A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Fellow Pilots,

This is a special time of the year for many cultures and religions around the world. The season offers us the opportunity – in fact it encourages us – to reflect, be grateful for the good things in our lives, and to convey best wishes to our fellow man.

As professional maritime pilots, we certainly have much for which to be grateful. We have earned the privilege of doing something that very few people can do. Being a pilot is without question one of the best and most rewarding jobs. We are part of a great profession with a long and a proud history. IMPA-member pilots are the most highly trained and proficient mariners in the world. Thousands of times each year, pilots 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 world’s busiest ports. You are the front line of marine safety and make a real difference every day.

In addition to recognizing the contributions pilots make and reminding all of us of the benefits of being a pilot, I also want to take the opportunity to wish all IMPA members a safe, happy, and healthy New Year. As President of IMPA, however, I have a greater responsibility than simply wishing you well. It is my responsibility to ensure that IMPA takes actions and pursues policies that promote the piloting profession and improves the safety and welfare of pilots around the world.

A recent example of IMPA’s successful efforts to advance safety and to protect pilots occurred at the 59th Session of IMO’s Subcommittee on Safety of Navigation (NAV 59). IMPA representatives worked collaboratively with a wide array of delegations and provided ample input on a number of important agenda items at NAV 59, including IMO’s E-Navigation Strategy, Revision of Guidelines for the Operational Use of AIS, and ECDIS Documentation. However, IMPA adamantly opposed an attempt by some shipbuilders and owners to interpret SOLAS Regulation V/23, which governs pilot transfer arrangements, in a way that would permit climbs of greater than 9 meters. Such an interpretation is contrary to the letter and spirit of the regulation, which is aimed at enhancing pilot safety. Fortunately, with the support of responsible Flag States and NGOs, this proposed interpretation, which had the stated goal of allowing some vessels to avoid the requirement (and expense) of having to carry and employ an accommodation ladder for any pilot transfer arrangements more than 9 meters above the water, NAV 59 rejected this misguided proposal.

In closing, let me again wish you a joyous holiday season and a happy New Year, and also renew my pledge to all IMPA member pilots that I will work diligently on your behalf as IMPA seeks to advance the interests of pilotage and to enhance the personal safety of pilots.

Warm regards,

Captain Michael Watson
President
IMPA

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I am proud of IMPA’s ongoing efforts to advance the interests of piloting and to protect the profession from those who would endeavor to undermine or weaken it – intentionally or otherwise. We ensure that at least one IMPA representative attends all major meetings of various international forums, including the IMO, IALA, IHO, etc. We attend these meetings not only to advance agenda items that enhance navigation safety and promote professionalism in the maritime sector, but also to counter efforts by those seeking to spread misinformation about pilots, lessen or even eliminate pilotage standards, or negatively impact pilot safety.

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At this time of the year when we often think or try to think in a more reflective way about life, I myself have begun to question the gulf between perception and reality in our profession. Or maybe I should put it ‘theory and reality’. My days are consumed sitting on your behalf at IMO listening to endless eulogies to new systems which the organization’s members want to introduce, and then periodically I am jolted out of this dreamworld by contact with reality.

Recently the shipowners with whom we have very warm relations(!) asked us to consider the requirements for pilot cards, or rather the content of pilot cards. Some of you for instance, over the past couple of years, have asked me whether windage could be included. As a starter, I asked the UK pilots to give me some current examples of what had been offered to them. Imagine my surprise to be handed 4 cards, 3 of which were blank and had no information entered into the boxes. The pilots explained that it was quite normal for a ship not to offer a card and when they had requested same, pro-formas had been torn off a pad, bizarrely with no ship-specific information entered. The icing on the cake was the 4th card which was completed, but the pilot ruefully told me the name of the ship at the top was not the name of the ship he had the conduct of!

Some days later I was in Cyprus for a symposium on the Master/Pilot relationship and I sat quietly while an argument raged about the optimum moment where those present, who were mostly agents and crewing managers, thought the pilot should be asked to sign his card. Finally, I was asked my opinion and I explained there was no requirement for a pilot to sign a card at all and the symposium lapsed into silence. The ‘gold plating’ of the pilot cards to include reams of highly detailed information simply for SMS purposes is something IMPA will be trying to deal with over the coming months.

2014 is looming with our conference in Panama and a wealth of other events taking place during the year. All the staff from the office on the Wellington thank you for your support and join me in sending greetings at this time of year to you and your families.

Best wishes to you all.
Nick Cutmore
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Capt John Freestone Retires...

