

**As Of: 1800h 03/01/18**

## **PART ONE: AN OVERVIEW**

### **The Mission**

Over the 40 years of its existence, the Society has never lost sight of its original mission:

To recognize, encourage and promote marine art and maritime history; to encourage cooperation and free intercourse among artists, art teachers, art students, craftsmen, publishers and others engaged in artistic activities relating to marine art and the history of marine art; to provide a registry for artists; to hold exhibitions and to promote the study and improvement of marine art; to take any action incidental to or connected with the foregoing purposes in an advancement thereof, but for (except) the pecuniary profit or financial gain of its members, directors or officers except as permitted under Article 5 of the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law.

*By-laws of the American Society of Marine Artists, Inc.*, Article I, Section 2.

Although the Society has sought to hold steady to this course, the manner in which it pursued its mission has changed and evolved and holding that course has not always been smooth sailing. Fortunately, we have learned from our experience – especially from some rough weather we experienced twenty years ago. Since then the learning curve has been steadily steeper – particularly in recent years – and has put the Society in a position of strength and promise it has never before seen.

### **Forty Years in a Paragraph**

The Society was established in 1978 by a group of professional artists who were particularly accomplished and interested in marine art and history.<sup>1</sup> Theirs was to be a serious, professional organization dedicated to its single mission. These founders, soon to be known as Fellows, led the Society in pursuit of its mission while overseeing its administration for the first couple of decades. Within ten years of its founding, the Fellows began to relinquish formal administration responsibility to the Board whose majority was less frequently made up of Fellows. Not surprisingly, retrospectively, the failure to address and define the evolving roles and responsibilities of the members of the Board verses the Fellows and to develop a consensus within the Society about them gradually led to dysfunction. And while this occurred, the Society's financial situation began to deteriorate and become unsustainable. This resulted in a crisis in 2001 when five

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<sup>1</sup> The founders were all men. The first woman Fellow (or “Fella” as she joked) was Norma Jay, who was named in 1985. There were never any prohibitions against women members; their absence among the Fellows reflected the fact that men had long dominated the professional marine art field with its more traditional subject matter until the genre broadened to include a range of subjects in which women had become more active.)

Fellows under the leadership of two past Presidents sought to have the rest of the Fellows abandon the Society and begin again. The effort failed but the five Fellows left.<sup>2</sup> However the experience resulted in a serious reevaluation of the Board (administrative) functions and those of the Fellows (artistic standards) and how they might work better together. That became the foundation upon which the Society continued to pursue its mission. With these matters addressed, the Society no longer spent so much time and effort focusing inward on its own affairs but looked outward to see how it could better accomplish its mission. Marked advances occurred as a result. As reported in the 35<sup>th</sup> historical update, those ten years (2003 – 2013) were the best in the Society’s history in terms of fulfilling its mission. This trend continued and accelerated during the last five years and has placed the Society in its strongest position ever in all ways.

### **The ASMA Culture: Perhaps Its Most Important Asset**

We shall look at these specific achievements below but we should note that the Society’s most important intangible asset – its culture - has grown steadily in recent years as the Society’s leadership has made respect and kindness a priority. All organizations and businesses have their own cultures. The most successful have a distinctive, uplifting and respectful yet challenging culture – one its members are proud to be part of and identify with. It is inspirational in its own way, encouraging greater aspiration and accomplishment. One way to judge the strength of the culture is the level of membership involvement in the mission of the Society. It has never been greater. And the awareness of the importance of “the ASMA Family” has never been more significant.

To quote our current President Kim Shaklee, “We have come to embrace the idea that we all share a common bond. My perception is we are past the days of examining a Director’s membership status before considering if their heart and minds are ‘in the right place’ for the whole Society. Fellows are expected to give back to the Society by sharing knowledge and encouragement. Signature Members should also strive to help their peers.”

In this culture, leadership example plays an important role. Kim goes on to explain, “Set a strong example and others will begin to follow in those footsteps. Encouragement and recognition of service helps inspire board members and encourages other members to join in. Believing in the mission obligates you to strengthen it. And never lose sight that *all* ASMA members matter.”

