



# Voyage Abstract

Fall of 2025

## Letter from the Executive Director

Welcome back to the Fall issue of the Voyage Abstract. Your museum Board of Directors and Staff have been busy putting together exciting programming and events for you. In this issue you will find information about our upcoming Art Exhibit, the story of our new model, the *Flying A*, and the adventures of our own director, Margaret Stocker on board the training ship.

Our calendar of events highlights for you all of the exciting opportunities at the museum in the coming months. Including the opportunity to volunteer. That's right, we are looking for volunteers to assist us with the upkeep of our treasures. If you are interested, please reach out to us at [museum@sunymaritime.edu](mailto:museum@sunymaritime.edu). We are also asking for your monetary support. Since the pandemic we have received fewer donations and memberships. We ask that you consider sharing membership forms with friends and colleagues, or making a donation to our organization. Every dollar counts towards continuing our mission.

Fair winds and following seas

Matthew Bonvento

Executive Director

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**Executive Director** – Matthew Bonvento

**Curator, Collections, Programming/**

**Events** – William Sokol

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## **Calendar of Events**

November 30<sup>th</sup> – Little Sailors arts and crafts

March 18<sup>th</sup> – Opening night Cathryn Jirlds Art Exhibit

April 24<sup>th</sup> – Shipbuilding in American Conference

April 24<sup>th</sup> – Closing night Cathryn Jirlds Art Exhibit

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The Maritime Industry Museum at Fort Schuyler proudly announces our new chairperson, Marta Bede.

Marta Bede is a Managing Director in ING's Infrastructure Team, where she leads large-scale financing for transportation and infrastructure projects, with strategic sponsor coverage across the Americas. With nearly 15 years of experience in finance, Marta is a recognized industry expert in structuring complex transactions—particularly in the port sector, where her deep expertise in maritime shipping and operations has earned her the title “Queen of Ports.”

Before joining ING, Marta served in the Bloomberg Administration, overseeing New York City's port and rail infrastructure. Her blend of public and private sector experience gives her a unique perspective on stakeholder engagement, policy alignment, and long-term asset value creation.

Marta holds an MBA from Columbia Business School and an MS in International Transportation Business from SUNY Maritime College, with a concentration in Maritime Shipping. She is known for her strategic leadership, her ability to articulate vision and impact, and her dedication to empowering others through mentorship and thoughtful guidance.

A passionate advocate for maritime shipping, Marta serves on industry boards and contributes to initiatives that preserve maritime history while shaping its future. She joined the Maritime Industry Museum in 2020 as Chair of the Finance Committee, became Vice Chair in 2024, and was nominated

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to serve as Chair in 2025—recognition of her vision, commitment, and transformative leadership.

Outside of work, Marta finds joy in traveling, discovering new experiences, and hiking with her beloved boxer pup. After summiting Kilimanjaro, she's now training for her next adventure: Everest Base Camp.



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## Featured Artist



## Cathryn Jirlds

Cathryn Jirlds is a contemporary fine art photographer based in Wilmington NC. Her photographic journey began when she earned a Certificate in Documentary Studies in 1999 at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke University. As a travel and documentary photographer, she gained recognition in publications throughout the Eastern Seaboard and as far west as Austin. As such, she established her reputation for capturing overlooked details within familiar landscapes. Over the past two decades, her work has evolved from documentary photography to more abstract explorations.



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Currently, Jirlds' focus is maritime industrial subjects, particularly within the Wilmington port area. Her approach is both technical and intuitive. Working exclusively with Sony equipment and producing museum-quality canvas Giclée prints, she has developed a signature style that blurs the line between documentation and abstraction. Her most recent work, the Shipscape series, features weathered ship hulls. In this series, her precise compositions and keen eye for finding beauty in industrial environments combine to create pieces that are often mistaken for abstract paintings. This work represents the culmination of her artistic development—merging her documentary background with her aesthetic vision. Jirlds' work is an invitation for viewers to discover the extraordinary beauty that can be found in unexpected places.