Retiring London Pilot Capt John Freestone on his last trip, made all the more poignant because the ship, HMS Sutherland, is the adopted ship of the Honourable Company of Master Mariners of which John was a former Master. He is pictured here with his daughter Sarah as the cutter came alongside. Highlights of John’s long career include Piloting the Queen on the Royal Barge Spirit of Chartwell along the Thames during the Golden Jubilee Celebrations in 2012 and taking a Volvo racing yacht through Tower Bridge.
In praise of pilots

When I was thinking about leaving the deep sea life, I thought about becoming a pilot, which was not as easy as it might appear, as vacancies seemed few and far between and newcomers had to spend an awful long time learning the trade and earning no money while doing it, in most pilotage districts with which I was familiar.

A couple of factors put me off – firstly it seemed to me that all the pilots I knew seemed to spend half their lives in trains, but more importantly I genuinely wondered about whether I could hack the job. Did I have the spatial awareness – the sixth sense that is apparent in a good pilot, who is able to sense whether the tide has cut in early when they are coming off the berth, and realising before anyone else that the helmsman, who speaks no known language, has put the wheel the wrong way? So I found something else to do with my life, and pilotage probably had a narrow escape.

But over the years I have sometimes reflected that if I had become a pilot, I could well have developed something of a persecution complex, in the endless efforts made by shipowners to either avoid taking pilots, or to pay them as little as possible. If you want to make a shipowner lose his urbane manner just say the two words “compulsory pilotage” and watch him seethe. In some parts of the world “light dues” will have the same Pavlovian effect, but the pilotage conversation topic might be considered universal.

It is something I have never understood, having been brought up to believe that pilots were put on earth primarily as a maritime safety measure and why would any sane person begrudge them their existence? Over the years I have spent quite a lot of time with pilots, watching them at work and have, as a result can be counted on to become quite rude when some dim shore-side operating person says something like – “why do we need a pilot – we have a master, don’t we”? The same sort of clown will tell you that quite a lot of ships have accidents with pilots embarked, to which the correct answer is that few groundings occur in the middle of the ocean. You can almost watch their minds working as they try and work that out. But pilotage is important and probably because of the economic downturn, it is currently under attack from those who grudge every cent a pilot earns.

A current line of attack suggests that with brilliant communications and the facility of AIS, a pilot aboard each ship is extravagant and just like air traffic control, half a dozen ships could be simultaneously directed by an operator in the VTS tower. A great, money-saving idea in theory, but nonsense on stilts, in practice, with the VTS operator, whatever his or her communication skills, being unable to know what on earth is really going on in the wheelhouse of an arriving ship. The “bridge team” probably is composed of one spaced out shipmaster, who has been awake for thirty hours and is being shouted at over his mobile by the charterer, while sorting out the arrival paperwork. There may, or may not, be a helmsman who knows how to steer, while nobody has bothered to clear away the anchors, and they have forgotten to call the hands for stations. The VTS operator, listening to some confusing shouts and grunts over the VHF, is unlikely to make much sense of the situation, and there can be no substitute for an injection of expertise, in the shape of an embarked pilot.

Some years ago, at my nearest port, the pilot boat was off the port for the arrival of a short sea ship, which failed to slow down and was heading straight for the breakwater. The pilot boat went alongside and the pilot leaped onto the foredeck and sprinted to the bridge where he found the master fast asleep in his chair, and no other soul aboard the ship awake. That’s instructive.

Pilots are important, and I think you can argue that in the history of shipping they have never been so important, as there never has been a time when ships’ crews have been so stretched, so few in number and been run with such desperate intensity. Delays, for whatever good navigational reason, will occasion screams from charterers who think that ships run on rails, like trams. The pilot can take a lot of the weight off the over-stretched master at the most crucial time in the voyage.

The pilot is important because there never has been a time when there has been such intolerance of maritime accident, and the presence of the pilot can be one very useful item of insurance against this happening. Sure, pilots can make mistakes, but they can also stop an enormous number of mistakes happening as by definition, they will be experienced people with a lot of local knowledge.

But none of this will stop shipowners from grudging their pilotage dues, believing that if they are forced to take pilots, they should be paid about the same as the linesman. They want to see pilotage “commercial” with competition forcing the prices down. My answer to this is that pilots are as essential to safety as the bollards on the quay, and you wouldn’t want competition for those.

by Michael Grey

Reproduced from Workboat World No. 36 with kind permission of Baird Maritime.
Deploying a Pilot Ladder Safely???

Among the myriad of other tasks IMPA is engaged in, within recent months attention has been drawn to a number of instances where plates have been welded to the ship’s deck in the way of the pilot boarding area and ladders have been simply hung over the plates without the use of the side-ropes.

The effect is that the entire weight of the ladder and more importantly the pilot, is taken on the whippings or devices that hold the widgets or chocks in place, not something that was ever envisaged by IMO or ISO. IMPA has challenged this with the classification societies and also somewhat surprisingly, one Port State Control who signed off such an arrangement as satisfactory.

