

# Blessey Adds Another Towboat To Growing Fleet

By NELSON SPENCER JR.

Following its annual captain's meeting, Blessey Marine Services christened the mv. Alton St. Amant on March 5 in New Orleans. The boat is nearly identical to the last vessel built by Sneed Shipbuilding, the mv. Joseph F. Morrison, except it is two feet longer with a few minor adjustments.

Blessey Marine has been steadily growing over the years and, despite the economy, 2009 appears to be no different. This vessel is the 53rd boat for the liquid bulk transportation company and more are on the way.

"We are fortunate and blessed to have long-term contracts," remarked Walter Blessey Jr. at the christening.

The namesake of the newest addition to the company's fleet is the father of Capt. Edgar St. Amant, the pilot aboard Blessey's retractable 2,400 hp. mv. Charles E. Martin. Edgar has been an employee of Blessey Marine since June 28, 1995 when he started as a relief captain aboard the mv. Charles Clark under Capt. Wayne Wood. With his wife, Mary Ann, he lives in Crown Point, La.

As Capt. St. Amant was unable to attend the event, his close friend and the captain on the mv. Charles E. Martin, Capt. Shawn Martinez, was the boat's sponsor. Martinez spoke kindly of Edgar following the ceremony, telling *The Waterways Journal* that he was a fast learner regarding operations on the upper rivers and a "go with the flow" kind of guy.

Martinez christened the vessel before posing for a photo with many of the other off-duty captains from Blessey Marine.

The crew of the mv. Alton St. Amant on-site for the christening consists of Capt. David Stone; relief Capt. Milam Green; tankermen Ashley Wilson, Derek



—Photo by Robert Montero

The 2,000 hp. Alton St. Amant was built by Sneed Shipbuilding.

Douga and Jeff Fontenot; and deckhands Chad Mizener and Jacob Gonzalez.

## Vessel Specs and Vendors

The new towboat is 87 by 30 feet, powered by twin Cummins KTA38MO diesel engines generating roughly 2,000 hp. Auxiliary power is provided by two Cummins 75 kw. generators. It carries 35,000 gallons of fuel, 10,000 gallons of water and 600 gallons of lube oil.

Karl Senner supplied two Reintjes WAF 562, vertical offset reverse reduction gears, with a 5.947:1 reduction ratio. Texas Wheel Works provided the 74-by 58-inch propellers. Keel coolers were supplied by East Park Radiator.

The mv. Alton St. Amant is equipped with Thordon com-

posite propeller shaft bearings, SXL rudder bearing and ThorPlas tiller arm bushings, supplied by Marine Industries. All of these are grease- and oil-free products.

The vessel is fitted with Simplan shaft seals provided by Dale's Welding & Fabricators. Dale's Welding also provided the aluminum doors, aluminum-framed windows and custom radar and computer stands.

Custom Hydraulic Components provided the electronic, full-follow-up steering system to control the enclosed rudders.

On deck are two Patterson 40-ton winches from Stanley Parts & Equipment. Above the wheelhouse are two Carlisle & Finch 1,000-watt Xenon searchlights and a Kahlenberg airhorn.

Butch Granger and Jeff Wilson of Sneed Shipbuilding were recognized by Martin Sneed during the ceremony. They were largely responsible for the construction project, including the interior, which

is different from the mv. Joseph F. Morrison. But while the layout has changed, the interior still has the added amenities, including a large galley with wood cabinets and granite counters. The boat is Crew Endurance Management System-compliant, just like the previously built Sneed boats.

Schuyler Rubber provided the fendering system and the boat was coated with Carboline paint.

In the wheelhouse, the pilot will have all new electronics and monitoring devices at his disposal including Furuno FR8062 radars, a sounder, GPS, hailer, AIS, a satellite compass, two ICOM VHF radios, a Davis wind indicator and a De-Hart swingmeter all installed by D & G Communications, Texas City, Texas. The company also subscribes to Jeppesen Marine's electronic charts.

