

Houston Hosts Blessey Christening

BY NELSON SPENCER JR.

In 1993, Lyle Beaubouef started his career on the river as a tankerman with Blessey Marine Services, Inc., Harahan, La. Today Beaubouef serves as captain of Blessey's mv. Claudia Harold, a twin-screw 2,400 hp. towboat built by Kody Marine Inc., currently running on the Ohio and Lower Mississippi rivers. As a tribute to his service, Blessey Marine's newest vessel was named in his honor. He chose to name the boat after his father, Joe Ray Beaubouef.

The christening for the Joe Ray Beaubouef took place on January 30 at Bray's Landing in Houston, Texas. Built by Sneed Shipbuilding, Channelview, Texas, the boat's dimensions are 75 by 30 by 10 feet. It is the 320th boat to be delivered by the father and son combo of Martin and Clyde Sneed, but the very first 75-foot boat. According to Clyde Sneed, the vessel has just about everything a typical 85-foot boat would have, including identical bunk and shower space and two refrigerators. The 10 less feet of hull was accomplished by removing an extra work room from the design, said Sneed.

The vessel is powered by two Cummins KTA 38-M0, 850 hp. engines, with 75 kw. 3VTA 5.9-DM Cummins generators for the auxiliary power. All engines were provided by Cummins Southern Plains Inc., Houston, Texas.

Karl Senner, Kenner, La., supplied Reintjes WAF 562, vertical offset, reverse reduction gears, ratio 5.947:1, to the Joe Ray Beaubouef.

Driving the boat are 74- by 56-foot Rice propellers from Texas Wheel Works, Port Arthur, Texas and 7-inch shafts with chrome liners. Shaft bearings and sleeves were provided by Marine Industries Corporation, Clarksville, Ind.

Dales Welding & Fabricators LLC, Plaquemine, La., provided a SeaPure bilge water extraction system, Seahorse sewer unit, 40-ton Patterson winches, a davit crane, aluminum windows for the pilothouse and all of the aluminum doors. The SeaPure bilge system is being used on all Blessey boats, said Dale Lively, owner of Dales Welding. According to Lively, the system has become popular because it is extremely user friendly.



—WJ photos by Nelson Spencer Jr.

The mv. Joe Ray Beaubouef docked at Bray's Landing, Houston, Texas.

An engine alarm, Sim-Vue, as well as a wheelhouse motion detector, Sim-Motion, were both placed on the boat for added safety. Both items were provided by Baton Rouge Marine Electrical Services, Inc., St. Gabriel, La.

The boat's general electrical needs were met by AES Electrical Service & Repairs, Channelview, Texas.

Paint was supplied by International Marine Coatings.

The Crew

Capt. Tom Brown is the captain of the Joe Ray Beaubouef and will be accompanied by long-time acquaintance relief Capt. Charlie Jones. In fact Jones had the job of training Capt. Brown. "I trained him and now I'm working for him!" Jones joked. Combined, the pair bring with them 58 years of experience.

Also on board will be tankermen Jeremy McCulloch and Steve Nash. One deckhand will be on board as well, but was not present at the time of the christening.

Complimenting Sneed Shipbuilding, the crew made several comments on how quiet the boat runs.

Harbor Boat Christened

Floating in the shadow of the mv. Joe Ray Beaubouef was another new vessel built by Sneed Shipbuilding. The mv. Gus Blessey is a 600 hp. harbor vessel that will be operating at Blessey's Channelview fleet in the Houston Ship Channel.

The namesake? No other than Walter and Jane Ann Blessey's miniature Chihuahua, Gus Blessey. Jane Ann Blessey and daughter Laura Todd, took over the christening duties.

—SEE BLESSEY PAGE 13



The mv. Gus Blessey.



"Gus"



Capt. Lyle Beaubouef is joined by sister Cindy Dwyer to christen the mv. Joe Ray Beaubouef, named after their father.



Laura Todd holds the fleet boat's namesake, Gus Blessey, as Jane Ann Blessey breaks the bottle.

Blessey

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

The Gus Blessey, 25 by 20 feet, is powered by two 300 hp. John Deere engines from Stanley Parts, Channelview, Texas. Northern Lights provided the 7.5 kw. generators.

The little boat has “all the whistles and the bells” that a little boat can have, said Clyde Sneed. This includes air controls, steering from Custom Hydraulic Components, Inc., Gretna, La., and two main rudders and four flanking rudders just like the larger vessels.

Sneed Shipbuilding

Sneed Shipbuilding Inc. was founded by Martin Sneed, who has been in the business for close to 50 years. The shipyard has produced 19 drydocks, 320 vessels and many barges. In addition to the vessel for Blessey, Sneed is building a deck barge for Central Boat Rentals and a drydock for Channel Shipyards.

