



The CAPE VICTORY (as well as the CAPE VINCENT) are Keystone RRF ships that sheltered emergency equipment in Beaumont that was used after Hurricane Rita blew in.



The rampant looting made a bad situation worse.



The MEBA-crewed vessel THOMAS JEFFERSON was one of the many NOAA ships that helped stabilize the situation on the waterways following the hurricanes.

KATRINA & RITA:

MEMBERS AND RETIREES WITHSTAND 1-2 COMBO

MEBA SHIPS AIDING GULF COAST COMEBACK

Gulf Coast members and retirees are down but not out after two heavyweight hurricanes delivered a 1-2 wallop to the region. MEBA Brothers and Sisters have all been accounted for following the devastation but many are solemnly picking up the pieces of their lives from the wreckage wrought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Weeks later, we are still hearing reports of members and retirees who have suffered the loss of their homes and property and many are continuing to search for missing friends and relatives. Our thoughts and prayers continue to be with the victims of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

STORM CENTER MEBA

As residents fled and Hurricane Katrina prepared to slam into the Gulf Coast, MEBA President Ron Davis and his Headquarters team issued a series of advisories to pass on words of warning and to apprise our people on the latest developments. Pres. Davis and Gulf Coast V.P. John McCurdy stayed in constant communication as the situation developed and agreed to designate the Houston Union Hall as HQ for the Gulf region. Branch Agent Lou Marciello kept a vigil at that hall, known as "Storm Center MEBA," and helped it serve as a communications checkpoint for our people caught in the storm.

With Hurricane Rita threatening, our Houston hall closed shop for a day or so, but was back in business two days later none the worse for wear and tear. The New Orleans Union hall similarly survived its bout with Hurricane Katrina. Branch Agent John McCurdy and Patrolman Moose Mallini reported that water levels never penetrated our space at 811 Carondelet Street. The hall also dodged the glancing blow received by Hurricane Rita. However, due to the deteriorated condition of the city and inadequacy of available water, the New Orleans hall will remain closed until the situation further stabilizes. MEBA operations normally conducted on Carondelet Street have been shifted to our Union hall in Houston.

CAPE K'S WEATHERED THE STORM IN NEW ORLEANS

MEBA officers helped save their ships as the Keystone-managed Ready Reserve Force vessels CAPE KNOX and CAPE KENNEDY weathered Hurricane Katrina from their berths at the Poland Street Wharf in New Orleans. Three rugs helped the vessels secure themselves at the pier and stayed on scene as the hurricane approached and conditions steadily worsened. In the early morning hours, the CHIOS BEAUTY, a bulker tied up nearby, broke her moorings and was blown across the river before running aground. As the 145 mile per hour winds began to snap the mooring lines on the KNOX and KENNEDY and the ships began sliding down the pier, it appeared that the RRF vessels might be doomed to the same fate. One of the bollards the KNOX had tied up to was actually torn out of the dock by the raging weather.

A small force of officers and unlicensed mariners deployed on deck in driving rain and hurricane force winds to prevent the ship from breaking loose. For five hours, with the first three spent constantly tending the lines, they labored through intolerable conditions but managed to refasten the lines and stop the vessels from hurtling off toward their demise. Hours later, when the winds began to slacken off, they re-secured the ships for the night. The next day they were able to return to their original positions. Since then, the ships began to run low on food and supplies as well as water but they continued to make do with great ingenuity not uncommon to MEBA engineers and deck officers. MEBA commends the incredible bravery and cool under fire exhibited by our members aboard these vessels.

Soon after, the Cape K's were turned into shelters for Coast Guard personnel and emergency workers. The KENNEDY was tapped as the emergency headquarters for Port of New Orleans staff and port operations were directed from there in the early weeks. The KNOX was put into full operating status and sailed down the coast supporting oil spill response and recovery efforts.



Katrina's force drove this barge up on the levee across from Riverwalk on the Algiers side.