Baton Rouge Marine Electrical Service (BRMES) provided an advanced touch-screen SIM-VUE ELITE vessel monitoring system with a WAGO processor. The system has 92 monitoring points, covering the main engines, generators and fuel tanks. BRMES has provided similar systems to Carline Companies and D & S Marine recently, among others.

Additionally, the mv. Alton St. Amant is implementing a software program to transmit data directly from the wheelhouse to Blessey's shoreside office.

According to Paul Cyr, business development manager for Edoc Systems Group, "Blessey Marine Services Inc. has taken wheelhouse automation to a new level with the implementation of Edoc's HELM Onboard software. This user-friendly system allows captains to enter daily log information quickly and easily without having to do a lot of typing. Logs are automatically transferred back to the head office without the need for a manual fax/e-mail process.

"Blessey is also using HELM Onboard's Vessel Maintenance, Crew Tracking, and Provision Requests features," he said. "The Vessel Maintenance module allows the crew to record daily fuel usage, engine hours, and lube change information. The Crew Tracking module is used to record the crew complement each day,

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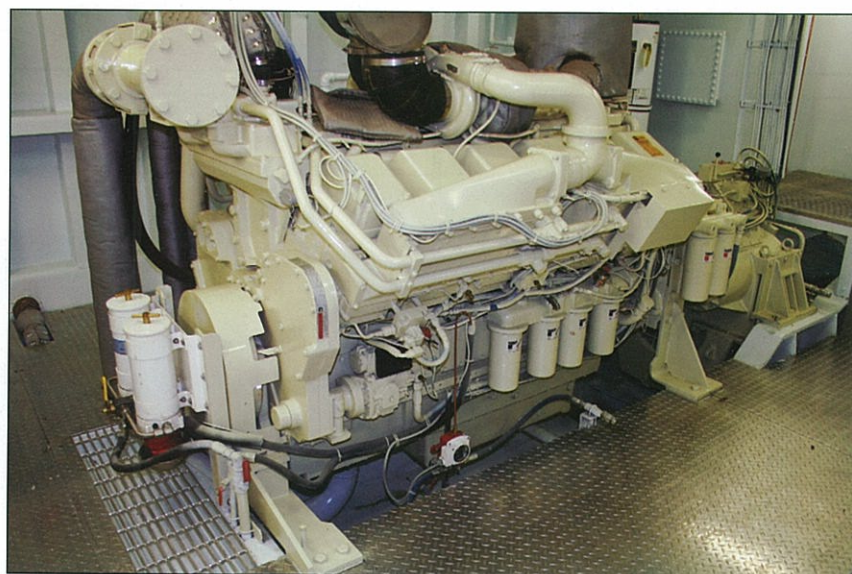
## mv. Alton St. Amant

**Owner** .....Blessey Marine Services  
**Builder** .....Sneed Shipbuilding  
**Dimensions** .....87 by 30 feet  
**Horsepower** .....2,000  
**Engines** .....(2) Cummins KTA38MO



Spacious stateroom.

—WJ Photo by Nelson Spencer Jr.



Power comes from twin Cummins KTA38MO engines.

—WJ Photo by Nelson Spencer Jr.



## Blessey

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

and the Provision Request module allows the submission of grocery and supply orders. Similar to the aforementioned Captain's Log module, all this information is sent electronically to the head office and is touch-screen compatible."

### Sneed Shipbuilding

Another company showing steady growth over the years is the shipyard responsible for building the mv. Alton St. Amant and many other Blessey boats.

## TWIC Enrollment Center To Reopen In St. Paul

The Coast Guard reports that the Transportation Worker Identification Credential enrollment center in St. Paul, Minn., will reopen on March 30.

There were originally two locations in the Twin Cities, one in Minneapolis and one in St. Paul. Contractor Lockheed Martin had initially closed the St. Paul location at the beginning of this year, but has announced that it will relocate the Minneapolis office to the former St. Paul location at the end of this month.

The address is 2161 University Ave. W., Suite 112. Hours are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to noon and 12:30-5 p.m.

For more information, contact Kristin Graybill of Lockheed Martin, 240-888-5295.

Sneed Shipbuilding, with about 100 employees, is currently driving 700 feet of wall on the west end of its property to accommodate two new 100- by 70-foot dry-docks that will be fit together for use as a single unit, said Clyde Sneed.

