
HOCKEMA GROUP



NAVAL ARCHITECTS ♦ MARINE ENGINEERS ♦ ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS

December 14, 2023
HG G2311

Marco Alumni – Hal Hockema: Thank you Bruce Whittemore and Chuck Cannon
Presented at the Seattle Norwegian Commercial Club (NCC) Fishermen’s Night

There are some true icons in our Pacific Northwest fishing industry. Some, like Peter Schmidt, Chuck Bundrant, and Erik Breivik are universally known, even by many outside of our industry after their passing. I’ve had the good fortune of working for or with all three of them.

Others are well known and appreciated within our realm. This status belongs to Bruce Whittemore and Chuck Cannon, who individually are very talented naval architects, but working together, Bruce and Chuck were a team that achieved icon status. Their large body of work in the Alaska fishing industry is unmistakable and, while some in the Northwest may not know it, they also left an indelible mark on the South American fisheries, mainly in Chile but other countries as well.

For me, and many others, Marco was a starting point in our careers; early experiences matter.

I grew up in Newport, Oregon. I developed an interest in boats while working on the docks for summer jobs in high school. The commercial fishing boats were particularly interesting to me. Then, I attended Oregon State University and majored in mechanical engineering. I worked on commercial fishing boats in the summers between college years.

In 1978 I interviewed at numerous naval architecture firms and shipyards in the Puget Sound area, and Marco was easily the most interesting. I am half theoretical and half “nuts-and-bolts,” and engineering school was all theoretical. Importantly though, that half and half viewpoint has served me well throughout my engineering career.

In the Spring of 1979, I needed a break after most of my mid-level courses were completed, so I arranged for another interview with Bruce Whittemore and he was willing to hire me, even though I hadn’t finished college. The job was to be a combination of drafting and engineering. On the day of the interview, Bruce assigned a young naval architect named Doug Dixon to give my fiancé Julie and me a tour of the Marco shipyard. I was thoroughly impressed, and not just with Doug!

While Bruce was ready to hire me, a final interview with Peter Schmidt was required. Bruce said Pete was interested in my situation and so we met with him that afternoon. At age 22, this was a big deal for me, as I was well aware of Peter Schmidt’s industry status and was a bit intimidated at the thought of an interview with him! At that time, however, I was not aware of Peter Schmidt’s personal prowess, which I soon discovered was impressive in a very positive way.

As soon as we arrived at Pete’s office, overlooking the 122’ F/V Oceanic that had been christened the day before, Pete and Bruce made me feel at ease. Pete recommended that I work in the shipyard as a trainee building boats for a few months before moving into the naval architecture department or production planning group. Of course, I said “yes.”

That meeting with Bruce and Pete changed my life. First, they opened a big door of opportunity for me, when I had not completed my engineering degree, because they recognized some untapped

potential I had. Second, Marco's business philosophy was something to appreciate and to emulate, as Marco was wholly focused on producing excellent products for their customers, and developing ambitious employees into important roles. This is why there are so many Marco alumni who have succeeded in our industry. My own naval architecture career has spanned 44 years.

In 1979, Marco built 10 large crabbers and trawlers, their busiest year ever, and I was in the middle of it. I was a kid in a candy store!

While at Marco as a shipyard trainee, I would visit the naval architecture department periodically to see what was going on there and to get to know some of the naval architects. Whenever I went there, Chuck Cannon was always hunched over his desk doing "naval architecture stuff." I could see that this was where the behind-the-scenes work was getting done, and Chuck was doing it. During this period, and many years thereafter, I studied naval architecture in the evenings at home.

I completed my shipyard training a few months later and entered the Marco naval architecture department, soon to be transferred to Campbell shipyard in San Diego. I never completed my engineering degree but was determined to succeed and secured my professional engineer's license for Naval Architecture and Marine Engineering, a few years later.

I have done a lot of work with North Pacific and Alaska fishing vessel designs. Many of my designs are influenced by the Marco designs of the 1970s that Bruce and Chuck were responsible for.

I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Peter Schmidt, Bruce Whittemore, and Chuck Cannon for their tremendous work for our industry. My life, and many others' lives, would not be the same without them. The foundational first five years of my career were at Marco and Campbell Shipyards, and I was fortunate to have had many personal interactions with all of them, and also Bob Allen. Shipbuilding is a cyclical industry. The crab boat boom ended in 1980 and the tuna seiner boom ended in 1983, so it was time for me to move on to other employment, but the Marco and Campbell experiences were the best that any young naval architect could dream of.

Here is a bonus experience. In 2017 Hockema Group collaborated with Bruce Whittemore on a 90' sardine purse seiner design that was built in Guaymas, Mexico. Bruce was in his late 80s at the time but was still offering his services in an advisory role. He and we separately developed preliminary hull forms, then we compared their performances utilizing computational fluid dynamics (CFD). Then, applying the best features of each hull form, we developed another model and ran the CFD again. The resulting hull was nearly 20% more efficient than either Bruce's or our parent hulls. For me personally, this was immensely satisfying not only because we had developed a very good design, but also because my company had successfully collaborated with one of the best fishing vessel naval architects in history.

My story is just one of many, and I'm sure all the other Marco Alumni are immensely appreciative too.



Hal Hockema, P.E.
Chairman
Hockema Group, Inc.