MPF(E) SHIP SHAKES OFF BLOW FROM KATRINA

The USNS 1ST LT HARRY L. MARTIN, an MSC Maritime Prepositioning Force (Enhanced) vessel, was slammed at the dock in Mobile, AL by Katrina. Crewmembers did what they could to contain the damage but the punishment inflicted by Mother Nature was enough to land the vessel in Mobile's Bender shipyard for minor repairs. During the wrath of Rita, the CAPE FLATTERY and CAPE FAREWELL, Patriot-managed RRF ships under the direction of the Maritime Administration, were also battered by ferocious winds but managed to survive the storm (in Orange, TX and Beaumont, TX respectively) reportedly without damage.

KEYSTONE TEXAS, ATLANTIC FOREST, CAPE FLORIDA HANG ON

The MEBA-crewed KEYSTONE TEXAS, operated by Keystone Shipping, endured Hurricane Katrina in Norco LA. Loaded with gasoline bound for Tampa, the ship's captain singled out the MEBA engineers as having performed exceptional work in helping the ship resist the storm. The Waterman LASH vessel ATLANTIC FOREST endured Hurricane Rita from Lake Charles, LA. The vessel and her crew braved excessive winds but escaped unscathed from their ordeal.

MEBA officers helped save the Patriot-managed CAPE FLORIDA, tied up in Orange, TX, as Hurricane Rita mercilessly pummeled the vessel. MEBA engineers aboard the ship and three tugs that stayed with the ship proved pivotal in keeping the vessel at bay.

MEBA BEAUMONT SHIPS SHELTER CITY'S EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT

Two of MEBA's Ready Reserve Force fleet vessels berthed in Beaumont, TX were used by the city to shelter valuable relief equipment used in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita. The Keystone-managed CAPE VINCENT and CAPE VICTORY were loaded up with emergency vehicles belonging to the Port of Beaumont, the City of Beaumont, and Jefferson County to keep them safe until the storm passed. A number of police dogs that needed a place to stay were also brought aboard. Both of these ships have been extremely active in support operations in the Middle East over the last two years. The Cape V's are crewed with MEBA officers on both engine and deck levels.

COMFORT DELIVERS A SHOT IN THE ARM; SUPPLY, ARCTIC SUPPORT RELIEF EFFORTS

A week and a half after Katrina struck, the Military Sealift Command hospital ship USNS COMFORT docked at Pier Gulf's Bayou Casotte Terminal in Pascagoula, Miss. to provide medical support and aid to victims. MEBA civilian mariners crew all of the MSC Auxiliary fleet vessels.

The COMFORT brought its unique capabilities for humanitarian relief missions, including helicopter lift capability, advanced medical equipment, a wide range of medical capabilities, berthing and personnel support, and logistical supply assets to support medical operations ashore.

The ship loaded more than 245,000 pounds of supplies, including more than 48,000 bottles of water prior to departure from Baltimore, Md. The 894-foot ship then stopped in Mayport, Fla. en route to the Gulf Coast to receive more than 300 medical and support personnel, to load an additional \$800,000 of medical supplies including pharmaceuticals, intravenous fluids and vaccines, and took on \$3 million in donated medical supplies. With the onset of Hurricane Rita, the COMFORT was awaiting orders to sail into the impact zone.

MEBA FUND FOR KATRINA- STRICKEN MEMBERS

MEBA President Ron Davis announced that the Union's District Executive Committee checked off on the formation of a Good & Welfare Fund that will assist our active and retired members who have been victimized by Hurricane Katrina.

The tax-free relief fund, set up as a non-profit organization, was formed just days after the Hurricane hit and has gathered well over \$60,000. The Union itself christened the fund with a substantial donation and members followed in kind.

In the meantime, keep those contributions coming! Checks can be made out to the "MEBA Good & Welfare Fund, Inc." and sent c/o Secretary-Treasurer Cecil McIntyre to 444 North Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 800, Washington D.C. 20001. The donations are tax-deductible—the EIN number is 20-3402158.

AFFECTED MEMBERS & RETIREES SHOULD UPDATE PLANS OFFICE WITH ADDRESS INFO

The MEBA Plans Office understands that many homes of members and retirees were affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and that many may be in long-term, temporary quarters. If you are amongst these participants please contact the Member Services Department at the Plans Office to keep them informed of any address changes that may affect delivery of mail to you.

In light of the fact that many of these participants may not have access to the Marine Officer or Telex Times they ask that anyone in contact with them please pass this message along.



