

‘GETTING THE NEXT GENERATION READY’

Glen Paine Logs 20 Years as MITAGS-PMI Executive Director

How can you have maritime-themed training centers that are not located on the water? It's a question often heard by Glen Paine, Executive Director of the conspicuously landlocked Maritime Institute of Technology and Graduate Studies (MITAGS), as well as the Pacific Maritime Institute (PMI).

His response? “The majority of our mariner attendees are on or around water every day of their working lives. When they come here, we provide a focused learning experience without distractions.”

Established in 1967 by the International Organization of Masters, Mates and Pilots, the nonprofit trust is a leader in maritime upgrade, assessment, ship simulation, operational research, safety, and emergency response training.

“MITAGS-PMI has the training needed to go from ordinary seaman to unlimited tonnage pilot,” says Paine, who this year celebrates 20 years at the helm. His home and office are on the 40-acre MITAGS campus in Linthicum Heights, Maryland, a few miles inland from Vane Brothers’ Baltimore headquarters. He also oversees PMI, located in Seattle, Washington, and he keeps tabs on licensed centers operating in the United Kingdom, India, the Philippines, and Croatia.

Attendees have been known to come to MITAGS-PMI from as far away as Japan and Sri Lanka to receive high-quality training delivered across 150 courses covering topics such as Able Seamanship, Advanced Firefighting, Confined-Space Entry, and Shipboard Medical Care. While noting that a substantial number of entry-level studies are available, Paine estimates that the schools annually issue 6,500 certificates and enroll 3,000



Glen Paine's office reflects his passion for the maritime industry and the work he performs at MITAGS-PMI. Amid paperwork on his desk are items such as a globe and a paperweight that reads “Diplomacy: The art of letting someone have it your way.” Behind him, hanging alongside a Vane Brothers calendar (of course!) is a portrait of the schooner Pride of Baltimore II.

mariners in programs that run anywhere from a few hours to several years.

“Some people have said we are a national asset,” Paine says. “It’s true that we have a very good track record of helping young mariners mature and move up to higher positions. That’s what it’s all about, getting the next generation ready.”

REAL-WORLD APPLICATIONS

The formal mission of MITAGS-PMI is relatively simple: to enhance the professionalism of mariners through the development of quality maritime leadership, training, education, and safety programs.

In practice, that task isn’t so cut and dry. “Probably 60 to 70 percent of what we do is customized for whomever our customers are,” Paine says. “We start with deciding on a training objective, then we work backwards from there.”

One of the schools’ biggest drawing cards is hands-on simulator training that allows attendees to apply what they learn and repeat as necessary.

“Where skillsets are concerned, it can really accelerate the learning process,” Paine says.

Multiple full-mission ship-handling simulators at both campuses are able to deliver a realistic display of all weather conditions, visibility and illumination effects, even glare on the water. “We can simulate any port in the world and any ship,” Paine adds. “It’s just a question of how much data is available.”

And MITAGS-PMI has upped its game by linking the ship-handling simulators with multiple tug bridge simulators. “This way, you can have tug masters, pilots, and captains all involved in the same training exercise,” Paine explains.

Among many other tools at MITAGS-PMI’s disposal are radar-plotting and electronic-charting simulators, a Vessel Traffic System (VTS) Watchstander, and Emergency Medical Labs.

Amid all of the technology, Paine places a high value on person-to-person communication. “When mariners are on the job, they are often so busy that

there is no time to devote to serious training or even talking to their fellow mariners,” he says. “The schools provide a neutral setting where, along with learning what they are here to learn, they can ask any other questions they want of our instructors and also interact with other attendees.”

FROM STUDENT TO TEACHER

Paine himself was once a MITAGS-PMI instructor. “I was here over 30-some years ago when we really started getting into customization,” he says.

The New Jersey native was drawn toward a maritime career because of his love for racing sailboats as a teenager. He attended the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), graduating in the same class as Captain Bob Becker (MITAGS’ Director of Business Development) and just ahead of Vane Brothers Fleet Development Manager Tom Lamm.

The next several years were spent traveling the world as a Second and Third Mate on off-shore tugs, container ships, and tankers. During one stop in Greece, he met an American tourist named Annette and vowed to stay in touch. The two have been married now for 34 years.

Back when Paine was still sailing, he took courses at MITAGS-PMI. He eventually transitioned into teaching

while also obtaining a Master’s Degree in General Administration from the University of Maryland.

Paine still holds a Chief Mate, Unlimited Tonnage, Oceans license, and he encourages MITAGS-PMI instructors to stay active in the industry. “A number of them do leaves of absence,” he says. “They might take two or three months off to go back to sea, then they return knowing ‘this is what’s happening now.’”

Remaining current is important in an industry that Paine says “changes rapidly. The skillsets that worked 10 years ago aren’t necessarily the skillsets that work today.”

A VALUABLE RESOURCE

For mariners seeking accelerated advancement, MITAGS-PMI offers Maritime Apprenticeship opportunities. Vane Brothers has participated by bringing on cadets as part of a U.S. Coast Guard-approved Workboat Mate Program that intersperses a half-year of shore-based training with a full year of sea time.

“MITAGS-PMI has long been a valuable maritime resource for, and partner with, Vane Brothers,” Tom Lamm notes. “Their programs have helped fill open positions in our fleet with well-prepared mariners.”

Among several former MITAGS-PMI Workboat Mate Cadets are current tug Delaware Mate Aaron Serinis, Anacostia Mate John Girvan, Fort McHenry AB Deckhand Chris Gaito, and Assateague Chief Mate Hank Carter.

Carter notes, “I started my tugboat career a little later in life, when I was already in my 30s, and I knew my goal was to get into the wheelhouse. The [Workboat Mate] program was a great way to get the requirements I needed to sit for the test while also gaining experience as a Deckhand.”

Vane mariners have also utilized MITAGS-PMI for skill upgrades and license renewal. According to Paine, “I think they know that when they work with us, they are going to get quality training.”

Other companies have praised an innovative, two-day Navigation Skills Assessment Program (NSAP) that utilizes custom simulation scenarios to identify a mariner’s skill gaps. In addition, MITAGS-PMI provides Tankerman-PIC training for the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) market and works with private firms on cybersecurity courses.

In Seattle, PMI recently expanded its safety and emergency-response training capabilities with the purchase of the India Tango Marine Fire Fighting School. And Paine notes, “Our Seattle campus will be standing up apprenticeships for Engineers by the end of 2019.”

For added convenience, the schools are exploring a “blended-learning approach” that might incorporate online studies to cover certain course basics. But Paine is quick to add, “We would never want to eliminate interactions with instructors and fellow mariners in a classroom or simulator setting. We think they are essential.”

Learn more about MITAGS-PMI online at <https://mitags-pmi.org>. 



The view from the helm of a MITAGS 300-degree tug bridge simulator.