



DETROIT LODGE NO. 7

INTERNATIONAL SHIPMASTERS' ASSOCIATION

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

December 16, 1992

TO: Members and Friends of Detroit Lodge No. 7

I am saddened to report the death of one of Detroit Lodge No. 7's most active and dedicated members. Captain Robert L. Benkert passed away on Friday, December 11, 1992 after a long battle with cancer.

Captain Benkert joined Detroit Lodge No. 7 on January 16, 1973 and was assigned pennant number 10093. He proudly flew his pennant from the many yachts and vessels he worked aboard over the years. Captain Benkert became active in all the affairs of Detroit Lodge No. 7. He served on numerous committees of the lodge, and was elected as lodge president in 1982. He served as delegate to the Grand Lodge Convention in 1983, which he considered to be one of his highest honors as a member of Shipmasters. He was a charter member of the lodge's Board of Governors when it was established in 1983. He was serving on the Board of Governors at the time of his death.

During most of the 1980's Captain Benkert served simultaneously as both Chairman of the lodge's Membership Committee and Chairman of the lodge's Entertainment Committee. It was during his tenure on the Membership Committee that Detroit Lodge No. 7 grew to be the largest lodge of the International Shipmasters' Association. As Entertainment Chairman, he sponsored and arranged numerous programs to enhance the professional character of the lodge. He felt that this was of utmost importance in attracting younger members to the lodge to ensure the future of the Shipmasters on the Great Lakes.

Beyond his lodge membership, Captain Benkert was very active in Detroit's yachting community, and served as Commodore of the Bayview Yacht Club in 1956. He served as skipper aboard a number of corporate yachts including the Mark Twain and the Scarlet Cloud. Many lodge members will remember the social outings he arranged for the lodge aboard those vessels. On the international scene, Captain Benkert was a member of the Tugboat Race Committee, serving as Official Starter for the Annual Detroit River International Freedom Festival Tugboat Race.

As Captain Benkert expanded his marine license, his boating experience became extensive, including trips up and down the Atlantic Coast and the Mississippi River. On the local commercial scene he occasionally worked with the J.W. Westcott Company and the Gaelic Tugboat Company. To expand his knowledge he also had trips aboard commercial freighters, with Capt. Arne Kristensen of the M/V Richard Reiss and with Lakes Pilots aboard salt water vessels. He always felt that there was more that he could learn.

Captain Benkert served with pride when the lodge members gathered for special ceremonies at Mariners' Church. For many years, he served as Flag Presenter at the annual Blessing of the Fleet held each spring, and he served in the Honor Guard at the Fitzgerald Memorial Service held each fall. He also volunteered his time to Dossin Museum whenever the museum called upon the lodge to help in one of its projects. He had a special fondness for both Mariners' Church and Dossin Museum because of their close ties to Detroit Lodge No. 7.

As Bob slowed down as a result of his illness, he nevertheless was determined to remain as active as possible. When the lodge was offered a tour of the Research Vessel Lake Guardian back in September, he showed up at Mariners' Church with a cane to shake hands and be with the lodge members. He thought it would be the last time he could see some of the guys. When Dossin Museum dedicated the plaques for the Fitzgerald Anchor Exhibit in November, Bob was there in a wheelchair to observe the festivities. When Bob's illness finally confined him to the house, he still enjoyed hearing from lodge members and his many friends. I spoke with him by phone just two weeks ago, and he remarked how much he appreciated being remembered, what with the many phone calls, letters and well wishes that he had received. Curiously, he apologized to me that he would be unable to prepare the lodge's first winter luncheon as he had for the last several years. It was so like Bob to always have the Shipmasters in mind, even as his health failed.

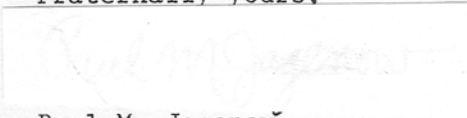
At our first winter lodge meeting this past Monday, there was a great deal of reminiscing as the members recalled Bob's devotion to the lodge, his many tall tales, his caustic wit, not to mention his culinary skills. How often did we have larger turnouts because Bob was serving as cook, serving up batches of pork chops and sauerkraut, or ham and sweet potatoes, or his taconite pellets as he loved to call his baked beans. We all had favorite stories to recall, and he will be missed.

A memorial mass will be held at St. Paul on the Lake Catholic Church in Grosse Pointe Farms on Saturday, December 19 at 10 a.m. Lodge Co-Chaplain Rev. Raymond Marshall will be celebrant and Lodge Co-Chaplain Rev. Richard Ingalls will give the homily. Because Captain Benkert had a high regard for the maritime uniform, the family would be very pleased if lodge members able to do so could wear their uniforms to the ceremony. After the church service, a wake in Bob's memory will be held at Bayview Yacht Club in Detroit.

