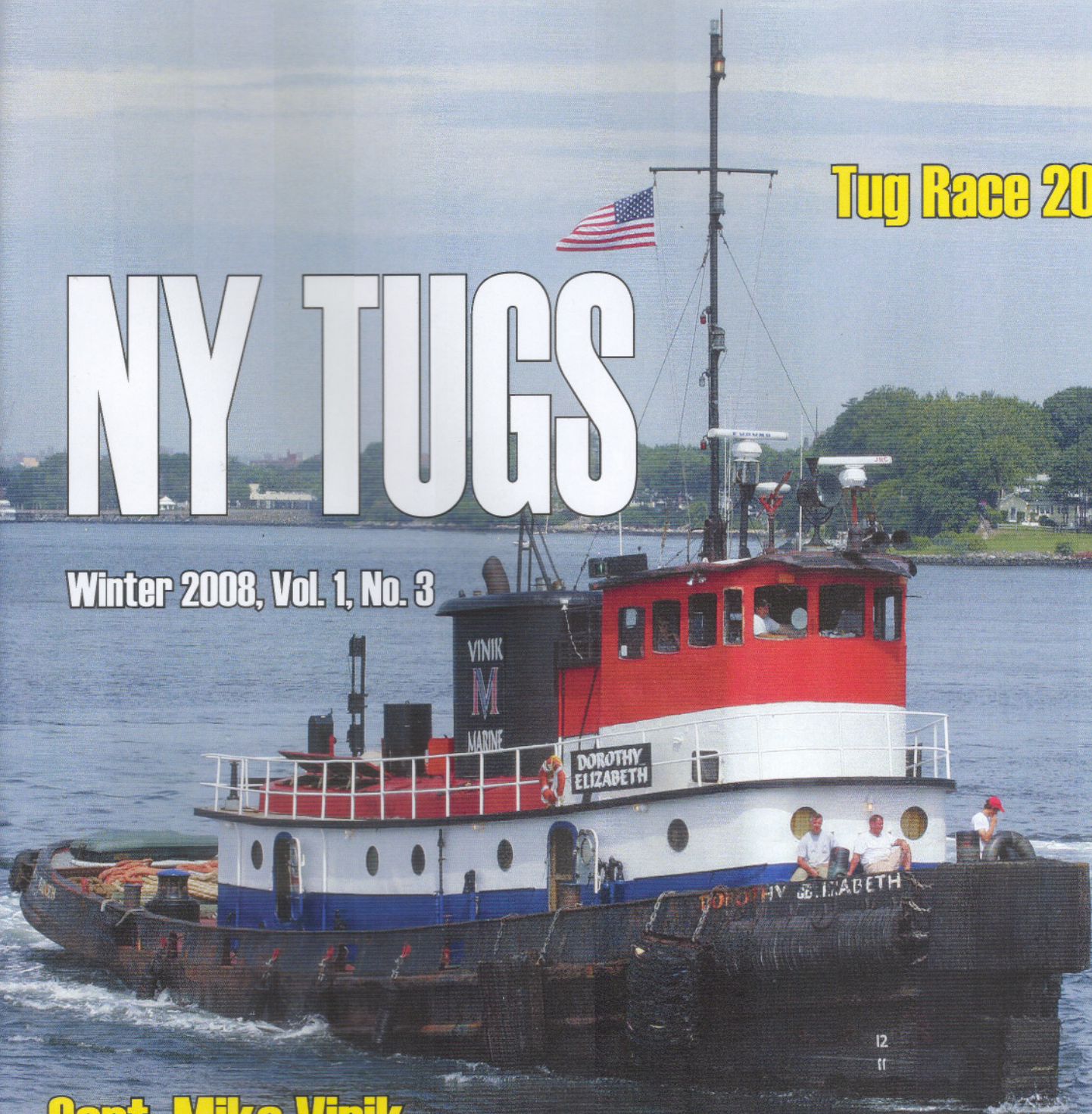


Tug Race 2007

NY TUGS

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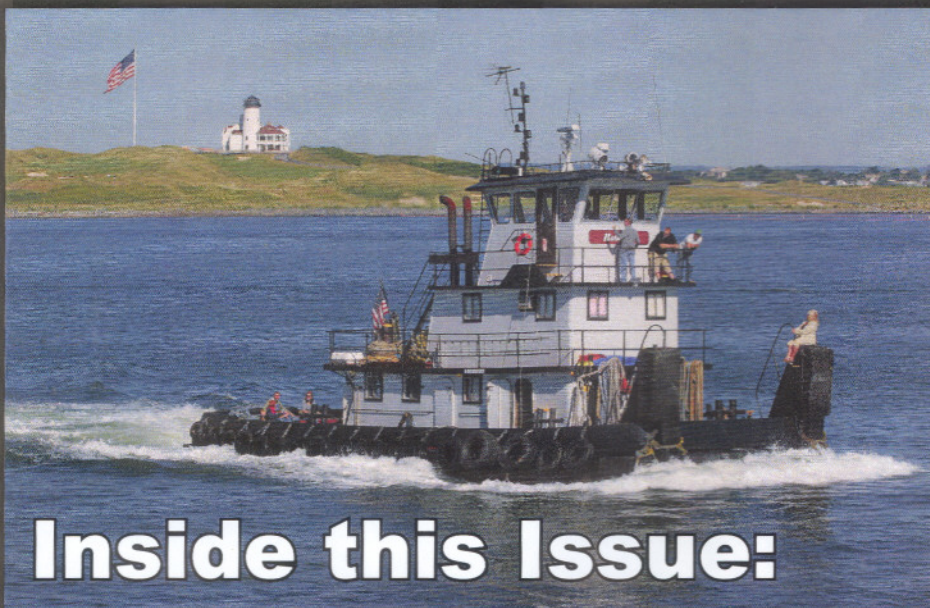
Capt. Mike Vinik

Along the Kills

**From the Log Books
1957**

Tug Tales of NY

Carfloats and Tugs



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Our guest raconteur, Bob Mattsson, brings us a tale of an unpleasant New Year's surprise.

On the Cover: Vinik Marine's DOROTHY ELIZABETH off Throgs Neck in 2006.

Contents Page: Off to the Races! It's Sunday Sept. 2, 2007, and Henry Marine's LEONARD IV is heading for Pier 84 North River for a day of fun. That's the Bayonne Golf Club's clubhouse behind her. Both photos: Rich Violino

NY TUGS

Winter 2007

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Q&A with

Captain

Mike

Vinik

The founder of Vinik Marine recently took time from his busy schedule to talk with NY TUGS' Steve Munoz.



What would we do without modern electronics? This is a digital-age interview, complete with interstate cellphone calls, tape recordings, and emailed photographs and copy exchanges. Yes, it's a digital-age interview of Captain Mike Vinik, about tugs from the steam and bells-and-whistles age working in a digital world—a blend that typifies Vinik Marine.

The first time I saw Mike's DOROTHY ELIZABETH was at the 2005 Tug Race off Staten Island. She was decked out in Vinik Marine's red, white, and blue, but missing the VM logo on her stack. Mike was anxious to get this Grand Old Tug into the race. In her lifetime as the MOBIL 11, the DOROTHY was the fastest boat in NY harbor.

The first time I met Mike was almost a year later on May 5th, 2006 when he brought the DOROTHY ELIZABETH alongside the BRIAN A McALLISTER at the SUNY Maritime College pier at Ft Schuyler in the Bronx. Both boats were hanging-on, waiting to sail the training ship EMPIRE STATE on its annual training cruise. Mike came aboard the BRIAN and introduced himself.

That was almost two years ago. Since then Capt. Mike Vinik has been expanding his fleet, his crew roster, and his workload. Long hours contributed to the delay in this interview, but we eventually connected one night for a ship-to-shore conversation. I started right in with, So, Mike.....