Whilst this phenomena seems to be concentrated in Northern Europe, one example has been seen in much more exotic Martinique! If you see such an arrangement please report it to Port State Control so that we can stop the spread of this menace.
Helcio Kerr, 18 May 1929 – 26 August 2013

Pilots around the world were saddened at the loss of Helcio Kerr, Rio de Janeiro pilot until September 2005 and IMPA Vice President from 1994-2002. In these roles and as President of the South America Pilots’ Association Helcio was respected for his common sense, efficiency and professionalism as much as he was loved for his kindness, good nature and energy.

Our condolences go to his family.

Robert Hofstee, 29 May 1941 – 13 June 2013

We are saddened at the passing of former EMPA President, Robert Hofstee.

Born in the Dutch town of Enschede, on leaving school he attended the Nautical Training College in Delfzijl and then joined Holland America Line. After several years of service as a deck officer became involved in the VNL (the former Dutch Pilots’ Association), where he ultimately became the General Secretary of the Association.

He also became active in EMPA, was elected President from 1987 and served until 1995. He then became deeply involved in training operators for the Turkish Straits VTS and for many years he was a visiting professor at the IMO’s WMU (World Maritime University) at Malmö, where his input was much appreciated. The greatest accolade, however, came on 14 April 1995, when he was made a Knight of the “Order of Orange-Nassau” for services to the profession by Her Majesty Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands.

Our condolences go to Robert’s wife Ansje, and their family.
Lifesaving Equipment has moved on...

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Nautical Institute Cyprus Branch Seminar

IMPA was represented Secretary General Nick Cutmore at a Nautical Institute Branch seminar on the Master-Pilot Relationship held in Cyprus recently. Attendees included Owners, Agents, Ship Managers, Ship Masters and some pilots from Cyprus (who were IMPA members also). The keynote speaker was Captain Sivaraman Krishnamurthi, newly elected Nautical Institute President. There were some very interesting exchanges about the use and content of pilot cards, and a surprising amount of consensus also, although the old chestnuts about all port stakeholders speaking English and assigning liability directly to pilots, raised their heads. From an IMPA perspective some of the outcomes are being used already in discussions with the International Chamber of Shipping.

The speakers at the seminar, from left to right: Graham Cowling, Operations Manager at Marlow Navigation, Sivaraman Krishnamurthi, President of the Nautical Institute, Martin Hernqvist, Managing Director of ALL Academy and The Swedish Club Academy, Valentin Mavrinac, Marine Superintendent with Columbia Shipmanagement and Nick Cutmore, Secretary General of International Maritime Pilots’ Association (IMPA).

Winner of the ‘Worst Ladder Competition’

Submitted by Spanish Pilot Capt Amador Gutierrez.

Court Fines Reckless Yacht Skipper

This incident has been on the IMPA website you-tube area for some months showing a yacht impaling itself on the bow of a deeply laden tanker entering Southampton Water in the UK. The skipper of the yacht who entered an extensive exclusion zone to get in this position was fined £2,000 sterling for failing to keep a proper lookout and impeding the passage of a vessel.

More significantly he was ordered to pay the full costs of the prosecution which exceeded £100,000 sterling. The skipper admitted to seeing the tanker more than 8km away. Although the yacht was in a race the defence used a novel tactic of claiming that the draft constrained tanker was going too fast! See page 18 for the full horror of piloting in the Solent during the summer.
QASTOR – ECS software for marine professionals

Qastor is Electronic Chart Software (ECS) that enables navigation, piloting and precise docking, as well as several other applications such as Oil & Gas FPSO/SPM mooring, patrol vessel and tugboat operations. First introduced in 2000, Qastor has continued to be developed and enhanced, and now includes a wealth of options and features specifically the result of extensive use in canals, ports and riverways around the world. Using wired or wireless methods, Qastor interfaces to most devices outputting NMEA data strings, to AIS units, and to the QPS Qastor Connect Server which is supplying meteorological data, VTS targets and ENC updates to Qastor users.

QASTOR – brings situational awareness

In addition to a minimum information such as speed, heading, course over ground (COG), and rate of turn (ROT) that is shown in the information panels, probably the most important aspect of navigation is the background electronic chart. Qastor uses an ECDIS engine which is built in accordance with the IMO publications S-52, S-57 and S-63 for digital chart presentation, format, publication and security. A number of chart formats are supported, including IHO S-57 Edition 3, C-MAP, Primar, ARCS and DENC charts, and CAD files can also be shown. Qastor operates under Microsoft Windows, but we’ve added the Qastor Move app for the iPhone/iPod/iPad. The Qastor Move app will connect to Qastor and receive the values normally shown in the Qastor instrument panels, allowing the mariner to move even more freely around the bridge, whilst keeping track of the most important navigational information.