The target market for the new dry-dock is 195-foot tank barge repair, he said.

Sneed Shipyard is a few months away from launching a similar 2,000 hp. vessel and has plans for a 1,700 hp. vessel to be launched later in the year, both for Blessey Marine's growing fleet.

The busy yard is also working on numerous other projects at the moment, including a 200- by 70- by eight-foot dry-dock for AEP River Operations, to be delivered in April.

## Obituary Notices

**Clyde J. "Buck" Bellows**, 50, died at his home in Maysville, Ky., March 19 due to complications related to diabetes. He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy who spent the last 25 years working for Crounse Corporation. Bellows started with Crounse Corporation as a deckhand, working his way up the ranks to chief engineer and then into the Maysville office as a port engineer.

**Edward "Boo" Texas**, long a deckhand and fireman on the Belle of Louisville, died on March 23. He was a member of the boat's crew from its first days as Belle of Louisville and is remembered by Alan Bates as "a solid, dependable man."

## Forthcoming Events

The Waterways Journal will be glad to list the city, date and place of your meeting in this column, provided it is of interest to the barge and towing industry or allied businesses, is national or regional in scope, and is received at least three weeks prior to the meeting date. Address your announcement to Forthcoming Events Editor.

**April 1-2, 2009.** Journal of Commerce Conferences, Sixth Annual North America's Marine Highways Conference, Hyatt Regency Jacksonville Riverfront, Jacksonville, Fla. Contact: Journal of Commerce Conferences, 760, 294-5563; Internet [www.joc.com/conferences](http://www.joc.com/conferences); e-mail [events@joc.com](mailto:events@joc.com).

**April 4, 2009.** 11th annual Towboaters Picnic, Lake Village, Ark. Contact: Capt. John R. Sutton, 504, 292-3000; e-mail [captainjrs@hotmail.com](mailto:captainjrs@hotmail.com).

**April 22-24, 2009.** Greater New Orleans Barge Fleeting Association, 2009 River and Marine Industry Seminar, Hotel Inter-Continental, New Orleans, La. Contact: Alan Savoie, 985, 783-6605; or Fred Renoudet, 985, 479-7218; Internet [www.gnobfa.com](http://www.gnobfa.com).

**April 23-24, 2009.** Informa Economics, sixth annual Grain and Oilseed Transportation Conference, Westin Memphis Beale Street, Memphis, Tenn. Contact: Pam Daniel, Informa Economics, e-mail [pam.Daniel@informaecon.com](mailto:pam.Daniel@informaecon.com).

**April 28-30, 2009.** American Institute for International Steel and Port of New Orleans, Critical Commodities Conference, Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel. Contact: AIIS, President David Phelps, 703, 245-8075; Internet [www.aiis.org](http://www.aiis.org).

**April 29-May 1, 2009.** Inland Rivers Ports & Terminals, 2009 Conference, Drake Hotel, Chicago, Ill. Contact: IRPT, 504, 585-0715; Internet [www.irpt.net](http://www.irpt.net).

### BARGE GRAIN MOVEMENTS (1,000 tons)

River/Lock	Week Ending 3-14-09					Week Ending 3-15-08				
	Corn	Wht.	Soy.	Other	Total	Corn	Wht.	Soy.	Other	Total
Miss./15	40	0	9	0	49	6	0	0	0	6
Miss./25	152	0	28	0	180	0	12	29	0	41
Miss./MP	458	17	73	0	547	214	16	86	13	329
Miss./27	462	17	71	0	550	206	14	76	0	296
Ill./8	216	17	24	0	256	209	14	27	9	259
Ohio/52	99	21	39	0	159	160	0	46	0	206
Ark./1	0	3	22	1	27	1	1	25	10	38

Cumulative to date for Miss./27, Ohio/52 and Ark./1:

Year	Corn	Wheat	Soybeans	Other grains	Total
2009	3,975	168	2,049	95	6,287
2008	3,704	300	1,641	144	5,789

\*Other grains include barley, sorghum and oats. Totals may not add due to rounding.

