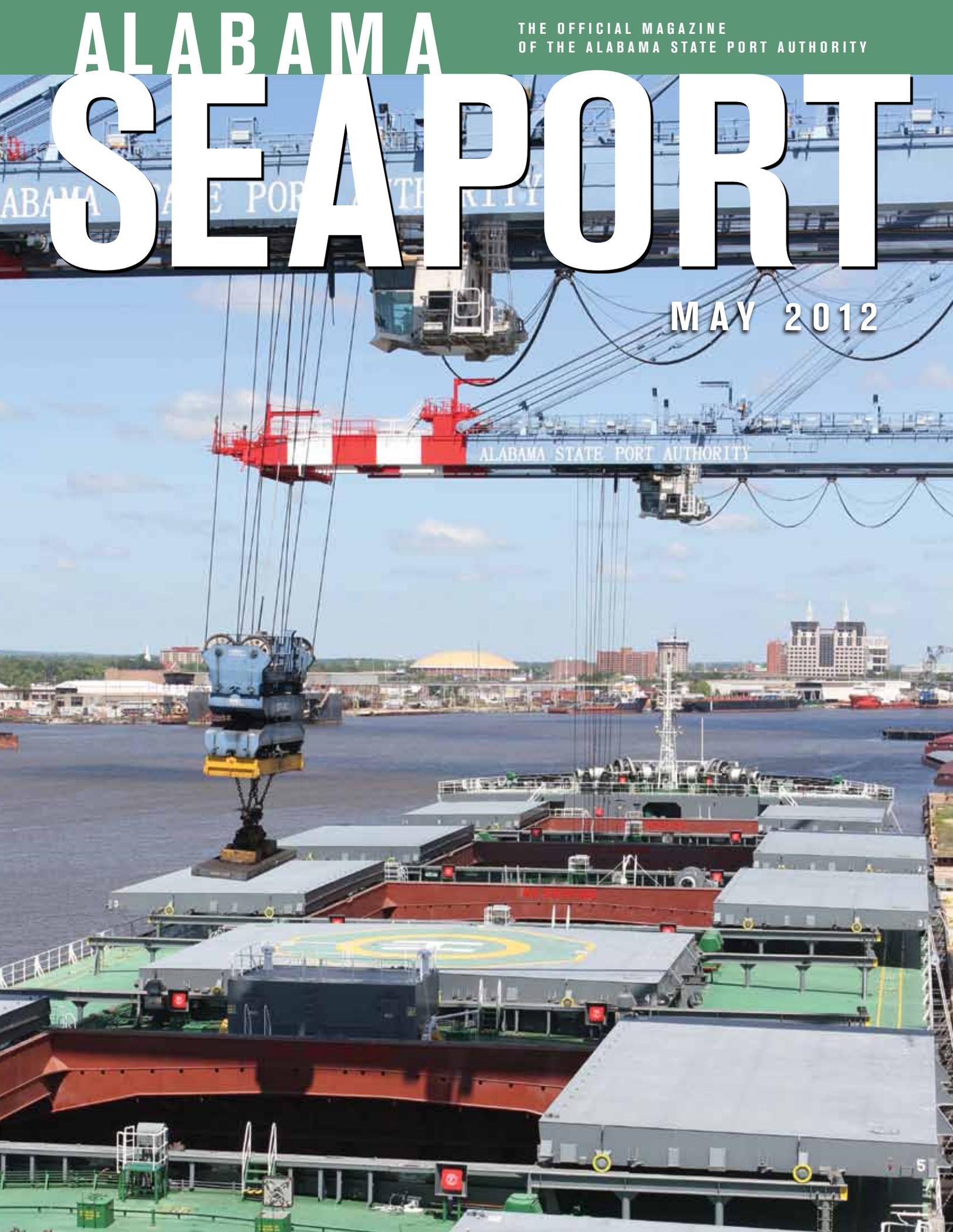


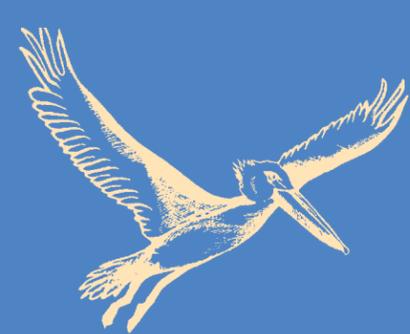
ALABAMA

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE
OF THE ALABAMA STATE PORT AUTHORITY

SEAPORT

MAY 2012





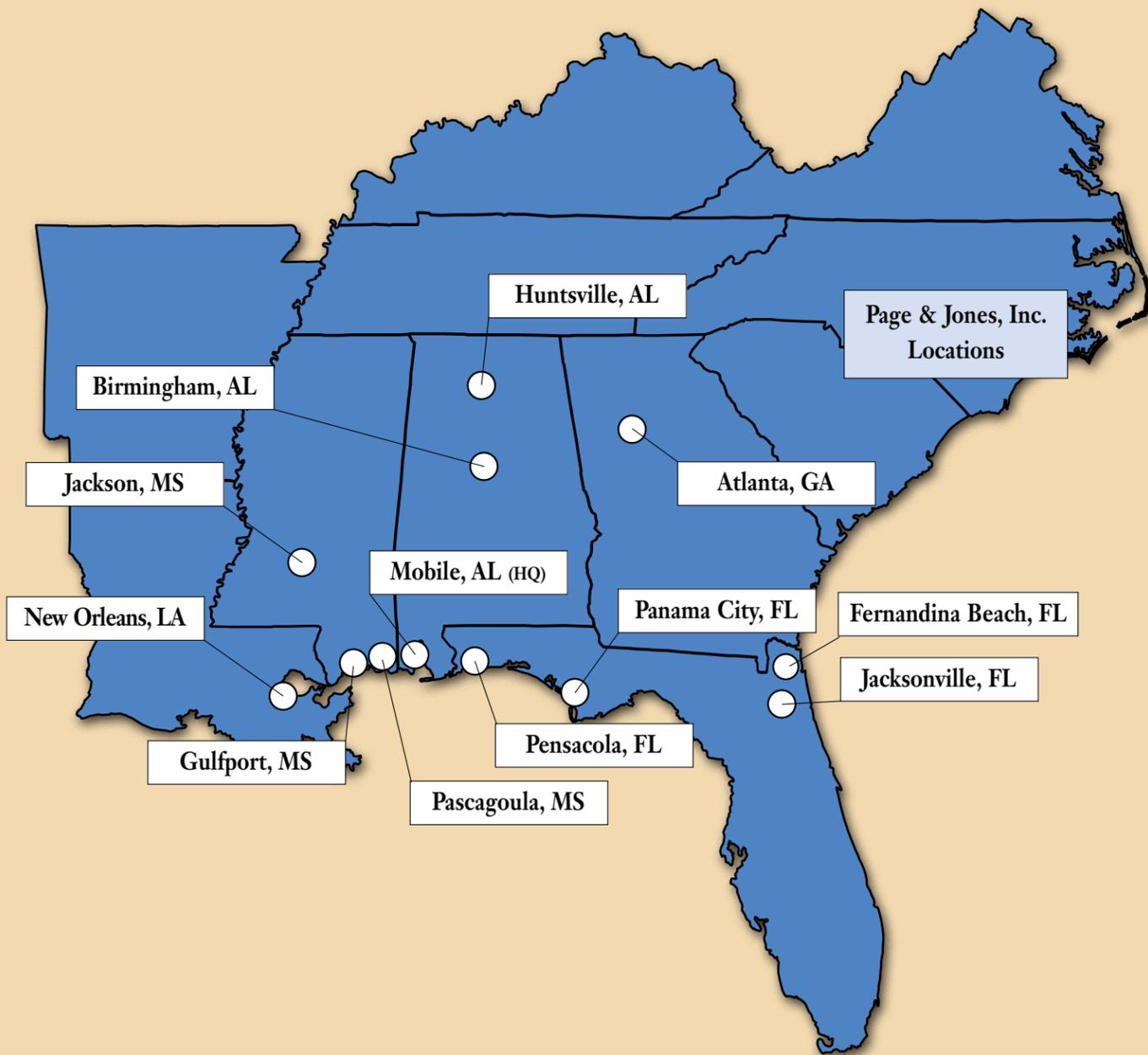
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ALABAMA SEAPORT

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On The Cover:

In April, Page & Jones acted as customs broker and vessel agent for the MV MAGSENGER 8. The ship arrived in port with a surveyed draft of 44.6 feet carrying 4,727 carbon-steel slabs weighing in at 102,488 MT. Built in 2012, and currently sailing on its maiden voyage, the MV MAGSENGER 8 is a 115,455 DWT vessel, measuring 834 feet in LOA and has a beam of 142 feet. This shipment set another record for the Pinto Steel Terminal.



