



# CONNECTIONS

NEWS AND TRENDS  
FROM THE WORLD OF MARINE COMPUTING

## Client Spotlight

### *Freedom Schooner Amistad Upgraded with New Satellite Equipment*

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*Earlier this year, I received a common request from an uncommon source. The request was for assistance in providing the most appropriate communications equipment. The source was unique—the schooner Amistad.*

#### ***In Brief***

It's hard to believe we're coming up on **Boat Show Season** again already. Catch us in booth C22 at the **Newport International Boat Show**, September 11-14. Dan Piltch will be presenting a daily seminar on communications options as part of the Newport show. We'll be walking the docks at the new **NY/NJ Sail Expo**, September 25-28 at Liberty Landing Marina. And of course we'll be on hand for the **Annapolis Sailboat Show**, October 9-13. Look for us in the OCENS booth, #YB21.

We're pleased to announce that **Susan Faunce** has joined the team at Marine Computer Systems. It is Susan's friendly voice which will most likely greet you when you call our Portland office. Please join us in welcoming her aboard.

In the Spring of 2003, the master of the freedom schooner *Amistad* contacted us to ask for help in selecting the most appropriate satellite phone for their vessel. The 129 foot (length overall) schooner was launched at Mystic Seaport in 2000 and has been representing Amistad America, Inc. with shoreside educational visits around the world.

The story of the original *Amistad* was launched into public view with the 1997 release of Steven Spielberg's movie highlighting the plight of a group of 49 people who were captured in Africa and revolted aboard their ship, taking command of it and ultimately winning their freedom through an 1841 U.S. Supreme Court decision.

Today's replica of *Amistad* is an impressively constructed vessel, as we learned during our tour of the boat as it lay at Portland's Maine State Pier a few blocks from our offices. Using traditional construction methods, the vessel was built with sturdy scantlings and is able to navigate to any port worldwide.

When an opportunity presented itself to upgrade the onboard communication and navigation systems, Captain John Deely, master of the *Amistad* contacted our Portland office and enlisted our help in providing a comparison of the growing number of options available. Our first few sessions together via email and telephone were focused on answering the many questions that came up and providing honest, unbiased opinions on the variety of sat-phones they were considering.

In the end, we all agreed on a SeaTel WaveCall 3000 fixed-mount, Globalstar based phone system. This allowed for a small (10") dome to be permanently affixed in the rigging, and any one of a number of commonly available corded or cordless phones to be used below decks without having to run wires throughout the cabins.

## *Freedom Schooner Amistad Upgraded with New Satellite Equipment*

Since the WaveCall 3000 was a new unit and wasn't yet available, we arranged to lend the ship one of our handheld Globalstar phones to use in the meantime. With this, they were immediately able to make use of their new email and weather gathering capabilities.

We also brainstormed a modified layout for the navstation below and the helm displays, and provided the necessary equipment which the Amistad crew very capably installed. The navstation now features a small-form factor computer with a flat panel screen. From here, they run Nobeltec's Visual Navigation Suite, and also retrieve their email and weather information.

If you're lucky enough to see this majestic vessel in port, see if you can locate their electronics displays on deck. It's not as easy as you might think.

Along with their new equipment, we provided some assistance with their email configuration and set up the vessel with Oceans' WeatherNet software to quickly and easily download compressed weather imagery from the Internet.

All in all, it was a pleasure to work with the very knowledgeable and capable Captain Deely and the entire Amistad America organization. The schooner is currently finishing a grand tour of the Great Lakes. You can find out more about the ship and the organization at their informative website: [www.amistadamerica.org](http://www.amistadamerica.org).

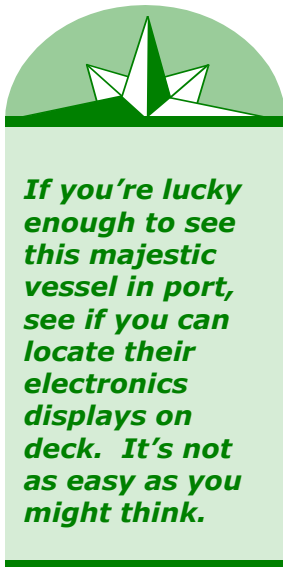
### *Also In Our Traditional Schooner Department . . .*

After five years of construction beginning with a damaged hull imported from California, the 65' staysail schooner *Lion's Whelp* was launched right outside our Maine offices on Portland's waterfront. Though the boat was beautifully crafted by some of the country's best marine woodworkers in a traditional style, the equipment down below rivals any modern racing yacht.

