

December 2020

Greetings Maine Maritime Academy Family,

Thank you for your interest in *El Faro Salute!* and taking the time to travel to our website. As a family we all have struggled with processing the sinking of the *El Faro*. Upon arrival of news that contact with *El Faro* had been lost, many sought out a way to constructively help. Vigils aided loved ones of the crew in the early days of the search and then the recovery efforts. Once it was declared that the ship was lost with no survivors, loved ones had to begin the grieving process with no bodies recovered for a proper burial.

With the sinking of the *El Faro* being the worst maritime casualty in decades, and the heavy blow that we as a family withstood, there seemed to be an almost immediate call for a proper memorial and expression of compassion. As a metal sculptor with a track record of successful long-term public art installations and a unique perspective toward this tragedy from my past career as a Merchant Mariner, it was logical that many inquiries arrived at my studio.

Many of us personally knew one or more members of the crew that were lost in the sinking. Maybe it was time together in Castine or having sailed together after graduation. Others may have previously sailed on the *El Faro* or a sister ship. For many with sea-going experience, thoughts of their own haunting encounters of storms in the past resurfaced. Our imaginations of those last few hours and minutes the *El Faro* crew experienced are gut-wrenching and long-lasting. Over time, I too sensed this need for a memorial and began working toward a suitable concept.

My own sea-going experiences and time as a certified scuba diver provided much inspiration. At the same time, I was aware of previous campaigns in our region to memorialize other specific and dangerous occupations in the maritime industry, and these influences coalesced to result in a universal Lost At Sea memorial of enormous scope. To get this endeavor off the ground, a decision was made to focus on the element closely tied to the *El Faro*. Beyond serving as a stand-alone tribute, a successful installation of *El Faro Salute!* would go far to inspire community collaboration and support for the more comprehensive memorial.

The Penobscot Marine Museum was approached to serve as fiscal sponsor for *El Faro Salute!*. Having this fitting organization on board brings prestige and allows for tax-deductible contributions. I then approached Dragon Products and the City of Rockland regarding exhibition of *El Faro Salute!* along the Rockland Harbor Trail on property owned by Dragon. An enthusiastic response from both parties resulted in securing a prominent site for *El Faro Salute!*. This precise location in the cultural and dynamic community will allow easy public access and have the Rockland Harbor and its landmark breakwater in Penobscot Bay as a backdrop. The spectacular sunrise offered here is hard to match. These two developments were impressive enough to warrant an anonymous donation of \$25,000. Having a "major donor" meant that the project had now met all criteria for a successful fundraising campaign.

One hallmark of Maine Maritime Academy is the wide-ranging diversity in the passions, directions and accomplishments of our alumni community. Among us are some very distinguished shakers and movers in untold areas of expertise. Several actually played a role in the search for the *El Faro* and her crew, retrieval of the voice data recorder, and had direct involvement with the resulting investigation into the sinking. No matter where your own path took you, we still carry the bond formed in Castine. Several in my own circle of MMA family contributed toward *El Faro Salute!* in earlier stages to sustain my efforts. Our bond remains strong through a variety of sea-going and shoreside career paths.

My recent path has garnered much favorable media attention regarding my creative environment here in Warren, public art installations, and a number of high profile solo and group art exhibits. An overwhelming majority of these interviews included mention of my education at Maine Maritime Academy and continues to yield great pride in my small role as Ambassador. No previous project, and very likely no following projects, will be influenced by the impact MMA has had on my life to the degree of this undertaking. The privilege of an Alumni Profile in *Mariner* magazine is of high order.

Beyond signifying honor, respect and compassion for the lost crew and their loved ones, *El Faro Salute!* has the potential to unite us around the globe. Public art expresses community value! Undoubtedly, *El Faro Salute!* will continue to command media coverage and a strong show of support from the MMA family will go far to bring awareness to the broader community of the major role Maine Maritime Academy and its alumni play in worldwide logistics and commerce.

I am pleased to inform you of this opportunity to promote wide-spread healing and remain connected to the souls of our own brothers and sister, and the entire crew of the *El Faro*. Since the launch of fundraising in late June, over \$40,000 has been raised toward the \$135,000 budget. It is my hope to inspire the necessary donations to fulfill the remainder of the budget and vision for *El Faro Salute!*

All Alumni Chapter members are encouraged to visit ElFaroSalute.com and then have a discussion regarding this opportunity, particularly the new Jacksonville, Florida chapter. Individuals, please consider employer matching grants and other creative approaches. This is when we set aside any Engine/Deck or Trad/Non-Trad mindset and seize the opportunity to make a difference and contribute to our common bond. Seeing this through as a family will enrich our collective pride. It will also set the stage for a celebratory reunion on a scale not previously seen when we muster at the dedication of *El Faro Salute!* on the back side of these current social uncertainties.

Thank you once again for your interest, attention and consideration. I wish you all fair winds and following seas.

Respectfully yours,

JBONE, '83E

As you were.....