10



12

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Contents

Page & Jones Celebrates 120 Years of Shipping Logistics	4
Page & Jones 120th Anniversary Photos.....	8
China Shipping Adds New Service in Mobile.....	10
Wildlife Finds New Home on Port Property.....	12
Seabulk Towing Inc. Annual Crawfish Boil Photos.....	16
Port Calls: Alabama Bass Trail Aims to Reel in Anglers From Around the Nation	19
WHO WORKS THE RIVERS™ CAREER DAY: Maritime Community Teams Up to Educate Area Students	22
Currents	24
Of Men & Ships: The Tanker War	27

Departments

Arrivals/Sailings.....	32
Postcards from the Past	35
Port of Mobile Directory.....	36
Steamship Agencies & Lines.....	38



19



27

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Page & Jones Celebrates 120 Years of Shipping Logistics

For 120 years, Page & Jones has provided shipping logistics to domestic and international clients, amid industry and technology changes, always with an eye to the future for the next industry trend. Today, the family-owned, Mobile-based company is thriving and continues to make plans for the future. Page & Jones handles air, ocean and surface transportation with services that include customs brokerage, export freight forwarding, ship agency, duty drawback services, marine insurance, project and heavy lift cargo, ship chartering, bonding, and NVOCC (non-vessel operating common carrier).

The majority of the company's time is spent on customs brokerage, followed by freight forwarding and ship agency. Some inland branches, such as Atlanta, Birmingham, Huntsville and Jackson, Miss., focus solely on customs clearance, while the port branches do a mix of all three areas, said Page & Jones President and CEO Mike Lee. The company's client base is diverse, ranging from antique furniture to alcoholic beverages to apparel, but its largest customers are in the automotive, steel, frozen poultry and refrigerated food industries. "That's been one of our strengths in growing: We've never concentrated on one industry," he said. "We've got enough variety we didn't feel we'd grow as much as we would have if we specialized."



Rufus Lee, first employed in 1949, led Page & Jones as president from 1972-1994 and served as Chairman until his death in 2005.



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Page & Jones acted as both ship agent and customs broker for the M/V MAGSENGER 8 as it unloads more than 100,000 tons of steel arriving to the Pinto Island Steel Terminal from Brazil.

Page & Jones has seen a number of changes over the years. In the 1970s, containerization moved primarily to the East and West coasts, with containers traveling to final inland destinations by truck or rail. "Many Far East and European Shipping lines left Mobile and the Gulf for ports like Los Angeles and Oakland to the west, and Charleston, Savannah, Baltimore and New York in the east," said Lee. To capitalize on this momentum, Page & Jones expanded its custom brokerage services to include inland cities, serving as customs clearing points for those land-bridged cargoes in containers. After seeing initial success in Birmingham, Ala., the company expanded to Huntsville, Ala., Atlanta and Jackson, Miss. At the same time, Page & Jones expanded its brokerage and ship agency operations to New Orleans; Gulfport and Pascagoula, Miss.; and Pensacola, Panama City, Jacksonville and Fernandina Beach, Fla.

In the 1980s, U.S. Customs and other government agencies automated their procedures, leaving the shipping industry to follow the new computerized process or be left behind. "As one of the customs commissioners during that time said to the industry in a well-known speech, 'automate or perish,'" said Lee. But this, too, turned into a silver lining for Page & Jones as the changes allowed customs brokers to qualify for

a national entry processing license, allowing remote filing. The company could handle customs clearance for its clients at any U.S. port or airport, even without a physical location in that city.

Additional technology changes followed as customs moved from a very paper-heavy industry, with multi-carbon forms requiring original signatures, to a 'paperless' environment where paperwork can be done online and companies have 24-hour access to agencies including U.S. Customs and Border Protection and the U.S. Coast Guard. "It's location neutral," Lee explained. "They don't care if you're in Mobile, Ala., or San Francisco. Once you're set up online, you can handle shipments all over the United States."

While technology didn't slow the company's actual growth, it did slow its expansion into other cities where business could be handled from a remote location. "It's all technology-driven," Lee said. "It changes the way we evaluate locations." As such, no immediate expansions are planned, but the company is eyeing neutral locations as it broadens its regional coverage. Cities like Savannah, Charleston and Houston, as well as cities on the West Coast for Far East land bridge cargo are attractive to Page & Jones. "There are a lot of opportunities

for that kind of expansion in our business," said Lee. The Mobile, Ala., location is growing, which Lee calls a good sign given recent economic conditions. Steady growth over the last few years recently added several more employees. Lee attributes this to the growth of the Port of Mobile with the introduction of APM Terminals-Mobile and the new Pinto Island steel terminal.

Over the years, the greatest change Lee observed has been closer to home: the company's diversification since its beginnings as a ship agency. "We started out specializing in that area, then growing into other areas and expanding our product line," he said. "We're doing some of the same services we offered in 1892, but a lot more services—a lot of value-added services. We have a lot more product range than in those early days."

Page & Jones, as well as the entire Gulf Coast region, is positioning itself for future growth with the expansion of the Panama Canal. "Mobile is a real strong candidate for having a big part of that, and Page & Jones is strategically located to see some growth in all its locations," Lee said. "It will help a lot of Gulf ports, some more than others." Specifically, he said, those ports investing in capabilities, facilities and harbor depth will likely see more activity. "Mobile is well positioned for that," he said. "We think the future is very bright in this area for the Port of Mobile and what we do. We will continue to build on our over 120 years of service to the international community."

The company, which began in Mobile, has chosen to stay in the Port City. Lee said the company has been in other big cities over the years to meet clients' needs. These cities include Houston, Miami and New York. "It all comes back to the fact we started here," he explained. Of the company's 60 employees, more than half work out of the Mobile office, which is also where the administration, banking and IT for the company are handled. "It's a good location for us," he said. "We're very happy to be in Mobile."

Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) Director and CEO James K. Lyons is thrilled that Page & Jones continues to call Mobile home. "Page & Jones has been a stalwart in our maritime community, providing shippers and port users with exemplary service. The longevity of our port and its growth is greatly attributed to companies like Page & Jones, and more importantly, to the people that work there. We congratulate Mike and his team on their 120th anniversary."