Q. What is Vinik Marine?

A. Vinik Marine is a tugboat company that specializes in tug and barge assists as well as ship assists, lightering, barge transports, some marine salvage, some agent services and maintenance of the marine industry, and the occasional special project. Just a week from now I will be heading to Long Island and salvaging two barges submerged in the Fire Island inlet.

Q. Where is your business located?

A. Our yard is in South Amboy, NJ, where we lease space from Amboy Aggregates. Our office is nearby in Keyport.

Q. How did you choose the logo and color of your tugs?

A. My mother and VinikMarine.com webmaster, Agnes Azzolino, took the MV signature I used as a kid and worked it into the VM symbol for the stack. I have always liked the red, white, and blue color scheme together so we decided to make the tugs with those colors—horizontally striped. We decided to make the colors of the logo VM in the same.

Q. Do you come from a maritime heritage?

A. I do. My father and older brothers were in the tugboat industry. My father has been a tugboat captain since the 1970's. As an infant my mother would take me out

to see my father when he was at a dock somewhere that was accessible. I would crawl all over the tug that he was working on at the time. My brothers decked for a number of companies over the years.

Q. Can you name any of the companies that your father and brothers worked for?

A. My father worked for just about everybody including Great Lakes and Bouchard. He was the first captain of the first MORTON BOUCHARD. My brothers worked for Hale, Moran, McAllister and Bouchard.

Q. What was your first experience on a tugboat and how old were you?

A. I was probably something like 2 years old when I was walking around the upper wheelhouse of a tugboat and I was astonished at how high I was and how small the tug looked down there. I knew it was big in real life when I was on the deck of the tug, but couldn't get over how small it looked from up there. It was a different perspective, it was pretty cool. And I couldn't have been more than 2 years old because my parents were still married.

Q. Do you remember what boat it was?

A. I don't, but it was probably the MORTON BOUCHARD, but I'm not sure.

Q. Did you work on tugs before you started Vinik Marine?

A. I worked on tugs in college. I worked for Weeks Marine before I graduated and also after I graduated. I worked on deck and as an engineer. I also assisted the port engineer in the yard and in the office. After I graduated from college I worked for a few other tugboat companies on deck and then moved up to the wheelhouse, but I never really worked as an engineer on a boat until I got the DOROTHY.

Q. You didn't work too long on the boats after graduating from college before you bought your first boat, the DOROTHY ELIZABETH?

A. No. I was out for about a year when I bought the DOROTHY ELIZABETH. In previous years it was formerly known as the SOCONY 11 (Standard Oil Company of New York), the MOBIL 11 (Mobil Oil Co.), the CHRISTINE GELLATLY, and the GOTHAM (Kosnac Floating Derrick Co.). I bought the DOROTHY to fix it and then hoped to work it in my off-time from Sandy Hook Pilots. I wanted to be a Sandy Hook Pilot, but knew I couldn't afford to support myself while training as a pilot unless I had another job. Little did I know how things would turn out.

I don't remember how long, but for a long time I looked for tugboats for sale, tugboats that looked like they could be fixed. I was working on deck on a Reinauer tug and we were heading for an oil storage depot in New Haven. At the time I was really, really, really interested in a tugboat in that area that was free. You just had to pay the dock fees that were owed, which were about \$5,000. I asked myself if I really wanted to get into this and do this. When the tug got into New Haven, was tied up, and the engine shut down, we noticed oil on the water. We found out that there was a tug boat up the river that they were trying to give away (the very one I was thinking about) that sank. That is when I realized that I had better not get into something as bad as that.

Q. What was the timeframe for buying the DOROTHY? I thought you graduated from SUNY Maritime College in 2001?

A. I was in the class of 2001, but I decided that I wanted the dual deck and engine licenses. It takes a lot longer than 4 years to do that and graduate. I took my time and got out in 2003 with both licenses.

Q. What led you to pursue tugboating as a career?

A. I've always liked the physics of how



(Above) DOROTHY ELIZABETH has a line on the stern of Maritime's training ship EMPIRE STATE. Steve Munoz photo. (Below) Penn Maritime's PENN No.4 brings the PENN No. 90 into the Kills assisted by the DOROTHY ELIZABETH. Rich Violino photo.

things move, the physics of towing, and how forces are applied to different things to make them move. It gets so cool when you work with tugs and push ships and barges around and other things that float, or are supposed to float. And I love the water. That's a good thing!

