



## American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc.

*Serving America in Peace and War*

### PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: May 15, 2026

#### **American Merchant Marine Veterans Officers to Receive Medals for Outstanding Achievement**

WASHINGTON, DC – Friday, May 22, 2026. In celebration of National Maritime Day, six past and current leaders of the American Merchant Marine Veterans, Inc. (AMMV) will receive the prestigious *Merchant Marine Medal for Outstanding Achievement* from Stephen M. Carmel, the Administrator of the U.S. Maritime Administration (MARAD). This medal is the third highest award for U.S. Merchant Mariners. The medals will be presented during the annual National Maritime Day program at the U.S. Department of Transportation Headquarters in Washington, DC.



*Merchant Marine Medal for  
Outstanding Achievement*

AMMV's National Secretary, Capt. Chris Edyvean, stated, "The birth of our Merchant Marine is commonly recognized as June 12, 1775, when colonial forces aboard the sloop *Unity*, led by Capt. Jeremiah O'Brien, seized the armed British schooner *HMS Margaretta* near Machias, Maine. During the ensuing 250 years, the U.S. Merchant Marine has made significant contributions during every war, conflict, and humanitarian mission. They have been present in many pivotal moments in American history, and AMMV strives to tell their story."

These volunteer AMMV leaders, all post-WWII era merchant mariners who served in AMMV's national officer positions between 2015-2025, include Capt. Dru DiMattia, Capt. Christopher Edyvean, Capt. Darin Huggins, Dennis Kelly, Chief Engineer Christian G. Yuhas, and Bosun John Pitts (posthumously).

All six recipients have spent decades serving in the maritime industry, and are connected with various prominent maritime institutions: Capt. DiMattia: member, Marine Engineers' Beneficial Association (MEBA), Maine Maritime Academy alumnus (1988); Capt. Edyvean: member, International Organization of Masters, Mates, & Pilots (MMP), Seafarers International Union's Paul Hall Center graduate (1992); Capt. Huggins: member, MEBA, Maine Maritime Academy alumnus (2002); Dennis Kelly: U.S. Merchant Marine Academy alumnus (1971); C/E Christian Yuhas: MEBA member, California Maritime Academy (1992); John Pitts: Atlantic Maritime Employees Union.

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The most notable outstanding accomplishment of this distinguished group of AMMV leaders was the grassroots efforts behind passage of the *Merchant Mariners of World War II Congressional Gold Medal (CGM) Act of 2020* (Public Law 116-125), which was signed into law on March 13, 2020. Following the minting process, the first awards of the Congressional Gold Medal occurred at a ceremony in the U.S. Capitol Rotunda on May 18, 2022, that was sponsored by Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi and attended by bipartisan members of Congress.

The award-winning AMMV leaders then arranged and hosted numerous ceremonies around the country to honor the service of our World War II Merchant Marine veterans, many of whom were in the late 90's and early 100's.

The success of the CGM Act became the catalyst to attract public attention, allowing AMMV to further showcase the history of the American Merchant Marine, from its inception during the Revolutionary War to the modern-day activities in the Middle East region. The U.S. Merchant Marine flag displays, *In Peace and War – 1775*, which sums up the incredible but relatively unknown history of this vital national service, described as the “Fourth Arm of Defense” by President Franklin Roosevelt.

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