Source: USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Transportation & Marketing Division/U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



### ATTENTION: CARRIERS

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## CONGRATULATIONS TO BLESSEY MARINE SERVICES, INC.



M/V Alton St. Amant complete with Simplan shaft seals, aluminum doors, aluminum windows, and aluminum custom radar and computer stands from Dale's Welding & Fabricators.

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## MARK YOUR CALENDAR

WHAT: Inland Rivers Ports and  
Terminals Annual Conference

WHERE: Drake Hotel — Chicago, IL

WHEN: April 29-30 & May 1

INFO: [www.irpt.net](http://www.irpt.net)

Information you need — Networking you want



## Does Popp's Ferry Bridge Accident Portend Surge Barrier Gate Problems?

By CAPT. RICHARD EBERHARDT

Could the Popp's Ferry Bridge accident happen at the Lake Borgne Floodgate on the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway and deprive the city of New Orleans the flood protection it is designed to provide?

Raymond Butler thinks it could happen.

Butler, executive director of the Gulf Intracoastal Canal Association (GICA), has been a leading advocate for a 225-foot-wide navigation gate at the Lake Borgne Floodgate, which has also been called the Surge

Barrier. Currently the Corps of Engineers has designed side-by-side flood gates 150-feet wide in what is the most expensive design-build project in Corps history.

"The navigation span at the Popp's Ferry Bridge is 180 feet wide," Butler said. "The

reason for the accident is still under investigation, but whatever the cause, the Lake Borgne structure is subject to the same. I share this with you all to illustrate one of the reasons that I remain concerned over the safety of the Lake Borgne Floodgate.

"We could have simulated the Popp's Ferry Bridge transit at ERDC [the Corps' Engineering Research and Design Center in Vicksburg, Miss.] for months, and we would likely have heard from all our wheelmen that there was no problem making it," Butler continued in a e-mail to the Corps and obtained by *The Waterways Journal*.

"They may have all had good records with no accidents, but they've just not gotten in that one special circumstance which results in that 'one in a thousand' accident happening to them," he said.

"That is why I'm skeptical of some of the comments we get from wheelmen telling us all is well, when I have seen myself the accidents during our Lake Borgne ERDC simulations, and I see every wheelman in some level of stress as he makes the simulated structure at 150 feet," Butler's e-mail continued.

In what Corps-watchers in industry said was a surprise move, the Corps signed a contract with Shaw Infrastructure and Environmental of Baton Rouge in April 2008, to design and build the \$695 million Lake Borgne Surge Barrier in eastern New Orleans. The 150-foot-wide gates were written into the contract.

Butler and other industry representatives protested loudly that, while the Corps

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### Bridge

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A salvage plan for the remaining submerged barge, SL-15, was approved on March 23. The barge was being stabilized by a spud barge. Schiehl said lightering operations had been suspended temporarily on March 25 to allow Department of Transportation officials to examine the site.

#### Bridge Debate

Biloxi's planning commission had been considering expanding the bridge, with some residents and commission members arguing that a third bridge is necessary.

After the accident, Biloxi mayor A. J. Holloway told the *Sun-Herald*, "I think this is a clear statement for a new bridge." Holloway has been urging a new, wider bridge for a decade.

On March 23, the Biloxi City Council declared a state of emergency at Holloway's request to speed up reconstruction before the hurricane season begins on June 1. The declaration allows incentive funds to be offered to contractors for speedy reconstruction. A similar incentive was used to repair the bridge after Hurricane Katrina, when it was



—Photo courtesy of Coast Guard Air Station New Orleans

The mv. Cheryl Stegbauer holds the remaining seven barges of its tow near the Popp's Ferry Bridge after the tow struck the bridge, collapsing a span.

closed for four months.

In the accident's wake, the Biloxi *Sun Herald* called for tighter regulation of tow sizes in the Back Bay. A March 23 editori-

al asked, "Are eight barges too many to be permitted on Back Bay?" and urged regulations requiring tows to be broken up in Back Bay's western end.

## CONGRATULATIONS BLESSEY MARINE ON THE M/V ALTON ST. AMANT

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