Q. Why did you choose to attend SUNY Maritime College instead of another school?

A. It was the right fit. I didn't apply to any other schools except for Kings Point and I think Kings Point said that I had to wait a year to start there. I don't think I ever would have finished at any other college. I honestly just didn't have an interest in school at all. But I wanted to gain the experience and the licenses that Maritime had to offer. It was really the logical

choice for me and I don't think another school would have kept my interest.

Q. Why did you decide to own your own boats and how did you choose the DOROTHY ELIZABETH and the CHARLES OXMAN when you shopped for tugs?

A. The price was right. The DOROTHY ELIZABETH was in need of an awful lot of work. All the pipes had burst, but it was inexpensive. In hindsight, I think I made the right decision. What I was actually doing was buying a boat that had the potential to be worth much more. I couldn't buy an expensive boat selling for a fortune because I didn't have that kind of money, but I could buy a boat for a lot less and turn it into a boat worth a great deal. That's what I did. Something worthwhile that needs a lot of work appeals to me. I chose a



boat that I would get for a good price and work to improve my investment, rather than purchase something that doesn't need any work and is way over priced.

Q. The same logic applies to the CHARLES OXMAN?

A. The CHARLES OXMAN, was formerly a steam tugboat, the H. S. FALK built in 1941 (Curtis Bay Towing). It later was renamed the A. P. St. PHILLIP (A. P. Philip, Inc., then Bay Transportation Corp., then Hvide Marine Towing) which lost its stunning art deco lines but gained a new heart (a 3600 hp Alco diesel engine), then it became the ST. PETERSBURG (Seabulk Towing, Inc.). It was a great deal except it was really far away in Tampa and it just about ran. The CHARLES is the only boat I've ever owned that came to the yard under its own power. When I bought the DOROTHY ELIZABETH, I felt like I was the laughing stock of NY. Everyone said that it would never run again. I mean I had friends that saw it in Perth Amboy and said, Mike you didn't really buy that did you? Don't do it, it looks like it is a mess. It's already listing over on its side in the mud. I said, Too late, I already bought it. You could tell from their voices they couldn't wait to tell all of their friends how much of an idiot that I was. In Tampa I was trying to find a dry dock to get the CHARLES OXMAN dry docked. A comment was, whoever buys that boat is just an idiot and will be the laughing stock of the harbor. My only response was, "Well, that'll be in two harbors then."

Q. Are you looking for a docking plan for the CHARLES OXMAN?

A. We are. We need to drydock it. We can't find the last time it was drydocked. The

zincs are gone and it needs some TLC.

Q. Do you see a way of getting around that problem?

A. Well it's funny. Some drydocks were very willing to work with us a year ago when we had the DOROTHY ELIZABETH hauled out. They were very anxious then to get the boat and we looked forward to it. But now they won't even return my calls. I don't know what the situation is. Apparently things have changed. It's a shame that John Gardner's yard can't pick up the boat. It is just too heavy for his travel lift. I will have to keep trying to find a place.

Q. What other equipment is part of Vinik Marine?

A. We've got a crane. We've got lots of pumps just in case something happens and something needs to get pumped out pretty badly. We've got a zodiac, a launch and a new tug named the MIKE AZZOLINO that we got from Boston over the winter. The MIKE is the former US Coast Guard ice breaker tug YANKTON (built in 1943). It's also been the M/T CETUS, the former RUSSELL JR., and the former ROGER STAHL. It is 110 feet long and is named after my grandfather, Dorothy's husband. We also have the TERI LOU, the former LITTLE NICK: a 40-foot push



boat that my mother can't wait to get running and take to this year's tugboat race. She has a 25-ton license, but no towing endorsement. Our newest acquisition is a 1989 Chevy Suburban, a diesel. No. We haven't named it—yet!

