



The Emerson Hotel where the cadet program was initially launched before moving onto Light Street. 2,035 men and women would complete the cadet program with the last class graduating in 1989.



The old Calhoon School at 9 Light Street was torn down in 2000. Members were on hand to collect bricks and granite for later use in the MEBA Merchant Marine Memorial.

Calhoon MEBA School Leaps into the Future

On September 21st 1966, MEBA lit off its cadet program with its first class of two dozen students seeking licenses and an eventual career at sea. Under the direction of Mr. Roy Luebbe, the program got underway using two floors of the Emerson Hotel in Baltimore, MD with a faculty of four.

The School resulted from an evolution of ideas developed in the early 1960s. The MEBA established a Training Fund in 1963 as a means to set up a system for engineers to upgrade their licenses and to keep members on top of the latest techniques as the industry began to embrace more automation and technically advanced ships.

But by the mid-1960s, that plan went onto a fast track when government and industry leaders approached then-MEBA President Jesse Calhoon seeking a way to help meet a critical shortage of qualified marine engineers as a result of the Vietnam War. The Union's creation of Operation LEAP (Licensed Engineer Apprentice Program) segued into the September 1966 startup date of the cadet program made tangible by the hundreds of applications for enrollment.

In 1966, to satisfy the demand, Operation LEAP took high school graduates through two years of intense study, including six months of sea time. Later, the program expanded to three years, with a full year of sea duty. This was unique, being the only Merchant Marine cadet program jointly sponsored by labor and management and funded by the maritime industry.

In February 1967, the facility was moved to the former Southern Hotel building at 9 Light Street in Baltimore and dubbed the Calhoon MEBA Engineering School (CMES).

News reports accompanying the graduation of the first class of cadets in October 1968 noted that the best inducement for attending the program was that in addition to it being free, a cadet received \$200 per month while in training. Upon graduation students would have the skills and knowledge which would enable them to earn a salary commensurate with an upper level corporate executive.

The School's mission was expanded in 1972. The new technology of first and second generation automated ships required higher skills for operation. Reduced manning demanded increased productivity from the engineering personnel. To meet these needs, the School's faculty, labs, workshops, and classrooms used for the cadet program were

made available to MEBA licensed engineers. During the 1970s, the School flourished as a center of training for both cadet apprentices and licensed seagoing members.

In 1972, the MEBA Training Plan purchased an expanse of land on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. Over the years the operation gradually shifted from Baltimore to Easton until 1984 when everything was operated from the Easton campus. Due to a downturn in the maritime industry, the need for the cadet program diminished and the number of cadet classes was reduced and eventually eliminated. 2,035 men and women had completed the cadet program at the School, with the last class graduating in 1989.

With the demise of the cadet program the Training Program sunk into a "down" period with a reduced staff and a bare minimum course load. Dedicated staff kept the School afloat.

But a 1991 restructuring and a new course heading helped revitalize the School. Under Director Larry O'Toole, the CMES was redefined to provide continuing education and upgrading opportunities for licensed MEBA officers. Subsequent directors added their own stamp and kept up a series of sparkling training program upgrades that have transformed our facility in Easton into the crown jewel of the MEBA.

Current Director Joyce Matthews has overseen some of the most far-reaching and exciting additions to the program. The recent addition of two full-mission bridge simulators and two part-task bridge simulators has further broadened the curriculum to ensure that our deck officers are able to benefit as much as our engineers from the outstanding selection of regulatory-required and professional courses.

The Quality Management System, as certified by Det Norske Veritas (DNV) and recognized by the American Council on Education, helps ensure that the School's high standards will be maintained. As technology advances and international maritime standards change, the School continues to adapt its curriculum and equipment to ensure that our membership stays current with the skills and knowledge necessary to keep American flag vessels safe and competitive on the oceans of the world. ■

Special thanks to Lisa McNeal, the school's librarian and archivist, who was crucial in compiling this nutshell account of the School's history.



The CMES Oct. 1978 class included the School's first-ever female graduate Joyce Hanson (now School Director Joyce Matthews) as well as MEBA President Ron Davis (standing second from left).



A firefighting course at the School. CMES has always been at the cutting edge of training. The US Coast Guard license examination, in their new format of entirely multiple choice questions, was tested for the very first time at the School in 1972. The new exam was in nationwide use soon after.



At a ceremony honoring retired Academic Director Art Newberry are (l-r) Larry O'Toole, Art Newberry, Joyce Matthews, Gil LaDana and Roy Luebbe.



Members at the entrance of the School participating in a local trash cleanup project. Popular Instructor Frank Walsh is the leader of the chain gang.



The School's new Bridge Simulator has allowed CMES to give our deck officers the most advanced training in the world. In the photo, Instructor Scott Conway shows the simulator to Labor Secretary Elaine Chao.



Left: Additional training such as the Lifeboat course (on the Miles River) became possible when the CMES was relocated from Baltimore to Easton. Giving our contracted companies more "bang for the buck," the CMES continues to be the finest source of maritime labor.



Groundskeeping Supervisor Vernon Freeman is the longest serving employee at the CMES (seen here at CAA Reunion). He began in 1972 and is still going strong. His brother William started the same year but retired in Nov. 2005. Darryl McCaslin is the longest serving instructor having joined the staff in 1974. He still teaches Diesel and Refrigeration courses at the School.



Chemical, biological, radiological defense (CBRD) training is provided as part of the Government Vessel Operations course at the School required for sailing on Government ships.



Calhoon graduates assemble at a dedication for the Roy Luebbe Center. To this day, the fear and respect the original School Director commanded prompts Calhoon Students to refer to him as "Mr. Luebbe."