

VANUATU MARITIME COLLEGE — A BUSY YEAR AND AN EXCITING FUTURE

Vanuatu Maritime College was only founded a year ago but it is already bustling with life under the direction of its dynamic Chief Executive Officer, Captain Ken Barnett, who was appointed in February 1999. Captain Barnett is by no means new to the Pacific Islands—he has headed maritime training institutions in Kiribati, Papua New Guinea and Tuvalu and so will be well known to many Island seafarers.

The College is situated in the town of Luganville on Vanuatu's largest island, Santo, and was formerly the Fisheries Training Centre. Its mandate is to 'provide quality training for seafarers and fishers at all levels to improve employment opportunities in the maritime and fishing industries and enhance safety at sea'. However, before any training could be done, the College had to be ready to provide it—and this has involved an immense amount of hard work over the past six months.

First, staff, most of them ni-Vanuatu, had to be recruited. The College team now consists of:

- Consultant Senior Engineering Instructor, Chris Gee — an engineer with plenty of Pacific experience and a familiar figure to those who own and work on Vanuatu inter-island ships;
- Engineering Instructor, August Fred—holds a 300 BHP Marine Engineer's ticket

by Caroline Nalo ⁽¹⁾

and has had overseas training in Solomon Islands, New Zealand and Finland; worked for the Marine Department and for private firms;

- Volunteer Senior Nautical Instructor, Joseph Dryburgh—an Australian citizen hailing originally from Ireland, with sea experience dating back to the Second World War;
- Catering Instructor, Kelvin Talo—experience as Chief Steward on vessels working internationally, and in hotels;
- Fishing Instructor, Nare Wolu—holds various fishing certificates and a Mate II qualification; worked for the Fisheries Department for 10 years;
- Boat Skipper, Soti William—Grade 5 Master's and other marine certificates; worked as Captain of government ships and was Nautical Instructor and then Head of the Marine Training School;
- Fitter/mechanic, Tom Lorrend—Mechanic 1st Class, 300 BHP Engineering Certificate and Grade 5 Engineering Certificate; worked for the Ports and Marine Department, private companies in

Vanuatu and PNG, and the Vanuatu Hydrographic Unit;

- Office Manager, Caroline Nalo—worked for Department of Lands and, as Chief Editor, for SPC; responsible for day-to-day administration and accounting;
- Administrative Assistant, Sharon Bulesali—worked for private firms and for the Vanuatu National Council of Women;
- Groundsman, George Warren—holds a coxswain's certificate and is a good fisherman; responsible for keeping the College grounds and buildings in good order;
- Cook, Walter Coty—worked as cook aboard overseas vessels and in local resorts; seafarers enjoy his cooking;
- Cleaner, Anna Shem—keeps the inside of the College squeaky clean.

Once people were on hand, the College facilities had to be brought up to scratch. From May to November, building teams were hard at work renovating the six staff houses, the three existing classrooms and accommodation for visiting instructors. They also refurbished a large existing building which now contains an engineering workshop and classroom, did up the student dormitories, enlarged the ablutions block and student kitchen, and built a student laundry.

At the same time, staff were busy with the two College vessels. *Etelis* and *Evolan* are now ready to play their part, with *Etelis* to be used for practical fishing instruction in rural villages and *Evolan* for training

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Fish handling workshop in Tanna

seafarers. In mid-November, the Council of Ministers approved the addition to the College fleet of the *Euphrosyne*, which in pre-Independence times was used by British Resident Commissioners as a touring vessel. *Euphrosyne* is to be on loan to the College for two years, with the College responsible for repairing and maintaining it. This will provide an excellent opportunity for seamen and engineers to have hands-on experience in ship renovation and seamanship.

Any training institution needs to be well equipped. College staff became a familiar sight at the wharf and airport cargo sheds as they collected life rafts and life jackets, fire-fighting equipment, distress flares, kitchen equipment, office furniture, computers, engineering tools and many other essential items. In the meantime, curriculum

development proceeded apace. The Vanuatu Maritime College provides take-home notes to all students attending its courses, so that they can refresh their memories and look up essential information when they go back to work. At the moment all course notes are in English, but there are plans afoot to translate them into Bislama as soon as time and funds permit.

