

# CAPT'N KEVO'S

## Boating Tips

### T.S. Golden Bear

If you've ever traversed the waterways around the Carquinez Strait to or from San Pablo Bay you've probably noticed a big white ship moored on the Vallejo side of the Strait just west of the bridge. I've passed it hundreds of times. Most mariners are aware that the California Maritime Academy (CMA), now a campus of the California State University System, is located right behind the ship, but few know exactly what purpose the ship serves and the history behind it.

So I sat down with Captain Harry Bolton, Commanding Officer of the *T.S. Golden Bear*, in his office on campus to see what I could find out about this ship. Rumor has it that it was a "spy" ship for the U.S. Navy before being decommissioned in 1994.

Officially, the ship was designed to map the topography of the (deep)

ocean floor in the Pacific Ocean. That seems harmless enough. But upon digging deeper (excuse the pun), I got the feeling there was more to the story than meets the eye.

It seems that during the height of the "cold war" between the U.S. and U.S.S.R., the Russians were thought to be experimenting and developing submarine technology that would make it very difficult for U.S. naval forces to track and locate their submarines while submerged. Apparently, the Russians were not very good at producing quiet subs and were aware that we could track them relatively easily, so decided on the tactic of "hiding" their nuclear underwater nautical assets in the deep canyons of the seas.

While our submarines were vastly superior to theirs in terms of technology and sophistication, we were behind the curve in our ability to decipher the topography of the ocean floor and the Russians



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

took advantage of this. Although the official version of the purpose of this ship was in fact mapping topography, one can draw his/her own conclusions as to what this information was used for. The U.S. government will not confirm or deny this information. (That's their story and they're sticking to it. HA!)

### T.S. Golden Bear Statistics:

LOA: ..... 499 ft 10 in (152.35m)  
 Beam: ..... 72 ft (21.95m)  
 Draft: ..30 ft 06 in (9.29m) [loaded]  
 Displacement: ..... 15,821 tons  
 Engine: ..... Twin Diesels  
 Horsepower: ..... 17,000  
 Propeller: Single Screw, 5 blade, 18 ft 7 1/2 in (5.68m) diameter  
 Speed: ..... 20 knots  
 Ordered: ..... June 28, 1985, under MARAD contract for the Navy  
 Keel laid: ..... July 29, 1986  
 Launched: ..... Sept. 4, 1987, at Bethlehem Steel, Sparrows Point, MD  
 Delivered: March 31, 1989, placed in service with the Navy as *U.S.N.S. MAURY*  
 Built for the U.S. Navy as a Hydrographic Survey Vessel to map the deep ocean floor



*T.S. Golden Bear* heads out under the Golden Gate Bridge on one of her long journeys. Photo courtesy of Doug Webster.

After the conversion of her living spaces, she was transferred to

CMA on May 4, 1996. *T.S. Golden Bear* (also referred to as TSGB) is the fourth and largest training ship at Cal Maritime, and is the third training ship to carry the name *Golden Bear*.

Currently, *T.S. Golden Bear* makes two major training cruises annually that serve many purposes. First of all, they give the cadets at the academy the experience needed to competently operate vessels of this size and larger. Secondly, they give the cadets the “sea-time” necessary to graduate from the academy with their respective degrees. Third, they provide a working navigational laboratory in which the cadets can learn the most sophisticated navigational training available on the high seas.

One of the tenets of the education at the California Maritime Academy is “hands on” education. While at sea and docking/anchoring, it is the cadets who run the show. That is, they have instructors at their side throughout the voyage, but all communication goes to the cadets via radio and the crew and instructors stand by to ensure safety.

They purposely let the cadets make mistakes and teach them afterward the correct procedures to follow, if there are minimal safety concerns. This is very similar to the personalized boating instruction I provide my clients. Unless the situation is reaching critical, I let clients proceed and offer verbal advice. If an imminent danger exists, I will take over and instruct on the proper procedure and then hand the vessel back to the client to proceed.

The deck and engine cadets are trained in every aspect of shipboard life: from watch standing to routine maintenance and everything else in between. They learn the discipline and responsibility of successfully



Ground tackle and dock lines on *T.S. Golden Bear*. Photo courtesy of Doug Webster.

operating a big ship.

The summer training cruises take the cadets to many ports in the Pacific Rim. Last year they went to Korea, Japan, Guam, Saipan, Honolulu and Seattle. This year it is Australia, New Zealand, Pago Pago, Lahaina, Honolulu and San Diego.

These port calls are also a huge part of the cadet training. In addition to learning the steps needed to successfully enter and leave ports, they also learn about other cultures they will encounter while ashore.

These are the experiences the cadets will have when they enter the sea-going maritime industry upon graduation – what better way to “see what you are getting into” than their own summer training cruises.

Companies hire these cadets knowing they have completed the rigorous CMA training process. These companies understand that these cadets had to do far more than your average college grad. Not

only do they adhere to a Code of Conduct, they must uphold uniform and grooming standards during their four-year journey through CMA. As they soon find out after graduation – it was worth it.

## Captain Harry Bolton

Captain Harry Bolton has over 37 years of maritime experience. Twenty-six of those years have been in command, maintaining a solid record of success in providing endless technical, operational and logistic support in every corner of the world.

He is a First Class Pilot, served as an expert witness, and has consulted for several maritime companies, the Marine Corps, and the U.S. Navy on many issues including new equipment design and implementation. He designed and developed the English-speaking curriculum at the Maritime Academy of Asia and Pacific located in the Philippines.

He has spent a lifetime demonstrating the essence of command, leadership, team building and



Captain Harry Bolton, Commanding Officer of *T.S. Golden Bear*.

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innovative solutions, receiving many awards for his achievements. He spent 20 years with General Dynamics/American Overseas Marine, sailing as Master of the *MV 1st Lt. Baldomero Lopez*, which is one of the original Maritime Prepositioning Ships home ported in the Western Pacific and Middle East. His duties included supporting the U.S. military during numerous exercises, humanitarian assistance, the Persian Gulf War and Iraqi Freedom.

Captain Bolton retired from the American Maritime Officers Union after 30 years of service and joined the California

Maritime Academy in 2008. He is the Commanding Officer of the Training Ship *Golden Bear*, Director of Marine Programs and Leadership Development.

His awards include two Merchant Marine Expeditionary Medals, U.S. Navy Meritorious Civil Service Award, FEMA Outstanding Public Service Award, Institute Of Merchant Shipping Ship Safety Award, Guam Governors Meritorious Service Award, and General Dynamics Outstanding Employee Award.

His professional affiliations include the Council of American Master Mariners, the Nautical Institute and the Boston Marine Society. He is a graduate of the California Maritime Academy.

## Kevo's Tip:

My father was in the first gradu-

ating class of the first Maritime Academy in the U.S. at Kings Point, Brooklyn. Afterward, he served in the Merchant Marine during WWII. He worked his way up to Chief Engineer and spent 12 years after the war traveling the world on many ships. I never knew what a great accomplishment this was until I researched this article.

If you or anyone you love is looking for a challenging career that will take you around the world, introduce you to many new cultures and teach you essential life skills, I urge you to visit [www.csum.edu](http://www.csum.edu) and arrange for a tour of the campus. Heck... Tell 'em Captain Kevo sent you. HA!

Be safe & happy boating!

**As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or [kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com](mailto:kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com).**

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