



THE FEDERAL MARINER

Volume 8 • ISSUE 4
October - December 2018

MSC • NOAA • ARMY COE • MARAD



OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE SEAFARERS INTERNATIONAL UNION'S GOVERNMENT SERVICES DIVISION

SIU, NOAA Complete Contract Negotiations

The SIU Government Services Division recently completed contract negotiations with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). The negotiations took place in Suffolk, Virginia, from Oct. 29 through Nov. 8, 2018. The SIU's negotiating team consisted of:

- Mark O'Connor, Chief Bosun
- Valerie McCaskill, Chief Steward
- Phil White, Chief Survey Tech
- Johnny Brewer, Junior Engineer
- Kate Hunt, SIU Vice President

Government Services

- Sam Spain, SIU Representative (chief negotiator)
- Jon Madden, SIU Associate Counsel.

During the past year, the SIU solicited and received suggestions and comments regarding issues related to the contract. Mariner and union proposals served as the basis for our negotiations. Sam Spain, East Coast Government Services representative, summed up the negotiations by saying, "The negotiations went very well. The expertise of the mariner committee members was invaluable. Without their input, ideas and hard work, we would not have accomplished



Briefly pausing for a photo are members of both negotiating teams. SIU personnel (from left) included Valerie McCaskill, Sam Spain, Mark O'Connor, Johnny Brewer and Phil White. NOAA personnel (right to left, starting at far right) included Hillary Fort, Michael Hopkins, Laura Young, Glenda Spears, David Zezula and Tina Eames.

this important negotiation. We are very pleased with the outcome of the negotiations as well as the great working relationship that was established with our counterparts from NOAA."

SIU representatives will soon visit NOAA ships throughout the fleet to explain the contract to the crews and seek ratification. Additionally, there are other steps NOAA agency representatives will

take to seek agency-head approval for the agreement.

Employees will be updated on the process in future issues of the *Federal Mariner* and via other notices.

SIU Vice President Mangram Retires At 40-Year Mark

SIU Vice President Government Services Division Kermet Mangram, 64, has called an end to his career with the union. He retired effective Aug. 31 following 40 years of dedicated service.

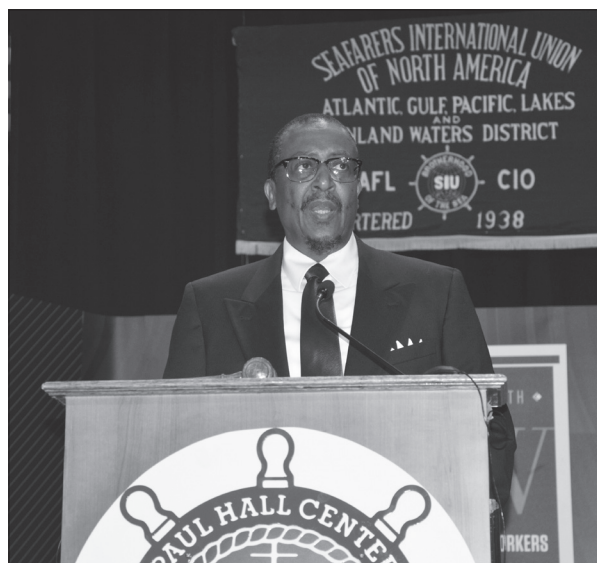
Mangram is only the second person to hold the Vice President Government Services Division post, which was created in 1985 shortly after the old Military Sea Transport Union merged into the SIU Atlantic, Gulf, Lakes and Inland Waters District following a vote by the membership. He succeeded the late Roy "Buck" Mercer, who retired in 1999. He also served as Atlantic Region vice president for the union-affiliated United Industrial Workers union and was a full member on the boards of trustees for the Seafarers Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship, Seafarers Pension Plan, Seafarers Money Purchase Pension Plan and Seafarers Vacation Plan.

Officials at SIU headquarters, as well as several individuals with whom he worked during his career, all recognized Mangram as a valued member of the team and tremendous asset to the union.

"Kermet was one of the most detailed union officials whom I have had the pleasure of working with," said SIU President Michael Sacco. "He was a very, very effective leader with a great personality. He represented the SIU membership with his heart and soul and always did his very best to look out for the little guy. Kermet was a tremendous asset to this organization and we are really going to miss him."

"We've known each other since 1980, when we were in Brooklyn," said SIU Executive Vice President Augie Tellez. "He's been a steadfast union official, a good dispatcher and a good all-around representative for the members."