# Time Travel on the Training Ship

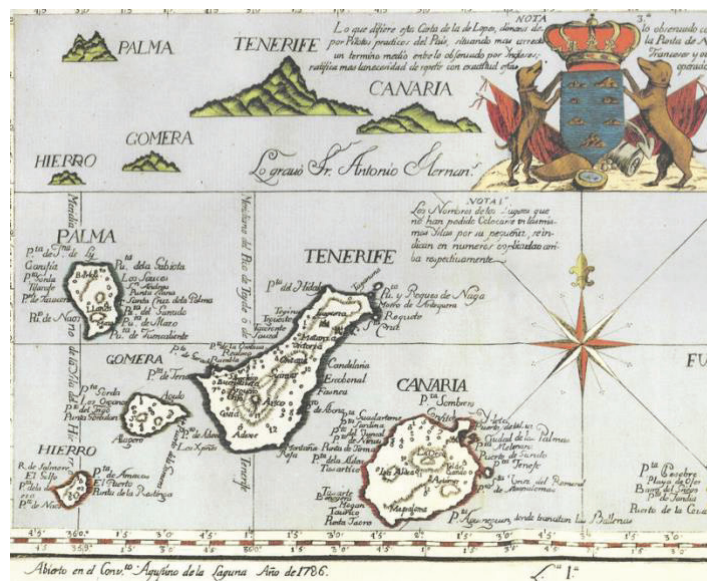
By the time I joined *TS Empire State VI* for the Summer Sea Term 2021-Cruise B the ship had made the Atlantic passage from SUNY Maritime College and its first port call at Palma de Majorca in the Mediterranean. The training ship had already steamed east past the Pillars of Hercules, known today as the Strait of Gibraltar. This was the western edge of the Mediterranean, in ancient mythology the end of the known world. Here Hercules had used his superhuman strength to crush Mount Atlas in two, creating a passage between the European continent and Africa for sailing ships to enter the



Atlantic Ocean. Various interpretations of the story point to the danger ships encountered when they left the relative calm of the Mediterranean Sea.

I was jet lagged from a July 29<sup>th</sup> overnight flight from New York City to Madrid and a six hour layover, when our group of instructors and officers arrived in the Port of A Coruña before nightfall on July 30<sup>th</sup>. The city and province of A Coruña are located in an autonomous area of Spain called Galicia, formerly the Kingdom of Galicia, north of today's Portugal. The next morning I cleared my head by hiking to the highest point of the city where the Tower of Hercules, standing 180 feet tall, commands a view of the North Atlantic coast. I was time travelling looking at the oldest lighthouse in the world.

The Romans made Galicia a province of the Empire and built the Tower of Hercules in the first century. It was an aide to navigation for Roman voyagers to conquer Britannia. Their sailing ships were not the first to drop anchor at A Coruña. The Phoenicians, the Mediterranean's first traders, had sailed past the Pillars of Hercules centuries before to trade at A Coruña and the Canary Islands, off the coast of Africa. Our next port call was Tenerife, the largest of the Canary Islands.





During the next ten days I became acquainted with the ship and its customs. Each morning, after breakfast and formation, I reported to SETO (Senior Engine Training Officer.) My job as Engine Yeoman was to record cadets' grades in a database and provide administrative duties for the Engine Department. Many of the instructors were recent graduates of SUNY Maritime. *Empire State VI* steamed through seas which the Roman God of the Seas, Neptune, had navigated in his chariot/ship drawn by seahorses. Our Master was Captain Morgan McManus, NY Maritime '92, who had been Master of a commercial sister ship of *TS Empire State VI*.

My "learning the ropes" included strategies to manage seasickness (watch the horizon and drink ginger tea) and knowing the one-way escape route for Fire and Evacuation Drills. It was important to learn which ladderway led to the Officers Mess on the Boat Deck - wonderful food (even hearts of palm on the salad bar) and desserts. On a 'dry ship', of course, the ice cream and dessert station doubled as our 'bar.'

The ship goes through a well-rehearsed 'dance' to leave port. Deck cadets catch the lines thrown by Spanish speaking stevedores on the quay and take

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in the slack on winches. All this is orchestrated with hand signals. Two tug boats gently pull the ship into the channel, guided by a Spanish pilot on the bridge. Joel E. Bem, our Chief Engineer (the Romans would have called him Vulcan, the God of Fire) and his associates, officers and cadets had opened and closed valves, monitored pressure and levels and made sure moving parts were properly lubricated to coax the steam engine into action. The boiler of *Empire State VI* was built in 1962 when John F. Kennedy was President of the United States. The ship had been launched as *SS Oregon*, a breakbulk cargo freighter. The steel cargo holds were converted into berths for about 600 cadets in 1989.



*Empire State VI* left A Coruña and headed south. We saw only the sun and the sea for ten days. If we had been closer to the shore, we would have seen the Port of Cadiz, half way between the Tower of Hercules and the Pillars of Hercules. In the ship's library (located on the Five Hold Tank Top, past the barber shop and the ping pong table), I discovered the Gove Collection, books gifted to the ship in honor of Robert W. Gove, NY Maritime '78, who was lost

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at sea on *SS Poet* in October 1980. More sea stories bubbled to the surface.

