



**Admiral James M. Loy**

**Christening of Maritrans 192 and the Tanker Diligence**

**Tampa, Florida**

**November 9, 1998**

Thank you, Stephen. Reverend Briggs. Mrs. Newcomb. Kay. Distinguished guests.

Well, this is a much nicer day than Hurricane Georges offered us in September. Kay and I are honored to be part of this landmark launch.

Next spring will mark the tenth anniversary of the accident that prompted the Oil Pollution Act of 1990. OPA 90 represents an enormous national commitment to protect the marine environment. It has required significant effort, significant investment, significant commitment.

But that commitment is paying off. In the years before OPA 90 was passed, an average of 14 gallons of oil were spilled for every million barrels shipped in or out of U.S. ports. After OPA 90, as the Coast Guard and Maritrans and the entire marine industry implemented and often exceeded the OPA 90 requirements, that number steadily dropped. In 1997, the rate stood at 1.5 gallons—a 90% reduction. Many in this audience are responsible for large parts of that tremendous national accomplishment.

The conversion of *Maritrans 192*—the nation's first conversion of a large single-hull tank vessel to a double-hull vessel—is an important milestone in that march of progress. Mr. Van Dyck, I congratulate the men and women of Maritrans for accomplishing a technical achievement that many considered undoable.

Double hulls clearly have a high preventive value. However, as we continue to work together to reduce the amount of oil going into our waters, we remain aware that any time a spill is prevented only by the interposition of a double hull between cargo and a navigational hazard, something else has clearly gone badly awry. Double hulls are a necessary line of defense, but they are a last line of defense. The most important key to safety and prevention is people.

That's why—impressive though the conversion of *Maritrans 192* certainly is—this conversion may actually be less significant than Maritrans' active commitment, day in and day out, to prevent pollution.

Each year the Coast Guard sponsors the William M. Benkert Awards to recognize companies that embody excellence in marine environmental protection. The award was established to honor Rear Admiral William "Mike" Benkert, whom many regard as the father of the Coast Guard Marine Environmental Protection Program.

The Benkert Awards are special for two reasons.

First, to qualify, companies must do far more than merely comply with industrial and regulatory standards. They must excel in environmental management systems, internal stakeholder focus, external stakeholder focus, and environmental measuring. Each element has rigorous objective criteria. Companies must clearly exceed standards.

Second, we feel absolutely no obligation to bestow Benkert awards in every category every year. We don't just round up nominations and honor the best of what comes in. This year, for example, though we had plenty of nominations in twelve categories, we made only eight awards. Earning a Benkert Award is indeed a significant marine environmental protection accomplishment for any company.

In 1996 and 1997, Maritrans was the first runner-up among Large Bulk Cargo Vessel Operators. This year, Maritrans won the Benkert Award. The selection committee particularly commended Maritrans' active rewards system, which provides impressive incentives for vessel crews to meet environmental goals, and a number of superlative management practices, such as their "Safe Operations Awareness Program," which quickly identifies and remedies environmental and safety risks.

Three years of Benkert recognition is incontrovertible testimony of a sustained commitment to environmental protection. So is compliance with AWO's responsible carrier program. So is a commitment to ISO certification. So is conformity to the ISM Code. The conversion of *Maritrans 192* and the delivery of the *Diligence* are but further evidence of a deep and enduring commitment to a clean environment.

From all of us at the Coast Guard, please accept our respect and acclaim for your leadership and willing partnership in this enormously important environmental challenge.

Now, let's get on with the christenings and dedicate these vessels to years of safe service.

Thank you.