"Kermet is also a lifelong friend," Tellez continued. "I've always introduced him as my brother from another mother."



SIU VP Government Services Kermet Mangram addresses attendees at a union event in Piney Point, Maryland, in 2017.

"Kermet's presence will be missed," said SIU Secretary-Treasurer David Heindel. "His knowledge of contracts and the shipping rules were impeccable. His love of life and learning of new cultures are his passion. He was an all-around great guy and respected by everyone he worked with."

SIU Assistant Vice President Archie Ware described Mangram as a trusted friend and outstanding union official who would stop at nothing to help rank-and-file members. "He was a one of a kind union official," Ware said. "I met Kermet in Piney Point shortly after he came ashore to become a union official. I was there

upgrading in 1980 when our paths crossed. Since then we've been very close.

"Over the years, his every action has been all about the welfare of the union's rank-and-file membership," Ware said. "He always went above and beyond to help them. I know from personal experience because he has been there for me on more than a few occasions."

Norfolk Port Agent Georg Kenny's tenure with Mangram goes back to a time when he himself was going to sea.

"I've known Kermet for over 30 years," Kenny said. "It all began when Brooklyn was headquarters. Maureen (his wife) and I were sailing on the black hulls, the M/V Hague to be specific. Kermet always greeted us back at the hall with a big smile. He made us happy to be home, like family. But, that's the SIU way."

"It was truly a great experience working with Kermet," said SIU Government Services Division Representative Sam Spain. "He has always been a man of fairness, integrity, and honesty. Kermet always put the welfare of the members first and worked on whatever issues they brought to him until they were completely resolved. During my 16 years of working with and being trained by Kermet, he took a no non-sense approach to his teaching method: to always follow the contract, treat members with compassion and respect, and put the union first."

"His knowledge of the union has been extremely valuable in sharpening my skills as union representative," Spain concluded. "The staff he put together in the Norfolk hall will miss him greatly. God bless and keep him and we all wish him a wonderful retirement."

"I started working at SIU hall in Norfolk in August 2009 and I have truly enjoyed working with and for

See Mangram, page 4

President's Column

Labor Rises to the Occasion

As we approach the end of another successful year for our union, I extend my sincere thanks to all of our federal mariners, our shipboard delegates, vice presidents, representatives, and staff for their collective roles in helping keep the SIU moving in the right direction.



Michael Sacco

Despite an array of challenges that were thrown our way during the past 12 months – the three executive orders impacting federal employees, the litigation that followed and the landmark case of Janus vs. AFSCME being chief among them – the SIU and the labor movement as a whole have continued to advance. In the face of adversity, we have not floundered.

Instead, we have gotten stronger and more popular.

According to a report issued earlier this year by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, union membership last year grew by 262,000 to 14.8 million. Further, the report showed that 11.4 percent of working men and 10 percent of working women in the private sector belonged to a union. Public sector numbers were higher, where 34.4 percent of government employees are protected by a union.

More people are learning what unions are all about, too – and they support us. A Gallup Poll released Aug. 31 said 61 percent of adults in America approved of labor unions, the highest percentage since the 65 percent approval recorded in 2003. The same poll said the current labor union approval rate is up five percentage points from last year and is 13 points above the all-time low found in 2009.

All in all, these statistics show that there is good reason for optimism about the future of organized labor. At the same time, however, it would be foolish not to admit that there also some undeniable challenges ahead. This is true not only for the labor movement, but for all workers across the country as well.

What it means is that we must all step up to the plate and do what's necessary to fully revitalize our movement. In my view, a good starting point would be to call on our elected officials—federal, state and local—to join us in the trenches and support our cause. We must demand that they do everything in their power to protect, strengthen and expand the freedom of American workers by making it easier for them to join together in unions.

That task now should be a bit easier to accomplish considering the results of the recent mid-term elections. The labor movement helped elect a wave of union members and other pro-worker allies across the country in contest after contest. We proved that if you support working people, we'll have your back. And we sent a resounding message to every candidate and elected official that if you seek to divide and destroy us, we'll fight back with everything we have.

This was an historic election for working people. Union members in every community, city and state were a driving force in this election. We fought for our issues, for union candidates and for proven allies, and we filled the halls of power with our own:

- Seven-hundred and forty-three union members were elected to office from the U.S. Senate to state capitols, including U.S. Sen.-elect Jacky Rosen (UNITE HERE) of Nevada; Michigan Gov.-elect Gretchen Whitmer (AFT); Minnesota Gov.-elect Tim Walz (Education Minnesota); and U.S. Reps.-elect Jahana Hayes (CEA and AFSA) of Connecticut and Ilhan Omar (AFSCME) of Minnesota.

