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*M/V Rockfish*

PHOTO COURTESY HIGMAN MARINE



*M/V Freeport*

PHOTO BY MICHAEL CARR PHOTOGRAPHY

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## Higman's Maryland Marine Christens Mv. Freeport

Maryland Marine Inc., the Houston-based subsidiary of Higman Marine, christened its newest towboat, the mv. Freeport, July 12. Constructed for Maryland by Hope Services Inc. in Dulac, La., the Freeport becomes the 35th boat in the combined Higman/Maryland fleet and the 20th Maryland boat built by Hope Services since 1996.

Maryland Marine named the vessel after Freeport, Texas, where the vessel will transit often. The mv. Freeport will push two new 30,000-barrel hot-oil barges recently constructed for Maryland by Trinity Industries at its Madisonville, La., yard, for Conoco Phillips. The new barges measure 50 by 325 feet in order to transit a restrictive bridge en route to Maryland's customer at Sweeny, Texas.

The christening ceremonies and celebration were held at Lakewood Yacht Club. Kara Samples christened the mv. Freeport for Maryland Marine, and the Rev. Jim W. Wilkinson of the Seamen's Church Institute officiated the ceremony. Kara is the wife of Jeff Samples, executive vice president of International Bank of Commerce, Maryland's lead financial institution.

The mv. Freeport continues the same design as the mv. Rockfish delivered to Maryland by Hope earlier this year. Measuring 72 by 30 feet with a draft of 10 feet, it is powered by a pair of Cummins KTA38-MO diesel engines that were supplied by Cummins Mid-South Inc., Kenner, La. They are rated at 1,800 hp.

The engines are matched to Twin Disc 540 gears with a 6.14:1 reduction ratio provided by Sewart Supply, Houston, turning 73- by 56-inch four-blade stainless steel propellers mounted on six-inch stainless steel shafts. A pair of Cummins 6B series 75 kw generators supply the electrical power.

Main and generator engines are cooled by Fernstrum gridcoolers and are monitored by a 32-point alarm system from Eagle Control Systems Inc., Baton Rouge, La. Eagle also supplied the vessel's fire detection systems.

Steering is accomplished via full follow-up, electric-over-hydraulic systems supplied and installed by Custom Hydraulics Inc. A



—photographs by Michael Carr

The 1,800 hp. mv. Freeport was built by Hope Services Inc.

five-cylinder Ansul CO<sub>2</sub> system was supplied by Freeport-Bourgeois, Houma, La.

The crew quarters and galley provide living accommodations for seven crewmen in four staterooms. The boat has satellite television and an omni-directional antenna for local stations.

For the mv. Freeport, Higman reconfigured the layout and specifications in the pilothouse. James Frazier, an outside consultant, worked with Higman's port captains, captains and management to redesign the pilothouse and console to improve its functionality.

The new design incorporates two Furuno 1954 C Black Box radars with 19-inch LCD monitors interfacing with a Furuno chart plotter; depth sounder; satellite compass and AIS systems, all supplied by Wheelhouse Electronics. There

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Boat sponsor Kara Samples christens vessel with Mark Flynn, Higman vice president; George Thomas, president; and John McMahan, vice president.



Crew of the mv. Freeport: John Williams, tankerman; Capt. Ray Sergeant; JoNorman Clemons, tankerman; Rusty Hanson, steersman; relief Capt. Keith Parrish; and Michael Smith, deckhand.



Richard Miles, president of Hope Services; John McMahan, Higman vice president; and Lou Parker, Hope services.

## Freeport

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5)

are also video cameras interfaced into the system to permit monitoring of the galley and engineroom from the wheelhouse. Three Standard VHF radios and a DeHart swing meter are also incorporated into the layout.

Hope is currently constructing two more identical boats for Maryland in 2006, and a minimum of four additional boats in 2007.

Is the industry overbuilding?

"No," said George Thomas, president. At the moment, there is "ample work" for the added equipment, he said.

Another factor in the company's building program is that most of the new builds are replacement vessels for towboats of lesser horsepower, which are now obsolete because of the larger barges, Thomas said.

"With the change from 20,000- and 25,000-barrel single-skins to larger-capacity double-skins, we are having to replace our 800 and 1,000 hp. boats with 1,600 and 1,800 hp. boats."

The same is true for the new barges, which are being built to replace older equipment that is being retired and single-skin equipment. There is still a market for used tank barges, according to Thomas. Drilling companies in need of barges to move "frac" water—water that has been contaminated after being used to hydro-fracture mines—and firms needing liquid fertilizer are able to utilize single-skin barges. Plus, some outfits are con-

verting the tank barges to deck barges, which are in big demand, he said.

In terms of personnel, Thomas said yes, the industry is having trouble keeping up with the additional equipment.

"We found when we bought the company 20 years ago, we had second- and third-generations of families in our crews. The kids would start out, stay with us. We don't see that very much anymore. The young people for some reason don't like the industry."

"We're somewhat fortunate in that most of our boats are new, which is an attraction. We're paying competitive wages and benefits and all that goes with it, but there is definitely an industry-wide shortage of licensed personnel right now," he said.

The labor market in South Louisiana shipyards also continues to be very tight, according to Lou Parker, at Hope Services.

"I could use 30 to 40 more hands," Parker said. "We normally build about five boats a year and right now I'm quoting bids for delivery in 2009. Maryland Marine will keep our new build department busy for the rest of the year."

Parker said the boat repair department has also been very busy. With hurricane damage, a number of boat owners did repairs to get their boats back into the water, he said. Now, those same owners are coming in to do complete repairs.

"I think we set the standard for inland pushboats with the design for Maryland Marine," Parker said. "Other yards are trying to build to the standards we set."



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# Maryland Marine Adds Mv. Freeport To Fleet



Top row left: Capt. Ray Sergent and wife Glenda, son Brad Sergent, daughter-in-law Diana Sergent, granddaughter Sydney Sergent and grandson Hayden Sergent.

Top row center: George Thomas, Kara Samples and John McMahan.

Top row right: The Rev. Jim Wilkinson.

Middle row left: Don Martin of Conoco Domestic Marine with Mark Flynn.

Middle row center: Kara and Jeff Samples.

Middle row right, above: George Thomas, John McMahan, Ray Sergent, Kara Samples, Jeff Samples and Mark Flynn.

Middle row right, lower: Sarah Boucher, Erwin Thompson, Brian Thomason and Don Martin.

Bottom row center: Teddy Cheramie in the Freeport pilothouse.

Bottom row right: George Thomas with Preston Shuford.



PHOTOS BY MICHAEL CARR PHOTOGRAPHY