

Narrator: You're listening to the Quarterdeck with Benjamin Strong and Coast Guard Admiral Jim Watson.

Benjamin: Hi. It's Ben Strong from Amver.com and I'd like to welcome you to the inaugural edition of Quarterdeck, which will be a monthly podcast featuring myself and my co-host Admiral Jim Watson, the deputy commander, U.S. Coast Guard, Atlantic Area. How are you, Admiral?

Admiral Watson: I'm just fine, Ben. It's great to be on today.

Benjamin: Great to have you with us today and I'm excited about being able to share interesting Coast Guard and maritime stories with the Amver audience. For those who are unfamiliar with the Amver program, perhaps you're tuning in for the first time or you're new to the Amver blog, the Amver program is an international search and rescue program that's sponsored by the U.S. Coast Guard, that uses large commercial ships to rescue people far out at sea. We rely on these big ships to voluntarily report their positions to the U.S. Coast Guard and then in cases of a maritime emergency, whether it be in U.S. waters, or anywhere in the world, we're able to call upon your ships, your merchant ships, to go rescue people. No different than a case we had February 3, where a sailor was rescued 1,300 miles east of Puerto Rico by a Philippine Flag Car Carrier. The French sailor was brought into Jacksonville, Florida. You can read that story on the Amver blog. That's a little bit about the Amver program. I'd like to introduce my co-host, Admiral Jim Watson. Admiral Watson.

Admiral Watson: Ben, I just to echo first of all the tremendous service that the Amver participants provide for seafaring world over and they certainly are wonderful partners with the U.S. Coast Guard search and rescue program. Let me just say a few words about myself if you don't mind. I'm a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy in 1978. My technical expertise is ship design, naval architecture. I've been in the Coast Guard's Marine Safety Program most of my career and commanded two different Marine safety offices where we do inspections, investigations, port operations, support, and pollution response. These days I'm the Deputy Commander for Atlantic Area. The Atlantic Area is all those Coast Guard units and missions east of the Rocky Mountains. We share the world, I guess, with a Pacific Area command, which is in Alameda, California. The Atlantic Area command's right here in Portsmouth, Virginia, right next to Norfolk. We have a lot of different Coast Guard cutters, air craft, sector units, and deployed units in the Arabian Gulf and off the coast of Africa and in the Caribbean at any given time. One of the things that I'm excited about is ensuring that we have good communications and good dialog with the professional maritime community. I think the Quarterdeck audience is a wonderful way for me to let that community know what the Coast Guard is doing and also I would hope that they will let me know their thoughts as we pursue this new social media that we have by virtue of the blog and the podcast.

Benjamin: Excellent, excellent idea, Admiral Watson. I know that we've discussed the frequency that we want to share news with our readers and listeners and I think we've agreed that we're going to do our best to get Quarterdeck up monthly to the listeners and we hope, as we discussed a little bit before the show, we hope that the listeners use the comment section to tell us the types of things that they're interested in hearing. I'm certainly not an expert in every area. Admiral Watson will probably echo that same sentiment, but we're committed to trying to find the right folks to answer your questions and to share what new initiatives and things may be coming out of the Coast Guard that affect our international

maritime partners.

Admiral Watson: That's right, Ben. I really do want to thank you and the Amver organization, based in New York, for really forging new grounds with your use of social networking, social media, and allowing me to participate in this new venture.

Benjamin: Well now you're going to make me blush but thank you for the kind words. We found that the Amver blog, we're very proud of what we're doing and how we're able to reach all of our readers and listeners. It's interesting, as an aside, there was a ship fire a year or two ago, a chemical tanker somewhere out in the Pacific caught fire and sank. I was really interested to find one morning when I was going through the comments on that particular blog post that we wrote, that the master that had just signed off and was back home in India, had read the story of the ship sinking and had already commented that he was sad to see that his ship went down and was thankful that we had covered the story and that he was able to read it at his home in India. I'm amazed every day at the reach that the Amver blog has and I'm glad that we've expanded and that we're working together to share important stories and information for our audience.

Admiral Watson: Great, and that's exactly what I'm hoping we can accomplish with this podcast is that responsiveness from the listeners.