- Union members knocked on more than 2.3 million doors this election cycle.

These results are meaningful but there is more to do. How can you make a difference? Step up in your work environment and support your union. Keeping in contact and letting us know what challenges you are facing is vitally important to protecting your interests on the job. Paying union dues helps guarantee that the SIU remains strong and continues to protect all mariners as they perform the essential work of supporting the missions at ACOE, NOAA, MSC and the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet.

Happy Holidays

The winter holidays once again are upon us. As indicated earlier, I am grateful to everyone for their hard work and continuing support.

On behalf of all SIU officials, I extend warmest wishes to all federal mariners, retirees and their families for a safe, healthy and happy holiday and a highly productive and prosperous New Year.

Additionally, I offer heartfelt greetings and prayers for all men and women of our armed forces – stateside as well as overseas – who are protecting our freedom. May all of your missions be successful and may you return home to your families safe and sound.

SIU Directory

Michael Sacco, *President*

Augustin Tellez, *Executive Vice President*

David Heindel, *Secretary-Treasurer*

George Tricker, *Vice President Contracts*

Kate Hunt,

Vice President Government Services

Chester Wheeler,

Asst. Vice President Government Services

Introducing Jesse Ruth, West Coast Government Services Representative

The SIU is pleased to introduce our new West Coast Government Services Division representative, Jesse Ruth.

Many CIVMARS may know Jesse Ruth from his work with the Military Sealift Command at the Customer Services Unit (CSU) West.

SIU Assistant Vice President Government Services Division Chet Wheeler said, "Our Government Services team is very excited to have Jesse on board. I've worked collaboratively with Jesse during his decades-long career as the coordinator of the MSC CSU West. I'm looking forward to working closely with Jesse as he enters his new career representing federal mariners at the four agencies where we have bargaining units – MSC, NOAA, ACOE and the Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet."

Working at the CSU West, Ruth assisted many CIVMARS in their day-to-day administrative needs. Prior to starting his SIU position on the West Coast, Ruth attended a month-long intensive training program for union representatives at the Seafarers-affiliated Paul Hall Center in Piney Point, Maryland. Jesse met many of the SIU staff members and union officials and learned all aspects of the union's history and operations.

While at the Paul Hall Center, Ruth also met with Sam Spain, the East Coast Government Services representative, to share information and discuss future projects that Vice President Government Services Division Kate Hunt, Wheeler and the entire SIU Government Services team will be addressing on behalf of federal mariners.



SIU Government Services Division Representatives Sam Spain (left) and Jesse Ruth are pictured at the union-affiliated Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training and Education in Piney Point, Maryland.

Know Your Workplace Rights: Taking Action Against Exposure to Unsafe Living or Working Conditions

For decades, the SIU has protected and advocated for federal mariners at ACOE, NOAA, MSC and the SUISUN Bay Reserve Fleet who have been exposed to unsafe working and living conditions.

The SIU has most recently been advocating for CIVMARS working aboard the *USNS Sioux* who may have been exposed to hexavalent chromium – an element which can cause harm to the respiratory system, liver, kidneys, eyes and skin. The exposure occurred while the vessel was undergoing a maintenance period.

Asbestos, lead, poor air quality, noise, unpotable water, and other types of dangerous exposures require SIU representatives and federal mariners to work together to ensure shipboard protections are implemented, the problem is corrected, and the exposure is recorded in the federal mariners' work and medical record. These are crucial steps once the danger is discovered.

Often, agencies will notify the union long after an exposure takes place. This is why the greatest protection starts with the crew – we need to know

about the unsafe conditions and exposures as soon as possible. Mariners are most likely the first to know of these problems.

The sooner SIU officials are notified by the mariners, the better the union can take action to protect the mariners. To best address the issue, the SIU will investigate and gather information, and work with agency representatives or through the Safety Committee or Habitability Committee structures to correct the problem.

If solutions are not reached and more advocacy is needed, the SIU will file grievances, OSHA complaints or unfair labor practice charges to rectify the situation. To best protect yourselves and your shipmates, let us know of any problems. You can do this by writing to your representative or to sifedmariner@seafarers.org. If no email is available, call your SIU Government Services Division representative (contact information in listed on page 3).

