

Golden Compass Awards Dinner Benefits Port Everglades' Seafarers' House

Stena Group's Dan Sten Olsson is honoree at annual gala



by Will Watson
#3256-A

Seafarer's House, which serves as the home away from home for thousands of mariners who make port calls at Port Everglades in Fort Lauderdale, received its annual major financial shot in the arm on May 7th from the local maritime community which came together for the annual Golden Compass Awards Dinner. Total revenues from the dinner and auctions were still being tabulated at press time, but estimates are upwards of \$300,000 from the near record number of guests.

Known to Hispanic seafarers as Casa Del Marino (and there are a number of Central American seafarers who visit), the facility became a reality in 1989 in a 400 square foot facility with just four telephones. Today Seafarers' House is a 4,200 square foot facility that serves over 100,000 mariners annually – more than any similar facility – and during the heavy winter cruise season, more than 1,500 phone calls are placed daily by visiting crew to their homes across the globe.

This year's black tie gala honored Mr. Dan Sten Olsson, who is both CEO of the Stena Sphere and its major shareholder, as well as chairman of most Stena Sphere companies. The company's operations are split among three main entities: Stena AB with ferry lines, tanker operation, offshore drilling, real estate and financial interests; Stena Metall AB, active in recycling, trade and related finance; and Stena Sessan AB handling

shipping, real estate and investments. Stena trades in the US under the names Stena Bulk Inc., Stena Metal Trading Inc. and Sessan Properties Inc.

A community leader, mentor and philanthropist, Mr. Stena generously shares his considerable expertise through his role as Chairman of the Swedish Shipowners' Association and as member of the Alliance for Global Sustainability. In 2005, He was awarded the King's Medal for contributing to the development of Swedish society in terms of business, sustainable values and charity.

The annual dinner and its accompanying auction is the largest annual fundraiser for Seafarers' House and was held at Fort Lauderdale's Hyatt Regency Pier 66 hotel – just across the road from the port. Hosted by local television personality Kristi Krueger, the annual live auction was run by Bill Panoff, Publisher of *Porthole Magazine*. The event is chaired by Mr. Michael Hopkins, Vice President, Operations L.A. of Crowley Liner Services teamed with Auction Committee Chair Ms. Maureen Orts, Assistant Manager, Shore Operations, Holland America Line.

Top Rated

Port Everglades' Seafarers' House was recently voted the Top Center in the Americas by Working Mariners. In a competition launched by the International Committee on Seafarers' Welfare, Seafarers' House was short-listed for the top five seafarers' centers in the world and was the only center selected in the Americas for consideration for this award. Over 2000 seafarers took part in the nomination process and awards for the shipping company



PHOTO: STENA GROUP

of the year, port of the year, and seafarer center of the year, were nominated by seafarers. The top center worldwide was the Rosenhill Seamen's Centre in Gothenburg in Sweden.

One reason for the top marks must be the FREE escort transportation service that Seafarers' House provides to visiting mariners. "We started working with the port on this even before the TWIC card came out," recalls Ms. Lesley M. Warrick, executive director of Seafarers' House. She says that the House's volunteer drivers all have TWIC cards with escort privileges at all terminals at the port.

Ms. Warrick notes that her staff of six employees and countless volunteers blend "practical welfare with spiritual welfare" and that combination is greatly appreciated by the mariners who visit the massive South Florida port. ☆

Will Watson is a member of CAMM and a veteran journalist. He also works for the Marshall Islands Registry and is a representative of the Republic of the Marshall Islands to the UN Contact Group on Piracy off the Coast of Somalia (CGPCS).



PHOTO: MARITIME ART BY BOBBY RASKIN

Port Everglades' Seafarers' House.