Ship Report Transcript
Monday, May 6, 2024
By Joanne Rideout
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It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Monday, May 6th, 2024.

Well, in our Marine weather forecast, we have active weather persisting early in the week with disturbances moving through our waters, with increased winds and steep seas at times calmer, more summer like weather returns around the middle of next week, accompanied by northerly winds. We have a small craft advisory in effect through this morning. Today, West winds 10 to 15 knots, rising to 15 to 20 in the afternoon. Wind waves from the west five feet high at 5 seconds apart. West swells eight feet at 11 seconds, showers and a slight chance of thunderstorms.

And we'll take a quick look at the ship schedule.

And then I'm going to answer a listener question about kind of about the gas pedal on ships, I'll put it that way, and how that works. So inbounders, we have the Fortune Cookie arriving from Mexico headed for the Astoria Anchorage. She'll be picking up wheat upriver eventually she will be in the Astoria Anchorage by about 3:30 a.m..

The Alpha Loyalty is arriving from Japan, headed for Astoria's Anchorage. She too will pick up wheat eventually upriver. She will be in Astoria's Anchorage by about 5:30 p.m.. So a big span of time between those two vessels.

The Pacific Hero is arriving from Everett, headed to Vancouver, Washington. I think she could have wind turbine parts on board delivering those to the Port of Vancouver. Will pass Astoria around 10:30 p.m. and be in Vancouver by about 4:30 a.m. tomorrow morning.

And the Bora is arriving from China, also headed for the Astoria Anchorage. She'll be picking up corn, soy or wheat upriver eventually at Kalama, and she will arrive in Astoria's Anchorage around 11:30 p.m..

In our outbounders, we have the Cumbria, leaving Portland with potash on board, leaving around 6 p.m. from the Port of Portland, passing Astoria outbound around midnight. The Star Kin is leaving Vancouver Wind turbine parts. I think she came in with those on board, delivering them to Vancouver, leaving around 8 p.m., passing Astoria outbound around 2 a.m. on Tuesday.

And the ATB Sound Reliance is leaving Portland. She's a petroleum carrier, a tug and a barge attached together. That's an ATB rig. So the tug is not pushing or pulling the barge. They are actually attached together with a hydraulic pin system. So they do look a lot like a ship. But if you look closely, you'll see that there is there is a tug and a barge. They're leaving around 9 p.m., passing Astoria outbound around 3 a.m. on Tuesday.

And the Royal Quest is leaving Portland. Soda ash on board, heading out of the Port of Portland, about 9 p.m., passing Astoria outbound around 3 a.m. on Tuesday. And in the Astoria Anchorage, we have the Fortune Cookie headed to Portland to pick up wheat, leaving around noon in Portland by about 6 p.m..

That leaves some ships in the Astoria Anchorage the ITG looming. The Genius SW, the CMB Bruegel, the Mighty Star and the Epos.

Well, I have an interesting listener question that I thought I would answer today. It's about ships and how they move. This person asked: “I'm curious about the gas pedal, so to speak, on ships. Of course, I know that in olden times the bridge signaled speed adjustments and other things to the engine room. The engine room crew adjusted. How much power the engine was putting out. I'm wondering how much electronics have changed these respective roles in ships.”

So a very interesting question. And it's really all about how ships get around kind of a “then and now” question.

So in explaining things, especially for folks who may be listening who are new to the realm of ships, I like to relate things to stuff that we do on land. So if you think of the conveyances we use on land like cars, the gas pedal in a car is directly connected to the engine, which is right in front of the driver's compartment, separated by a firewall.

So at least in older cars, that connection was direct and mechanical. That's because the engine and the gas pedal are so close together. On a ship where the bridge, that's the place where you steer from usually very high up in the ship.

And the ship's engine, which is way down in the bottom of the ship, they may be many levels apart.

And so things are done a bit differently in older ships. The bridge communicated with the engine room to change the ship's speed using a device called an engine order telegraph. You may have seen one in an old movie that featured a ship. The engine order telegraph consisted of a lever that can be moved over different speed positions for ahead and astern. That's backwards direction.

When an officer on the bridge wanted to change the vessel's speed, they moved the lever in the required direction. This action rings a telegraph bell in both the engine room and the bridge. And after hearing that bell, the engine officer in the engine room would acknowledge the order by bringing the telegraph down in the engine room to the same position as that on the bridge, which stopped the ringing of the bell. This ensured that the correct movement was acknowledged on both ends and the engine speed and direction were controlled accordingly.

So as you can see, a somewhat time consuming process, but overall very effective. Now the Telegraph might have positions noted on it that specified things like full ahead, half ahead, slow ahead, dead slow ahead ,and stop.

On more modern ships built recently. The bridge telegraph is directly connected with the engine controls, so eliminating the need to involve engine room personnel in every change of ship propulsion. This type of telegraph is known as a remote controlled telegraph device. And this eliminates the human error factor. That's a potential. And that kind of communication between the bridge and the engine room.

But there are times when the captain on the bridge may want to communicate more directly with the folks in the engine room, such as in a situation where the ship needs to maneuver very carefully in a tight spot and perhaps communicate with tugboats. There may be a marine pilot involved at those times. The captain can communicate with the engine room by radio. And I've watched a situation like

this in real life, in real time. A ship maneuvering this way. When I was aboard a bulk carrier coming up to a dock in British Columbia in heavy, heavy current being assisted by two tugboats. So the ship had to turn approach the dock and turn around. All in this very heavy current.

The Canadian pilot and the captain and the tugs and the engine room were all in constant communication with one another via radio. And commands were done slowly and deliberately, moving a few degrees at a time. This was because the current was so strong in this place that the ship was in serious danger of spinning out of control. As it turned around. I stood on the bridge wing for an hour as they slowly turned that ship around in tiny increments of movement. A degree here, a degree there.

It was a real eye opener for me to see how slowly and deliberately these kinds of maneuvers are done on ships because once you start a heavy vessel in motion like that, it can be very hard to stop, especially in strong current or wind. And when they were done, the ships stood motionless right next to the dock exactly where it needed to be with no mishaps.

So while modern technology is a great thing, there is sometimes no substitute for careful and measured one on one communication between humans who are working to get a delicate and important job done.

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