QASTOR – facilitates safe navigation

Knowing the ship’s draft value, the required safety margin for under-keel clearance (UKC), and the real-time tide value, Qastor will clearly distinguish between safe and unsafe areas. Of course the quality of the chart and the density of its contours dictate how accurately safe areas can be shown. Some ports now produce and use “high-density” charts with contour intervals as small as 10cm. Routes are fully supported in Qastor, including checking for unsafe areas. Qastor makes available information such as the distance to the next waypoint, off-track distance, wheel over line, and more such as an AIS target closest point of approach. Taking into account vessel’s speed, heading and course of ground and rate of turn, Qastor is able to predict the vessel’s path. Together with a state-of-the-art RTK accurate Portable Pilot Unit (PPU), the path prediction is extremely accurate and is typically used in combination with the “guard zone” and “picture-in-picture” options.

QASTOR – suitable for fleet tracking and route management

It’s not just mariners on vessels using Qastor, a number of harbour masters and most recently fleet operation managers use Qastor and the Connect Server for round the clock monitoring and alerting.
The VII Meeting of the Foro Latino Americano de Prácticos

DECLARACION DE BUZIOS

Los Prácticos presentes en el VII Foro Latinoamericano de Prácticos, realizado en Búzios, Brasil, entre los días 01 at 04 de Octubre de 2013, representado a las Asociaciones Miembros de IMPA, luego de concluidas las ponencias, debates e informes de los asuntos de la situación del practicaje en la Región, declaramos:

2. Se aceptó por unanimidad a los dos prácticos del Perú, Capitanes Carlos Negrini Arello y Manuel Iaquiguirre como observadores porque manifestaron su interés y necesidad de pertenecer a IMPA.
3. Se lee y aprueba el acta del VI Foro realizado en 2011 en Venezuela.
4. El Representante de Venezuela Capt. Adolfo Valbuena presentó la moción de aprobar un “Manual Padrón de Maniobra”, se debate extensivamente y se aprueba la moción Argentina de tomar conocimiento del “Manual Padrón de Maniobra” de Venezuela, que esa representación editará en la pagina web de FLAPRAC.
5. Se postulan y aprueban Perú y México como titular y retén respectivos del próximo FORO, confirmar en 90 días.
6. Representatividad: Se reitera que el titular del último Foro, Ricardo Falcão, será su representante hasta el próximo.
7. El representante de Colombia expuso la situación de secuestros y amenazas por la que pasan los Prácticos de su país y la desprotección de sus autoridades. Propone que IMPA visite las autoridades, COPRAC Argentina propone cartas individuales a las autoridades. Otavio y Nick presentan cara tipo para IMPA.
8. La representación de Panamá presenta el caso de 3 Prácticos acusados en un proceso penal por accidente. Se aprueba esta manifestación anexa (Anexo B).
9. Vistas las situaciones a las que son sometidos los prácticos de los países representados en el VII Foro en el orden administrativo y judicial se resuelve dar mayor intensidad al intercambio de información entre sus miembros.
12. Visto lo expuesto por COPRAC Argentina con relación a la maniobra de transferencia de un Práctico a la escala del buque a ser pilotado, el accidente allí ocurrido y las consecuencias legales subsiguientes, considerando que por tratarse de una maniobra propia de la profesión, permanente y necesaria, el VII Foro Latino Americano de Prácticos recomienda a sus miembros establecer:
   a. El Práctico debe acordar con el Patrón de la lancha cual será la posición en que esta debe ubicarse cuando esté debe ubicarse cuando esté subiendo o bajando por la escala del buque.
   b. De no establecerse otro acuerdo entre el Práctico y la lancha, esta debe apartarse de la vertical de la Escala de Práctico, manteniéndose cerca y a popa de la misma para que ante una eventual caída del Práctico al agua, el Patrón lo vea y pueda acudir en su auxilio de inmediato.
13. Unidos, disciplinados e informados podremos enfrentar todos los desafíos futuros.

ANEXO A

The 7th “Foro Latino Americano de Prácticos” meeting in Buzios, Brazil, 1-4 October 2013, :-
- Notes the kidnapping of 5 civilian Maritime Pilots in Colombia between 2001 and 2013;
- Recognizes that Colombia National Authorities have withdrawn protection for Maritime Pilots when proceeding on their work;
- Acknowledges the effect protection has made to the service of Maritime Pilots;
- Further recognizes the critical role of Maritime Pilots in the Economic Trade and welfare of the people of Colombia:

The Foro unanimously moved that IMPA approach the relevant Authorities in Colombia to restore this protection to essential National Safety Service workers.

ANEXO B

Condenar enérgicamente los ataques criminales, comerciales, políticos y jurídicos a los que están siendo sometidos los prácticos en el ejercicio de su profesión. El Foro se pronuncia de manera particular en contra del proceso penal iniciado por las Autoridades de La Republica de Panamá en contra de tres prácticos del Canal de Panamá, quienes se encuentran imputados en un proceso sin mediación en el expediente pruebas que los vinculen al hecho.

