A Message From Your Chairman

As incoming Chairman of the Louisiana River Pilots Association, I understand the importance of working together to maintain an ongoing, coordinated and positive effort to build an even better future for all of Louisiana’s maritime industry. Those are not and cannot be merely words.

2009 will be one of the most challenging years for America’s economy since the 1930’s. Sitting at the mouth of the Mississippi River and on the Gulf of Mexico will present many possibilities for us as a state and as an industry to help rebuild the nation’s overall economy.

Few people will have the opportunity, as will we as members of the Louisiana River Pilots Association, to have direct involvement and influence in reigniting the growth and prosperity of our country and our state. The maritime industry will be critical in the movement of commerce across the globe. It will be a highly competitive endeavor, but no other place in the world offers industry what we have here on the Mississippi. Top ports and key industry are beacons to the maritime industry.

But, as important as those two are, the other vital ingredient is that here on the Mississippi River foreign shippers recognize that highly experienced, dedicated and professional pilots are on call to them 24 hours a day, each and every day of the year, to guide their commerce and vessels to safe port. We work together to provide industry with skilled pilots who are constantly vigilant.

We are also working to improve what is already recognized as one of the safest, most cost and time efficient trips available to the maritime industry. We are constantly working with industry to improve facilities. We are involved directly with helping our ports. And, we provide continuing education for all our pilots in realistic simulation as well as actual on the river educational programs.

As members of the LRPA we can help rebuild the economy and in so doing play a critical role in the future prosperity and safety of our state. We have a vital role in this effort and people across Louisiana, particularly among our state’s political and community leaders, are realizing that the pilots are an integral part of a better and brighter future.

I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as next year’s Chair of the Louisiana River Pilots Association. It is a responsibility and an honor I accept and take seriously. Together, we can make the difference our state so desperately needs.

– Michael Lorino, Jr.
Governor Jindal recently appointed Capt. Bud Watson and Capt. A.J. Gibbs to the Governor’s Maritime Advisory Task Force. Capt. Watson was named Chairman. This Task Force, made up of 12 hand-picked representatives of every aspect of our maritime economy advises the Governor’s office on Maritime issues and opportunities. The group is charged with identifying and analyzing future challenges and opportunities impacting maritime commerce and advising the Governor on policy, legislation, and initiatives to further Louisiana’s greatest single source of revenue. Capt. Watson and the other Task Force members will serve at the pleasure of the Governor and will meet regularly with leaders of the State Department of Transportation and Development, the Department of Economic Development, the Senate, the House and a representative of the Governor’s office and submit reports and recommendations directly to the Governor.

Jindal Appoints Maritime Advisory Task Force

The Heidmar Blue & Gray Golf Classics will introduce 3 new golf courses to its 2009 tour with Bulle Rock in Maryland highlighting the field. The eight-month tour commences in March and travels the entire country setting up camp at 12 amazing golf courses.

After seeing a record 1,290 golfers in 2008, the Classics enhanced the field by switching courses in Baltimore, Washington, D.C. and New Jersey. Bulle Rock, one of the country’s finest courses and nationally ranked at 30th by Golf Digest, will be the new home in the Chesapeake Bay area. The course is also one of only 24 Five-Star Rated Courses in North America.

In conjunction with the Propeller Club of Washington, D.C., the Washington, D.C. Golf Classic gets a new look by playing at the Laurel Hill Golf Club. This is one of the area’s best and ranked by Golfweek.com as one of America’s Best Municipal Courses. The event takes place the day before the Propeller Club’s Annual Salute to Congress on April 27.

With nearly 90 golfers at the inaugural New Jersey Golf Classic, the tournament is being moved to Neshanic Valley Golf Course in Branchburg. Golf Digest ranks Neshanic as the 2nd best public course in the state and 20th overall.

In addition to the 3 new courses, the Golf Classics will continue to play at fan-favorites, such as Trump National (Los Angeles), Presidio (San Francisco), The Woodlands (Houston) and the Engineers/North Shore Country Club combination in New York. Overall, the tour reaches nearly every major U.S. shipping port and attracts over 1,500 annual participants.

The events are maritime golf tournaments that benefit the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy and its Department of Athletics. The events are coordinated during the calendar year and serve U.S. Merchant Marine Academy alumni, parents, maritime organizations and friends of the Academy.

Heidmar Inc., the tour’s National Title Sponsor, leads a string of national sponsors that provide critical support to the outings. The organization is a successful tanker vessel trader, a leading worldwide commercial manager of tankers and a marine services provider to the energy industry. Located in Norwalk (Conn.), Heidmar employs eight Merchant Marine Academy graduates and recently extended its partnership through 2013.

For golf and sponsor information, contact Gregg Matalas, Manager of Blue & Gray at 516-773-5544 or gregg.matalas@alumni.usmma.edu.

Nation’s Best in Maritime Golf Gets Better

The Mississippi Valley Trade & Transport Council will host the 27th year of serving the maritime industry at the 2009 World Trade & Transport Conference February 18-20, at the Astor Crowne Plaza New Orleans. Early bird registration rates are available until January 9.

We are pleased to announce Celtic Marine Corporation, General Maritime Transportation Services, Inc., AEP River Operations and Marine Inspection LLC are gold level sponsors. The Associated Branch Pilots, Jones Walker and United Maritime Group are supporting the event as silver sponsors.

