



SNAME

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY FOR MARITIME AND OCEAN PROFESSIONALS



MARITECH 2025 in Montreal – Memorial University and Marine Institute alumni made up over 10 percent of the 640 attendees. For more photos from MARITECH 2025, please see page 6.

SNAME NEWS

April 2025

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NEW SNAME SCHOLARSHIP

The new Thordon Bearings Graduate Scholarship, made possible by a generous donation from George A. “Sandy” Thomson (see the Member Profile on page 7), is a merit-based award intended to inspire and foster the design of green and efficient vessels. The design may address any part of the ship (above or below the water line) and any environmental element (e.g., noise, air, water).

Successful applicants must demonstrate that their innovation will result in significant environmental improvements based, at a minimum, on the following criteria: degree of innovation and novel idea; technical soundness of the design; potential for significant environmental improvement(s); can be practically implemented or produced; commercially viable.

Applications for the 2026-2027 academic year are due on 1 February 2026. Applicants must be a SNAME member for at least four months to be eligible. For more information about SNAME Graduate Scholarships, go to: www.sname.org/scholarships

MARITECH 2025 IN PHOTOS

Stay turned for more coverage of MARITECH in the June SNAME*News*.



Top left: MARITECH 2025 in Montreal - En Avant Tous! (Full Speed Ahead!) – With well over 600 attendees, MARITECH 2025 included bringing together the key Thursday afternoon presenters, Operators Forum panelists, Closing Keynote, and CIMARE and SNAME leadership, including young professional volunteers.



Top right: The Power of Volunteering – New SNAME student member Karina Shechtman (Concordia University) is welcomed aboard by Sandy Thomson (Thordon Bearings Inc.), Glenn Walters (Walters Marine Engineering and Consulting Inc.), Rich Mueller (NETSCo), and Elizabeth Bouchard (SNAME).

Bottom Left: Welcome Aboard – Joanna Davies boarded the SNAME boat during her “pinning ceremony” with SNAME Functional Vice President of Membership Glenn Walters and SNAME Executive Director Elizabeth Bouchard.

Bottom right: Building Ships = Relationships – MARITECH is always looking for innovative ways to enable networking, including a new young professional-led activity. Thanks to long-time SNAME and CIMARE member Dave Belisle (Algoma Central Corporation) for sponsoring the first MARITECH Stability Challenge.



Elizabeth Bouchard

Executive Director

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MEMBER PROFILE



GEORGE A. "SANDY" THOMSON

FOUNDER, INNOVATOR
THORDON BEARINGS INC.

Eliminating Oil and Grease from Our Rivers, Seas, and Oceans

Sandy Thomson is the founder and innovator at Thordon Bearings Inc., a non-metallic bearing and seal manufacturer producing environmentally sustainable

solutions to the global marine, clean energy, pump, and industrial markets. He has been the driving force behind the development of polymer bearings that are truly revolutionary – long lasting and operating without oil or grease.

With a strong focus on the health of our oceans, seas, and rivers, Sandy was ahead of his time developing seawater lubricated propeller shaft bearings used on over 5,000 vessels around the world from workboats on the Mississippi, cruise ships in the Mediterranean, container ships on all the oceans, and vessels for over 50 navies and coast guards around the globe.

Sandy's Early Life

Sandy attended Northrop University in Inglewood, California, studying Aircraft Maintenance Engineering but graduating as a Mechanical Engineer. In 1965, he decided to join the family business, Thomson-Gordon Ltd., in Hamilton, Ontario, Canada. At the time, the company was primarily a distributor of Engineers Supplies. Looking for a niche where engineered mechanical products made from rubber and plastic components could be designed, they developed the Thordon polymer in the late 1960s.

Sandy thought of many markets for the polymer, and after the successful operation of the polymer installed in vertical pump applications, the marine market on Lake Ontario seemed like the perfect place to test the bearing in horizontal applications. So thanks to Sandy, the world's first Thordon propeller shaft bearing was installed on a Great Lakes tug owned by McKeil Marine in Hamilton in the late 1970s. Today McKeil is the largest tug/barge owner on the Great Lakes and still a loyal customer 40 years later. Following this conversion, many other vessels on the Great Lakes were converted to Thordon's propeller shaft bearing system, helping to put Thordon on the map in the marine industry.

Sandy at the Helm

Sandy's focus on innovation and developing export markets has been the key to Thordon's success. In 1990, he bought the Russian deep sea salvage tug Rudokop, converted it to a "floating

showcase" of Thordon marine bearing and seal products, and then captained this ship visiting more than 200 ports in Europe. With Sandy at the helm, Thordon has become a global leader in seawater lubricated propeller shaft bearings and seals as well as offering a complete range of non-metallic sleeve bearing solutions for rudders, deck equipment, and shaftline solutions.

Sandy's Contributions to the Maritime Community

- ▶ He produced the world's first polymer alloy bearing installed into a vertical pump in partnership with a local steel plant, replacing traditional rubber bearings that typically wore out in a few weeks.

MEMBER PROFILE

- ▶ With a strong focus on the health of our oceans, seas, and rivers, Sandy was ahead of his time developing seawater lubricated propeller shaft polymer bearings that did not need oil. In the last 35 years, these bearings have been installed on thousands of vessels around the globe where they have prevented millions of liters of oil from polluting our oceans and seas.
- ▶ The performance of Thordon's polymer tailshaft bearings on the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax-Class Patrol frigates in the 1990s led to its use in over 50 navies and coast guards around the world using non-metallic bearing technology on nuclear submarines, German Navy frigates, and South Korean Navy destroyers to name a few.
- ▶ Sandy was the catalyst in the development of a robust tailshaft seal that has a unique emergency seal feature. This feature allows any ship to return to port safely while preventing permanent seal damage.



The SNAME Connection and Advice to Our Students

Sandy was recognized by the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers (SNAME) in 2016 when he was elected a Fellow for his outstanding personal contribution to the marine/ocean engineering fields through significant achievements in design, research, production, operation, and education. He and Thordon Bearings have presented many technical papers at SNAME conferences, furthering the movement of seawater lubricated propeller shaft bearings.

In 2019, Sandy won the prestigious Elmer A. Sperry Award for advancing the art of transportation in recognition of leading the innovation for water-lubricated propulsion shaft bearings for marine transport through the application of polymeric compounds.

Sandy is a firm believer in the role technical societies such as SNAME play, to provide forums for open and collegial discussion and debate while acting as the guardians of best practice and innovation. He actively encourages his team, including young professionals, to develop a culture of technical dialogue coupled with a seasoning of business acumen. Sandy advises young engineers to not be discouraged by negativity. Anyone can design a test rig that can cause your product to fail. Products fail in service as well, and diagnosis is critical. Sandy advises his team to never turn away from a problem. When Thordon Bearings was incorporated in 1990, Sandy travelled the world for five weeks at a time, setting up distribution and selling. Tough sledding, because Thordon had little success history. But then Thordon had a breakthrough with the Royal Canadian Navy's Halifax-Class frigates where Thordon's low-friction COMPAC propeller shaft bearings met acoustic criteria and replaced rubber bearings, and the rest is history.

A New SNAME Scholarship

Sandy wants to encourage environmental innovation, developing marine products focused on reducing or eliminating pollution of the water and/or air. The maritime community represents Thordon's largest business sector – and water covers four-fifths of the earth's surface – so a new SNAME scholarship is the best place to make such a contribution. Sandy hopes the new Thordon Bearings Graduate Scholarship inspires the next generation of students to lead the maritime community to make a strong impact to help the survival of our planet.