### ***The ASMA 40-year History Review: The Update to the Excel Spreadsheet***

All of the basic historical information has been updated. It is far too much information to be presented here. It is available - - - - - in the format of an Excel spreadsheet titled *The ASMA 40-year History Review*. It contains all the basic information including: who served on the Board, in the various offices and on the different committees; the list of the Fellows and Fellow Emeriti; the location and dates of the annual meetings, Regional and National Exhibitions, awards and special recognitions,

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<sup>2</sup> Two of the five soon returned to the ranks.

and much more. Another source of information is, of course, our quarterly Journal, the *ASMA News and Journal*, that has been faithfully produced by Editor and Signature Member Bob Semler for nearly a quarterly of a century.

The considerable and important contributions made by all of those listed in the Excel spreadsheet is recognized and acknowledged here. However, in the interest of space, only those who served as President in recent years and drove the very significant advances the Society has witnessed are mentioned here. The three Presidents are: Fellow Ian H. Marshall (1933-1916) who served from 2007-2010; Fellow Russell Kramer who served the next five years to 2015; and Fellow Kim Shaklee who took the helm in 2016. Each built on the considerable progress of their predecessor.

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## **PART TWO: A Record of Steady Headway in 1. The Society's Basic Mission, 2. Its Management and 3. Its Pursuit of Broader Horizons**

### **1. The Basic Mission:**

Fundamental to the mission of the Society is its commitment to bring marine art to the public. This has been the case from the very beginning and has evolved into three types of exhibitions: National, Regional and, the newest, Themed. The Society's educational mission is also evidenced by its quarterly publication, the *ASMA News and Journal*, its first video documentary, *The Naval War of 1812 Illustrated*, and its first book based on that video, *The Naval War of 1812-1815: Foundation of America's Maritime Might*. Another far-reaching and important educational effort began ten years ago, the Young Marine Artists Search competition or YMAS that seeks to find and encourage young artists interested in marine subjects by giving them local and national recognition.

### **National Exhibitions**

During the last five years there have been three National Exhibitions. *The 15<sup>th</sup> National* opened in the fall of 2011 at the Cornell Museum of Art and American Culture in Delray Beach, Florida and in the course of 2012 was hosted by the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Alabama, the Art Museum of Southeast Texas in Beaumont, the Art Museum of South Texas in Corpus Christi, the Museum of the Southwest in Midland, Texas, and the Haggin Museum in Stockton, California. In 2013 it opened at the Coos Art Museum in Coos Bay, Oregon and closed its run of at the Minnesota Marine Art Museum in Winona.

Although the *15<sup>th</sup> National* traveled over 6,000 miles and was hosted by eight museums located on the Atlantic, Gulf of Mexico and Pacific coasts as well as on the headwaters of the Mississippi River to reach as many people as possible in a twenty-one month period, the Society took advantage of the Internet to reach a much larger audience when it launched its first on-line show, the *16<sup>th</sup> National* in 2015. This was an exciting experiment for not only was its potential audience enormous, but the amount of time and effort involved in setting up the exhibition and the expense of running it (no shipping and handling, no insurance costs, etc.) were greatly reduced.

For the *17<sup>th</sup> National*, the Society returned to its traditional practice with six venues in five states hosting the show over a period of sixteen months. It was an exciting opening in September 2016 at the Muscarelle Museum of Art at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia for it coincided with the Society's First National Marine Art Conference. (More about that later.) In another first, two venues on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in St. Michaels and the Academy Art Museum in Easton, co-hosted the show by dividing it between them. Thereafter it went south to the Quinlan Visual Arts Center in Gainesville, Georgia in the spring, followed by a long trek to the Minnesota Marine Art Museum in Winona and finally to the Mystic Seaport Museum where it closed in January of this year.