For more information or to register, visit www.mvttc.com.
Port of LC to get $49M - Money for Dredging Channel

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers set aside $49 million to pay for dredging along the Calcasieu Ship Channel to get the waterway back to its original 40-foot depth. The funds come from the Consolidated Security Disaster Assistance and Continuing Appropriations bill for the 2009 fiscal year.

U.S. Sen. David Vitter said the money will allow the Port of Lake Charles to resume normal activity along the ship channel, which was disrupted by excessive silt deposited during Hurricanes Gustav and Ike. He said ships were having to be short-loaded by 2 feet because of the depth of the channel. He said that was costing the refineries more money. Since the storms, Vitter said, he has spent the last few months meeting with corps officials on the issue. “We had major meetings with the corps and the Office of Management and Budget about how significant this is economically,” he said. “This is not an isolated event; it’s an ongoing problem.”

Adam McBride, director of the Port of Lake Charles, said that the state’s congressional delegation has been working to get the corps to help with dredging costs. “We have had several meetings up there (Washington, D.C.) since Hurricane Ike with the corps and others,” he said. “A delegation from our Harbor and Safety Committee that included Lake Charles Pilot’s President Captain Mike Miller, traveled up there to meet with senior OMB (budget) officials and corps officials.” Captain Miller addressed the reduced draft issues and the inefficient movements of vessels due to lack of dredging.

“They were able to report to us that they in fact understood our message and were able to find $49 million. This is great news.” McBride commended “the entire maritime community for its assistance in getting the dredging funds.” He added that Sens. Vitter and Mary Landrieu, Rep. Charles Boustany and the city of Lake Charles all assisted in the efforts to get the dredging funds. “We just kept working with our congressional delegation and the Harbor and Safety Committee, and we finally saw some results,” he said.

McBride said it will be next year before the dredging work begins on the Calcasieu Ship Channel. “This will take us back to 40 feet. We will remove that draft restriction we are suffering from and restore all of the dredging spoil areas back to good condition,” he said.

Article by John Guidroz, American Press

Quote of the Month

As Vice President of The New Orleans Baton Rouge Pilots Association, I would like to say, hello to all of you wonderful people I have had the pleasure of working with for the past five years. I have chosen not to seek re-election to the NOBRA board and spend time with family, do some committee work within the association, make some river trips, and fade on into the sunset! Please contact Capt. Martin (Marty) Gould Jr. mgouldjr@charter.net my replacement as V.P. NOBRA to continue the communications. Again, it has been indeed a pleasure to serve you.

- Captain Chris A. Rieder

New Year’s Resolution Diet
HMS Bounty Adventure

At 0500 on a dark December morning Captain Mitch Gibbs, Cres 86, boarded the replica of the sailing ship HMS Bounty at the General anchorage in the Port of New Orleans. Mitch volunteered to pilot the vessel on the 90 mile voyage from New Orleans to Pilottown, LA. NOBRA Pilots Captains Chris Rieder, Ted Davidson, Pat Daniels along with BAR Pilot apprentices Jason Mott and Henry Peterson, and Tow Boat Captain Pate McGuire also piloted the Bounty.

As Mitch described it, “it was quite an adventure, as the piloting takes place completely outside on the deck of the vessel, with no protection from the elements. The vessel’s speed was less than 10 miles per hour and with the headwind they encountered, sometimes slowed to 6.5 m.p.h. To be given the opportunity to navigate such an historic replica on the Mississippi creates a memory not soon to be forgotten.”

The HMS BOUNTY was open for touring at the Baton Rouge City Dock, adjacent to the USS KIDD Veterans Memorial, between November 24 and December 7.

Many visited the ship to see what life was like for sailors in the 18th century and learn why Fletcher Christian led a mutiny against his captain, William Bligh. The British Admiralty purchased a coal carrying merchant ship operating on the coast of England, named Bethia, renamed her Bounty, and re-commissioned her in 1787 for a special mission. Bounty was to sail halfway around the world to the tiny island of Tahiti, collecting sapling breadfruit trees and transport them to the West Indies. Owners of the British plantations there needed a cheap source of food for the workers.

The replica of the Bounty was built in 1960 for MGM studios’ Mutiny on the Bounty with Marlon Brando. Since then, the new Bounty has starred in several feature-length films and dozens of TV shows and historical documentaries. The Bounty first visited Red Stick in 2002 and has since been seen in Pirates of the Caribbean 2: Dead Man’s Chest.

Photos by Crescent River Port Pilot Captain Mitch Gibbs

LRPA Supports New Heights

The LRPA sponsored the recent 2008 Garden Party at Summergrove Farm to benefit the New Heights Therapeutic Riding center. Over 450 people participated and helped raise more than $100,000.

Watson Passes the Torch

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conference. Additionally, we as pilots are enjoying the best relationship with industry in recent memory. None of this was even envisioned as recently as 10 years ago, but is now an accepted fact. We are well-positioned to put our combined influence to work to better the conduct of commerce on our rivers while ensuring a future for our groups and our fellow pilots. Capt. Lorino is faced with this challenge as your new Chairman and with the help of us all, I am sure he will be equal to it. Thank you all for making the LRPA what it is today.

– Bud Watson