Another successful event hosted by CONAPRA in Buzios, Brazil. The VII Meeting of the Latin American Pilotage Forum in October 2013 was attended by representatives from Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela as well as delegates from the United States of America, Canada and IMPA. Delegates were assured that it only rained for two days a year in Buzios and were thrilled to receive three years rain whilst they were there.
Alcohol-assisted Collision

A small outbound general cargo vessel and a large inbound ferry collided near the fairway buoy that marked the seaward limit of a port. Fortunately, there were no resulting injuries or pollution and both vessels managed to proceed into port under their own power. However, the cargo vessel’s bow was extensively damaged (Figure 1) and the collision caused a large gash in the ferry’s port side (Figure 2).

It was shortly after sunset, the weather was fine and the visibility was good. Each vessel had operational radar, each had contacted the port’s VTS at the required reporting points, and there was no other traffic in the vicinity.

The cargo vessel’s master was alone on the bridge as the vessel approached the fairway buoy. On the ferry, the master had temporarily left the bridge, leaving the chief officer (who was also a pilotage exemption certificate holder for the port) with the con. The third officer and a helmsman were also in attendance.

As the ferry approached the fairway buoy, the chief officer was content to close the cargo vessel because, in his experience, vessels departing the port routinely altered course to starboard after passing the fairway buoy.

The cargo vessel left the fairway buoy to port. However, instead of then altering course to starboard, her master chose to alter course to port, which put the cargo vessel on a collision course with the ferry.

The VTS operator had called the cargo vessel on VHF radio and had questioned the master’s intentions. On receiving confirmation from the master that he was altering course to port, the VTS operator then called the ferry, informing the chief officer that the ferry was standing into danger with the cargo vessel, and requesting him to contact the cargo vessel directly.

The chief officer followed the VTS operator’s advice and tried to make contact with the cargo vessel. Meanwhile, the third officer, who had seen the cargo vessel altering course to port, informed the chief officer of the fact and repeatedly advised him of the danger of collision. The chief officer then ordered hard to starboard and called the master back to the bridge. However, this action was too late to prevent the vessels colliding.

Once the vessels were alongside, local police officers boarded each of them and breathalysed the deck officers. The cargo vessel’s master was found to be more than three times over the legal limit for alcohol. He was later convicted for breaching the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2003 and sentenced to 1 year’s imprisonment.
Don’t drink and drive! It is totally unacceptable to be in charge of a navigational watch while intoxicated. In this case, the cargo vessel’s master received a prison sentence for his reckless behaviour.

The ferry’s chief officer assumed that the cargo vessel would alter course to starboard after passing the fairway buoy. When this did not happen, he should have been in little doubt that a risk of collision existed. The ferry was a stand-on vessel in a crossing situation and the chief officer was at liberty to take avoiding action by his manoeuvre alone. However, he delayed doing so and continued towards the fairway buoy on the assumption that the cargo vessel would eventually take action to avoid a collision.

Such complacency is very dangerous. In this case, the outbound vessel was under the charge of an inebriated master who decided irrationally to alter course to port. However, the vessel could equally have suffered a steering failure leading to a similar result.

When approaching another vessel at close-quarters, an OOW should always have the ‘what if?’ scenario playing in their mind, so that he or she is prepared to act, and does act, should the need arise.

Although the ferry’s third officer informed the chief officer that the cargo vessel was altering course to port, the chief officer continued to delay taking avoiding action.

Given the close proximity of the cargo vessel and the ferry’s manoeuvring characteristics, his decision to delay indicates that he did not appreciate the time available in which he had to act before collision became inevitable. How well do you know your own vessel’s manoeuvring characteristics? Would you know when to act?

A further contributing factor is likely to have been the chief officer’s distraction in choosing to respond to the VTS operator’s VHF radio call and then attempting to communicate with the cargo vessel. This was contrary to the advice provided in MGN 324(M+F), which states: “Valuable time can be wasted whilst mariners on vessels approaching each other try to make contact on VHF radio instead of complying with the Collision Regulations”.

The VTS operator quickly identified that the cargo vessel, on passing the fairway buoy, had not altered course to starboard as he had expected. He did not hesitate to question the master’s intentions, confirm his action and convey this to the ferry. However, short and sharp warning messages, in accordance with best practice, would have been more effective in conveying the urgency of the situation to both vessels.

The VTS operator then requested the ferry to make radio contact with the cargo vessel directly; a request that the chief officer followed. This distracted him and possibly delayed him from taking avoiding action.

The Lesson

1. Don’t drink and drive! It is totally unacceptable to be in charge of a navigational watch while intoxicated. In this case, the cargo vessel’s master received a prison sentence for his reckless behaviour.

2. The ferry’s chief officer assumed that the cargo vessel would alter course to starboard after passing the fairway buoy. When this did not happen, he should have been in little doubt that a risk of collision existed. The ferry was a stand-on vessel in a crossing situation and the chief officer was at liberty to take avoiding action by his manoeuvre alone. However, he delayed doing so and continued towards the fairway buoy on the assumption that the cargo vessel would eventually take action to avoid a collision.