Personal condolences may be sent to Captain Benkert's wife Eleanor and his family at 452 Moran, Grosse Pointe Farms, MI 48236.

A brief ceremony in Captain Benkert's honor will be held just prior to the lodge's membership meeting of December 21 at Dossin Museum. The ceremony would take place at about 1:00 p.m.

Fraternally yours,


Paul M. Jagenow
Secretary-Treasurer

Obituaries

Robert L. Benkert, loved boating

By Brenda Ingersoll
THE DETROIT NEWS

Businessman Robert Louis Benkert's first love was boating, an avocation that began with summers spent sailing Higgins Lake near his family's summer home.

Mr. Benkert died Friday, Dec. 11, 1992, of cancer at his Grosse Pointe Farms home. He was 79.

A Detroit native and 1934 graduate of the University of Detroit, Mr. Benkert was a partner of Cadillac Wallpaper and Paint Co. of Detroit.

He served in 1956 as commodore of the Bayview Yacht Club, where he instituted a junior sailing program, and commodore of the Detroit River Yachting Association in 1961. He

was a past president of the International Shipmasters Association Lodge 7.

Mr. Benkert was instrumental in establishing the annual George Van Memorial sailboat race on the Detroit River, which was named after the former Detroit News boating writer.

Following his retirement in 1963, Mr. Benkert turned from amateur sailing to the marine industry, receiving a U.S. Coast Guard license to command vessels of up to 100 tons in 1976 and in 1979, a U.S. Merchant Marine Master's license. He had held the U.S. Power Squadron's advanced pilot ranking since 1945.

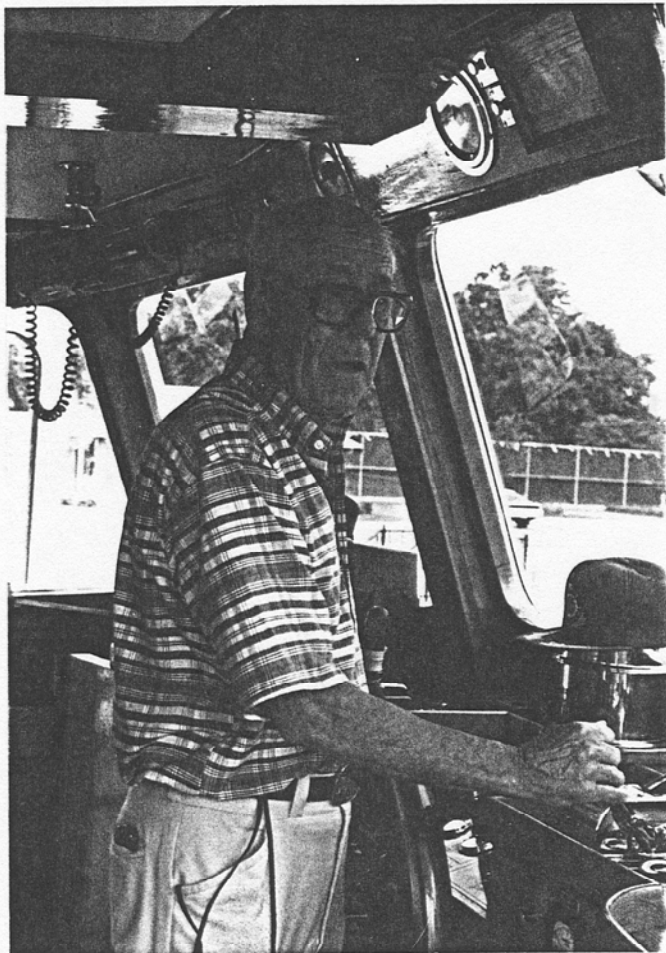
In retirement, Mr. Benkert com-

manded private yachts for such Michiganians as furniture store magnate Art Van Elslander.

"He taught all of us to sail. He was always willing to help somebody else on the water, and he taught us to be concerned for other people, as well," said Michelle Kozak, a daughter.

Mr. Benkert also is survived by his wife, Eleanor; a son, Robert L. Benkert; daughters, Camilla Brisley, and Sister Judith Benkert; a brother; two sisters; and 11 grandchildren.

A memorial mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Saturday at St. Paul Catholic Church, 157 Lakeshore, Grosse Pointe Farms. Memorials may be made to the Dominican Sisters at Adrian or to the Dossin Great Lakes Museum.



ROBERT L. BENKERT
1913-1992
Pennant 10093



Capt. Bob Benkert - Aboard the M/V Mark Twain
July 17, 1974