

## AOTOS

Thank you, ladies, and gentlemen. Thank you, Ken, for the kind introduction.

It is a pleasure to be here tonight and accept this award on behalf of Masters, Mates & Pilots. MM&P appreciates the recognition we are receiving for our proud and time-honored role in the U.S. Merchant Marine.

We also appreciate and salute the work of the United Seamen's Service which has been serving mariners since the Second World War

I can say from personal experience that the United Seamen's Service -- in some cases, occasionally serves mariners a little too well and a little too much! - Some of those midnight departures from the USS club in Naha, Okinawa could get very exciting!!

While USS was founded during the dark days of WWII, MM&P traces its roots to New York harbor and 1880, when the Long Island Steamboat Seawanhaka suffered a boiler explosion and caught fire.

While the wheelhouse was engulfed in flames, Captain Charles H. Smith successfully beached the vessel, saving the lives of most of the passengers.

No sooner did the badly burned Captain Smith land ashore than he and the vessel's Chief Engineer were arrested and charged

with manslaughter. Captain Smith died before he could be brought to trial. The outrage in NY harbor caused by his treatment led to the formation 7 years later of what became the International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots.

Founded as a protective and fraternal association, many of the issues of 1887 continue to confront mariners today.

Chief among them is the continued criminalization of mariners. Industrial accidents at sea and in port have resulted in the imprisonment of masters and other mariners around the world – including in the U.S.

Despite vast technological changes and improvements in safety and living conditions at sea, unrelenting stress, isolation and fatigue aboard the short-handed vessels that carry the commerce of the world continue to plague mariners, making the occupation a difficult and challenging one. This award most properly belongs to mariners.

I take great pride in having successfully served as a professional licensed deck officer. My pride is magnified by the honor of serving as a union official for the men and women of Masters, Mates & Pilots. I may be biased, but there is no *finer* group of professionals at sea today.

My life-long involvement in the maritime industry and the trade union movement has been the best of both worlds. What better industry can there be than the merchant marine? An honest, essential industry with a heritage and tradition that go back to

colonial days. What better, more vital movement can there be than the labor movement that still struggles to protect the living conditions and working conditions of the 99% against the onslaught of an insatiable global plutocracy.

The political action of MM&P and other trade unions represented here is the reason that the U.S. flag is still found aboard merchant ships on the high seas. It is only by clinging to the Gods of War that we have not been completely submerged by the Flag of Convenience racket that has largely destroyed the seagoing professions of traditional maritime nations.

Our mission in labor is to maintain our jobs, compensation and working conditions and to assist others in doing so. That is why MM&P, the International Longshoremen's Association, International Longshore & Warehouse Union, Marine Engineers Beneficial Association, Inland boatmen's Union and American Radio Association have banded together to form the Maritime Labor Alliance.

Our mission is to protect our working conditions and our jobs aboard ship and on the docks. Unfortunately, we are in an era where the social compact between labor and capital has ceased to exist.

For me, the Ship and the union, the Masters, Mates & Pilots Union, have always been ideal structures. Both are in constant

motion and both require teamwork, trust and fraternity to achieve their best results.

At a time when the sea-year at Kings Point has been suspended for reasons that have not been adequately explained to anyone – least of all the students, I think back to my sea year -- the supreme learning experience of my life with lessons about the job, about trade unionism and about life in general.

I had some great teachers considering I made about every mistake that a cadet can possibly make. There were people like Captain Henry Petersen of *the S/S Austral Rainbow* who gave me a chewing out that I never forgot and Bosun Bill Harrison had a larger than life personality and worked the ship as if by magic.

The fraternity of the crew and the seafaring life, when things are good, life cannot get any better. Of course, when it is bad, shipping out can be imprisonment with the possibility of drowning. But then there is the beauty of returning to the hiring hall. The personal freedom of the qualified and experienced mariner is hard to beat -- even in this day of micromanagement from ashore and uncertain prospects.

I've been very fortunate to have had many mentors in my youth, aboard ship and within MM&P. I didn't always recognize them or appreciate the tutorials at the time. In fact, in a couple cases

it took me ten or fifteen years to become reconciled to the lessons I received.

Sometime the hardest lessons are the ones that are learned the best. My father often told me to “SHAPE UP or ship out,” -- I did the latter – as soon as I possibly could. My Uncle Madison was an absolute individualist. His best friend was a 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Engineer who would blow into town every two or three years and inspire me with his tales about life aboard ship and in ports around the world.

One mentor ashore was an SUP dispatcher by the name of Andy Anderson. I showed up at the Sailors’ Union shrine on Harrison Street in San Francisco one fine morning in 1974. He advised me that the Vietnam War was over, shipping was bad and I would be better off going to a maritime school than trying to ship out as an Ordinary Seaman.

Captain Georg Pedersen told me that when he came over from Denmark in the 1960’s, he was warned the US merchant marine was going down the drain and not to join. He ignored the advice, telling me his this as he sat comfortably in the Captain’s chair aboard the *M/V Sea-Land Developer*. Thankfully, for the young mariners here tonight a satisfying career in the US Merchant Marine is still possible. What it takes is perseverance.

My best mentors were true seamen, shipmates and trade unionists who knew their jobs, had lived through some

**incredible times and most importantly knew what was right and what was wrong. I have had the benefit of an apprenticeship at sea thanks to Uncle Sam and MM&P. I also benefitted from another apprenticeship ashore thanks to union brothers like Paul Nielsen, Glen Banks, Jim Hopkins and the brilliant George Quick. Union sisters like Kathy Moran, and beacons from other unions such as Gunnar Lundeberg and James Spinosa, have provided great inspiration.**

**What greater satisfaction can there be than to stand up here tonight and thank the industry and the trade union movement for such an exciting and satisfying career?**

**What greater satisfaction for me than to follow that true Captain and the greatest of mentors -- Captain Tim Brown, in representing MM&P with this award. Thank you, Tim, and may you Rest in Peace**

**Having had the freedom to pursue my vocation for almost 20 years of seafaring and as many years in the trade union movement ashore as an MM&P official, I need to thank my wife Gwen: for her love, unceasing support and encouragement, for enduring the many cross-county moves and disruptions in her own career as a pediatrician, and most of all for raising essentially as a single parent our three wonderful children, Daniel, Claire & Nora.**

**Thank you, Gwen, it was the luckiest day of my life when I spotted you in the crowd at a Kings Point mixer and asked you**

to dance! Thank you, Dan, Claire and Nora for understanding of a dad so often absent -- on a mission of one sort or another.

What we have at MM&P is precious. The union provides direct continuity with the generations that came before us and with those that are coming up next. The motto of our union is that *“Faith is a Living Power.”* MM&P will maintain our faith in the future -- our faith in our brothers and sisters.

We will work together within our union and within our industry to pass the opportunity for a satisfying maritime career on to our sons and daughters.

I am grateful for the hard work of so many fine people in our organization, at sea and ashore, who are keeping us steaming ahead. Thank you to our dedicated MM&P officers and staff -- It isn't exactly smooth sailing, but it's never boring. Thank you, My Brothers and Sisters of MM&P who have put me in this position --Thank you, United Seamen's Service for this fine award!!