remaining two years of the term of Captain Steve Brown, Columbia River Pilots, who resigned from the position. 

WILKERSON, WATKINS HONOURED AT CONVENTION

The APA Trustees at the Orlando Convention adopted a resolution making Captain J Fred Wilkerson an Honorary Life Member of the APA. Captain Wilkerson was APA vice president of the Gulf States from 1990 to 2004. As recounted in the resolution, he retired in 2006 after 30 years as a pilot with the Aransas-Corpus Christi Pilots. He served as president of that group and as an officer in the Texas State Pilots’ Association, including six years as president and four years as vice president.

Captain George E. Watkins, Virginia Pilot, was also honored with a resolution by the Trustees recognizing his “50 years of dedicated and valuable service to the state piloting system and to the piloting profession.” Captain Watkins began his apprenticeship in 1957 and became a full Branch Pilot with the Commonwealth of Virginia in 1962. He retired as an active pilot in 1996 but has continued to serve the maritime community in and around Hampton Roads in a variety of positions. The resolution noted that he has attended nearly every APA convention since 1979 and has worked his entire 50 years to build strong relationships among piloting organizations along the East Coast.

NEW APA MEMBER

Captain Mike Watson, with the approval of the APA vice presidents, has accepted the application of the Mississippi State Pilots of Gulfport, Inc. for membership in the APA. The group has four pilots, each of whom holds a state of Mississippi license issued by the port authority in Gulfport.

Welcome to the Gulfport pilots!

ELECTIONS, SELECTIONS, ETC.

- Captain Larry Vose has been elected president of the Southeastern Alaska Pilots’ Association. Other new officers of the association are Captain Tom Dundas, vice president, and Captain Doug Hanson, secretary-treasurer.
- The Southwest Alaska Pilots’ Association has elected the following officers: Captain Jeff Pierce, president; Captain Mike Stone, vice president; and Captain Vincent Tillion, secretary-treasurer. Other board members are: Captains Rick Desautel, Eric Elling, Ed Murphy, and Harry Scally.

THE CHAMPIONS

Winners of the prestigious Admiral’s Cup at the 2006 APA Golf Tournament at the Orlando Convention are presented with the Cup by Mrs. Geraldine Watson. From left to right: Captain Tommy Brown, Savannah; Captain Leonard Glass, Houston; Captain Rick Wesley, Savannah; and Captain Chris Rieder, NOBRA.

FRIENDS FROM UP NORTH

Enjoying the festivities of the Friday night gala at the Convention are, from left, Captain Simon Pelletier, Lower St. Lawrence Pilots, and Nadine Tremblay; and Captain Michel Pouliot, Lower St. Lawrence Pilots, president, Canadian Marine Pilots’ Association, and APA Honorary Life Member, and Michelle Pouliot.