### **Regional Exhibitions**

Over the last five years there have been eleven Regional Exhibitions or an average of just over two per year. Almost all – ten of the eleven - have been in the West and South Regions. There was one in the North Region and none in the East Region. Clearly this reflects a difference in the energy levels and dedication in the Regions but, importantly, points to a difference in philosophy among the Regions. Both the South and the West have built long term relationships with venues: The Coos Art Museum in Coos Bay, OR (whose annual Maritime Art Exhibit is the only show co-sponsored by ASMA) and the Channel Islands Maritime Museum in Oxnard, CA (formerly the Ventura County Maritime Museum) and, in the South, the Quinlan Visual Arts Center in Gainesville, GA and the Gadsden Arts Center in Quincy, FL. The North continues to build an important relationship with its sole venue, the Minnesota Museum of Marine Art in Winona (which has been active in our National Exhibitions and which ASMA has recently singled out for special recognition. The East had no Regional during the last five years. All of the eleven Regionals have been well received and very successful on all counts. Regionals continue to play an important role in developing long-term relationships to further the Society's mission.

### **Themed Exhibitions**

Following the production of the Society's first historic video documentary to commemorate the bicentennial of the War of 1812 and subsequent book based on it, an exhibition presenting the story of the War as seen in various paintings by ASMA artists traveled to five venues in places that saw action during that War. This exhibition, *Star Spangled Nation*, opened in September, 2013 at the History Museum in Buffalo, New York and went on to the Detroit Public Library in Michigan, the Connecticut River Museum in Essex, Connecticut and to the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum in Ferrisburgh, Vermont. It then was featured in the Star Spangled Flag House in Baltimore, Maryland coincidental with the 2014 Bicentennial commemorations of the Battle of Baltimore and Bombardment of Fort McHenry that occasioned the penning of the lyrics for the American National Anthem. It was also planned to coincide with the 2014 ASMA Annual General Meeting in that city.

### **The ASMA News & Journal**

Eight years ago our quarterly magazine went full color and since then it has gotten more polished and professional in presentation. The popular "newsy" column about

members in the Society by Christine Diehlmann, “Christine’s Log Book,” that was begun in 2005 concluded in the fall 2015 issue as she wound up an active role in the Society due to health issues.

### **1812 Video Documentary & Book**

In 2009 the Exhibition Committee began to plan an appropriate event to commemorate the Bicentennial of the War of 1812 by having a half dozen museums to contribute works from their permanent collections to a traveling themed exhibition in which ASMA artists would lend appropriate works. With a half dozen cooks in the kitchen, innumerable logistical and expense complications the whole notion of such a jointly created traveling show proved unworkable and was abandoned. In the process we settled on a much simpler and vastly cheaper approach: Put together under ASMA’s direction a video documentary which drew on the considerable historical paintings ASMA artists had produced over the decades. The U.S. Navy, itself trying to come up with an appropriate educational product for the Bicentennial, got wind of our efforts and became involved. No financial assistance was offered (the closing of the government and “sequestration” had just occurred) but they did add credibility to the project and were able to open doors and offer technical assistance. This led the other two armed maritime services, the Marine Corps and Coast Guard, to join the effort. Since ASMA is legally a not-for-profit 501.C.3 educational organization like most historical societies and museums, we were able to get them to lend images from their permanent collections for use in this educational, non-commercial undertaking. Sixty museums and historical societies in France, the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States lent images at no cost. These, when combined with works from fifty ASMA artists brought the total number of images in the video to nearly nine hundred. ASMA members produced the resulting seven-part series with a running time of over four hours and we were able to get one of our Signature Members, a former professional opera singer and voice-over artist with a rich baritone voice to narrate it.<sup>3</sup> The series is free to all and can be found on the Society’s web site.

With the storyline written and with a wealth of images from ASMA artists, producing a book based on the video was easily done. Since the book would be sold commercially, we limited the images to ASMA artists who readily gave the right to use their work for this purpose. All of the net proceeds generated by the book sales go to the Society; it is available as a traditional book in full color or black and white, as an e-book and as an audio book from Amazon and other book sellers.