The company has strong ties to the Mobile community, which is no surprise after 120 years. "We've very much benefited, and we've been a good corporate neighbor," Lee said. "The success we've been able to generate in this area is a

cooperative effort." Page & Jones is a member of the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce, as well as other international trade organizations and economic development groups, and organizations like the Alabama World Trade Association, the Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, the North Alabama International Trade Association, the Japan-America Society and the AlabamaGermany Partnership, in an effort to build international ties with industries moving into the Port City. Page & Jones has worked with the Chamber and the Port on projects of an international scope and with the Alabama Department of Commerce on state projects. "Our relationships with them are very valuable to us," said Lee. "We feel like the time and effort we put into helping these agencies really pays off for us." In fact, the company belongs to the chambers of commerce and economic development organizations in most of the cities where it has an office.

What kept Page & Jones afloat through the years was its diversity, its quick response to industry changes and its people. "This is a people business, and we've got a good track record," Lee said. "All we are is a service industry, and the service industry revolves around people. The success of our services is personnel. People who work here have a long average tenure; some have been here most of their lives. That's a real key to our success: long-term staff, experienced with what they do, competitive with anybody in the world. We think we compete very strongly. Quality, experienced personnel. It's hard to match."

The company also boasts a strong management team readily available to its customers. As the shipping industry becomes increasingly automated, personal contact counts. "It all revolves around the people who work here," Lee said. "Nothing substitutes getting a real live person with experience and the authority to do whatever he needs to do. That sets us apart from the competition." Over the years, Page & Jones has met clients' requests ranging from the usual to the extraordinary, including 500 gallons of milk on Christmas Day and the supplies to make a giant litter box for a seeing eye dog for a cruise ship. "It's different every day," said Lee, who started working for the company during high school and college, experiencing the different departments. He then joined the company full-time in 1970, becoming president and CEO in 1994.

In its earliest days, Page & Jones, founded by John Jones and Arthur Page in 1892, operated as ship agents handling banana, cotton and lumber ships at the Port of Mobile. During World War I, the company also operated vessels for the War Shipping Board. The company struggled in its early days and after the Great Depression, shrinking down to only a handful of employees. When John Jones, the surviving partner, died after World War II, his nephew Frank

Jones and two brothers, James and Rufus Lee, who were all Page & Jones employees, purchased the company from Jones' estate. The Lee brothers hired their father, James Lee Sr., who was working as a union checker for a stevedoring company on the docks, to head up the dock operations. The new leadership began a slow recovery and by the late 1950s and early 1960s, the company was growing and expanded into the import customs brokerage business. As Mobile grew, so did Page & Jones, handling products such as steel, apparel and grain.

Frank Jones retired in 1970, and James Lee Jr. passed away two years later. Rufus Lee remained active as the head of the company until his death in 2005. He served as president from 1972 to 1994 and chairman of the board from 1994 to 2005. Rufus Lee's son, Mike, came to work for the company as well, and a fourth generation of the family now works at Page & Jones: Mike Lee's son, Michael, and son-in-law, Bill Kraus.

"Not many companies in our industry are still family-owned. They're largely gobbled up by multinational, publicly traded companies," said Lee. Page & Jones' long and storied history of success continues, even as they compete against the large conglomerates. This fact is something that the maritime community in Mobile can certainly be proud to say.



Page & Jones President Mike Lee accepts the Governor's Trade Excellence Award on behalf of the company in 2007 from former Governor Bob Riley.

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China Shipping Adds New Service in Mobile

China Shipping Container Line, a subsidiary of China Shipping Group, has started a weekly service into the Port of Mobile. The service, which China Shipping has named their AAE2, includes stops in Houston, Miami and Jacksonville as well as Xiamen, Hong Kong, Chiwan, Shanghai and Pusan. The service calls in Mobile on Fridays.

A spokesperson for China Shipping says the expansion to Mobile marks a move back into the Gulf of Mexico for the company, and a call in Mobile will provide an alternate route for current customers using east and west coast services as well as open up the possibility of adding new customers.

Representatives of China Shipping toured the Port facilities in April 2012 and were happy to see how the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) has been looking to the future. The spokesperson said the company is excited about the service and that executives were impressed by how well the Port is prepared to handle growth.

ASPA Vice President for Trade and Development Mark Sheppard says welcoming the new line is no surprise. "It's a nice addition to the Port and is a sign of our continued growth," he said. The Panama Canal is currently undergoing expansions and upgrades to handle larger container ships known as post-panamax vessels. The Port has been preparing for these huge ships by expanding and improving its facilities, including extensive upgrades at the APM Terminals-Mobile container terminal.

Although China Shipping did not decide to add Mobile because of the Panama Canal expansion, Sheppard says the work done to improve the Port is paying off in overall business development. "Shipping lines are realizing our infrastructure to handle larger ships is already in place. Right now, we can handle the ships set to come through the canal post expansion," he said.

Sheppard says adding China Shipping gives Port customers more container space and more options for logistics and pricing. According to the company, China Shipping offers competitive shipping times to and from China. Sheppard says he expects to see China Shipping expand more in the Gulf in the next couple years.

For additional information on this new service, China Shipping can be reached at its USA corporate headquarters in Montvale, New Jersey, at 201-505-6900.



Representatives from China Shipping toured the Port in April. From L-R: Todd Jones, ASPA; Li Weng, director, intermodal services, China Shipping; Ralph Mattiello, director, marine operations, China Shipping; Zhang Bing, Chairman, China Shipping North America; Chen Xiaoxiong, vice president, China Shipping; Paul Nazzaro, vice president, national customer services, China Shipping; Mark Sheppard, ASPA



The CSCL AMERICA loaded with containers. China Shipping Container Line announces a new weekly service to the Port of Mobile.



The CSCL DALIAN, one of China Shipping Container Line's container ships, underway with a full load of cargo.



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The Alabama State Port Authority is moving "full speed ahead," thinking towards the future and the challenges ports face. Embark on this voyage with us at the 2012 AAPA Convention and Expo, presented by the Alabama State Port Authority. See you in October!



Wildlife Finds New Home on Port Property



Both father and mother black-bellied whistling ducks share in the duck-raising duties. This family, spotted by Bill Summerour on Blakely Island, inspired Summerour to spearhead a nesting site project for the species.

The Port of Mobile is known for its hospitality to international visitors, but this story takes that concept to a whole new level. The Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA), the Alabama Ornithological Society and an Eagle Scout candidate wanted one group of visitors to feel right at home on Port property, literally. They even built them homes. The visitors? Black-bellied whistling ducks.

In July 2010, Bill Summerour saw a pair of these ducks with a brood of chicks on a birding trail near the mud lakes disposal area on Blakely Island owned by the Port Authority. These ducks have been spotted in the region before, but the fact that they nested and produced a family was significant. "What brought this into focus for me was that pair with their brood. There was an opportunity here to provide them with nesting sites. I thought it would be good to give them a little help," said Summerour.



The black-bellied whistling duck, described as a "striking bird," has a pink beak and feet. Bill Summerour photographed this duck with a brood of ducklings near the mud lakes on Blakely Island.



Roger Clay, Alabama Department of Conservation; Joseph Leathers, Eagle Scout candidate; and Wayne Slaughter, ASPA environmental technician, put the boxes near the mud lakes, a little off the trail. Bird watchers should not leave the trail to go near the boxes, but can see them from the trail.

"The Port has had a bird watching area on Blakely Island for 10 years as part of our community development. We have been using it to build up habitat again," explained Megan Gable, an intern in the Environmental Program Management department at the ASPA.

Summerour is a well-known Alabama ornithologist. He spent 20 years teaching biology and ornithology at Jacksonville State University. He continues to do research and support bird watching and conservation efforts throughout the region despite being retired. He knew this duck was a rare bird for Alabama. It usually calls the Rio Grande Valley and coastal Mexico home. It seems the species is starting to expand its territory little by little into Louisiana, Texas and Alabama.

"It is an interesting duck in itself and beautiful. It is nice to add to the species we see here," Summerour said. "Birders like it because it is a rarity," he added.