Editor's note: The Joint SIU-MSC Safety Committee will be meeting in early 2019. Have a suggestion? Contact SIU through the sifedmariner@seafarers.org e-mail.

Did you miss a back issue of The Federal Mariner?

PDF copies of every edition are available at www.seafarers.org

Look under the News menu, then click "CIVMAR News"

SIU Counsel Kleinberg Retires After 35-Year Career

Deborah Kleinberg, SIU Counsel, will be leaving the SIU after 35 years of dedicated service. During her time with the legal department, Kleinberg worked on a wide variety of issues including on behalf of the Seafarers Plans, the SIU's private sector vessel units and the SIU's Government Services unit representing federal mariners at four government agencies.

"The majority of Deborah's time was spent working with our federal mariners and the union officials who represent them to ensure they were receiving the wages and benefits to which they were entitled and that they experienced the best possible working conditions," stated SIU General Counsel Leslie Tarantola. "She has been extremely dedicated to this cause over the years and has done a very good job, which included winning major arbitrations on behalf of the union and the federal mariners the union represents."

SIU Assistant Vice President Government Services Chet Wheeler described Kleinberg as "a consummate unionist and a joy to work with. She and I were a great team. We started off with just the West Coast, and when the SIU and NMU merged and the unit grew to include East Coast mariners, she really stepped up.

"I couldn't have had anybody better to work with," Wheeler continued. "She was patient, considerate and thorough. She gave me absolute support."

Wheeler also complimented Kleinberg's thoroughness.

"She never took a shortcut," he observed. "Whatever it took to get both initial resolution and long-term resolution, she always had that vision and it always turned out to be exact. She did everything by consensus. That impact was very, very important for the mariners, and that's a unique ability. She leaves a great legacy."

Jordan Biscardo, SIU communications director, said, "Debbie's commitment to the membership is second-to-none. She is a pleasure to work with and someone you want on your side. She was also the driving force behind the launch of the *Federal Mariner* newsletter. She is a credit to the SIU and to the entire labor movement, and most definitely will be missed."

Kleinberg's work for the Seafarers Plans included establishing the Seafarers



SIU Counsel Deborah Kleinberg, pictured at union headquarters, devoted 35 years to the organization and its members.

Aids Forum for Education (SAFE) with Dr. Elizabeth Reisman. This was the first joint labor-management work group convened to address the needs of mariners and shipping companies who were in need of information and education to assist seafarers with HIV/AIDS working on vessels. She was invited to share the results of that work at the World Health Organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

Kleinberg also participated in setting up one of the original PPO hospital and occupational health networks for the care of Seafarers and their families.

In addition to advocating for SIU mariners, Kleinberg was appointed to the Department of Labor's Federal Advisory Council on Occupational Safety and Health (FACOSH), a group which works on health and safety-related issues across the government.

She has also worked closely with two federal labor groups: the Federal Workers Alliance, and the United Defense Workers Coalition. These organizations are composed of many federal unions representing civil service employees nationwide. They have protected workers' interests through advocacy and litigation,

including the most recent lawsuit challenging three executive orders issued by President Trump's administration in an effort to diminish workplace rights.

Kleinberg has worked directly with mariners to assist them with complex disciplinary actions and injuries, and has advocated for mariners who were placed in unhealthy and unsafe working conditions. She also handled grievances to ensure collective bargaining agreements were enforced.

Over the course of her career, Kleinberg has participated in scores of negotiations. She was the union's lead negotiator during the CMPI 610 negotiations. She participated in the retroactive "Comp Time for Travel" negotiations, which took several years to complete and resulted in CIVMARS receiving a significant time-off award.

Kleinberg litigated a series of shipboard and shore-side habitability arbitrations, all of which had positive outcomes. The first shore-side habitability case resulted in a \$350,000 back pay award for the impacted CIVMARS and approximately \$61,000 in attorney's fees. These attorney's fees were used to

finance other habitability arbitrations. At the end of this multiyear litigation period, MSC and SIU representatives agreed to enter negotiations for a permanent payment for unlicensed MSC CIVMARS berthed in quarters lodging more than two individuals to a room, the implementation of certain habitability standards and the establishment of a joint habitability committee which requires that the SIU and MSC convene on a regular basis to negotiate about habitability modifications to all MSC vessels.

