

COAST LIFE

SECTION E

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IT'S A TUG BOAT IT'S A FIRE BOAT



IT'S 'PATTI BUILT'

Hybrid has both strength and agility

By Julie B. Connerley
News Journal correspondent

When is a tug boat not just a tug boat? When it is a hybrid tug commissioned by Signet Maritime Corp., Houston, Texas, designed by Robert Allan Ltd., Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, and built by Patti Marine Enterprises in Pensacola.

Two 105-foot "Patti Built" state-of-the-art tug boats have been launched since April. The first was named Signet Arcturus. Its sister ship, launched June 16, is Signet Polaris.

Signet, expanding its offshore towing, rig escort, and subsea operations, wanted a specialized vessel capable of "providing our customers the best of both worlds in strength and agility," said Joseph W.



Capt. Brian Waters, left, and Frank Patti Jr., president of Patti Marine Enterprises, chat on the Signet Polaris, a new state-of-the-art hybrid tug boat. PHOTOS BY JULIE B. CONNERLEY/ONLINE@PNJ.COM

Dahl, vice president of Signet Maritime. "By bundling controllable pitch propeller tractor technology with the brute strength of Signet Warhorse tugs, we did."

That strength and agility comes from two Caterpillar

C175-16 main engines.

"The designer wanted the biggest engines available to provide the most Bollard pull, which is a conventional measure of pulling/towing power of watercraft," said Frank Patti Jr., president of Patti Marine.

"The Caterpillar engines we installed are on some vessels, but are not in widespread production yet."

With all that horsepower came other hurdles. The added weight meant the vessel fell under the United States Coast Guard Subchapter 1 Certificate of Inspection criteria because of its displacement (tonnage volume).

"All tanks and welds were inspected and X-rayed," Patti said, "every bolt and screw examined. It literally meant thousands more man-hours in construction time to become USCG inspected. I don't know of any other tug boats this size in the U.S. that are USCG inspected besides Arcturus and Polaris."

Both tugs are American Bureau of Shipping certified for International Air Pollution Prevention, International Oil

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SOUTHERN PERSPECTIVE

Welcome to summertime in Northwest Florida

Have you noticed a little sizzle to the seats getting into your cars lately? Even if you have cloth seats, I'll bet you still have to work to avoid touching the metal buckle in your seat belt strap when you're locking in. The gearshift and steering wheel probably aren't any fun either. That's right. Welcome to summertime in Pensacola.

It's hot, plain and simple. It's no surprise, seeing as how this is July, but knowing ahead of time that the misery is coming doesn't make it any better when it arrives. There's something about



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those 10 months of not getting blasted by invisible yet deadly waves of heat when we open the car door that makes us forget the reality of it. It's a lot like childbirth in that way (just ask any mom of more than one child if you don't get the comparison).

It's also tempting to tell ourselves that getting rain most afternoons helps the situation. Anyone, however, who has ever watched the resulting steam rise from the asphalt afterward knows it doesn't help much. It only adds moisture to the already-95 percent humidity, which may be a slight exaggeration. On some days, it's no exaggeration at all.

So, why do we do this to ourselves? We could live somewhere else. Beside the most straightforward answer being that Pensacola is our home, it's also a matter of

percentages. We put up with two months of scooting from our air-conditioned homes to our air-conditioned cars to our air-conditioned job locations in order to luxuriate in the other 10 months of mostly great weather. It's a fair trade.

If you do work outside, especially in the blazing sun, you have my respect. You're a summertime superhero. It's one thing to hit the beach or the river or the ballfields and stay safe in the heat as part of your fun. It's a whole different thing to have to work and be productive as you drip

sweat and feel various sections of your skin start to crisp.

While the heat does warrant caution, it doesn't mean everything bad. It also means the swimming water feels much cooler. The air push from a box fan can make your day. Popsicles and ice cream hit that dry spot when the sun is beating down on you.

This is my public service reminder to pause often and enjoy the small pleasures the season has to offer. It will make the difference. Well, that and a freezer full of iced treats.

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