Roger Clay of the Alabama Department of Conservation describes it as "... Not your typical duck. It is quite striking.

It looks a little like a cross between a goose and a duck. It's long-legged and has a long neck," he added. The duck's legs and beak are pink, and it emits a wheezy whistling sound.

Summerour came up with a plan to help the new families settle on the bird trail. He contacted ASPA's environmental management department to ask about adding nesting sites. Black-bellied whistling ducks nest in cavities such as hollow trees and will take to specially designed boxes very well, according to Summerour.

Bob Harris, ASPA's vice president of Environmental Program Management, worked with Summerour to get all the needed permits and approvals. Summerour also got in touch with the Alabama Department of Conservation to get support for the project. Clay says it is not unusual for his department to help in projects such as this one, offering technical expertise.

"By coincidence someone I know knew some [Boy] Scouts, and we thought this would be a good opportunity for a project for them," said Summerour. Enter Joseph Leathers



Joseph Leathers and a fellow Boy Scout work on the duck boxes in Leathers' grandfather's workshop. Leathers built the boxes as part of his Eagle Scout project.

and his father, Danny. The younger Leathers is trying to become an Eagle Scout, the highest rank in the Boy Scouts of America. He admits this project was more than he expected. "I needed a project and I thought this would be easy, but it wasn't," said Leathers. He added that, as an avid outdoorsman, he was glad to find a project related to helping conservation efforts.

Summerour designed the houses and drew up plans. Each is made of cypress, about 3' tall and 1' wide with a slanted roof, a hole on the front for the ducks to use and a hinged-panel on the side. The panels will allow ornithologists to check the boxes for use. The boxes are mounted on 10' poles. Each pole has a metal collar to discourage predators from climbing and reaching the box.

"My grandfather has a workshop. He does a lot of woodworking and has professional equipment. He had to teach me how to use the tools," said Leathers.

He and a couple of fellow Scouts spent a couple days building eight boxes. "He did an excellent job," praised Summerour. "It wasn't easy. They had to be made out of cypress," he added. He said he plans to sell Krispy Kreme doughnuts to repay the \$400 cost.

Clay went on behalf of the conservation department to clear the sites and install posts for the boxes. "Roger (Clay)



Each of the eight boxes is mounted on a pole. They all have holes in the front for the ducks and panels on the side scientists can use later to check the boxes.

was instrumental in getting those things up out there," said Summerour. "He did a lot of the heavy lifting."

Leathers and his father delivered and installed them. Summerour went back later to paint them so they would better blend into the scenery. He said he will continue to go back and check them for activity, but says casual birders should leave them alone.

Anyone on that trail must have a permit from the Port Authority to be on the property and must inform the Port when they are actually on the trail. The boxes are off the trail so birders should not be close enough to touch them anyway. They are placed around lakes four and six and are easily visible from the trail. Permits are available from the Port and on the Alabama Ornithological Society website, www.aosbirds.org. Each permit is good for a year. The Blakely Island trail is just one of many on Alabama's Coastal Birding Trail.

"This is a pioneer project so we don't even know if the ducks will turn up again," said Summerour. He hopes this project will help provide information about the species itself. "We don't even know for sure when their nesting season is because we don't have any data," he explained. He saw the family in July 2010, which means those ducks were probably on their eggs in June. "Hopefully they will use the boxes so we can find out," he said.

Summerour praised the Port for allowing the project. He says it is a testament to the work the environmental department is doing on behalf of conservation. "This is part of the Port Authority's effort with that and everyone comes out a winner – particularly the ducks," he said.



Joseph Leathers, Eagle Scout candidate; Roger Clay, Alabama Department of Conservation; and Danny Leathers, Joseph's father, install a "critter collar" on one of the duck boxes near the mud lakes disposal area on Blakely Island. The collars keep predators from getting duck eggs.



Joseph Leathers, Eagle Scout candidate; Bill Summerour, ornithologist; and Roger Clay, Alabama Department of Conservation, put the final touches on a nesting box for the black-bellied whistling duck.



A pair of black-bellied whistling ducks on Blakely Island. The species usually lives in Mexico but seems to be expanding its territory along the Gulf Coast.



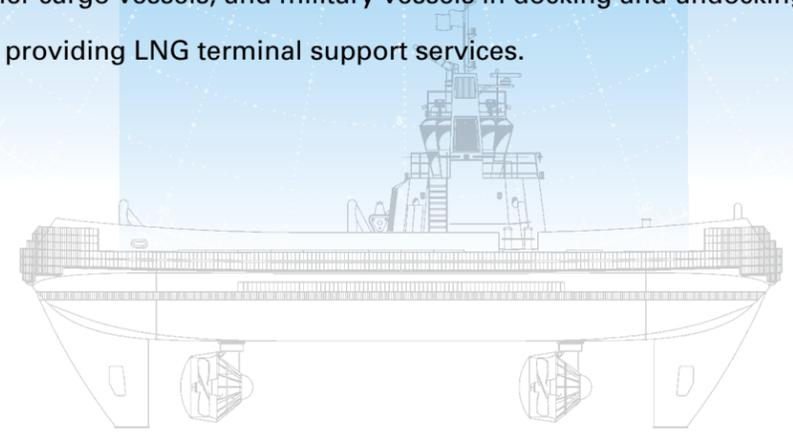
Seabulk Towing Annual Crawfish Boil Alabama Cruise Terminal • April 26, 2012

1. John Adams, University of South Alabama; Anna Ward, Alabama State Port Authority; Luis Sanchez-Navarro, Transmarine 2. Judith Adams, Alabama State Port Authority; Marx Nicholson, Alabama State Port Authority; Anna Ward, Alabama State Port Authority; Pete Dranka, Alabama State Port Authority 3. Ed Sledge, McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge LLC; Greer Radcliff, Radcliff/ Economy Marine Services; Alex Lankford, Hand Arendall LLC 4. Zemmie Murray, Richard Murray & Company; Chuck Camp, Alabama State Port Authority; Parrish Lawler, CG Railway Inc 5. John Brooks, Richard Murray & Company; Neal Collins, Bay Steel Corp 6. Neal Collins, Bay Steel Corp.; Bob Collins, Bay Steel Corp.; Brian McCarthy, McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge; Caroline McCarthy, Phelps Dunbar; Lucian Lott, Cooper Marine & Timberlands 7. Danny Barnett, Alabama State Port Authority; Bill Padgett, SeaCliff Agency LLC; David Bray, Alabama State Port Authority 8. Rob Constantine, Paul A. Boulo Inc.; Ludwig Langer, GP Cellulose; Lloyd Rich, GP Cellulose; Grethe Hoyvik, Grieg Star Shipping; John Norton, Paul A. Boulo Inc.; Al Fordham, GP Cellulose; Judith Adams, Alabama State Port Authority 9. Dorvan Turner; Johnny Phillips, Gulf Marine Chemists Inc.; Tom Littlepage, Gulf Marine Chemists Inc. 10. Bob Collins, Bay Steel Corp.; Wade Gordon; Steve Gordon, TransMontaigne; Stuart Gordon, Radcliff/Economy Marine Services; Ashley Gordon 11. Eddie Brister, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Ellen Brister; Earline Thorne; Smitty Thorne, Alabama State Port Authority

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Port Calls: Alabama Bass Trail Aims to Reel in Anglers From Around the Nation



Gov. Bentley boasts his 12-pound catch at the launch of the Alabama Bass Trail on Lake Guntersville.

From the sand bunkers of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail to the dunes of the Alabama Gulf Coastal Birding Trail, Alabama is no stranger to carving paths in the tourism industry. This March, the state kicked off the most recent and unprecedented statewide tourism campaign with the launch of the Alabama Bass Trail.

