



January 15, 2025

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VIA E-MAIL (VIS@PDXMEX.COM)

Old Salt Committee Chairperson
c/o Maritime Commerce Club
200 SW Market Street, Suite 190
Portland, OR 97201

RE: 2024 Old Salt Award Nomination

Dear Sir or Madam:

My partners Noah Jarrett, Alicia Lowe, Charmin Shiely, and I nominate our partner, mentor, and friend C. Kent Roberts for the Maritime Commerce Club's Old Salt Award for 2024. Kent has been a critical member and leader of Schwabe Williamson & Wyatt's maritime legal team since 1989.

Before his time at Schwabe, Kent spent 11 years working with Alex Parks, an earlier fixture of Portland's maritime community and a worldwide authority on maritime law. As a young lawyer, Kent helped research and edit Mr. Parks' leading treatises, *The Law of Tug, Tow & Pilotage 2d* and *Marine Insurance*. Both remain valuable references within the industry today.

In all, Kent has worked in and for the maritime industry on a local, national, and global scale for over four decades. In that time, Kent handled some of the region's most complex and high-profile projects in transportation and shipping, marine terminals, shipyards, and marine casualties, including:

- Negotiating and papering the sale of one of North America's largest floating drydocks, and the construction and shipping of its replacement 15 years later.
- Representing multiple tug and barge companies on hundreds of towing contracts, time charters, bareboat charters, and vessel sales.
- Representing buyers, builders, and lenders on vessel construction financing and fleet financing.
- Representing service providers, operators, shipyards, and marinas in maritime and state lien claims.
- Serving as outside general counsel to Pacific Northwest tankship operators.
- Representing non-U.S.-owned vessel operators in forming Jones Act compliant "Bowaters Amendment" entities, allowing them to operate in the U.S.

January 15, 2025

- Representing operators and insurers in litigation following Washington State's largest oil spill.
- Representing most every maritime entity around the River, at one time or another, in business sales and acquisitions.
- Representing an international terminal operator in entering a long-term lease with a Pacific Northwest port.
- Representing a Pacific Northwest coastal port in litigation following an oil spill from a port-owned marine terminal constructed from WWII-era cargo ship hulls.
- Representing a Pacific Northwest port in successfully recovering all damages resulting from a major ship casualty at the port's general cargo terminal.
- Representing maritime operators and a port in defeating an "Act of God" defense when multiple ships dragged anchor in a 50-year windstorm, damaging four Columbia River docks.
- Obtaining Coast Guard approval for foreign construction of non-integrated cargo tanks installed in U.S.-built barges while maintaining Jones Act compliance.
- Representing a Pacific Northwest shipyard in contracting for construction and heavy lift transport from China of a new build 960' drydock.
- Representing a Pacific Northwest shipyard in contracting for construction of a 540' ATB tank barge as well as multiple general cargo and tank barges.

Kent also had his hand in standing up and structuring the agreements and outfits (like MFSA and Clean Rivers) that respond to fires, spills, and similar incidents on the Columbia River. Frankly, it might be easier to list the significant Pacific Northwest maritime matters that Kent hasn't had his hand in over the last four decades.

He's known and has been known by generations of vessel, marina, and shipyard operators throughout the Pacific Northwest. He knows who's up to what, who needs something built, and who is looking for something to build. He knows what needs moving, who ought to move it, and how to structure that deal in a way that *both* sides want to hire him to help on their next project. Nothing is a greater testament to the quality of Kent's character and work than the number of waivers his clients have to sign every year, because everyone in our industry wants to work with him.

Kent is generous with his time. He is as energetic and gregarious as they come. He's got a good story for everything. And good pictures to go with the story. And boundless energy for the telling. And, if you stay with it, his stories all get around to a relevant point, having taken the scenic route in the getting-there. He's likely to tie a ride he just took on a tugboat in New Orleans to a deal he negotiated to move a drydock from China to a bluegrass concert he just got back from in North Carolina. And he'll make that all work.

January 15, 2025

As Liz Wainright was always fond of saying to me: “Someone needs to follow Kent around with a tape recorder—everything he says is worth remembering.” I think she hoped I was doing that. In a way, I was.

I’ve been lucky enough to get to follow Kent around for the last 13 years, to chase his stories around their bends to their useful ends, and to learn. And learn. And learn from him.

But Kent hasn’t reserved that generosity only for colleagues. For many years, Kent taught Admiralty Law at Willamette University College of Law and he’s given dozens-if-not-hundreds of presentations to industry leaders on challenging transportation, port, and shipyard issues. We’ve all seen more than a couple. Kent is a teacher and a mentor, in the broadest sense. He can explain why the maritime lien act works the way it does. How a three-piece drydock should be stacked for an ocean crossing. How a spill ought to be cleaned up. And why ‘larboard’ became ‘port’.

That said, he is not shy about sharing credit, where due, drawing upon the expertise of others, where warranted, or listening and learning with as much gusto as he gives to teaching. Working with Kent always feels like meaningful collaboration, even when he is pulling harder at the oars than everyone else. He cheers on his colleagues and clients alike. He is an advocate, in the most generous sense of the word.

Kent has been a Proctor member of the Maritime Law Association of the United States for decades. He served on the MLA’s Board of Directors from 2007-2010 (and has served on the nominating committee for that same Board since 2011). Kent also served as Chair of the MLA’s committee on Inland Waters and Towing from 2016-2018. He edited Benedict’s and American Maritime Cases for years, reading about every maritime decision written in the United States over the past 30 years.

We are honored to work with Kent, day in and day out. We are honored to call him a partner, a teacher, and a friend. And we are deeply honored to nominate Kent Roberts for the 2024 Old Salt Award.

Very truly yours,



David R. Boyajian

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cc: Noah Jarrett (via email)
Alicia Lowe (via email)
Charmin Shiely (via email)