



# THE SOCIETY OF MASTER MARINERS SOUTH AFRICA

## CAPE TOWN BRANCH

P.O. BOX 1956, CAPE TOWN 8000, SOUTH AFRICA

Quarterly newsletter from the Branch Master - October 2010

Dear fellow members.

Thank you for the many positive comments received in response to my first newsletter in June this year. It certainly gave me encouragement that many of our members are committed to the work of the Society and that they want to contribute to this work.

Your Branch committee and some members have met regularly on the first Tuesday of each month to ensure the day-to-day work of the Society continues. This monthly routine can be a bit tedious at times but it has to be done and I am particularly grateful to those few loyal members who regularly attend these meetings in support of your committee.

We try to keep meetings short and to the point (with a target of a maximum 1 hour meeting). Apart from there always being something of value to learn from those attending, there is always an opportunity to have a few drinks and snacks before and after the meeting where we are able catch up on old friends and “off the record” gossip about our industry.

The main event since my June newsletter was our annual Congress held on the 27<sup>th</sup> August at the Lawhill Maritime Centre in Simon’s Town. I was particularly pleased to have 10 Cape Town members take time out of their busy week to join me as the Cape Town delegation to Congress.

This Congress was a bit of a watershed because after nearly 20 years based in Durban, Congress decided to return the Executive Committee to Cape Town with immediate effect. As many of you know, Durban Branch has been dysfunctional for some time now and this has impacted negatively on the Durban based Exco. The feeling of Congress was that the only way to save the Society from a terminal decline was for Cape Town to take over Exco immediately.

Making the decision to take it over was the easy part! The difficult part is to find members who are prepared to commit themselves to positions on the Executive and Branch Committees. Your current Branch Master (myself), Deputy Master & Secretary (Colin Flockhart) and Treasurer (Brian Greenwood) all volunteered to take on the similar Exco positions of Vice President, Honorary General Secretary and Honorary Treasurer as well as their Branch roles. Given our President Graham Mannal was elected for a 2-year term at the 2009 Congress he will stay on as President for another year. Of these four office bearers, all are based in Cape Town except for our President who lives in Durban. The practicalities of this arrangement are such that the Vice

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President and our Cape Town-based committee will run the day-to-day activities of the Society and will consult electronically with the President as required.

Needless to say, we are anxious to find at least two Full Members who would be prepared to offer their services as Secretary or Treasurer of either the Branch or Executive Committees. The work is not onerous and with e-mail and electronic banking most business can be done quickly and from your home or office between monthly committee meetings. **Please give this appeal your serious consideration and contact me on 083 627 1684 if you are prepared to help.**

Our Branch submitted 3 items for Congress of which 2 were administrative. The third item however dealt with an issue we believe is critically important to many of our members - that is the "down grading" of the Master's (and Chief Engineer's) Certificates of Competency (CoC) within the National Qualifications Framework (NQF).

In 1989 the Human Sciences Research Council evaluated the Deck Officer Class 1 CoC at the level of Senior Certificate plus five years i.e. NQF Level 9 (Master's Degree level).

Since the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the NQF in 1996 our CoC's have been informally recognized at NQF Level 6 (i.e. Diploma level). This means that institutions dependent on NQF-based job grading structures (e.g. maritime college & university lecturers, SAMSA examiners) have extreme difficulty attracting suitably qualified and experienced individuals into employment given the salary scales available to the matching NQF Level 6 qualifications.

It has now become a serious concern among our members that should this situation continue and suitably qualified and experienced personnel not be attracted to these important jobs, South Africa will ultimately be placing our IMO "White List" status at risk and the international acceptance of our Certificates of Competency that goes with it.

Congress directed Exco to seek an alliance with SAIMENA (who have a common interest in this) and to jointly undertake efforts to resolve this issue. We have made formal contact with SAIMENA and are now awaiting their response in this regard.

December this year is our Society's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. We are arranging a special feature in the November issue of SA Shipping News and I appeal for your companies to support our feature with associated advertising. I look forward to your support! For more details please contact me at [rob@africanmaritime.co.za](mailto:rob@africanmaritime.co.za)

#### General notices and dates to diaries:

Annual Merchant Navy Memorial Service on 10 November 2010 at 1100 at the Merchant Navy Memorial in the Cape Town Harbour. The Memorial is situated at the end of the South Arm of Cape Town Docks (situated at the foot of the Port Control Tower). In the event of inclement weather the service will be switched to the chapel at the Mission to Seafarers situated diagonally opposite Table Bay Harbour Police Station / E Berth. If in doubt as to the venue please contact Colin Flockhart on 083 2503380. At the conclusion of the service refreshments and snacks will be served at the Mission to Seafarers.

Most of you will know that the immediate past President of the Society, Roy Martin, was involved in a serious car accident about a month ago. He is making a slow recovery and I'm sure you all wish him a complete recovery in time. He is currently undergoing tests at Entabeni Hospital.

Rob Whitehead – Branch Master

Colin Flockhart – Hon. Secretary