Governor Robert Bentley hoisted a 12-pound bass from Lake Guntersville at the opening ceremony of the Trail, hopefully a symbolic beginning to what could be a prosperous undertaking. The mission of the Alabama Bass Trail is to market the state as a year-round fishing destination for anglers around the nation, while also teaching youngsters the value of ethical fishing and conservationism. The Trail was founded with three ideas in mind: Promote, Preserve and Educate.

Promoting Alabama Bass Fishing

The idea of a large, angler-oriented campaign originated through Don Logan, co-owner of the Bass Anglers

Sportsman Society (BASS), also known as Bassmaster. The organization, which was first initiated in Montgomery, established the original rules for competitive bass fishing and fostered ideals of ethical angling. After a series of exchanges in ownership, the Bassmaster brand came back to its Alabama roots and settled in Birmingham. As a vehicle for the authority on bass fishing, the organization is highly influential with an extensive reach. When the Trail idea was brought forth, it didn't take long for it to come to fruition, thanks to a cooperative effort between the office of Governor Robert Bentley, the Alabama Tourism Department, the Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association, and the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources.

After all, the resources were already present. The state is full of great fisheries and has produced some of the best sport fishermen in the nation. In the past two years, Alabama has boasted more anglers than any other state to compete in the Bassmaster Classic, the biggest fishing tournament in the United States. This year, Chris Lane of Guntersville,

Seabulk Towing Annual Crawfish Boil (continued) Alabama Cruise Terminal • April 26, 2012

12 (L to R) Seated—Mary Hawkins, Alabama State Port Authority; Charlotte Sykes, Alabama State Port Authority; Genesis Pate, Alabama State Port Authority. Pictured (L to R) Standing—Wayne Matchett, Cooper/T. Smith; Gwen Morgan-Hill, Alabama State Port Authority; Judith Adams, Alabama State Port Authority; Charlie Pate 13. Jaime Betzeze, Hand Arendall LLC; Hodge Alves, Hand Arendall LLC; Norman Stockman, Hand Arendall LLC 14. Dorvan Turner; Paul Jones, Oil Recovery Company Inc. 15. Steve Broadus, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Mickey Cook, C&G Boat Works Inc.; Neal Powell, ABS; George Rayner, Seabulk Towing Inc. 16. Larry Henriksen; Lisa Kavanagh, University of South Alabama; Michelle Brown, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Linda Littlepage; Tom Littlepage, Gulf Marine Chemists Inc. 17. Webb Winsor, Inchcape Shipping Services; Tim Ard; Michelle Brown, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Larry Henriksen 18. Eddie Brister, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Charlie Earle, Grieg Star Shipping; George Manders, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Rob Constantine, Paul A. Boulo Inc. 19. George Manders, Seabulk Towing Inc.; Ryan Threadgill; Webb Winsor, Inchcape Shipping Services; Carl Black, Ross Maritime Inc. 20. Kathy Uzzelle; Hamp Uzzelle, Hand Arendall LLC 21. Mark Coco, MAH Electrical; Danette Richards; Kenny Hirsch, CSA Stevedoring; Polly Wilkins, Alabama State Port Authority; Tara Carrera, CSA Stevedoring; Allan Hill, Alabama State Port Authority



A clean-up crew consisting of volunteers with the Alabama Student Bass Fishing Association works to remove trash from a lakeshore.

Ala., won first place, while state residents also claimed the second and third winning spots in the tournament. Alabama Bass Trail Program Director Kay Donaldson claims that the reason Alabama anglers are so successful in the tournament is in part because they were “raised fishing on these lakes, which makes them highly competitive at a national level.”

The challenge in building the campaign, therefore, was not in finding resources, but in selecting the best of the ones provided. Tourism and conservation officials with the help of BASS developed the selection criteria and quickly identified the 11 lakes that make up the Alabama Bass Trail. Some fisheries did not qualify because their neighboring cities did not supply the tourism backbone to support the visiting anglers. The communities around the Bass Trail lakes provide healthy tourism industries, including sufficient boat launches and baiting shops as well as adequate lodging and restaurants. Other factors, such as reputation, catch rates and geographic location, also went into consideration when choosing the special 11.

Preserving Alabama’s Lakes and Educating its Anglers

The Alabama Bass Trail has partnered with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and the Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association (ASABFA) to



Bill Penney of Bill Penney Toyota donated a truck with graphics to promote the Alabama Bass Trail.

educate young men and women about protecting and enhancing Alabama’s natural resources. Bass fishing is the fastest growing non-traditional sport in the United States among high school students. As Donaldson puts it, “Not every kid is built to be a football player... with this partnership these kids can use their talents to represent their school and the association.” The Trail, in cooperation with Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and local power companies, will host conservation projects for the young anglers, which include building fish habitats in lakes which need it, shore cleaning projects, hydro-feeding to protect shores from erosion, and many other assignments. Currently, there are over 1,100 students from grades seven to 12 in the



Two Alabama Student Angler Bass Fishing Association members fish on Lake Guntersville.

ASABFA, separated into chapter clubs. After so many hours of volunteer work, each club is awarded cash grants to be used within their chapter.

Tourism Components

The Trail begins geographically at the Tennessee River in the northeast corner of the state, at Lake Guntersville (Alabama’s largest) and courses its way south to the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta. Along the way, from north to south, anglers may choose to fish at Wheeler Lake, Pickwick Lake, Lewis Smith Lake, Neely Henry Lake, Logan Martin Lake, Lay Lake, Lake Jordan, Alabama River and Lake Eufaula. The lakes do not link to one another, so some traveling may be required if anglers want to visit more than one body of water in a weekend. “We don’t anticipate people fishing the whole trail at once,” said Donaldson. However, it is easy to fish at least three in a weekend. The Alabama Bass Trail website tallies up the miles between lakes so users can calculate their trip for gas mileage, time restraints and the budgets. There is even a link to find and book hotels for the overnight traveler.

The Trail’s website, www.alabamabasstrail.org, is a navigational gem for anglers looking to fish on the Alabama waterways. The website provides an overall map of the Trail, but its most impressive point is the detailed information given

for each individual lake. With a simple click, an angler can find anything from fishing hot spots to the immediate weather forecast. Other helpful details include locations of marinas, bait and tackle shops, boat launches, water temperature, and even tips from the fishing pros on how and where to catch the largest fish.

Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association

The Alabama Mountain Lakes Tourist Association was formed in 1964 to develop North Alabama’s travel industry and market the region to the traveling public. Today, the Association serves 16 counties with an ever-expanding membership base representing progressive travel-regulated businesses and associations as well as various levels of government.

Freshwater angling brings the state \$700 million annually and provides about 15,000 jobs, from waterway law enforcement officers to biologists. The tourism industry provides about 127,000 jobs. By combining these components, Gov. Bentley predicts that the Alabama Bass Trail will be a huge success in bringing additional revenue to the state, much like the success of the Robert Trent Jones Golf Trail, which will see its 10 millionth visitor this year.

WHO WORKS THE RIVERSSM CAREER DAY: Maritime Community Teams Up to Educate Area Students



On a Tuesday in early April, students from two high schools in Mobile, Ala., came together with several companies to learn about the vast career opportunities that await them in the maritime industry. Who Works the RiversSM career day sought to answer questions such as, "Is this some place that I could work someday?" and "What kinds of jobs are on the waterways?" More than ever before, companies that operate in and around Alabama waterways are in need of quality workers.

"The Port of Mobile is one of the largest ports in the United States, and though job opportunities are on the rise, it's hard to find good workers," said Angus Cooper III, of Cooper Marine & Timberlands Corp., who was instrumental in getting the program to Alabama.