Reflecting on her time working for the SIU, Kleinberg said that it has "been a great privilege to work for President Mike Sacco, and all of the SIU's executive officers. I also have been incredibly fortunate to work for SIU's General Counsel Leslie Tarantola, and with each of my great colleagues in the union's legal department. Leslie Tarantola gave me the opportunity to work for an exceptional organization and supported me in developing a very fulfilling and challenging career."

Kleinberg also noted, "Working with all of the SIU's Government Services unit officials and representatives has been a highlight of my career. I know how hard they strive each day to protect all federal mariners working in government sector jobs. I'm especially grateful to Chet Wheeler, assistant vice president of the Government Services unit. After Chet completed a 32-year career sailing with MSC, we began working together in 1997 when he came ashore. I began doing more work in the SIU's Government Services Division. I knew very little about this sector of SIU. Chet was instrumental in helping me obtain a better understanding of the unique working environment of federal mariners. His extraordinary hard work, passion, persistence and exceptional dedication to federal mariners and their families inspired me each day to live up to his example."

In retirement, Deborah will continue her volunteer efforts for Montgomery Hospice and organizations doing voter protection and voter education work. She also plans to travel and spend more time in her garden, participating in citizen scientist projects including raising and releasing monarch butterflies as part of a yearly "Raise the Migration" effort.

MSC to Implement Crew Manning Pilot Program for Medgar Evers, Pecos

The U.S. Military Sealift Command (MSC) will implement a crew manning pilot program covering the *USNS Medgar Evers* and the *USNS Pecos* beginning in

January 2019. This pilot program will examine, among other things, whether it will be possible to 1) assign CIVMARS to a vessel for two years; and 2) the impact of having the vessel captain determine when each crew member will be allowed to take leave and schedule training periods. The pilot program itself will last for one year.

The procedures of the pilot program have not been completely finalized. The SIU is negotiating with MSC over the impact of this program on the unlicensed crew aboard these two vessels. The pilot program is voluntary. Unlicensed CIVMARS will be able to opt out of the program by signing a form. The program will be evaluated on a periodic basis throughout next year. The SIU will be receiving data about the program and will

continue negotiations if the pilot turns into a new type of crewing assignment process.

The union understands that many unlicensed CIVMARS have great concerns about this program as it is a significant departure from MSC's longstanding crewing procedure. The SIU has monitored all the written comments we have received from CIVMARS; the union has summarized these concerns and provided them to MSC. We will also keep track of CIVMARS' concerns relayed at the CSUs and keep them in mind during the negotiations with MSC.

Employees will be updated on this pilot program in future issues of the *Federal Mariner* and via other notices. If you have comments about the pilot program, please send them to siufedmariner@seafarers.org or contact your union representative.

How to Become an SIU Member

Joining the SIU is easy and an important step in protecting your workplace rights. The union's website - www.seafarers.org - includes printable PDF versions of forms that mariners may use to request and authorize payroll deductions for labor organization dues. The forms are posted at:

www.seafarers.org/memberbenefits/civmar.asp
Forms are also available under "union forms" in the SIU membership tab.

Contact Information

Vice President Government Services Kate Hunt:
Phone: (201) 434-6000
Email: khunt@seafarers.org

Asst. Vice President Government Services Chet Wheeler:
Phone: (510) 444-2360, ext. 17
Email: cwheeler@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Sam Spain:
Phone: (757) 622-1892
Email: sspain@seafarers.org

Government Services Fleet Representative Jesse Ruth:
Phone: (619) 581-6008
Email: jruth@seafarers.org

NMC Notice on TWIC Enrollment

The U.S. Coast Guard's National Maritime Center issued the following notice on Nov. 13. It's posted in the News section of the SIU website, www.seafarers.org

Important Information About TWIC Enrollment

Mariners applying for a Merchant Mariner Credential (MMC) must list their occupation as Merchant Mariner on their Transportation Worker Identification Credential (TWIC) applications. The United States Coast Guard relies on data provided by the Transporta-

tion Security Administration (TSA) when evaluating MMC applications.

Personal data supplied to TSA must match what is provided to the Coast Guard on the MMC application. If a TWIC applicant does not list his or her occupation as Merchant Mariner, the Coast Guard cannot reconcile the data provided by the TSA. In such cases, mariners may be asked to work with TSA to update information, which could result in MMC application issuance delays.

To begin the application process for a TWIC, visit the TSA TWIC enrollment website (<https://universallenroll.dhs.gov/programs/twic>).