Finally, in August, the College was ready to conduct its first safety and survival course—one of six to be held in 1999. Each course takes between 12 and 15 students, this number being small enough for all students to receive individual attention from instructors and to participate fully in practical exercises. As this article went to press, the College was running three courses: a Safety and Survival Course, an Engineering Course on engines of less than 75 kW,

and a Master's Course for masters of small ships under 20 tonnes.

All students successfully completing a course receive a certificate attesting that they have been trained in accordance with the requirements of the 1995 amendments to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Watchkeeping and Certification (STCW '95). These amendments come into force on 1 February 2002 and require that all seafarers be appropriately trained before that date.

Vanuatu is a nation of many islands, and inter-island ships carrying cargo outwards and kava and copra into Santo and Vila are the islands' lifeline. For this reason, the Vanuatu Maritime College is currently giving priority in its training to seafarers serving aboard inter-island ships.

And they value the opportunity to receive it. Each day, more seafarers are in the College office completing application forms, while over a shell of kava at night, those who are attending courses can be heard recounting what they have learnt and commenting on the value, especially, of the practical parts of the training. One was even overheard saying 'We have all these life jackets on board, but I had no idea how to use them until yesterday'!

Staff, too, have been given the opportunity for further training. All staff attended a Safety and Survival Course, with two being the first ni-Vanuatu women ever to gain a Safety Certificate. The Fishing Instructor was given three weeks of training at the New Zealand School of Fisheries, with funding provided by SPC. Several of the instructors and the Office Manager attended a course for teachers of HIV/AIDS information, organ-



Righting a life raft

ised and funded by SPC and held at the College, with other participants from Vanuatu and four from Solomon Islands. The Catering Instructor returned in November from a two-month attachment to the Hospitality Section of the National Institute of Technology in Port Vila. Funds for training and develop-

ment in 1999 came from two sources: the recurrent budget, funded by the Vanuatu Government through the Departments of Ports & Marine and Fisheries, and the capital budget, funded by a levy on the Vanuatu Shipping Registry.



The year 1999 has been mainly one of 'tidying-up' and preparation. What are the plans for the future? In 2000 the College will continue to concentrate on training of inter-island seafarers (it is believed there are between seven and eight hundred of them), with Safety and Survival Courses running right through the year and increasing emphasis on training in engineering, seamanship and navigation at various levels.

Training for rural fishers will also begin in 2000. Already the College has received a request from Torba Province (the Banks and Torres Islands, probably the most isolated of all Vanuatu communities) for men and women on four different islands to be trained. This type of practical training in their home environment will help villagers to increase their catches both for home consumption and for sale. Modules offered will teach skills in boat repair, engine repair and maintenance and net mending, as well as different fishing techniques.

Further into the future, the College will be embarking upon the exciting challenge of training ni-Vanuatu seafarers for employment as deck, engine-room and catering ratings aboard vessels trading internationally. Interest in this type of training has already been expressed by ship-owners as far afield as Japan and India. Other potential students are the 300 or so ni-Vanuatu fishermen working aboard overseas fishing vessels. Contacts with the Vanuatu Fishermen's Association indicate a sizeable likely demand from its members.

Further development of the College facilities is also planned. A

Fire-fighting practicals

grant has been made available by AusAID for construction of a fire-fighting simulator; construction began in late November.

Recently the National Development Commission approved a three-year investment programme. It includes an engine-room simulator, a cargo-handling simulator, dangerous goods

storage, additional classrooms, more student accommodation and staff housing, repairs to the College jetty and pontoons, dredging of the channel leading to the College, and buoy moorings and navigation aids. Several donors have already shown interest in the programme.

The weather looks set fair for the Vanuatu Maritime College.

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**Demonstration of the correct use of pyrotechnics
at the Vanuatu Maritime College**

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Original text: English

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