

Thruster Customer Report

Success With First WESMAR Thruster Leads Smith Maritime to a Second System

When Smith Maritime, Florida-based ocean towing and salvage services company, commissioned its tugboat *Elsbeth III*, she had something on board the company's other tugs do not have—a WESMAR DPC75 heavy duty, counterrotating bow thruster. A first for Latham Smith who designs and builds vessels for his own company and has a reputation as a successful innovator in the industry. Smith says he is so pleased with the bow thruster's performance, he plans to put one on his next tug, currently under construction.

"The bow thruster has greatly enhanced the maneuverability of the tug, allowing us to bid on jobs requiring close quarters handling and precision moves," said Captain Latham Smith, owner of Smith Maritime.

"The best available technology is indeed a standard propulsion package for the main engines, with their strong, simple reliability, paired with a bow thruster to allow for greater maneuverability. I am quite pleased with the flexibility this combination allows."

Smith, owner of five vessels, with a sixth under construction, commissioned the *Elsbeth III* in February 1999. She is the third to be named after his wife and business partner with whom he began Smith Maritime in 1969. Today their company includes a shipyard in Green Cove Springs, Florida, where they build new vessels and a second office in Northampton, Massachusetts, which handles vessel operations and company administration; it is managed by their daughter Rachel Smith, Operations Manager. The company employs between 35 and 40 people.

Smith Maritime's vessels operate



The WESMAR DPC75 enhances the maneuverability of Smith Maritime's ELSBETH III tug.

primarily between the U.S., the Caribbean and South America, performing a variety of towing services including barge towing, rig shifts and ship escort/rescue. Their tugs are designed to be shallow draft, which increases maneuverability and access to greater locations—yet have the fueling and other capabilities to safely and routinely perform transoceanic towages. The two larger tugs operate worldwide. In fact, during 1991- 92, Captain Smith and First Mate Elsbeth Smith circumnavigated the world towing barges throughout with the tug *Elsbeth II*.

The 90-foot tug *Elsbeth III* is a shallow-draft, triple-screw tug with a sharply upturned bow and a generous beam of 40 feet and a draft of 15. Quoted in *American Tugboat Review* 1999, Smith said, "As the years go by, my boats keep getting shallower and fatter with more freeboard and high bows. We like them shallow so they can take on jobs involving shallow rivers where a lot of our competitors

can't go. And this one has an official length and other measurements that keep her just under 100 tons, which puts her outside the purview of a lot of rule books," he explained.

He said he builds them wider so they can carry more fuel. "Fuel efficiency is an essential measure for any tugboat operation, and we are operating in all waters between the two U.S. Coasts, the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico, where fuel is available at prices ranging from \$.40 to \$1.00 per gallon. We want to have the load carrying capacity to purchase fuel where it is available at the best price and at the same time, we don't want a particularly deep draft.

"With the high bow, when you are plunging into head seas, you are more likely to have dry decks, which means the crew can be out on deck working safely and productively. Also, some of the offshore barges which we handle have freeboard of 18 to 20 feet, and with a high bow our crew can easily climb onto the barges whenever necessary."