Benjamin: You know, the listeners are key, if I can segue into something that's important to us is despite the fact that I'm a civilian in the Coast Guard, I'm still certainly a shipmate and Admiral. Admiral Watson and I are shipmates and colleagues but Commandant Papp yesterday gave the State of the Coast Guard address. One of the pieces of that, that I thought was key and really harkens to the importance of the Amver program and Admiral Watson and our inspections and any kind of front facing pieces of the Coast Guard that are almost touchstones with the international maritime community. Admiral Papp said that partnerships are forged over time through interaction and mutual respect. In the past, where some folks may have felt that there wasn't as much mutual respect, that's one of the things that we're going to share with the audience and that's one of the things we want to try to continue to build upon.

Admiral Watson: Absolutely, Ben. You know, respect and really that sense of we're all shipmates, we're all professionals in this seafaring profession, is a key to the success of the Coast Guard and, quite frankly, to individuals serving in just about every role within the Coast Guard. One of the things that I've noticed in my entire career is that there is a need for us to learn from these maritime professionals. We don't have the capability internally to educate to a level that is needed if you're going to be a marine inspector. All of the different technologies and competencies that exist across the entire maritime spectrum and so that gap is filled. I mean we've just got to recognize that by master's of ships, by chief engineers, by port engineers, in my case by Naval architects, in a lot of cases the same thing occurs in Maritime law. You name it, it's that two way communication, that respect for each other which allows us to develop our profession on the Coast Guard side. I would like to think the same thing is true for those people who choose to work in the private sector, that there is value for when they interface with a Coast Guard marine inspector or a Naval architect or maritime lawyer, whatever it might be. This is an opportunity, again, reflecting on the potential that we have through this podcast to take that in a new vector using the social media. So I'm really excited. I think there can be another step increase in this partnership as we look at the new options we

have.

Benjamin: I agree. I think this is going to be great in that kind of the marriage of both of our ideas and the listeners, our other shipmates that are out there, contributing their thoughts and questions to us is really going to hopefully turn this into a powerful medium and a way to get information and answers or spark some debate perhaps and maybe raise other questions. I will say if you've heard a loud horn in the background, because this is an authentic podcast that was the Staten Island Ferry departing. So if you hear any big horns out there, we take this very seriously and we're right down here on the water. Admiral Watson, some of the things that we kind of shot back and forth a little bit, things that we would be interested in discussing, I had mentioned piracy and sadly, the maritime papers are reporting that possibly a second seaman was killed aboard The Beluga Nomination, which was hijacked within the last week or so. We've talked about marine credentialing. What are some of the other thoughts that you have of things that we can share and that we encourage our listeners to ask questions about?

Admiral Watson: What I envision is that we would have these podcasts on a periodic basis and we would pick a subject, piracy or credentialing or the inspection procedures that we use both on foreign vessels and domestic vessels. I think we've got some interesting issues coming up with regard to water standards and the environmental control areas. We've got all kinds of new things occurring with regard to renewable energy and the wind farms that are potentially in the future. The Coast Guard is involved in the Arctic questions. Then we've got other waterways type issues of deepening of ports and that sort of thing. I think we want to always keep in mind however, that this is Amver's site and that each time we get together we want to talk about those things that mariners do to save the lives of other mariners and to, in some cases, prevent bad things from happening in the first place. That's kind of what I envision, Ben. I would hope that we could get some guests who are the real subject matter experts in some of these areas. I'm interested in learning myself, both from experts from within the Coast Guard and experts within the professional mariner community.

Benjamin: Absolutely. I think we've got a great opportunity to, as you said, learn ourselves and share important and useful information with our audience. I'm excited. I think this is going to be a great dialog with you, with me, and as we've tried to underscore, with the maritime community. There's a term in the social media world called user generated content and I know, Admiral, that you're in agreement with me, that we'd really like to see the users help drive the topics that we cover and the issues that we try to tackle, the stories that we share with you. Certainly we're going to have Amver success stories. Perhaps some stories that aren't so successful because that's how we learn is from things that don't necessarily turn out the way we expect them to. So I'm very, very excited. This should be a great opportunity to give and take with the maritime community. Admiral Watson, I can't thank you enough for rodgering up and offering to join us. I'm very thankful to call you a shipmate and I think we've really got something for the future here.

Admiral Watson: Well great, Ben. It's been good talking to you this morning and we'll look forward to doing it again soon.

Benjamin: Wonderful. We'll have some links in the show notes below to some of Admiral Watson's information and links to our Atlantic area. We'll see you on the Quarterdeck next month.

Narrator: You have been listening to the Quarterdeck. Learn more about the Amver program at Amver.com. The Quarterdeck theme song is called Botany Bay by the Blaggards available at musicalley.com or follow the link in our show notes.