

Capt. P.N. Tsakos Speech
CMA – Commodore Gala Dinner
25th March 2015

SHIPPING  **2015**

Dear Chairman, dear friends, dear colleagues, fellow commodores

Good evening to all and warm greetings from Athens!

It is a great honor and privilege for me to be the recipient of the prestigious Commodore award and I would like to express my sincere thanks to the CMA Board of the Directors. Although I would have loved to be with you and to wear the Commodore hat in front of you, I truly apologize that for reasons beyond my control, I was not able to do so. I have however asked to be with you and accept the award on my behalf, my most precious associate and the best that I have. My son Nikos – president of Tsakos Energy Navigation and current Chairman of Intertanko - and my grandson Panagiotis. I would really like to thank you for the affection and hospitality that you have offered to them. I would also like to thank you for the concern, care and interest that you are showing to the seafarers of all the world, as I take pride to be one of them.

Please allow me to take you on a cruise through time and a few thousand miles away across the Atlantic.

As some of you may know I was born in the prewar years in the village of Kardamyla, small in size but great in shipping heritage island of Chios in the Aegean Sea. As you can see my town is beautiful, however its land is barren, lacking vegetation and impossible to feed all of us. Therefore, our valley to cultivate, our outlet for a better life was the open sea.

We were all making dreams at the time. Dreams of a better life, dreams of a better future. The dream of all us was to be seafarers and eventually Captains. The most common wish to youngsters in our village was “to your health and may you become a good captain”. But we also had role models, mentors, shining examples. They were our fathers and grandfathers as everything was built on the solid foundations of tradition, family values, trust, teamwork, dedication, determination and mutual respect.

However the route for all of us was immensely difficult and it required a huge effort. The country was war torn, it had lost most of its ships and the people seeking employment plenty.

This is the reason I consider myself extremely lucky that a few months after my graduation from the Livanion Maritime Academy of Kardamyla, on 11/11/1954 I was able to secure an unpaid position as a deck boy on the Kyma (ex Erastus Smith) Liberty ship. These were the Liberty ships, -over 100 of them - that the American government granted to Greece right after WWII and provided the impetus for Greek shipping to get back on its course. For this act we will be eternal grateful to the United States. As we are also indebted for the assistance and support provided during our struggle of independence. It is a happy coincidence that today the 25th of March we celebrate our July 4th, our National Independence Day and I would like to thank you and all the philhellenes.

The fact that I was able to move up the ranks and become a Captain at the age of 26 was beyond my expectations. It has only been exceeded by the fact that I have now been awarded the title of Commodore which to be honest I did not even know that it existed while growing up.

If I knew I would not have proceeded in becoming a ship owner as definitely the title of Commodore is far more prestigious! Thank you once more CMA !!

From there on my life is quite ordinary and I presume similar to most of the distinguished participants of this gala dinner. Getting married, having kids and developing our business, being thankful to God for his blessing, and for the support of my family, associates and all the people at sea with whom I had the privilege to work together and coast along. Allow me to say as a tribute to my village and my island, that I was not the only to make it. From the 19 boys in my high school class 15 become captains and 5 of them went on to become shipowners. You many recognize some of them. Thus, today we can proudly state that my village has almost 50% of the Chiot shipping, which is 50% of the Greek shipping, which is almost 50% of the European Shipping.

On behalf of all these people, my ancestors, my associates and my family I accept your distinguished award and I thank you for your love and this recognition.

Allow me a few more words on the current state of shipping. We are all fascinated and impressed by the technological developments of the past decades in shipping. From the Argonauts to my grandfather, oars and sails were the only means of propulsion. Proper operation was dependent on the skills of the seafarers. One may think that recent technological advances reduce the role of seafarers. To the contrary they highlight and underline the importance of the human factor and the need for proper training of all staff regardless if they work at sea or ashore. We need committed, educated, well trained and motivated personnel to serve the best, oldest, most courageous and full of pride industry which I am proud to be a member.

May I also add that the years that I spent at sea traveling the world were the most exciting years of my life. I met and made friends people from all over the world, from every nationality, from every race, from every religion. Thus wherever I go from Vancouver to Santiago Chile, from the Far East to Australia I feel that I am in my own neighborhood.

This is the greatest wealth and richness that I have accumulated. And this wealth I would like to pass on to the younger generation, with pride and gratitude.

What I have achieved in life was made possible by the generosity of the sea, following our seamanship tradition and heritage and having respect to the sea.

This has been and will always be the beacon of our actions. Respect to our people, respect to the environment, care for all those in need. This is our legacy.

I thank you once more for your generosity and recognition, which I truly appreciate.

May God bless you all!