Martin Sneed is still active in the business. Just one week prior to the Blessey Christening, he completed a 100- by 70-foot drydock for Superior Shipyards, Golden Meadow, La. A unique feature of the drydock is that it can actually be used



The crew of the Joe Ray Beaubouef admires the galley. From left to right are: Steve Nash, tankerman; Capt. Tom Brown; Relief Capt. Charlie Jones; and Jeremy McCulloch, tankerman.

as a single unit or as two separate drydocks. The drydock was constructed in two 50- by 70-foot sections at Sneed's Orange, Texas location.

“Walter is a fine customer,” said Clyde

Sneed. “It is always a pleasure working for the people at Blessey.” A sister vessel to the Joe Ray Beaubouef is currently in production and is expected to be delivered in May.

Tasked

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3)

mercial activity, Rawson explained.

While the Mississippi River and Gulf Intracoastal Waterway were clearly defined waterways, other waters were not so clear.

“The operational definition would include waterways up to the last fish house, shrimp shed, ice house, or fuel dock, but not to the fisherman's home if he kept the boat there at a pier,” Rawson said.

Making the definition more complicated was the fact that fishermen often had to travel through non-conventional routes because the normal routes were blocked by debris, he said.

The Coast Guard met with parish officials to determine how many waterways and which of the multiple routes, including new oil field access routes, should be included in the designation, Rawson explained.

Another aspect of the operational definition: debris had to be removed that would “potentially” affect the waterway, Rawson said. This widened the scope of the debris removal from limits that normally include just the channel.

He told the assembled government and private industry officials that if the Coast Guard contractors “could reach the debris with a marine crane” it would be included in the “potentially affect the waterways” category.

Along the Mississippi River, larger equipment could be used, which expanded the reach of the definition, he said. Some of the debris removal had to be accomplished before the Corps of Engineers could repair damaged levees.

At Mile 52 on the Mississippi River, a number of loaded and light barges were deposited literally on top of the levee, attesting to the power and size of the storm surge. Hurricane Katrina came ashore with Category 3 winds, but water pushed ahead of the storm was built off-

shore when it was a Category 5.

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, Rawson said as many as 40,000 vessels were damaged in Plaquemines Parish alone, including many that were “pushed up into peoples' yards.”

He said fishing vessels provided special challenges because they often had booms and other gear which made positioning the lifting gear difficult. Many fishing boats were very tough and quickly put back into service.

“Fishermen still carry the spray-painted four-digit Coast Guard recovery number on the bows of their boats as a badge of honor,” he said.

Other older wooden fishing vessels would not take the stresses of being lifted onto barges or flat-bed trucks, Rawson said.

Rawson's powerpoint presentation included widely circulated photos of two blue and yellow Menhaden (Porgy) fishing boats that were deposited on a levee top. Recovery of those vessels employed heavy-duty air bags that contractors placed under the boats and then literally rolled them to the water's edge.

In other reports, CWO Tony Marinelli said Southwest Pass Lighthouse near the mouth of the Mississippi River was still operating on emergency power and had suffered significant structural damage. A decision has not yet been made whether to repair the facility or build a new one.

Lt. Cmdr. Jeremy Briggs said the Vessel Traffic Service in the New Orleans area suffered some damage but system redundancy kept it working. He anticipated the system would be up to pre-Katrina level by March.

Chris Reider said New Orleans to Baton Rouge (NOBRA) pilots are handling about 37 ship moves per day. He said one of the issues during the hurricane was loss of communications. In the aftermath of the storm, Reider said pilots would walk to the levees to relay messages with their walkie-talkies to keep communications open. He said Nextel

worked best.

Meanwhile, the pilot station used by Crescent and Bar pilots was reported destroyed and pilots were staying on a “quarters barge” while awaiting their next ship to keep the river open.

Lockwood

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14)

It was then moved to Natchez, Miss., to transfer cars from Briars Plantation, Miss., near Natchez, to Vidalia, La., for the Natchez & Southern Railway, a subsidiary of the Missouri Pacific. It was retired in 1961 and delivered under its own steam to a restaurant owner in Chicago. There it was renamed Sara. Strange things happened during that stint. The tops were cut off the boilers to make way for a flight of stairs! In 1970 it was again sold and renamed Showboat and towed to Buffalo, N.Y. That didn't pan out, and in 1985 it was tied up in New York City until 1989, when it was taken to Lelystad, Netherlands, and renamed Mark Twain.

Few steamboats have lasted as long as the Lockwood did, and certainly none had such a long career after retirement. If anyone had told Kavanaugh & Lockwood their boat was destined to fetch up in Holland, they would have had a good belly laugh and dismissed the subject from their minds.

The James Y. Lockwood's hull was built by the Schultz Bridge & Iron Company at McKees Rocks, Pa., in 1896. The boat was finished at Marietta, Ohio. The hull was of steel and was 165.4 feet long, 33 feet wide and 4.5 feet deep. The compound engines had cylinders of 15.5 and 27 inches in diameter and an eight-foot stroke that developed 650 indicated horsepower.

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