### ***Young Marine Artists Search Competition (YMAS)***

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<sup>3</sup> Del Bourree Bach

With great dedication, persistence and enthusiasm,<sup>4</sup> this inspiring program has gone from a local, regional undertaking to a national one, with the Fifth National YMAS Awards having been presented last summer. YMAS finalists have been invited to exhibit their work in Regional and National Exhibitions and their success recognized with press and media attention during opening ceremonies and at the Society's Annual General Meetings or National Marine Art Conferences to which they are invited to attend free of charge as well as be the Society's guest at the Captain's Dinner on Saturday night or the Artists' Dinner on Friday night. YMAS winners are awarded Student Membership in the Society and receive a PDF of the *ASMA News and Journal*.

To further encourage attendance, the Society's President writes to the award winning student's Principal or School Board announcing the Students honor, and suggests they consider help fund the student's transportation to conference. This student participation has been successful in recent years and proven very inspirational for both the winners (and their teachers or parents who often accompany them) and ASMA members attending the event.

The Society plans to strengthen and expand the YMAS program across the country by naming a representative to promote the program for each of our four Regional committees. While the YMAS program has demonstrated success in finding and encouraging young marine artists, a challenge remains not only to expand the effort but, importantly, to find ways to retain these artists once they pass the 23-year age limitation. This will not be easy since very much is happening during these post-teen years as they go on to school and careers and have other priorities.

## **2. Management**

Management has been strengthened in recent years by filling positions vacated through death or retirement with competent, qualified and experienced individuals. These slots included the Treasurer, Managing Director, Bookkeeper and Administrative Assistant. The latter two are on the payroll but within our minimal budget parameters. As the result, we have one of the strongest teams ever mounted by the Society, providing the foundation for greater financial analysis and planning and the creation of a much more sophisticated management information system. (More about that below.)

Going back many years, the management of the Society has tried to maintain in one place a document that lists and explains the various policies and procedures to be followed. The diligence with which this has been maintained has varied over the years under different administrations and circumstances. Management in recent years took on this task with renewed vigor and dedication resulting in an updated *ASMA Policies and Procedures Handbook* that brought structure to some previously disparate and sometimes conflicting policies. Importantly, the document has been circulated to those in leadership positions to insure it is used and followed.

The Society has tried, within its means, to have its management remain technologically up to date. Retrospectively, some of these earlier "steps into the future" might seem quaint – like adopting early versions of QuickBooks. But the team that has

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<sup>4</sup> Member Dick Elam carried the flag for this effort during its early years. It passed to Anne Brodie Hill who with charm and energy and the assistance of Cynthia Darwin, Val Sandell, Bob Semler and Charles Sharpe have blossomed it into a national program.

managed the Society in recent years has been much more open to ways new technologies and software can improve, strengthen and at the same time lessen the cost of running the Society. It has aggressively pursued them and transitioned from spreadsheet record keeping to the Internet-based automated Wild Apricot system that allows for: online voting; automated dues and notice reminders; secure online payments; e-news and special notices; and registration for special events and activities. Management uses the system to provide on our web site updated key information for our members and enables the public to view our exhibitions there as well.

The Society greatly facilitated and reduced the total expenses of the jury process some years ago when it adopted what was then cutting edge digital jury technology, Juried Art Services. As that new field became more competitive, better, less expensive and more user-friendly alternatives appeared and about a year ago the Society successfully switched to Submittable.com. It not only allows members to upload images and information about their work for National and Regional juried exhibitions and for applications for membership upgrades but provides administrators easy access to images and biographical information about our artists to be used in conjunction with the Society's online Wild Apricot membership software.

