

# MEBA Engineers Rewarded for Pulling Battered Ship Through Maelstrom

**W**hen a torrential Atlantic squall savaged the Central Gulf barge carrier GREEN ISLAND, the MEBA engineering crew was the only thing that stood in the way of an appointment with Davy Jones' locker. The potentially catastrophic storm swirled up in February 1999 and on the 16th of that month hammered the vessel mercilessly. The lighter aboard ship (LASH) was returning from Singapore with a full load of barges, rubber and iron en route to North Carolina. One hundred and fifty miles northeast of

of fuel and ballast managed to counteract the intensifying list as the engine crew maintained a persistent vigil to shield the ship from the billowing waves. The engine team wrestled the seas for over a day and kept the vessel trim until the GREEN ISLAND managed to limp into port in Bermuda, with cargo intact. An immediate and unremitting response had rescued the vessel.

Twenty-two months after their courageous actions saved the ship, the engineering crew was honored with the American Merchant Marine Seamanship Trophy presented at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in Long Island, New York. Established in 1962, the award honors mariners who display the 'highest standards of professional competence at sea in the presence of extreme peril to life and/or property under adverse and severe weather conditions.' The Academy's selection committee, made up of representatives of maritime

labor, trade associations and federal government, noted that the actions of the worthy recipients both saved the severely damaged vessel as well as the lives of



*The Chief Engineer on the GREEN ISLAND Charles Brown. He directed a successful effort to save the GREEN ISLAND after the storm ripped away a chunk of the ship's hull. He and his team were honored in December by the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy.*



*The storm tore apart the inch-thick steel plating on the ship's hull. Through heroic efforts by the engine crew, the ship diverted safely to a port in Bermuda.*

Bermuda, punishing 40-foot waves and 50-knot winds beat down the vessel's interior web frames, wiped the longitudinals clean and ruptured a gaping 90 x 30 foot hole in the ship's hull. Chief Engineer Charles W. Brown rallied his crack team to grapple against relentless waves that pummeled the floundering vessel. The ventilator shafts streamed water into the engine room and the starboard wing tank and the bilges began to flood. As water blasted through the naked hull, the vessel's crew faced a mounting crisis that threatened to drag the ship down to the bottom of the sea.

Chief Brown, along with 1st Assistant Engineer Garrett Harrington, 2nd A/E Robert Reading, 3rd A/E Eddie Washington, along with the MM&P deck officers and SIU unlicensed crew, furiously battled the uncompromising weather that hobbled the ship with a 20-degree list. Aided by the ship's double bottom, the MEBA members bravely applied their engineering skills to neutralize the onrushing water and the violent swell of the seas straining against the ship's steel. Sustained cross-pumping

a thankful crew. On December 16, 2000, Garrett Harrington and Robert Reading accompanied by Chief Brown's significant other, Jody Green, accepted the prestigious award, an ornate sterling silver cup. Chief Brown, a fourth generation MEBA member, was back in his engine room at the time -- keeping his ship on an even keel.



*Chief Engineer Charles Brown couldn't attend the award ceremony held at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in New York but was represented by his significant other - Jody Green (2nd from left). At left is the Chief Mate on the GREEN ISLAND, Al Magill. MEBA's Atlantic Coast V.P. Paul Krupa holds the cup with the ship's 1st A/E Garrett Harrington.*