Originally created by AEP River Operations, the RiverWorks Discovery (RWD) program is a national outreach effort of the National Rivers Hall of Fame intended to educate school children and their families about the commerce, culture and conservation of America's rivers. Since its inception, RWD has educated more than 400,000 children and families with free educational materials and presentations to the public via festivals, conferences, seminars, school presentations and hands-on workshops.

According to Cooper, Tim Parker of Parker Towing brought a similar program to Tuscaloosa, Ala., in 2010. When Cooper learned of this, he wanted to bring a program to Mobile to educate the local community about Alabama's waterways. The program kicked off last year by presenting to fourth grade students at 11 elementary schools from Mobile, Washington, Baldwin and Escambia counties. The success of this endeavor led Cooper to pursue opportunities to "do something bigger" and involve area high schools students. From there, the Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) teamed up to help get things rolling.

The RWD Who Works the Rivers program began in Pittsburgh, Pa., as a career-awareness program for high school students. The program was based on curriculum developed by NEED (National Energy Education and Development Project) and funded by RWD co-sponsors Ingram Barge Co. and Crouse Corporation.



Representatives from the Coast Guard speak with students about various opportunities available to them upon joining the Coast Guard.



Employees from the Alabama State Port Authority take time to speak with students in attendance at the 2012 Who Works the Rivers Career Day. The Alabama State Port Authority is one of the most important economic engines for the state of Alabama.

The career fair portion of the program involved members of the Waterways Association of Pittsburgh who came to set up informational tables for the students to visit and find out about career opportunities available at each of the member companies. The event was held aboard the GATEWAY CLIPPER FLEET, which was moving in and around Pittsburgh's waterways. It was a tremendous success.

"The public can't support what they don't understand," said Errin Howard, program manager for RWD. "This program allows us to educate the public about the commodities that are transported on the rivers and how they affect our everyday lives."

In November 2011, Howard met with AEP President Keith Darling to update him on the continued success and expansion of the RWD program. Darling requested that Howard and her team try to expand the program's offerings and replicate it around the country. Mobile, Ala., was the second city to hold a pilot program. Upon receiving the green light for financial backing, Mobile County Soil and Water Conservation's April Griffin, the local RWD educator, and Howard began planning.

Cooper Marine & Timberlands Corp. was the lead financial sponsor, funding the curriculum and providing educational materials for students. They also presented one of the sessions. The ASPA did several things to make sure that this event happened as well, including providing security at the event, transportation for students, and more.

Other members that ended up being part of the planning committee included representatives from AIDT, Gulf Quest and Warrior-Tombigbee Waterways Association. The Alabama Cruise Terminal allowed free access to its terminal for the career fair portion of the program. Several companies participated in the career fair, including the U.S. Coast Guard, Norton Lilly International, U.S. Customs and Border Patrol, Parker Towing Co., U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Richardson Stevedoring and Logistics Inc., Cooper/T. Smith, AEP River Operations, Mobile Co. Soil and Water Conservation, Warrior-Tombigbee Waterway Association, GulfQuest National Maritime Museum, Alabama Cruise Terminal, and ASPA.

"When we got to the career fair portion at the end of the day, the students were definitely engaged," said Griffin. "Many said that they didn't realize how many career options there were available to them in the maritime industry, and they asked lots of questions."

Cooper said they have tried several similar projects in the past, but this was the first time that the whole maritime industry seemed to get excited about a new program. He believes that the ongoing support of industry leaders will propel the program on to be helpful for the community and future generations to come.

"We think this is a great avenue to educate students on the Port and job opportunities," said Cooper. "We have an aging workforce, and this event was a great opportunity for students to learn how to make a good living after graduation."

RWD is a coordinated effort that brings together the river industry, community leaders, museums, nature centers, educators and the general public to recognize the important role America's rivers have played throughout history and will continue to play in the nation's future. Who Works the Rivers is a great example of all of these entities working together for a common goal. Paducah, Ky., just held a pilot version of the program on April 24. Cincinnati, Ohio, and New Orleans, La., will both host Who Works the Rivers later this fall.

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ASPA Director and CEO Leads Tour of Port of Mobile for State-Wide Economic and Business Development Leadership

Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) Director and CEO James K. Lyons recently met with and toured the seaport with statewide economic and business development leadership. Representatives from the Alabama Department of Commerce, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, the Birmingham Business Alliance, Alabama Power, PowerSouth, the Mobile Chamber of Commerce, the Huntsville/Madison Chamber of Commerce, Alabama Communities of Excellence, Alabama Gas Corp., and the Alabama Industrial Development Association took part in a two-day briefing on international trade that included presentations from Mike Lee, president of Page & Jones, and Hilda Lockhart, director of International Trade for the Alabama Department of Commerce.

While in Mobile, the group also met with Brian Harold, director of APM Terminals-Mobile, and received a tour of the seaport's state-of-the-art container terminal that opened for business in 2008. The program, "Impact Alabama," was hosted and organized by the Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce.

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Austal Sets Keel of U.S. Navy's JHSV 3

In early May, Austal USA held a keel-laying ceremony for the third Joint High Speed Vessel (JHSV), one of nine Austal-designed 103-meter JHSVs under contract with the U.S. Navy. Austal invited Rep. Jo Bonner of Alabama to authenticate the keel. He was assisted by Jeff Cellon, who is an "A" Class welder who has been part of the Austal team since May 2010.

A traditional keel-laying ceremony marks the first significant milestone in the construction of the ship. Due to Austal's modular approach to ship manufacture, 32 of the 43 modules used to form this 103-meter aluminum catamaran design are already being assembled. For Austal, keel-laying marks the beginning of final assembly. Five modules have been moved from Austal's Module Manufacturing Facility (MMF) and erected in the final assembly bay in their pre-launch position. The rest will follow over the coming months.

"Fifty-three years ago, when there were 860 ships in the fleet – a relatively small combatant – the USS EVERSOLE, was at the right place at the right time, rescuing 14 fishermen from contested dangerous waters," said Joe Rella, president and chief operating officer of Austal USA. "The JHSV, as the future utilitarian workhorse of the support fleet, can serve a similar role and help the U.S. Navy be where it needs to be to prevent crises and to support the nation's other national security priorities."



Rep. Jo Bonner authenticates the keel as "A" Class welder Jeff Cellon completes the weld. Cellon has been a member of the Austal team since May of 2010.

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Austal USA Joint High Speed Vessel USNS SPEARHEAD (JHSV 1) Completes Builder's Sea Trials

Joint High Speed Vessel USNS SPEARHEAD (JHSV 1), the innovative high-speed catamaran transport ship under construction by shipbuilder Austal USA in Mobile, Ala., successfully completed Builder's Sea Trials (BST) on April 19 in the Gulf of Mexico. The trials encompassed over 50 demonstration events that enabled the shipbuilder to rigorously test the ship and all of its systems in preparation for final inspection by the Navy before delivery.

Notable achievements during the trials included a demonstration of major systems along with first-of-class standardization and maneuverability trials, reaching a top speed in excess of 35 knots.

A series of high-speed ahead and astern maneuvers in the Gulf of Mexico demonstrated the effectiveness of the ship's four steerable water jets. During the course of repeated high-speed turns, the ship demonstrated the stability and agility of the catamaran hullform, with the JHSV exhibiting virtually no heeling motions throughout the radical turns.

Upon returning from the full-power trial, Joe Rella, president and chief operating officer of Austal USA, remarked, "The successful first-run trials for this prototype vessel validate the quality and reliability of Austal's shipbuilding know-how. I have never witnessed a more problem-free BST than USNS SPEARHEAD's. The global Austal organization successfully participated in the design, procurement and production of this ship with a great outcome, all being accomplished while locally, Austal USA continues to hire new workers and expand our facilities. This is a telltale sign of the dedication of our team of shipbuilding professionals."