The Spanish Armada had passed the Tower of Hercules trying to invade Britannia and rule the world's shipping lanes in 1588. There were many other attempts to conquer Britannia. Admiral Lord Nelson, sailing for the British Navy, had set his course by the lighthouse on his way to battle against Napoleon's combined French and Spanish fleets. I looked at the chart to know when we were west of today's Cape Trafalgar. We passed through the waters where Nelson signaled by semaphore flags "England expects that every man will do his duty." The British Fleet won the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Even though Nelson was mortally wounded, he had taught his officers and crew well the lessons of regimental order, duty and responsibility. This established a loyalty between officers and the 'Lower Deck' which evolved into the successful supply chain that enabled the British Empire to rule the seas and become a global power. Students on the training ship were learning those same lessons. Obeying orders is necessary to operate a ship safely. At the end of their last cruise, cadets would be qualified to acquire a Merchant Mariner License from the U.S. Coast Guard. This, along with completion of their degree program, equipped them for a career in the shipping industry.



During our port call in Santa Cruz on the island of Tenerife, I saw a mural that remembered the 1797 Battle of Santa Cruz. Nelson lost his right arm in that



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failed amphibious assault against the Spanish. A three cornered hat in the line of fire of a rifle represents Nelson in the mural.



Time travel adventures continued. We took a two-day trip to the Port of Garachico on Tenerife to swim in the harbor that had been filled in by lava from the island's volcanic eruption in 1706. The volcano was now silent and resembled a moon scape. As we crossed the Atlantic, rough weather resulted in the contents of my desk being "drifted" onto the deck but otherwise we avoided the path of Hurricane Ida. In September, shortly after the training ship returned to SUNY Maritime, the volcano on La Palma, the nearest island to Tenerife, began to erupt. My time travels continue into the present.

America followed Britannia's example. Regimental training follows the same hierarchy of the chain of command from the Captain through the Chief Mate to Deck, Regimental, and Engine Instructors to First Class Cadets helping Second Class Cadets who then mentor Third Class Cadets. I salute them.





Margaret Stocker  
Board Member  
Maritime Industry Museum  
SUNY Maritime College  
October 2021



All photographs by Author.

Map of Canary Islands,  
reprint, made at Convent of  
St. Augustine, Laguna,  
Tenerife, Canary Islands, 1786

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# Tanker Flying A California

When reconnecting with a classmate at our 55th class reunion in late 2023 I was pleased to learn that he had a scale model of a tanker named *Flying A California* that he wanted to donate to the Maritime Industry Museum. After viewing a few pictures of the model I decided it would be a worthy addition to our museum. I planned to pick it up the following summer then personally deliver it to the museum after I completed some cleaning and minor restoration work.

The ship was a fine example of a post-war steam tanker built in 1954 at Bethlehem Steel, Sparrows Point, Maryland, for the Tidewater Oil Company. The ship and her sister ship, *Flying A Washington*, were both of modest size, 515' length overall and 10,473 gross tons, but otherwise notable improvements in appearance and creature comforts over similar sized T-2 tankers of WWII.

The ship was long lived and well-known on both Atlantic and Pacific coasts. The brand name *Flying A* and its noteworthy logo was derived from the Associated Oil Company that merged into Tidewater Oil during the pre-war period. The name *Flying A California* was kept until 1966 when she was renamed *Phillips California*, then owned by Phillips Petroleum. In 1976 the ship was sold for the final time to Tosco Refining Company of Martinez, California, and given the lovely name *Lion Of California*. During the following twenty years the ship was employed carrying refined products from Martinez to west coasts ports. The ship was finally retired and broken up in 1995 giving her an exceptionally long ship life of over forty years.

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The 1/16” scale model was owned by Mr. Thorvald Homestead an executive and member of the shipowner's board of directors. The model was handed down to his grandson Robert Homestead, Maritime Class of 1968, who has kindly donated it to the Maritime Industry Museum for our permanent collection.

As a modeling subject the ship featured the clever Flying A insignia on her bow and funnel and on the hull amidship below the forward superstructure. The ship's classic profile with superstructures fore and aft was typical of almost all oil tankers afloat in the twentieth century but has disappeared entirely in the twenty-first century. The model is a worthy addition to our museum.

Roland R. Parent  
Maritime Class of 1968



Donation by:

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Sayville, New York 11782

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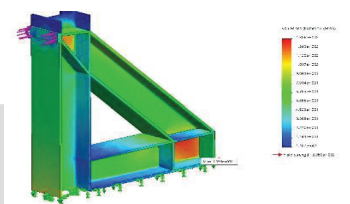




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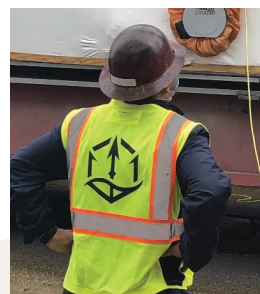
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