

The Last Years of Sun Ship

In the early 1980's Sun decided to get out of the new construction business. At the time they had three vessels contracted to build. One 823' 45,408 gross ton Ro/Ro ship for Waterman and it was sub-contracted to the General Dynamic's yard in Quincy MA. The other two a 354' 12,500 gross ton Medium Class Hopper Dredge for the Corp of Engineers and a 634' 36,161 DWT Sugar Barge for the California and Hawaiian Transportation Company.

This is a brief history of the sugar barge as I remember it, having worked on this vessel for Sun as it was being built at BIW (Bath Iron Works) in Bath Maine in 1981-1982.

The double bottoms were built in Chester put onto barges and moved to Bath in the spring of 1981. These double bottoms were probably the last new construction that Sun performed. Bath was to receive a bonus if they delivered the barge dockside in Chester by a certain date in the spring of 1982 which they did.

This vessel was classed by ABS (American Bureau of Shipping) and was classified as ITB (integrated tug barge). The tug of catamaran design with two hulls joined to the barge with a wedge which would lock between the two pontoons of the tug, producing an "integrated tug barge."

When we think of a barge we don't picture it to look like a ship without an engine room but in essence that is what it was. She was 634'ft in length had six cargo holds, molasses tank, anchor windlass, pump room and a diesel generator room with Bulbous bow and bow thruster.

As the story was told at the time the idea behind the ITB system was for the tug with its giant latching devices to slip into the barge's tongue, secure it, and move on to the next port, drop it off pick up another barge and so forth. Also classifying this as a barge and a tug and not a ship they could man it with a third of the crew. Reading this link it mentions the tug not being seaworthy in ocean waters. I believe that the tug mentioned in the article was the tug to be married to the Sun barge.

<http://www.oceantugbarge.com/about-the-atb/33-atb-vs-itb>

The tug was being built by Halter Maine in Pascagoula, MS.

During the construction we encounter problems like any shipbuilders would in building something this complex. The cold winter in Maine slowed the painting of the exterior hull. To paint the bottom we took plastic and enclosed the bottom and pumped heat into a tent like enclosure. The hull was painted in the afternoon when temperatures rose to paint specifications to apply paint. Hempel Marine paint was used on this contract.

The Sun 800 made us all proud

The last unit to be erected was a 120 ton unit that we referred to as the tongue. This was a critical part of the barge and tight tolerances had to be met for this is where the tug would join with the barge. BIW did not have the crane capacity at the time to make such a lift. Their solution was to cut the unit in two pieces in a 1/3 piece and another 2/3 piece. We made the decision that this was too critical of a piece to cut so we said we would make the lift with our barge crane. The Sun 800 arrived on New Year's Day 1982 and a couple days later they made the lift look easy. On the day of the lift I recall being at a meeting with about 20 or so Bath workers, John Wolf, Bill Fortune and myself. Bath was trying to make this lift a bigger deal than it was. Bill told it like it was. Just put the unit at the edge of the shore and I'll take it from there. That is just what he did, picked it up and set it on a dime. Bill and his crew showed what real professionals can do.

Sometimes it was hard to come to work knowing that Sun Ship was coming to a close. Every day we would walk through the same gate as did the 5000 plus men and women of BIW with a sign overhead that read "***Through these gates pass the best shipbuilders in the world***".

A shipyard that had a reputation of building ships on schedule and under budget, and a yard that built ships for the US Navy since 1893.

The barge was christened the HSTC 1 on February 12, 1982. The barge then went to the wet basin where the outfitting continued. A couple months later (don't remember the exact date) it was towed to pier 84 in Philadelphia. The barge was originally to come to Chester to be married to the tug but when the tug left from Halter Marine it was unable to sustain just light seas and had to return. This gave us no option but to bring Bath

workers to Philly to complete the work. The work left to do was some testing of pumps, a few miles of paint on the exterior hull, some minor outfitting and a list of Coast Guard items. After that was complete the barge would be towed south.

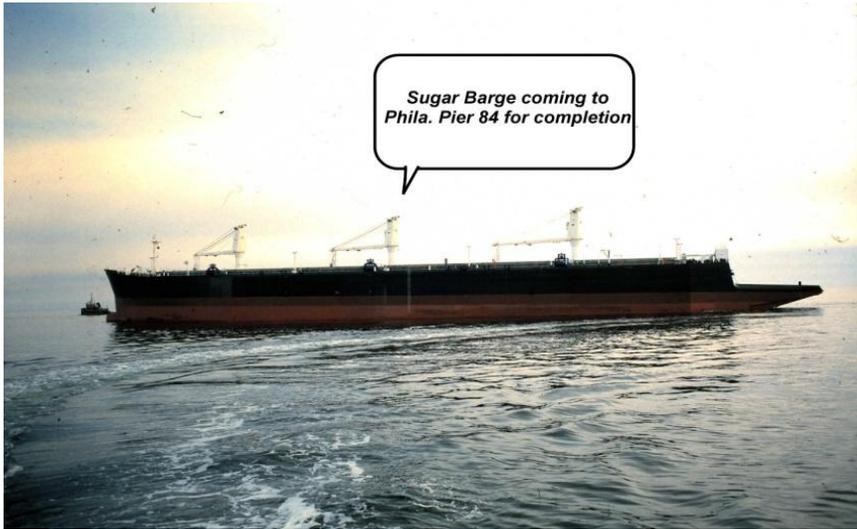
While the barge was tied up at pier 84, a ship's wake rocked it and damaged the accommodation ladder on the starboard side. I had to make arrangement to get a portable crane, a flatbed truck, remove it and ship it to Baltimore for repairs.

It was a tedious job to marry the barge and tug together. On the tongue we installed this Greenheart timber. Greenheart timber is a marine favorite for its resistance to water rot and is grown in South American. I was not present for this connection but was told that they moved the tug on and off the barge some eleven times, each time shaving wood in different areas until they achieved the correct fit. This link is from the US court of Appeals regarding a law suit by C and H.

<http://openjurist.org/794/f2d/1433/california-and-hawaiian-sugar-company-v-sun-ship-inc>

To my surprise, I read that the date for delivery was June 30 1981. I went to Maine in April of 1981 when construction was just under way.





Members of the Sun Ship field office in Bath Maine

This is a list of the workers I had the pleasure to work with on this project. People came and went at different times depending on the work load.

Jon Fallick and Gill Crane were the project managers they would come to Bath every few weeks for a couple days to check on progress and meet with Bath personnel.

On site were Marty Martinson, Jim Durkin and John Wolf (site managers)

Paul Young and Richard Janney (inspectors)

Pete Ross (store room would receive and disburse material for us)

Joe Dwyer (expeditor)

Bill Winans and Mildred McLaughlin (purchasing)

Jim Knox, Clyde Brookbank, Marshall Moody, Berrie Seales (engineering support)

This is how I remembered this experience if I omitted someone or an important detail I apologize.

Medium Class Hopper Dredge (Essayons) for the Corp of Engineers

The Hopper dredge was being built at the same time. At the time it was a state of the art dredge with computer operated suction arms on both sides. In the fall of 1982 we sailed it to Jacksonville Ship Yard for testing because of the cold winters in Maine. Paul Young sailed with her to Florida. She was finished in the spring of 1983. I believe the first dredging was done here in the Delaware River. It is still in operation today in Portland, Oregon.

Written by Richard Janney and photos were taken by me during their construction.