Q. Do you have any interesting tugboating stories to share with our readers?

A. Everyday is an adventure, but one story comes to mind. It was in 2006 and I had just obtained a free deck barge. I had a 6-day contract to tow this barge around Manhattan with an advertisement display consisting of this huge sign for Dow Chemical Corp. During one of these days, the CEO of Dow Chemical Corp. was giving a presentation at the United Nations building. As instructed I towed this barge past the UN building so the CEO could point out the window and impress his audience during the presentation



(Above) Down in Florida, the Vinik Marine crew prepares to bring the CHARLES OXMAN up to its new home in the Port of NY/NJ. They look happy, and if you look closely, you will see that the OXMAN too looks pleased about its future. From left to right: Capt. Mike Vinik, Capt. Sam Zapadinsky, and Capt. Stu Davidson. Behind them is Mike's brother Ken, the engineer for this trip. Photo by Vinik Marine employee Greg Sharpe.

(Left) After a hard day's work in New York Harbor the OXMAN is returning to Vinik Marine's South Amboy yard. She is southbound in the AK. That's the abandoned coal-dumper at Port Reading behind her. Rich Violino photo.

Q. Is it true you brought the tug CATAWISSA down from Kingston?

A. I did bring her down with the DOROTHY ELIZABETH and it's at my yard waiting to be scrapped. It was supposed to go to a yard in Staten Island, but it was too small to handle the boat since it is about 160 feet long. It is the biggest tugboat I've seen. The new tug that we have is 110 feet long and the CATAWISSA makes it look like a tinker toy; it's just gigantic, huge. However the wheelhouse is gone as it was used for something else. There are some steam pumps, reciprocating steam pumps, but that is just about it.

Q. Is it important for the maritime academies to have tugs and towing added to their curricula? I believe that Maine and Massachusetts Maritime Colleges have tugboats that they use to train their students.

A. I don't think it could be more important. US-flagged shipping is on a downward slope. Tugboating is on an upward



(Above) Captain Vinik in the wheelhouse of the MIKE AZZOLINO. Agnes Azzolino photo.



(Above) Mike with Vinik Marine's mascot Gotham, winner of the trophy for best animal mascot at NY's 2007 tug Race. Agnes Azzolino photo.

slope. It just makes sense, but I guess that's for them to decide. They know more about the required curriculum than I do.

I was at a leadership conference at Maine Maritime College and it was just amazing. The school is in the middle of nowhere, but they've got over 90 vessels at their waterfront including sailboats and tugboats. I think they have 5 tugboats. Their ship is smaller than the training ship EMPIRE STATE at SUNY Maritime College. At Maine Maritime, the ship is readily available and can be taken out any day, every day. They are not limited to once a year. The training ship is like the KINGS POINTER at Kings Point. At Massachusetts Maritime College, I don't know if it has towing tugs. I know that Arthur Fournier is right there and leases their dock space. He has assist tugs for the Cape Cod Canal area.

Q. What do you foresee as the future, say 5-10 years from now, for Vinik Marine?

A. It's funny, in high school, when one of my teachers made us write down what we'd be doing in 10 years, all I could think of was enjoying life and working on the water. So I think I'd say that again, we'll be enjoying life and we'll be on the water, hopefully, with more equipment and jobs.

Q. Who else from SUNY Maritime makes Vinik Marine run?

A. We have great people—many of them from NY Maritime. There's Capt. Sam Zapadinsky, Capt. James Zatwarnicki, Mark Sorochynskij, Port Engineer, Jeremy Travers, Port Engineer, Kerri Seke, Mate, Kristen Johnston, Mate, Halsey McGowan, Training Mate and Training Engineer, Matthew Perricone, Engineer, and Ray Drollinger, Engineer. Even the Office Manager, Melissa Shea is the sister of my NY Maritime roommate. Gotham, our mascot, does not have any ties to NY Maritime, but Vinik Marine is clearly his home. We just can't seem to train him to use a cell-phone or throw a line.

Thank you Capt. Vinik.