   Such complacency is very dangerous. In this case, the outbound vessel was under the charge of an inebriated master who decided irrationally to alter course to port. However, the vessel could equally have suffered a steering failure leading to a similar result.

   When approaching another vessel at close-quarters, an OOW should always have the ‘what if?’ scenario playing in their mind, so that he or she is prepared to act, and does act, should the need arise.

3. Although the ferry’s third officer informed the chief officer that the cargo vessel was altering course to port, the chief officer continued to delay taking avoiding action.

4. The VTS operator quickly identified that the cargo vessel, on passing the fairway buoy, had not altered course to starboard as he had expected. He did not hesitate to question the master’s intentions, confirm his action and convey this to the ferry. However, short and sharp warning messages, in accordance with best practice, would have been more effective in conveying the urgency of the situation to both vessels.

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Piloting from a female perspective

We prevailed upon Carolyn Kurtz, Pilot in the port of Tampa for 18 years, to set out her experience of our Industry from a female’s perspective.

Women and men similarly face a variety of challenges when transitioning from being a sea-going mariner to being a pilot. If one has sailed as Master it may be difficult to accept being in the role of trainee. If one has not been in a command position it may be difficult to act in an authoritative manner.

What matters is that the Master and Pilot establish a cooperative working environment to achieve the same goal, namely moving the ship successfully from one place to another. A forceful personality, language barriers, different priorities (speed vs. safety), poor hospitality (no offer of food/coffee), even appalling toilet facilities (that one may need it’s own article) can contribute to a less than ideal working environment, but these challenges are faced by all pilots, not just women.

Some of the challenges I have faced as a woman in the piloting profession have more to do with challenges faced by women, generally, in all sorts of industries and less to do with piloting in particular. My fellow Tampa pilots had not previously had a pregnant partner, so figuring out how to deal with maternity leave was new territory for all of us (I ended up on disability for 6 months). Balancing motherhood with an on-call schedule is my greatest ongoing challenge, one that is shared by working women everywhere.

When thinking about the challenges I have faced as a pilot, I realized that they fell mostly into three categories: age, gender, and personality. I entered the training program in Tampa just shy of my 31st birthday. Many Captains seemed to be as surprised by my youth as my gender. A few men that I know who began piloting at a fairly early age encountered the same questions about their qualifications as I did. In so many countries around the world, particularly 18 years ago when I started, pilots tended to be older, often retired sea captains. I can’t even remember how many captains told me that they had be sailing as Master for as long as I had been alive, and that I was the first “Lady Pilot” they had even seen.

In the first few years of my career when there were fewer than a dozen women working as pilots in the United States, one of the frequent challenges was of the captains figuring out how to interact with a woman, not a pilot. The older captains would often tell me about their daughters and their grandchildren and would ask if I had any children (I have a 12 year old son, Jack). The younger captains often acted in a slightly too familiar manner - inquiring about my marital status, invading my personal space, or going for a kiss, rather than a handshake at the end of a job. Fortunately, due to either the greater number of women piloting, or my advancing age, or a combination of both of these factors, most captains seem to have adjusted to a woman walking onto the bridge and assuming the con. The days of the entire crew sightseeing on the bridge or the officers coming up to stand watch reeking of cologne seem to be, thankfully, behind me.

Early on in my piloting career, I was asked to speak to a group of young professional women about the challenges faced by a woman in a traditionally male-dominated industry. My message to them was that if you act like a woman in a man’s world that is exactly how you will be treated. If you conduct yourself in a professional manner and do the best possible job, you will be treated as an equal. Your successes and failures will be attributed to your performance, not your gender. In a profession where 100% success rate is the minimum expectation, it has been my experience that women and men are in the same boat.
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View from the Bridge

This is a view from the Bridge during Cowes Week, in the Solent, UK!

Photo by Nigel Allen.
Too Close for Comfort

If you don’t have a clue about your position, you are less likely to take navigational risks. This might appear to be an uncontentious statement, but within those words all sorts of complications arise in the minds of the modern navigator.

There is no doubt that the position-finding equipment vouchsafed to the modern mariner is really quite remarkable in its all-weather, “all-singing, all-dancing” qualities which remove so much of the doubt that would have assailed our ancestors. No longer will the mariner peer through the muck, hoping for the loom of a light, worrying whether the tides or currents have set the vessel miles off the charted course following days without celestial assistance.

No more worrying as to whether the radar is picking up an echo on the foreshore, or one five miles inland, or whether a radio direction finder bearing is to be trusted and the echo sounder is registering the 100-fathom line, or a shoal of fish. The “integrated e-navigation” facilitated by those useful satellites and their associated bells and whistles makes navigation more sure, more certain and more precise than ever before. The tension, even the terror, of positional uncertainty is removed. The navigator can relax!