The computer driven navigation, communication and weather systems are supported by redundant hard drives — if one fails at sea, no problem, it can be yanked out and replaced while the other drive keeps the system going. No need to even turn off the computer. All this was packed into a 1.75" high box. When the navstation gets too crowded for all aboard to see the weather forecast, it (along with any other computer image) can be projected on a larger screen in the main salon.

Through a combination of a wireless network (including NMEA feeds) and an Iridium satellite phone system, the owners can navigate and communicate from a laptop anywhere onboard. There's even talk about having a display halfway up the mast so they can steer the boat through shifting coral channels.

See this unique combination of old and new at the docks of Portland Yacht Services.



New Products**New PTC-IIex Pactor Modem, Skymate Satellite Service Expands****PTC-IIex Pactor Modem**

The wizards at Special Communications Systems in Germany recently introduced their new PTC-IIex Pactor modem, as a successor to the PTC-IIe. Significant features in the new modem include an increase in onboard memory to 2Mb, and an improved Digital Signal Processing (DSP) chip which clocks along at a brisk 100 MHz.

Pactor has evolved as the de facto standard for marine HF Email services, and is supported by the amateur WinLink 2000 system as well as SailMail, ShipCom (WLO), SeaWave, Cruise Email and others. In addition to Pactor support for HF Email, SCS modems such as the IIex will also decode a variety of other digital signals including weatherfax, NAVTEX, SITOR and RadioTeletype, a point which should be of keen interest to mariners (appropriate software is required).

The PTC-IIex remains backward-compatible with previous models, and fully supports the older Pactor-I and Pactor-II protocols. Support for the newer, faster Pactor-III protocol, which offers a 3-5 time speed improvement over Pactor-II, is available via a firmware upgrade and appropriate license. More information on Pactor modems and HF Email providers is available on our website.

**Skymate Wireless Developments**

Skymate, which debuted during last fall's boat shows as BoatersMiniWeb, will unveil software with some interesting new features and new lower service rates this fall season.

A company spokesman tells us that advances in technology will enable Skymate to offer the same level of service at lower rates. Details on the new plans should be available at the boat shows. The latest version of the Skymate software features a new graphical weather interface which can deliver color NEXRAD radar images and weatherfax charts. Text-based weather from NOAA and customizable text forecasts from BuoyWeather are also available. If you can't bear the thought of going boating while your favorite team is playing "the big game", another new feature will allow users to receive Yahoo alerts to track stock prices, news headlines and yes, sports scores.

The Skymate system uses the ORBCOMM satellite constellation to deliver text email, weather information and position reports. We took Skymate along on a recent cruise, and were impressed with the unit's simple setup and ease of use. Contact us for a demonstration or more details.

- Tim Hasson (thasson@marinecomputer.com)

**CONNECTIONS: NEWS AND TRENDS IN MARINE COMPUTING** *is brought to you by:*

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TO:

### Practical, Hands-On Workshops

## New Seminar Series in conjunction with *Blue Water Sailing*

We're very happy to announce we've joined forces with the great folks at *Blue Water Sailing* magazine for a new series of "hands-on" workshops.

**Electronic Navigation with Nobeltec** is an interactive one-day session designed to help you master Nobeltec's Visual Navigation Suite electronic charting software. Covering both the basics and advanced features, this course is designed for users of all levels. Topics include customizing the software, route planning, choosing the right nautical charts, combining navigation information with tide, current and weather information, and more.

**Offshore Marine Communications** will combine lectures, live demonstrations and exercises to help you become a confident communicator. Ranging from SSB to Satellite, topics will include "hands on" equipment operation, distress and safety calling, options for email on the high seas, ways to get weather information, plus tips and tricks to save money.

Seminar venues and dates are:

Boston, Massachusetts  
Baltimore, Maryland  
St. Petersburg, Florida

November 1 & 2, 2003  
February 28 & 29, 2004  
April 3 & 4, 2004

Registration is \$295 for one day or \$495 for both days with a 20% discount for a second person. Grab a friend and join us for what we promise will be a fun and informative couple of days!

Call our Portland office at 207.871.1575 to register or request more complete course information. Our thanks to *BWS* for helping to create this unique opportunity. Visit them on the web at [www.bwsailing.com](http://www.bwsailing.com).