The Galleria, an office and shopping complex in New Orleans, fell victim to the Category 4 force of Katrina.



Crews aboard the CAPE KENNEDY (seen here) and CAPE KNOX performed heroically in saving their ship from the wrath of Katrina.



The MEBA-crewed WHEELER and other Army Corps dredge and survey ships helped clear shipping traffic in Gulf Coast waters following the hurricanes.

In addition, the USNS ARCTIC, which is based at Naval Station Earle, N.J., arrived in the Katrina-ravaged Gulf Coast two days after the disaster. The MSC Fast Combat Support ship, complete with MEBA officers in the engine room, was providing underway replenishment to the USS BATAAN Navy ship group sent into the region. USNS SUPPLY, another MEBA crewed Fast Combat Support ship, was also tapped for relief operations and sailed in support of her Naval group. Several State Academy training ships EMPIRE STATE, SIRIUS and STATE OF MAINE were also called into action to assist the relief efforts after Hurricane Katrina.

At press time, it appeared that the MEBA-crewed oiler USNS PATUXENT would be tapped for Rita relief but it still had not become clear what other MEBA-crewed vessels would be called upon to assist in the aftermath of Hurricane Rita.

MEBA NOAA VESSELS CLEAR KATRINA-RAVAGED WATERWAYS

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and her MEBA mariners played a key role in a major interagency effort to ensure that navigational areas affected by Hurricane Katrina were cleared of obstructions and debris.

MEBA crews the NOAA vessels, some of which were sent to the hurricane areas as part of Navigation Response Teams. The THOMAS JEFFERSON completed repairs to the Pascagoula tide gauge and conducted side scan survey work in the approaches to the Pascagoula ship channel. The NANCY FOSTER was sent on a mission to sample water, sediments, and fish/shrimp for evidence of toxic contamination and pathogens in the offshore waters affected by Katrina. It later sailed to Gulfport, MS, to assess the tide gauge locations. GORDON GUNTER provided food and shelter for crews and displaced NOAA employees, and assisted with cleanup and relief operations. The ship also provided communications support to the Navy and Coast Guard. The OREGON II provided berthing and relief for crew/family members and NOAA personnel, and assisted with cleanup and relief operations on a limited basis. The vessel had suffered a foot-long gash in its hull above the waterline and some scarring on the hull from banging against the pier during Hurricane Katrina.

ARMY CORPS VESSELS GIVE AID IN GULF

The largest seagoing hopper dredge in the United States served as a workhorse in the Gulf following the Katrina disaster. The WHEELER reportedly went into emergency mode acting as a communication station, feeding and berthing station for emergency personnel and conducted fuel transfers to emergency vehicles. The Hopper dredge STUYVESANT was relied upon in Mobile for survey and dredge operations and later worked the Lower Mississippi River. The Dredge McFARLAND was concentrating on the area near Venice, LA. The MEBA-crewed vessels are part of a fleet of dredges that are freeing up waterways and providing help whenever necessary.

N.O. REC TEMPORARILY OUT OF COMMISSION

Hurricane Katrina caused the Coast Guard's Regional Examination Center (REC) in New Orleans to close its doors as employees evacuated from the city. The crescent city REC is the largest in the country and regularly issues 20 percent of all mariners' credentials nationwide. The Center may be closed for a few more months. In the short-term, the Coast Guard plans to augment staff levels at surrounding RECs with New Orleans personnel.

Many mariners in the hurricane devastated area lost their credentials in the subsequent flooding. These mariners, as well as those seeking routine renewal of expiring credentials, need Coast Guard services before they can return to shipboard employment. In many cases, records that existed in REC New Orleans are being recovered through copies, identified through letters sent to applicants, or verified from information in centralized mariners' records. Mariners who had an application pending in New Orleans can contact another REC and provide that Center with copies of the documents submitted to the New Orleans REC along with any correspondence received in response to the application. More can be found on the web at www.uscg.mil/stcw/index.htm.

TRAINING SCHOOL TO HOUSE MEBA HURRICANE EVACUEES

The Trustees of the MEBA Training Plan have authorized the use of MEBA's training school facilities for short term, temporary housing for active and retired MEBA members (and their immediate families) who have had to evacuate their permanent homes because of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Space and duration are limited because of the ongoing academic activities and student load.

