

## Now going strong, Vallejo Maritime Academy started out shaky

By Nancy Dingler

Saturday, November 20, 2004

A record number of students are enrolled at the California Maritime Academy. The academy, otherwise known as Cal Maritime, is a campus in the California State University system.

Enrollment is at an all-time high of nearly 700 students, which includes an entering freshman class of about 210. Enrollment is expected to grow to nearly 800 students in the next few years.

This is a long way from the academy's shaky beginnings.

In 1874 new schools were created to train future officers on steam-powered merchant ships. Congress authorized the secretary of the Navy to furnish U.S. Naval vessels to the states of Massachusetts, New York and Pennsylvania for the sole purpose to provide training vessels for these new schools. No schools were established on the West Coast. No longer content with being left out, the Legislature passed a bill on June 3, 1929, authorizing the establishment of a California nautical school.

In spring 1930, the Navy assigned the SS Henry County, a 261-foot freighter, to the new California Nautical School.

The Henry County had been sitting in the East Coast mothball fleet after the end of World War I. After her arrival at San Francisco, the ship was turned over to the California and was immediately sent to the shipyard for renovations. By December, the Henry County was renamed the USS California State. A location was needed for the school and its new training ship. The school's board of governors were able to lease the old Navy Fuel Depot at California City (now called Tiburon).

The 50-acre site had machine and foundry shops, housing for cadets, fuel storage, offices and, most importantly, a mooring facility. On Jan. 29, 1931, the first entrance exams were held throughout the state. More than 100 men took the test. From that number, 56 "cadets" reported for instruction (44 graduated in August 1933). From the beginning, the school was underfunded. Renovations for the training ship were postponed.

In the interim, the 126-foot private yacht Valero II was loaned to the school. Finally the renovations for the California State were completed. The ship was renamed, TS. (Training ship) California State. In December 1931, the ship made its first training cruise, sailing to South America and Washington D.C. The following year, the cadets took the training ship around the world. In 1933 because of severe budget cutbacks on the state level, there was a proposal to abolish the school. Funding was found and the school continued. However, to save on finances, both the officers and cadets held classes and lived on the ship. The nickname "Iron Mother" was born.

Two years later, funding again became so severe the school's board of governors seriously considered closing the school. The process of closing had started when officials found emergency funds. The school was reorganized and business resumed in July 1935. The major change under reorganization was to change the curriculum to three years, instead of the previous two years to graduate. By 1939, the school had an enrollment of 127 cadets.

On Oct. 10, 1939, the California Nautical School changed its name to California Maritime Academy. Beginning with the graduation class of 1940, besides receiving their licenses as third mates or third assistant engineers, they now received a bachelor of science and some Naval Reserve commissions. CMA was no long just a trade school, but an institution of higher learning.

As war threatened, it became clear the Navy was going to need return of its refueling depot. The lease to the academy was not renewed. The school relocated to San Francisco. The ship was berthed at Pier 54. In 1941, the ship moved to the Ferry Building. The training ship would not have a permanent home for a while. As these events were occurring, the control of the ship switched from the Navy to the new Maritime Commission in December 1940.

Upon the declaration of war, in 1941, the ship was painted wartime gray and once again renamed. Thus TS California State became TS Golden State. The three-year course of study was accelerated to just 18 months. With smaller enrollment, two classes a year would graduate. The cadets were confined to short local training cruises within the confines of San Francisco Bay and the San Joaquin River.

The California Maritime Academy graduates served with honor in the various branches of the armed forces and Merchant Marine during the war. Many saw action. Some became prisoners of war. Eleven died in the line of duty. Since World War II, graduates have served with distinction in the Korean War, Vietnam, and in the recent conflicts in the Middle East.

Since the eviction in 1940 from Tiburon, the search for a new, permanent home was

ongoing. In early 1941, a 67-acre site was selected in Morrow Cove at Semple Point by the mouth of the Napa River and the Carquinez Straits at Vallejo. Finally, in August 1943 the TS Golden State arrived at her new permanent home. The cadets could now eat and sleep ashore, instead of within the confines of their "Iron Mother."

The cornerstone for the first permanent building was laid in 1945 and the three-year class schedule with its long foreign training cruises resumed. The original TS Golden Bear was retired long ago and replaced over the years by a succession of three other ships, each named TS Golden Bear. The current Golden Bear is the former Navy hydrographic survey ship USNS Maury (T-AGS-39) placed in service at Cal Maritime in 1996.

On July 1, 1995, the California Maritime Academy became the 22nd campus of the California State University system. It's one of only seven degree-granting maritime academies in the United States, and the only one on the West Coast.

Cal Maritime offers students (men and women) four-year degrees in business administration, facilities engineering technology, global studies and maritime affairs, marine engineering technology, marine transportation and mechanical engineering.

For more information about Cal Maritime, visit [www.csum.edu](http://www.csum.edu).

Many thanks to Douglas Peterson, historical archivist at the academy, who provided a personal guided tour, which included classroom simulators in action.

Correction: Last month's story about the Glashoff Pumpkin Patch contained some factual errors regarding Larry, Phil and Nancy Glashoff's parents. Martin was born Aug. 31, 1918; died April 13, 1999. Elzada (derivation, according to Katherine Murphy, granddaughter, is Ellen and Sadie) was born Aug. 28, 1921, and died April. 22, 1992. I apologize for the errors.

Downloaded from the Solano History Database

<http://www.solanohistory.org/465>

<http://articles.solanohistory.net/465/>