### **Building Fiscal Responsibility for the Society's Future**

As an established and respected national organization with an international reach, ASMA does a lot with very limited funds. We are – even more so than were in the past - basically an “All Volunteer Navy.” As President Kim Shaklee rightly states, “If it were not for the time so generously given by our members, we would have died off decades ago. Time *is* money, so it is important we spend it wisely. The current administration has worked tirelessly to be frugal as possible and provide a solid financial strategy. If the money isn't there, don't spend it! If the money is there, save some of it!” To insure management has the financial information to “keep their pencils sharp,” accounting and reporting information systems have been upgraded. Using these systems, management has been hardnosed about minimizing the cost of operations and services rendered to our members while at the same time being sure our revenues cover those costs. For instance, an analysis was done about how much it actually cost to bring on a new member and it was found we were actually losing money even with a very tight grip on the purse strings. So, dues were raised – and, because there was recognition of value, there was no loss of membership. All viable ways to save money through greater use of and in-kind contributions from the volunteer crew are pursued.

Experience has shown all successful organizations need a capital base to survive the unexpected. Not long ago, ASMA had none. During the last few years, Management began to systematically build a capital base through capitalizing retained earnings and fundraising with the idea that, to use nautical terms, should we be caught in a storm that threatened to drive us on to land on our lee, it would be good to have an anchor to windward – good to have the resources to survive. Thus began the *Anchor to Windward* annual fundraising drive with a set goal to reach and build on in the future. The Society set a stretch objective for our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary and reached it: We now have a capital base of over \$100,000 invested in various index funds at Vanguard, the largest mutual fund

management fund in the world with over \$4.5 trillion in assets. Our longer-term goal is to increase that capital base to \$250,000 by 2024. This will be achieved by continuing what we have been doing and, hopefully, with funds given to the Society through estate planning – a program we have begun to promote with a brochure that will be updated and with ongoing advertising.

While this capital drive has been successful, how it was achieved is very important. Members of the Board, Committees and Fellowship have demonstrated leadership by pooling funds to match contributions from members. Equally important, follow-up measures include acknowledging those who gave by recognizing them in the *ASMA News and Journal* and on our website. Moreover written acknowledgements are mailed to donors with information for their annual tax preparation.

### **3. Its Pursuit of Broader Horizons**

#### **Introduction of the National Marine Art Conferences**

Undoubtedly the most consequential accomplishment for the Society in recent decades was when the Board under the leadership of President Kim Shaklee took the ASMA ship into unknown waters that looked excitingly promising but were not without considerable risk. Captain Kim – or as she is known to some of us as a result of this venture, “Brave Kim” – believed along with the Board that the Annual General Meeting could be transformed into a much more rewarding and beneficial event if it morphed into a National Marine Art Conference, or NMAC.

To quote her, “Build it and they will come.’ It was not rocket science. Artists need and want to have the opportunity to learn from their peers. Although we always had some significant learning opportunity during our Annual General Meeting, it was not enough to entice most members to attend over the course of the last fifteen or more years. The cost for limited learning that was offered was simply too great. The financial risk for mounting a conference was great; getting AGMs to break even proved very difficult so to have a much larger undertaking do so would be most challenging. Keeping the costs affordable was important, and the Board and Fellowship worked extremely hard to prove it could be successful. And it was! The first NMAC was held in Williamsburg, VA in September 2016 where the *17<sup>th</sup> National Exhibition* opened at the Muscarelle Museum of the College of William and Mary, one of the nation’s oldest and finest colleges.

In the past only ASMA members could attend our events but management opened the doors and welcomed individuals and organizations outside the Society to attend the Conference. They developed the ASMA Lifetime Achievement Award that is “Given in recognition of outstanding contributions to the preservation and conservancy of maritime art, while selflessly creating public awareness and promotion of marine art for future generations.” Its first recipients were Robert Kierlin and his wife Mary Burrichter for the work they have done to create the Minnesota Museum of Marine Art in Winona, MN which has become a regionally important museum with national aspirations and which has hosted ASMA Regional and National Exhibitions. In the same vein, management changed the name of the Saturday night dinner that honored Robert Oliver Skemp (1910-1984), an early Fellow who was tragically killed in an auto accident, to the Captains

Dinner as a way of honoring of all those who have served ASMA in a special way. Based on the success of the first NMAC, a second one was held the following year in Mystic, Connecticut to coincide with the arrival of the *17<sup>th</sup> National Exhibition* at the last of its six host venues. It was also very successful but the amount of work involved in these Conferences – especially when the crew mounting them is all volunteer – is considerable so the Board decided they should not be annual but occur in conjunction with our National Exhibitions every three years or so. The 2018 AGM will be combined with a retreat in Charleston, South Carolina this fall.