Well, maybe, but only up to a point. There is one rather worrying statistic that keeps emerging, that suggests that despite all the amazing new equipment that has been eagerly bought by shipowners to sharpen up the skills of their navigators, casualties caused by navigational error have remained in a flat trajectory, with no improvement in the past thirty or forty years.

Various reasons have been given for this depressing revelation, which range from rude remarks about the abilities of the present generation of navigational watchkeepers to more thoughtful views about their training or their abilities to handle what the equipment manufacturers keep providing for them. Ask a casualty investigator, somebody better able than most to appreciate man’s unkindness to ships, and the world “complacency” is likely to crop up.

Maybe the fact that the navigator feels able to relax, confident in the veracity of what the equipment is telling him, is part of the problem. Everyone knows all the rules about never relying on a single method of position fixing and cross checking with other means, but if the faithful Satnav never seems to go wrong, fussing around with radar ranges or visual bearings is just a bore. Maybe that word is more significant than we might think, because where, you might ask, is the intellectual stimulus in navigation, when it is all done for the navigator by computers?

Navigation, once something that kept your senses on edge, has now become so routine and unchallenging that it is a bore, and if your mind wanders, this is no more than is to be expected. Some have suggested that we have “de-skilled” or “dumbed down” navigation, and the equipment hasn’t been able to pick up the slack!

Years ago, when shipowners and equipment manufacturers were colluding in a plot to bring in one-man bridge ship operations (with no lookout ever needed), the United Kingdom authorities employed a psychologist, Dr Martin Dyer-Smith, to ride a number of short sea ships permitted to operate in this fashion. Dr Dyer-Smith, in the darkness at the back of the wheelhouse, observed the alertness of the watchkeeper. These were well equipped little ships, but Dyer-Smith (who was a chief officer long before he turned to psychology) was appalled by some of the situations people were getting into, being forced to intervene on a number of occasions with an apparently awake officer seemingly unaware of an impending collision and being the give-way ship. He described the state they were in as a “catatonic trance” into which they had lapsed, because, he concluded, they had had become disconnected by simple boredom.

Other people looking at alarming casualty data have suggested that the belief in the precision of modern navigation equipment leads people to take far more chances with both collision avoidance and proximity to hazards. This might be considered not so much an argument against the equipment that provides the precision, but the attitude that this belief engenders. The utter confidence in the instruments dulls the senses and makes the “Mk.1 Eyeball” seem redundant, so a watchkeeper may forget to look out of the window!

The reliance on amazing equipment and its precision, besides encouraging complacency in the shipboard user and increased risk-taking, is likely to persuade those operational people ashore to expect ships to be driven harder, take short cuts and arrive on time. This expectancy will disapprove of the risk-averse master, who, in another age, would be praised for his prudence and safety-first attitudes.

The Steamship Mutual P&I Club has recently produced a fascinating film “Groundings – Shallow Water – Deep Trouble” that seems to echo so many of these concerns, with complacency one of the reasons given why so many well-equipped ships end up where they should not. “How on earth did that ship get into such a mess?” – is not an unreasonable question to ask when looking at this DVD, produced after the club calculated what was being paid out in gigantic claims. We struggle for answers!

by Michael Grey

Reproduced from Work Boat World 8 November 2013 with their kind permission.

Michael Watson shakes the hand of Master Chief Petty Officer of the USCG Michael Leavitt, at the Exceptional Bravery at Sea Award at the International Maritime Organization. Former IMO Secretary General Bill O’Neill shakes the hand of Admiral Bob Papp as Immediate Past IMO Secretary General Efthimios Mitropoulos looks on.

Photograph by USCG Officer Annie R B Ellis
On 19th March 1513 a guild of mariners troubled by the poor conduct of unregulated pilots on the Thames petitioned the king for license to regulate pilotage. A Royal Charter was granted by King Henry VIII and presented to The Master Wardens and Assistants of the Guild Fraternity or Brotherhood of the Most Glorious and Undivided Trinity and of Saint Clement in the Parish of Deptford Strond in the County of Kent, (the Corporation’s full name to this day!) governed by a Master, four Wardens and eight Assistants.

Lights
With the increasing number of ships lost along the Newcastle to London coal route, Trinity House established Lowestoft lighthouse in 1609, a pair of wooden towers with candle illuminants. Until the late 18th century, candle, coal or wood fires were used as lighthouse illuminants, improved in 1782 with the circular-wick oil-burning Argand lamp, the first ‘catoptric’ mirrored reflector in 1777 and Fresnel’s ‘dioptric’ lens system in 1823; the Nore lightvessel was established in the Thames as the first floating light in 1732.

