

Hello,

I have a story to tell you and hopefully by the time I reach the end I will have connected all the threads so it makes sense to you. You may have some senior staff and pilots around there who will recall some of the vessels I will mention here and if so, that will help. This will be rather lengthy so please bear with me.

I was born and raised at the old, now non existent phosphate facility at Port Boca Grande, Fl. My father was a supervisor there as well as Harbormaster. Being his son, I had total access to the port and the ships that called there. During the 1960's the port was very active it was during this time that I became familiar with many ships and crews of many flags.

Some of you may remember the MARTHA MAC, she was a T-2 tanker converted to a self unloading bulk carrier owned by Gulfcoast Transit (now TECO Transport). During one period of the mid to late '60's, her captain was John Gunnison and one of her mates was Harry Filkins who now lives on Anna Maria Island. MARTHA MAC was sold to Marine Transport Lines and renamed MARINE PROGRESS which was appropriate as MTL had a number of old, worn out Liberty ships at that time so acquisition of MARTHA MAC was indeed...."progress". Gulfcoast Transit replaced her with two tugs, KATHERINE CLEWIS and SARAH HAYS along with two large barges. Later several other tugs were added and after TECO Transport was formed the fleet proliferated as I'm sure you are aware.

Sheridan towing used to call at Boca Grande about every 10 days. Normally it was the tug D.T. SHERIDAN with her captain, Jean V. Patrick. It is my understanding that D.T. is now on the bottom about 20 miles west of Egmont Key serving as an artificial reef. I've seen many of these vessels come and go and have undertaken a project to learn their ultimate fates. The MARTHA MAC for instance, was scrapped in Taiwan back in the 80's.

I have attached two photos of a ship called ARTHUR ALBRIGHT. She was built in Burntisland, Scotland in 1959, owned by Albright and Wilson and managed by James Fisher and Son. Some of your senior pilots may remember her as she would load phosphate in Tampa occasionally, probably at Seddon Island where I used to spend my summers with the family of the port supervisor Jay Shiabe. I was 14 years old in 1965 to give you an idea of where I was in life when all this was going on. In one of these pictures, AA is unloading phosphate in Barry, Wales., In the other, she is leaving Boca Grande fully loaded for Britain. She would call at BG roughly every 30 days. Her agent was a fellow named Gordon "Skeeter" Buck who at the time was with Tampa Shipping Company and who was with Fillette-Green later on.

In 1965, I witnessed an engineroom explosion on ARTHUR ALBRIGHT as she was attempting to get underway from BG. She had a direct reversible,

opposed piston Doxford engine and the explosion resulted from the rupture of the scavenging tank. In later years, I have learned that this was NOT an uncommon occurrence with these engines. To make a long story short, she was dead in the water but managed to get lines back to the dock however the engineroom was destroyed and most of the engineering staff on duty were badly burned though no one died as a direct result. Two or three days later she was towed to Tampa Shipbuilding and Repair at Hookers Point. Less than a year later she was taken out of service and sold to a Greek company. She finished her life under the name BUNNY flying the Maltese flag and was scrapped in India after breaking her back in a grounding incident.

Yeah, I know this was a long story and for you, maybe irrelevant but I thought it might be nice to post a photo of an old gal who had a bad reputation but did also have a Tampa connection. These pictures can be enlarged to a more appropriate size.

Thanks, hope you can use this little piece of history.

Regards,

Milton Bell