### **More Active Networking with ASMA Allied Organization**

In 1963, under the leadership of a legendary Cape Horner, Karl Kortum,<sup>5</sup> a group interested in preserving American Maritime history got together to save the American-built merchant bark, the *Kailulani* rusting away in the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> It sank before it could be saved but similar efforts continued and in 1970 they created the National Maritime Historical Society (NMHS) and the late, dynamic Peter Stanford took the helm. The organization is devoted to historical ship preservation and maritime education and publishes a quarterly magazine, *Sea History*. It has helped form other organizations with similar interests, including our own Society when it took ASMA under wing while we applied to New York State authorities to incorporate.

As part of our reaching out to include others in our new Marine Art Conferences, our early ties with the NMHS were refreshed and this resulted in reaching the audience in their large membership (over 10,000) that shared interest in marine art and history. This renewed relationship led to opportunities for editorial exchanges, favorable advertising rates and a very generous gift to all ASMA members of one full year free subscription for *Sea History* from their Chairman, Ronald L. Oswald. Their President Burchenal Green provided ASMA invaluable assistance. In Kim's words, "She helped prepare me for the many challenges of putting together a conference. She has been a great mentor and good steward for all things maritime."

This same approach to strengthening existing relationships has been happening with the Minnesota Marine Art Museum and with Mystic Seaport where the Second National Marine Art Conference took place last year and where the Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to J. Russell Jinishian. It is also where traditionally the Fellows meet in the spring to judge submissions for membership upgrades, National Exhibitions and the ASMA web site. Mystic has an added connection with ASMA for many of our artists are represented at the Mystic Gallery, located on the premises of the Seaport.

### **Publicity and Advertising**

Over the last ten years ASMA has cultivated a very productive relationship with *Fine Art Connoisseur* magazine and its Editor, Peter Trippi, who holds our Society as a leading organization in the field of contemporary marine art. His belief in and support of

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<sup>5</sup> He was instrumental in making ASMA a national organization from its beginning in 1978 by bringing a whole Pacific Coast network interested in marine art. Amazingly, forty percent of our initial membership was from outside New England and a large part of this was from the West.

<sup>6</sup> This was the ship that Karl Kortum first went to sea on in 1941.

the Society has been manifested in a number of ways. He was a keynote speaker at one of our Annual General Meetings, has provided discounted national advertising rates for all ASMA members and has been a generous National Sponsor for both of our National Marine Art Conferences. For over ten years – nearly as long as the magazine has been in existence, he has championed the Society by running articles about the Society and its members in the magazine. These are taken from articles originally written for “Notes from Brush Hill” by Charles Raskob Robinson in our *ASMA News and Journal* and have averaged at least one article annually for the last ten years. The most recent appears in the current issue of *Fine Art Connoisseur*.

With the strengthening of our financial situation, the Society has been able to pursue a more aggressive advertising program. In addition to *Fine Art Connoisseur*, we have advertised in *Artists Magazine*, *Plein Air Magazine*, *Western Artist*, *Art of the West Magazine*, *Sea History and Artists Network Online*.

Management has also sought successfully the support and recognition from national art suppliers. They contributed about three thousand Dollars in art supplies and prizes for the ASMA National Marine Art Conference attendees.

Finally and as an appropriate close to this historical update, past President and Fellow Russ Kramer, who was actively involved in many of the above achievements, listed as among his most significant the fact that he, “Insisted, cajoled, persuaded, induced, prevailed upon, influenced, impelled, urged, and coaxed Kim Shaklee to succeed me, knowing she would be the most tireless and effective President in our history.”  
Amen to that.