In 1836 Trinity House accepted powers to levy out the last private lighthouse owners and began the arduous task of building some of that era’s most iconic designs: the first Bishop Rock was carried away during a storm before the lantern could be fitted; over the eight years it took to build the Wolf Rock lighthouse, landings could be made on only 33 days per year.

Buoys
In 1803 the Corporation established the Blackwall Depot in east London on the Thames as a buoy workshop, and six district depots were later established at Harwich, Great Yarmouth, East Cowes, Penzance, Holyhead and Swansea.

During the First World War, the Corporation was busy buoying shipping lanes for naval operations, moving lightvessels and laying hundreds of buoys.

From 1939 Trinity House kept sea lanes marked and lighted on request by the Admiralty for the safe passage of Allied convoys. The Pilotage Service guided ships safely to their ports under hazardous conditions; at the time of the evacuation from Dunkirk a number of pilots helped in piloting vessels to and from the beaches.

In the month following D-Day (the Allied landing in Normandy) nearly 3,000 vessels were handled by 88 Thames river pilots and nearly 2,000 ships by 115 sea pilots working day and night.

Helicopters
1969 saw the debut of helicopter reliefs to and from lighthouses, rendering the tradition of keepers trapped by foul weather with dwindling supplies of food and fuel a thing of the past.

Trinity House played a leading part in the design of the IALA Maritime Buoyage System, laying the first buoy off Dover, watched over by representatives of 16 nations on 15th April 1977.
Transfer of pilotage administration

By the 1960s Trinity House licensed about 500 pilots, of whom about 350 were in the London District, handling an estimated 60% of the nation’s piloted tonnage. 1987’s Pilotage Act saw Trinity House passing its District Pilotage responsibilities to various local harbour authorities, becoming instead a licensing authority for deep sea pilotage.

Automation

The completion of the lighthouse automation programme came with North Foreland Lighthouse on 26th November 1998; the last six keepers were given a warm farewell by the Master HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. On 9th June 1989 the last manned lightvessel was towed from the Channel station to Harwich. Accordingly, the network of depots was scaled down; busy offices and buoy yards remain today at Harwich and Swansea with a satellite depot close to Land’s End.

As a charitable body, the Corporation has owned a number of properties for their benevolent purposes, chief among them the estate at Newington in south east London and the almshouses at Deptford, Mile End and Walmer. It dispenses millions for the welfare of retired seamen, the training of young cadets and the promotion of safety at sea.

Deep Sea Pilotage

The Corporation of Trinity House was originally a guild of mariners or pilots, and its interest in pilotage continues today. Trinity House London is authorised by the Secretary of State for Transport to licence Deep Sea Pilots. In 1988, Trinity House responsibilities for district pilotage were transferred to various harbour authorities. Trinity House continues to grant certificates to persons who satisfy the necessary criteria of entry qualification and examination. Currently 32 pilots hold the document.

Although it is not compulsory to carry a Deep Sea Pilot, many shipmasters unfamiliar with northern European waters employ their professional expertise to assist the bridge team.

Since the first Royal Charter, the Corporation of Trinity House has been entrusted with many powers, all of which ensure its utility to the mariner as a General Lighthouse Authority, a major maritime charity and a Deep Sea Pilotage Authority.

Light Upon the Waters

The definitive history of The Corporation of Trinity House, Light Upon the Waters by Captain Richard Woodman and Captain Andrew Adams, is available now.

Readers are invited to visit www.trinityhouse.co.uk for more information and an order form.
Maritime Operational Research

Developing Practical Solutions for Today’s Toughest Piloting Challenges

The Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS) and the Pacific Maritime Institute (PMI) are proven worldwide leaders in the area of Full-Mission Ship Simulation (FMSS). With over twenty years of experience, and state-of-the-art simulation technology, the MITAGS-PMI expert staff can program a model of virtually any port/vessel combination in the world. Multiple, large-scale simulators allow tug masters, captains, and pilots to work together in the same scenario as part of a highly-accurate, interactive environment. In fact, ship simulation is now the most practical and cost-effective way for professional mariners to develop safe operational limits for vessel transits within restricted waters.

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For additional information on Maritime Operational Research, please contact Captain Robert Becker via e-mail at rbecker@mitags.org.

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Safehaven Marine have undertaken possibly an industry first, by capsizing their latest Interceptor 48 Pilot / S.A.R. vessel in a live condition, with two crew inside during the roll over. In the ultimate expression of confidence in the vessel’s design and integrity, Safehaven’s managing director and designer, Frank Kowalski, volunteered to be inside the vessel during the roll over. Strapped in with a full harness at her helm position he commented “it was a bit stressful when she was over at 90 degrees about to roll over, and the motion past 180 during recovery was pretty violent, but it went off without a problem”. Safehaven gained valuable data from this test, providing a greater understanding of the forces involved, thereby allowing them to incorporate design features that will maximize both their vessel’s seakeeping, and survivability, when operating in extreme conditions of wind and wave.

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