

Presentation of the Great Lakes Captain's Professional Maritime Achievement Award to Captain John Wellington

It is interesting to find out how a person becomes a mariner. It can be a brief exposure that lingers, but some are born to a place and they can hardly escape it.

Captain John Wellington was born on Mackinac Island July 25, 1931, with a twin brother Jim. Being raised there had to have provided an unlimited opportunity for a young lad to watch all of the vessels not only passing the island but also the ferries and large passenger vessels calling on the island. In those days the hundreds of steam boats passing could not help but stir feelings for what lies over the horizon.

At a very early age he and Jim acquired a small row boat and explored the area in it. At 14 or so he got a small sailboat and expanded his exploration to all around the Straits.

At 17 he decided joining the United States Coast Guard was the way to see over the horizon. Being under 18 his mother had to sign for him at the time, which she did.

His first assignment was to Duluth and while there met a young lady that was to become his lifelong companion, staying home with the girls while he sailed all around. Dolly this award is for you also for making it possible for John to do what he did. They married in 1951.

Sent to the station at Little Rapids Cut at the Soo where he operated small boats for search and rescue. Also while there bought the Sugar Island Ferry with his father and brother Jim.

He was then set to Kodiak Island, Alaska arriving shortly after the earthquake and tsunami. There he sailed aboard the Citrus and the Storis.

Finally assigned to Portland, Maine where he remained until retirement in 1969.

Upon retiring to the Soo he operated the ferry until they sold it in 1973. Then a stint at Famous Soo Locks Boat Tours. The open water called him and he went tugging for several different companies and delivered boats all over the lakes, towing some for boats out of the Welland Canal to be scrapped.

Soon he bought two tugs the Seaway One and Two. He then bought the Tugs Chippewa and Iroquois. These were also used for ship assist and contract ice breaking on the St Mary's River. A big achievement was converting the Chippewa from steam to diesel, installing an Alco in her later selling them to Great Lakes Towing.

Since he had a lot of free time he also owned the pilot boats in the Soo and Detour for a while.

He served the City as Harbor Master for many years and facilitated port calls by numerous ships, providing them with anything they needed.

Still the guy that Lake Carriers calls when they need something as well as all the shipping company managers. They all know who has all the answers and the guy who has the biggest grin when gets aboard and under weigh.

Instrumental in getting International Shipmasters Lodge 22 chartered as well as serving as Grand Lodge President. He is also a longtime

supporter of Great Lakes Captain's Association currently serving as a board member.

His foresight, hard work and dedication resulted in this magnificent museum which we are now aboard, serving for many years on the board of Sault Historic Sites, many as its president.

The list continues but I think this indicates what kind of a man we are here to honor today. Certainly a lifetime of maritime achievement.

It is a great honor for me to present Captain John Wellington with this award.

Captain John Wellington – 2018 Great Lakes Captain Association Award recipient