For further information and referral, evacuees should contact MEBA Headquarters at 1-877-282-6322, identify yourself as an active or retired MEBA member and ask for the person in charge of Hurricane Relief.

Coast Guard REC phone numbers follow: Anchorage (907) 271-6736; Baltimore (410) 962-5132/5147; Boston (617) 223-3040/41/42; Charleston (843) 720-3250 or (800) 826-1511; Guam (671) 339-2001; Honolulu (808) 522-8264; Houston (713) 948-3350/51; Juneau (907) 463-2458; San Pedro (310) 732-2080; Memphis (901) 544-3297 or (866) 777-2784; Miami (305) 536-6548/49/6874 or (800) 982-9374; New York (212) 668-7492/7864/4970/6395; Portland, Ore. (503) 240-9346; Oakland, Calif. (510) 637-1124; San Juan (787) 729-2376; Seattle (206) 220-7327; St. Louis (314) 539-3091.

SHIPPING CARDS: NEW ORLEANS MEMBERS CAN DEAL WITH HOUSTON

MEBA's Houston hall is in possession of the New Orleans registration records and they can subsequently confirm members' shipping card information should that member be without his or her carbon copy half of the card. Also, members wishing to transfer their card to another Union hall can rely upon the Houston hall to confirm their information should they be without their half of the shipping card.

SECOND JONES ACT WAIVER GRANTED FOR HURRICANE RELIEF

The Katrina disaster prompted President Bush to order a temporary lifting of the Jones Act to allow foreign-flag vessels to ship between U.S. ports for petroleum and refined petroleum products only. As you know, the Jones Act requires that vessels used to transport cargo and passengers between U.S. ports be owned by U.S. citizens, built in U.S. shipyards, and manned by U.S. citizen crews. The waiver took effect on September 1 and was lifted at 12:01 a.m. on September 19.

A SECOND AND BROADER WAIVER WAS THEN PUT IN PLACE FOLLOWING HURRICANE RITA FOR A ONE MONTH PERIOD.

Regrettably, these actions are symptoms of the erosion of the U.S. Merchant Marine. Together with the American Maritime Congress, MEBA canvassed our contracted companies and determined that there was in fact a legitimate lack of Jones Act vessels available to carry oil & gas in the Gulf during this time.

MEBA is working with other unions, the Maritime Trades Dept. and the Maritime Administration to help ensure this latest waiver remains temporary. In the meantime, we will continue to work with Congress towards achieving a more robust fleet so that this situation need not repeat itself.



N.O. Patrolman Moose Mallini found the hall undamaged. Moose was not as lucky—Katrina destroyed his house and most of his earthly possessions. Many of our Gulf coast members and retirees are in similar straits.

VACATION/PORT RELIEF PAYMENTS

All Vacation and Port Relief Claims normally processed in New Orleans are now being processed in the Cleveland Office. Claims can be mailed directly to the Cleveland Office, turned in at any Plans outport office, or mailed to the Plan Office in Baltimore. Claims will be processed as quickly as possible, usually within 24 hours of receipt. The address of the Cleveland Office is:

MEBA Vacation Plan
101 Erieside Avenue
Room 202, Dock #30
Cleveland, OH 44114



MEBA HQ TOLL-FREE "HURRICANE HOTLINE" SET UP FOR EVACUEES

Headquarters has set up a toll free phone number for MEBA evacuees of Hurricanes Rita and Katrina. The number is 1-877-282-MEBA (6322). It was primarily set up to aid those displaced members and retirees who are in need of shelter but is also designed for other hurricane-related assistance. Members and retirees have been extremely generous in offering up their homes to MEBA Gulf area evacuees. We would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to those people who have demonstrated the true spirit of unity and friendship (the "U&F" from the MEBA logo). Headquarters is updating that list and would appreciate if you give us a ring (using the toll-free hurricane hotline).

The situation in downtown New Orleans further highlighted the importance of maritime and shipping in relief operations. (Photo: CG Petty Officer 2nd Class Kyle Niemi)