

Silver Bell Awards Dinner 2018 - PRESS RELEASE

**Jim Lawrence, the “fulcrum of the shipping and finance worlds” presented with prestigious Silver Bell Award**

On June 6, 2018, at a major awards ceremony attended by over 700 guests from the shipping industry and associated companies, the Seamen’s Church Institute (SCI) presented its prestigious Silver Bell Award to **Mr. Jim Lawrence**, Chairman of Marine Money & Founding Partner of the MTI Network. The event, held at Chelsea Piers in New York City, marked SCI’s forty-first annual Silver Bell Awards Dinner.

Each year, SCI confers the Silver Bell Award to an individual or group in recognition of outstanding leadership in the maritime community, significant commitment to merchant mariners, and engagement with issues facing the maritime industry. Jim Lawrence was a hugely popular choice as recipient of the award.

In his introductory remarks, Jack Noonan (President of Binnacle Maritime), spoke of Jim’s foresight in taking a 10-page newsletter devoted to credit reporting, developing it into *Marine Money* as it is known today, and establishing *Marine Money Week NY*, the world’s premier ship finance event attended annually by more than 1,000 investors, ship owners, lenders, and advisors. Jack also spoke of Jim’s role as founding partner of the MTI Network, the leading incident response company for the shipping, energy, offshore and transportation industries.

Jim’s high standing in both the shipping and finance worlds, Noonan said, is not solely the result of his “vision, business acumen, and tireless work ethic” but also of his character, full of good-natured enthusiasm and optimism.

“Jim is generous in all ways”, Noonan added, “- with his time, his expertise, and his energy... He has long been a mentor and role model for up and coming generations.”

In his acceptance of the award, Jim spoke warmly of his colleagues past and present, and his commitment to and admiration for the Seamen’s Church Institute. He urged those present to discuss the mission of SCI with one another, and think about new ways in which they could support the important work of the organization.

Maritime Administrator ADM Mark Buzby took the podium to pay tribute to the importance of the merchant marine fleet to our national security and economic prosperity, reminding the audience that mariners of the U.S.-flag commercial fleet always rise to the challenge in peace and war, and in national and international emergencies.

SCI honored three companies, **Crowley Maritime**, **TOTE**, and **Trailer Bridge Inc.** with the **Humanitarian Award** for their relief efforts in Puerto Rico following Hurricane Maria. Those representing each company who accepted the award spoke movingly of the devastation experienced on the island, and of how vital it was that companies and organizations mobilized to provide life-sustaining food, water, supplies and cargo to impacted citizens and communities.

Finally, the **Lifetime Achievement Award** was given to **ADM Charles (Chuck) Michel** of the United States Coast Guard. ADM Michel is approaching the end of his illustrious career as Vice Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, and is in fact set to retire next month on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018.

Douglas Stevenson, Esq., the Director of SCI's Center for Seafarers' Rights, presented the award to ADM Michel, highlighting his impressive achievements, not least in becoming the first four-star Vice Commandant in Coast Guard history, and also the first career judge advocate in any of the Armed Forces to achieve four-star rank. Doug spoke of ADM Michel's "genuine concern and compassion for protecting seafarers' rights", his diplomatic skills, and his "deep-rooted sense of justice", describing Chuck's role in developing international requirements to combat the problem of seafarer abandonment among other issues.

The Silver Bell Awards Dinner was preceded by the traditional "Blessing of the Fleet", attended by vessels from Bouchard Transportation, Dann Marine, the Fire Department of New York (Marine Company 1), McAllister Towing & Transportation, Moran Towing Corporation, the New York Harbor School, Reinauer, one of the Sandy Hook Pilot Boats, and the US Coast Guard.

The event raises vital funds to support SCI's important programs including advocacy, continuing education and training, and chaplaincy for merchant mariners who arrive at America's ports and work on U.S. inland waterways. Overall the event raised \$820,000.

Select photos of the honorees can be found [here](#).

More information on the Silver Bell Awards Dinner 2018 can be found at [seamenschurch.org/sba2018](http://seamenschurch.org/sba2018).

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*Photos available upon request.*