

Mike Fitzpatrick, President & CEO, Robert Allan Ltd

“SAFETY AND ALTERNATIVE PROPULSION ARRANGEMENTS, THE FUTURE TRENDS”

ROBERT ALLAN LTD. IS A FIRM OF INTERNATIONALLY-RECOGNIZED NAVAL ARCHITECTS IN VANCOUVER, CANADA. SINCE 1930, ROBERT ALLAN LTD HAS BUILT A REPUTATION FOR INNOVATIVE DESIGNS FOR VESSELS OF ALMOST ALL TYPES, FROM HIGH-PERFORMANCE TUGS TO FERRIES AND SOPHISTICATED RESEARCH VESSELS. INDUSTRIAS PESQUERAS INTERVIEWED MIKE FITZPATRICK, PRESIDENT & CEO OF ROBERT ALLAN LTD, WHO LET US INTO SOME OF THE SECRETS BEHIND THE SUCCESS OF HIS COMPANY.



What is the secret of the success of Robert Allan's designs?

There are many factors that have contributed to our success but if I had to highlight one factor it would be the fact that our entire company of 80 or so people is primarily focused on advancing the art and science of commercial workboat designs using all of the advanced tools now at our disposal. Other similarly sized or larger Naval Architecture firms that design small workboats do this only as a secondary business focus and most smaller firms do not typically have the resources to spend a million dollars a year on tug R&D like we do. Our long term mutually beneficial relationship with our many loyal shipyard and Owner clients is another very import factor.

In a world so changing from the world of technology, and being Robert Allan the trendsetter, how are the future tugboats being thought of?

In the immediate future we are primarily focused on two trends right now. The first is ensuring that the new generation of highly powered compact tugs are safe for the crews operating them by developing a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic forcing involved during ship-handling, towing and

escort operations. The second trend we are most focussed on is the many alternative propulsion arrangements and fuel types that are becoming viable alternatives for tugboat operators to consider.

What do you consider to be the main challenge for the company to remain the market leader during 100 years?

I plan on retiring in 2030 which will be the 100th Anniversary of Robert Allan Ltd. We will strive to maintain a leading position in our industry by investing heavily in our staff and R&D. Given our very low turnover of staff at RAL I am quite certain we be far stronger in 2030 than we are now with a very broad range of experience and an expanded portfolio of built designs.

How does Robert Allan adapt to new and growing environmental regulations in the design of its boats?

More demanding environmental and safety regulations require a higher level of engineering expertise so we are uniquely well positioned to respond to these changes and see this as an opportunity to increase our influence in the market.

“All of our most successful designs and the ones we are most proud of have been the result of a close collaboration between our design team, a knowledgeable Owner, and a shipyard committed to building a high quality vessel”

Robert Allan works with the world's leading companies, how is the relationship they maintain with their customers in the design of their ships?

RAL is very much a client focussed company. We are always very aware of the trust our clients place in us and the 5 billion or so dollars of their money that they've spent building more than 1000 vessels to our designs. Of course we always strive to get everything right the first time and have a very good track record of successfully delivered vessels but perhaps more important is that our clients trust us to stick with them and solve any problems that inevitably come up from time to time.

How is the ship design process usually? Relations with the client and with the shipyard?

While most often it is the shipyard that is paying our bills our design process is focussed on ensuring that the Owner has the opportunity to review and request changes to the design as we progress through conceptual and preliminary design phases. Sometimes shipyards are not entirely enthralled with this process but most in the end understand that it is better to make these changes on paper during the design phase than in the middle of construction. All of our most successful designs and the ones we are most proud of have been the result of a close collaboration between our design team, a knowledgeable Owner, and a shipyard committed to building a high quality vessel. The three dual fuel tugs recently built by Gondán Shipyard for Ostensjo are a perfect example of such a successful collaboration. ●



87 years, 1000 tugs

Robert Allan's business is centred on the design of commercial working vessels of all types, with a particular focus on the international tugboat market.

Robert Allan Ltd. was founded in 1930 when Robert Allan commenced private practice as a consulting Naval Architect after serving as Technical Manager of a local major shipyard. A 1907 graduate naval architect from the University of Glasgow, he was responsible for numerous enduring designs produced for the growing British Columbia fishing fleet and coastal ferry services, among others. His reputation for quality designs was enhanced by the notable, classic ocean-going motor yachts Meander (1934) and Fifer (1939), both of which are still in active service on the Pacific Coast. Robert F. (Bob) Allan joined his father in the practice in 1945. The business grew steadily and was instrumental in the development of specialized tugs and barges for the burgeoning forestry and mining industries along the BC coast, and for many unique shallow-draft vessels for Canada's remote Northland. Incorporated as Robert Allan Ltd. in 1962, the company continued to expand and achieved international recognition for the high standards and performance of its many unique and specialized designs. In 1973, Robert G. (Rob) Allan joined the company, following the family tradition. In 1981 he succeeded his father as President, leading the company into a

new generation of computer-based design technology. The expanding firm created a wide range of distinctive designs including modern high-performance ship-assist and escort tugs, icebreakers, government service vessels, and high speed craft. With significant growth since the mid 1990's the firm has established itself as an international force in commercial working craft design. A staff of highly qualified Professional Engineers, Naval Architects, Marine Engineers, Technologists and Designers handle a wide variety of projects for an international clientele. The development of ever-larger container ships, major LNG terminals, expanding bulk carrier ports such as Port Hedland in Australia, and of course, the rapid evolution of tanker escort technology created a whole new generation of high-performance specialized tugboats. Since 2000, Robert Allan Ltd. has had more than 720 tugs built to our designs worldwide.

The "KiloTug", the 1000th tug delivery in the now 87 year history of this firm, is the "Dux", the first of three ultra-high performance dual fuel escort tugs built by Gondán Shipyard in Spain for Østensjø Rederi of Norway. Johannes Østensjø was the first Owner in Europe to purchase a Robert Allan Ltd. designed tug and our subsequent work with that fine company has always been "extra special", including tugs of truly innovative and specialized designs. ●



▲ MV Tugger Yorke – R.F. Allan at the aft window 1955

Industrias Pesqueras has published an article on Robert Allan in Norshipping 2017.

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