



SIU & Maritime Trades Dept. President Mike Sacco gave a brief but rousing speech at the dedication ceremony.

# BRIDGE SIMULATOR

## Transforms MEBA School into Full Service Facility

*MEBA's Calhoun School in Easton, MD has completed its evolution into a first-class facility for both engineers AND deck officers as its world-class bridge simulator was introduced to the world in February. The Union's training facility played host to a slew of dignitaries, union leaders, government and company officials as the School showcased its new bridge simulator suite and 235-seat auditorium at a dedication ceremony.*

The multi-purpose simulation bridge trainer suite allows the School to offer 'one-stop shopping' for MEBA mates to obtain licensing credentials while minimizing the School's reliance on outside training organizations. It allows our deck officers to receive advanced training on some of the most sophisticated modeling and imaging equipment in the world. Students can simultaneously control simulated vessels at ten bridge stations, playing out high fidelity ship scenarios utilizing any of 56 different vessel types in over 20 different ports. In addition to the ten ships that can be controlled within one scenario, instructors can further intensify the simulation by implanting multiple computer-controlled ships into the scenario.

Joined by MEBA President Ron Davis, Calhoun School Director Joyce Matthews helped christen the new bridge simulator at the February 4 ceremony. She pointed out that the project came together in an amazingly short time telling attendees, "This time last year you would actually be sitting on the floor of the gymnasium!" MEBA's Training Plan Board of Trustees checked off on the simulator/auditorium construction one year and five days before its dedication ceremony. Director Matthews pointed out that the simulator "is the crown jewel in a major infrastructure upgrade that balances out an already intense curriculum for ship's officers."

President Davis, who also serves as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees, announced that with the introduction of the bridge simulator, "we are now able to offer as inclusive and excellent a training program for our deck officers as we have been offering to our engineers." He also remarked that the simulator was designed not only to offer the highly specialized training maritime officers

require today, "it's designed to be upgraded, and to be flexible to fit the many tasks that we may face in the future." Davis correctly noted that deck officers won't be the only beneficiaries of this amazing new tool at the School. The simulator is being utilized to augment the Maritime Security Officer course and there are also applications for the Damage Control class. As the need arises, future software upgrades will only broaden its reach for both engineers and deck officers. "With the right software, we can simulate crisis management scenarios, new concept ship training, oil spill response, port security, firefighting, damage control and even land-based exercises," President Davis asserted. "We're ensuring that as the world changes, so can we."



Calhoun School Director Joyce Matthews with the former Academic Director of the School Art Newberry. The beautiful new 235-seat auditorium and lecture hall will carry his name.



MEBA President Ron Davis with MM&P President Tim Brown. Both men were recently returned to office by their unions' respective memberships.



MEBA's Government Affairs Director David Tubman (r) chats with the Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission Steven Blust at the School ceremony.



The Coast Guard's Rear Admiral Sally Brice-O'Hara and MEBA President Ron Davis shared the ribbon-cutting duties at the ceremony for the simulator/auditorium. Also included in the ribbon cutting bunch are Art Newberry, FMC's Steven Blust, AMC Pres. Gloria Tosi, Director Joyce Matthews Adm. Jim Perkins (AMC), and Atlantic Coast V.P. Don Keefe.

Also attending the ceremony was Rear Admiral Sally Brice-O'Hara of the U.S. Coast Guard who noted that the new simulator places the MEBA School "on the cutting edge" with this momentous technological leap. SIU/MTD President Mike Sacco and MM&P President Tim Brown and several of their officials were also in attendance. Other guests included Federal Maritime Commission Chairman Steven Blust, AMC President Gloria Tosi and numerous MEBA-contracted company representatives, MEBA members and officials including Atlantic Coast V.P. Don Keefe, Secretary-Treasurer Cecil McIntyre, Baltimore Branch Agent Bill Van Loo and Government Fleets Rep. Randi Ciszewski. Taking copious notes and frequent photographs were several members of the media. The *Star Democrat* later ran a front page story on the affair.

Students can simultaneously control simulated vessels at ten bridge stations, playing out high fidelity ship scenarios utilizing any of 56 different vessel types in over 20 different ports. In addition to the ten ships that can be controlled by members within one scenario, instructors can further intensify the simulation by implanting multiple computer-controlled ships that can present further challenges for students. Unlike some existing bridge simulator systems, each station operating a different type vessel, can interact with every other station simultaneously. Such simulator interaction is indicative of the system's contemporary technology. A few user friendly software commands can transform the simulation and place a MEBA student at the helm of a tanker, cruise ship or almost any type of vessel including tugs, fast ferries and LNG ships.

Mastered by electronic and charting navigation systems pioneer TRANSAS USA, the versatility of the simulator accommodates upgrades to adapt to ever-evolving Coast Guard and International Maritime Organization training & testing requirements. Another unrivaled aspect of TRANSAS systems is their innovative approach in their creation of simulator visualizations. As Director Matthews noted, "This allows the highest levels of detail and realism in their visuals, as well as the fastest refresh rates with the highest numbers of polygons and image effects."

The stunning new auditorium was dedicated to Art Newberry, the longtime Academics Director at the School, who recently retired. Matthews called Art "the beacon that led the way for us as well as the glue that held it all together. He provided the continuity needed after the departure of the School's founding Director, Mr. Roy Luebbe." The auditorium, called by an auditory science expert, "the best



Some of the players who get into the nuts and bolts of the simulator system are gathered together in this photo. Left to right are Instructor Scott Conway (CMES), Neil Bennett (TRANSAS), Tony Kunecki (NAVSIM), Bob Majewski (NAVSIM), George Toma (TRANSAS) and Instructor Lee Brown (CMES).

acoustically designed space for its size in Maryland," is actually networked so that instructors can operate the simulation exercise on the big screen.

President Davis noted that the membership rolls of the Union are finally expanding after a sluggish decade with the addition of new work with Interlake Steamship and Norwegian Cruise Lines among others. "As the MEBA family continues to grow," he told attendees, "we must lay the proper foundation to build upon that growth. Education is a cornerstone of that foundation."

"A well trained mariner is the first and best way to ensure the safety and reliability of a ship," he continued. "...And this is one of the areas where MEBA excels – and that gives us a significant advantage that we must put to good use." He attested that more improvements and enhancements have been made to the School during the last three years than at any time since the facility moved from Light Street in Baltimore to its current location in Easton.

Of late, the School has welcomed a new Propulsion Systems building, dining hall and conference facilities, a damage control lab and a refurbished lounge and kids playroom as well as wide-scale dorm renovations. Another project currently in the works is a massive new memorial honoring merchant mariners that helped distinguish the Union during our 130 year history.

"This is great news for MEBA contracted companies," MEBA President Ron Davis affirmed. "Our companies will be getting more bang for the buck while their MEBA officers receive the best, most state-of-the-art training available in the world today. This allows our already-excellent training facility to turn it up a notch." ■



The School has continued its amazing path to training excellence that was begun during the tenure of longtime Director Roy Luebbe (on the right). The venerable Luebbe appears here with MEBA member and Calhoun School graduate Joseph Gilbert.



The new simulator suite allows MEBA deck officers (and engineers) to receive top of the line training that can evolve as regulations and requirements change well into the future.