7th Special Forces Group Uses ASPA Facilities for Fall Exercise

Major Patrick Toohey recently presented a plaque to Alabama State Port Authority (ASPA) Director and CEO James K. Lyons as a thank you for allowing the 7th Special Forces Group to conduct their successful fall exercises at the ASPA facilities.



USNS SPEARHEAD (JHSV 1) exits the Port of Mobile on its way to the Gulf of Mexico for builder's sea trials.



The Tanker War



An extension of the Iran-Iraq War, the "Tanker War" saw numerous third country oil tankers and merchant vessels attacked in the Persian Gulf beginning in 1984.

With the Persian Gulf perennially in the news, it may be helpful to look back to the Tanker War of the 1980s as a reminder of how tensions and military response can escalate – and misidentification or miscalculation made in the midst of combat can have tragic consequences. As will be seen, no one nation is immune to the misfortunes of war.

The so-called "Tanker War" grew from the conflict between Iraq and Iran. Iraq had invaded Iran on Sept. 22, 1980, in part as a response to Iran's Islamic Revolution, which had begun the previous year. Fears of a Shia uprising in Iraq, coupled with a desire to displace Iran as the dominant state in the region, led Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein to launch an air and land assault on Iran.

The conflict saw terrible atrocities and ground on for nearly eight years in a war of attrition. Although attacks on tankers had occurred as early as October 1980, Iraq stepped up its attacks on Iranian oil tankers and the Iranian oil terminal at Kharg Island in early 1984 in an effort to cripple the Iranian economy. Iran struck back, attacking not only tankers transporting Iraqi oil from Kuwait, but targeting the carriers of any Persian Gulf state that supported Iraq. Oil tankers and merchant vessels were attacked by both nations, and Iraq upped the ante, declaring that any and all vessels calling at Iranian ports in the northern Persian Gulf were subject to attack.

Saddam's gambit was to force the Iranians into making a miscalculation and closing the Strait of Hormuz, something

that the Persians had threatened often. Should the Iranians attempt to close the strait, Saddam believed that the United States would enter the war and come to the aid of Iraq. Although the Iranians did not make good on their threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, the international community, including the United States, eventually and inevitably found itself drawn into the conflict in the Gulf.

Beginning in 1984, Iraq began employing aircraft to prosecute the Tanker War, initially using French Super Etendards and, eventually, French Mirages and Russian MiGs armed with French Exocet missiles. The Iranians responded by deploying aircraft, naval vessels, gunboats and myriad speedboats to attack merchant vessels transiting the Gulf. The superior Iranian Navy kept Iraqi naval assets hemmed up in port. It also sowed mines in the Persian Gulf, targeting merchant vessels trading with Iraq.

On March 27, 1984, an Iraqi Air Force jet struck the Greek freighter FILIKON L with an Exocet missile, which failed to detonate. Approximately 200 tons of crude spilled into the Gulf. Ironically, the ship was carrying not Iranian oil but oil from Kuwait. Nevertheless, Iraq had just made the first move in ratcheting up the Tanker War. Following attacks against third country vessels by both belligerents, Iraq successfully struck the Saudi tanker SAFINA AL-ARAB on April 25. The ship, carrying 340,000 tons of Iranian crude oil, burned for two days and was a total loss.

As Iraq stepped up its attacks, an Iranian Air Force jet fired on the Kuwaiti tanker UMM AL-CASBAH, transporting 77,000 tons of Kuwaiti oil on May 13. What followed was a steady escalation of attacks against ships by both sides, so that virtually no vessel transiting the Gulf was immune from attack. Iraq kept the pressure on, launching an increasing number of strikes against ships, eventually graduating from use of the Exocet missile to the Chinese Silkworm missile, which packed more punch. By 1987, both Iraq and Iran were deploying Silkworms against merchant vessels.

On Nov. 1, 1986, Kuwait formally requested protection of its shipping by foreign powers. The West's response was to dispatch warships to escort tanker convoys through the Gulf. The U.S. Navy, while continuing to patrol the Gulf, initially left convoy duty to the navies of Great Britain, France, Russia, Italy, the Netherlands and Belgium. That changed

on March 7, 1987, when U.S. President Ronald Reagan gave approval for 11 Kuwaiti tankers to be reflagged as U.S. merchant vessels. It would only take a few weeks for the U.S. Navy to be brought directly into the war – and with tragic results.

On the night of May 17, some 85 miles northeast of Bahrain and 60 miles south of the Iranian Exclusion Zone, the pilot of an Iraqi F-1 Mirage returning from the center of the Gulf detected a ship underway. The Mirage had hugged the coast of Saudi Arabia and now turned toward Iran. The jet was detected by a Saudi-based U.S. Air Force AWACS aircraft and reported to the U.S. Navy vessels in the area. The Iraqi plane was accurately identified by a joint U.S.-Saudi tracking station as a Mirage. Flying at an altitude of 3,000 feet, the Iraqi pilot used his radar to acquire and “paint” his target, a ship moving at 15 knots. The pilot altered course directly toward the ship and fired two Exocet missiles at it, believing the vessel to be a tanker.

The ship in question was actually a U.S. Navy frigate, the USS STARK (FFG-31). On board, the STARK’s crew had been unable to track the approaching aircraft until it was nearly on top of them, but they had been following the plane’s progress through reports streaming in real time from the AWACS aircraft. The ship had been at sea just over 12 hours after having been in port for eight days. There were no other surface ships within 25 nautical miles.

At approximately 9:06 p.m., the Mirage fired the first of its Exocet missiles at the STARK, but the ship’s warning systems did not detect the launch. Moments later, the STARK broadcast a radio warning to the pilot of the Mirage: “Unknown aircraft: This is the U.S. Navy warship on your zero seven two [compass bearing] at 13 miles. Request you identify yourself.” But it was too late. The Mirage pilot had fired a second missile and had quickly altered course. A second warning was broadcast, and the STARK’s Combat Information Center attempted to arm the ship’s fire control radar in an effort to lock on to any incoming missiles. A lookout on the STARK saw the first missile about five seconds before it struck the frigate. The first Exocet failed to detonate, but less than 30 seconds later, the second one ripped a 15-foot gash in the port side of the STARK and exploded in the crew’s berthing area, killing 37 sailors and injuring 11. The crew battled the resulting fire for more than two hours before a salvage tug arrived on scene to offer assistance.

A subsequent investigation found that the ship’s officers took inadequate measures to defend the ship. In addition, the crew’s damage control training and equipment were deemed inadequate. The STARK’s commanding officer, Capt. Glenn R. Brindel, was relieved of command and took



On May 17, 1987, the guided missile frigate USS STARK (FFG-31) was struck with two Exocet missiles fired by an Iraqi Air Force jet, killing 37 crewmen.

early retirement from the Navy, as did the ship’s tactical action officer. The frigate’s executive officer was “detached for cause” and received a letter of admonition. The message was clear: Although undeclared, the United States was at war in the Persian Gulf, and commanders had better be on a wartime footing.

The U.S. Navy picked up its first convoy on July 22. Two reflagged tankers were accompanied by no fewer than four U.S. warships, including the guided missile cruiser USS FOX (CG-33), the guided missile destroyer USS KIDD (DDG-993), and the guided missile frigates USS COPELAND (FFG-25) and USS CROMMELIN (FFG-37). Missing from the escorts were any countermine warfare capabilities. At 6:30 on the morning of July 24, the 414,266-ton tanker BRIDGETON struck a mine on her port side, tearing a 10- by 15-foot hole in her hull and flooding four of her 31 compartments. With no minesweeping capabilities, the escorting U.S. warships could do little more than follow the crippled tanker as she limped toward Kuwait, armed sailors now stationed in the ships’ bows and given orders to shoot any mines they saw. America belatedly responded by deploying its inchoate mine warfare assets to the Gulf and turning to European allies to provide additional assets.

On the night of Sept. 27, helicopters from the guided missile frigate USS JARRETT (FFG-33) spotted the 617-ton ship IRAN AJR sowing a field of contact mines, the same kind that had damaged the BRIDGETON. The helicopters fired on the ship until it came to a standstill. Even so, the crew continued to push mines over the side. The helicopters resumed their firing until the crew abandoned ship. The next morning, a U.S. Navy SEAL Team boarded the IRAN AJR. In addition to nine mines still on board, the SEALs discovered

intelligence that led them to a number of minefields sown by the Iranians, including mines allegedly laid in international waters. The following day, U.S. Navy EOD technicians rigged the IRAN AJR with explosives and scuttled the ship. Intelligence recovered from the vessel also indicated that Iranian forces rendezvoused at night at Middle Shoals Buoy before launching attacks. U.S. Special Forces launched an attack of their own a few nights later, sinking three Iranian boats near the buoy.

In 1986, Iran had established the naval branch of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, the military group initially tasked with providing internal security and “protecting” the revolution. The Revolutionary Guards lacked the discipline of the regular Iranian Navy and utilized speedboats in hit and run tactics, often launching their raids from deserted oil platforms. On Oct. 15, the Iranians fired a Silkworm missile, striking the U.S.-flagged tanker SEA ISLE CITY, anchored off the coast of Kuwait. A total of 17 crewmen and the American captain all were injured in the attack.

On Oct. 19, U.S. Navy assets consisting of four destroyers approached what had been determined to be two of Iran’s most active raiding stages and warned those on the oil platforms to abandon them. Once the platforms had been cleared, the ships shelled them into wreckage. SEALs boarded the primary platform and rigged it with explosives. They also searched another platform, recovering radios and other intelligence.

The U.S. Navy continued its convoy duties and went on to provide safe transit for a total of 252 ships through the end of the Tanker War. In addition, the Navy would discover and disable a total of 176 mines of Russian and Iranian design, 87 of which were floating mines and 89 of which were moored in seven different minefields. Nevertheless, it was a Russian-made, Iranian-deployed mine that the USS SAMUEL B. ROBERTS (FFG-58) struck on April 14, 1988. The blast ripped a 15-foot gash in the hull and snapped her keel, usually a fatal wound for a ship. The ROBERTS’ crew battled the blaze heroically, however, and by running a series of cables, literally stitched the ship together. Miraculously, no one was killed in the explosion, although 10 sailors were wounded, four of them seriously.

In retaliation, the U.S. Navy launched Operation Praying Mantis four days later in what would prove to be the largest surface engagement by the U.S. Navy since World War II. Warships from two surface action groups shelled and destroyed two Iranian oil platforms in the Sirri and Sassan oil fields. The Iranians responded by dispatching speedboats to attack three tankers—one a U.S.-flagged vessel, one registered in Panama and the third a British vessel. All



The U.S. Navy began escorting convoys in July 1987. The oil tanker BRIDGETON struck an Iranian mine on the very first convoy. Seen here, the guided missile frigate USS GALLERY (FFG-26) escorts the tanker GAS KING through the Strait of Hormuz.



With limited countermine warfare capabilities at the time, the U.S. Navy resorted to placing lookouts in the bows of warships with instructions to shoot at mines.

three sustained damage. A-6E Intruder aircraft from Attack Squadron 95 were launched from the aircraft carrier USS ENTERPRISE (CVN-65) to intercept and attack the speedboats, several of which were sunk. A number of others were reportedly damaged.

As the action in the Gulf escalated, the Iranian fast attack craft JOSHAN challenged the guided missile cruiser USS WAINWRIGHT (CG-28). When WAINWRIGHT warned the Iranian vessel to stop its engines or be sunk, the smaller vessel responded by firing a Harpoon missile at the cruiser. The guided missile frigate USS SIMPSON (FFG-56) immediately fired two Standard missiles at the JOSHAN, while the WAINWRIGHT responded with one of its own.



As part of Operation Praying Mantis, aircraft from the USS ENTERPRISE (CVN-65) bombed the Iranian frigate SAHAND, which was also attacked by the USS JOSEPH STRAUSS (DDG-16). The frigate sank after burning for several hours. No more attacks were launched against third country ships following the operation.

Nearby, the fast frigate USS BAGLEY (FF-1069) launched a Harpoon at the JOSHAN but missed its target. The American ships closed on the JOSHAN and fired on it until it sank.

In the Strait of Hormuz, two A-6E Intruders from the ENTERPRISE located and bombed the Iranian frigate SAHAND. The guided missile destroyer USS JOSEPH STRAUSS (DDG-16) also fired a Harpoon missile into the Iranian ship. The SAHAND burned for hours before her magazine exploded, sending her to the bottom. At 6:18 p.m., the Iranian frigate SABALAN fired a surface-to-air missile at A-6E Intruders flying overhead. One of the Intruders put a laser-guided bomb down the frigate's funnel, causing an explosion and subsequent fire. The aircraft were ordered to discontinue the attack, and the SABALAN eventually was taken in tow by an Iranian tug. The day-long Operation Praying Mantis had ended, with one Iranian frigate and an Iranian fast attack craft sunk, one frigate damaged, and three speedboats sunk, along with two oil platforms destroyed. U.S. casualties included the two-man crew of a Marine helicopter that crashed later that night. A subsequent investigation of the airframe indicated mechanical failure.

Following Operation Praying Mantis, there were no more Iranian attacks on third country merchant vessels, but there was one final, tragic footnote to the Tanker War. On July 3, 1988, the Aegis cruiser USS VINCENNES (CG-49) steamed toward and engaged a number of Iranian speedboats that had just fired on one of the cruiser's helicopters. Capt. Will Rogers III, commanding officer of the VINCENNES, gave the order to pursue and engage the speedboats, allegedly following them into Iranian waters. During the engagement,

two of the VINCENNES' guns jammed, and the large warship undertook dramatic maneuvers to keep her one gun trained on the fleeing speedboats. Simultaneously, an aircraft was reported approaching the cruiser. Initially identified as an F-14 Tomcat flying at attack approach, the plane was hailed on the "Guard channel" and warned to steer clear of the ship. When the plane continued its approach, the order was given by the captain to shoot it down. The VINCENNES launched two surface-to-air missiles, shooting down the aircraft.

Unfortunately, the plane was not a military aircraft but a civilian airliner, Iran Air Flight 655. The Airbus A300B2 crashed in the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 on board. The plane had been in the air for only seven minutes when the VINCENNES shot it down. The VINCENNES' own radar records, along with those of two other U.S. Navy ships patrolling nearby, show that the airplane was ascending at the time that it was shot down. At no time during its brief flight was the airliner descending or in an attack profile.

The Tanker War drew to a close with the end of the Iran-Iraq War in August 1988. The U.S. Navy had accompanied some 177 convoys in 13 months. It had rediscovered the importance of mine detection and countermine capabilities. The Navy had also learned that, despite the best technology available, it is still humans who must make difficult decisions in the heat of combat. A delay in taking action can lead to the loss of one's ship, as in the case of the STARK, just as acting hastily on faulty information can lead to tragic results, as in the case of the VINCENNES. Both incidents continue to be studied today to help future leaders make better decisions under stress.



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