Know Your Benefits and How to Secure Them

Completing, Filing Accurate Retirement Application Package is Vital

In 2018, there was a significant jump in retirement applications for civil service employees. You may be thinking about joining the crowd and making the transition into retirement. It's important to think through all the steps in this process. Retirement is probably one of the biggest steps of your career.

Preparation is key. Making a retirement budget is essential. You must know how much money you will need to live on in retirement before you take another step in the process. Once you have that key figure in mind, you are ready to move forward.

Knowing how to complete your paperwork and make the correct decisions will save you many time-consuming problems down the road and will allow you to collect your full benefits when you expect to receive them.

You should estimate that the application process will take about 90 days to complete. It may be shorter but is sometimes longer, especially if there are mistakes or omissions in your application. The information in this article will help you get a good start. You should always ask questions of your agency representative if you see that there are mistakes in your records or if you do not understand what is required of you throughout the application process.

At the end of this column there are other resources listed that you may consult for further information.

First, check your service history – this is one of the most important steps to take to ensure you will get the annuity to which you are entitled. Your leave and earning statement dates of employment are not used for calculating retirement benefits. One of the best ways to do this is to request a retirement estimate. You can get this by contacting your Human Resources Office.

You can also review your official personnel file (OPF). This is what the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will use when calculating your benefit. MSC, NOAA, ACOE and Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet – MARAD may have converted your paper OPF record to an electronic one. If that is the case, you may check your OPF via computer. Make sure all the information on this document (your start dates and end dates for all your previous federal-sector jobs) is accurate. Also check to make sure your name is spelled accurately and that your Social Security number, birthdate and marital status are correct.

Second, the retirement application package is different for employees depending on whether you participate in the older Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or the newer pro-

gram Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS), which took effect in January 1987.

Third, make sure you know all the forms which must be submitted as part of the application process. If you participate in CSRS, start with a review of form 2801. If you participate in FERS, start with a review of form SF 3107.

Fourth, if you are married, you must be careful to ensure that you and your spouse know the rules for your elections related to survivor benefits. If this part of the application is not filled out correctly, your application may be held up.

Fifth, make sure your beneficiary forms are correctly filled out and up to date. This is also important to do throughout your career.

Sixth, make sure you know your options for health insurance for you and your family in retirement.

Seventh, make sure you are aware of your life insurance status and how to continue the coverage if you want to elect to do so.

Eighth, know the rules about credible service and service credit deposits. It is important to understand whether you can make a payment for that service to increase the amount of money you will receive during retirement. The rules about deposits are some of the most complex in the retirement application process. You should understand them well. Knowing these rules can impact the amount of your retirement and may be worth a great deal of money to you and your family.

Here is a brief summary of these rules. To get a fuller understanding, speak to your agency representative and seek information from the websites below.

There are two types of creditable service for those participating in the CSRS or FERS programs: Civilian and Military. If you have service for which you may not have credit, it may be possible to make monetary deposits to get credit for this time applied to your monthly pension annuity.

Under FERS, you can make a payment for the following types of service, in order to credit it toward your retirement:

- Any period of creditable civilian service performed before 1989 during which no retirement deductions were withheld from your pay.

- Any period of civilian service during which retirement deductions were withheld from your pay and refunded to you.

- Any period of Peace Corps or VISTA volunteer service (excluding training time) regardless of when the service was performed.

If you are covered by CSRS and were once employed by the federal government in a position where no retirement de-

ductions were taken out of your pay and the service occurred on or after Oct. 1, 1982 you'll have to make a deposit to the retirement system to get any credit for that time. On the other hand, if such a period of employment occurred before Oct. 1, 1982, you'll get credit for the time in determining your years of service; however, if you don't make a deposit, your annuity will be reduced by 10 percent of the amount you owe.

Credit for Military Service

As a general rule, military service in the Armed Forces of the United States is creditable for retirement purposes if it was active service terminated under honorable conditions, and performed prior to your separation from civilian service for retirement. Military service performed before 1957 is generally creditable without a deposit.

For service performed on or after January 1, 1957 the applicant must make a deposit to credit the service to establish title to an annuity or to compute your annuity.

There is an exception for individuals with a portion of their FERS annuity computed under CSRS rules. If your military service was performed before the effective date of your FERS coverage, the military service will be credited under CSRS rules.

Ninth, if you are divorced, make sure you have copies of your divorce decree or order to ensure you understand how much of your pension may be received by your former spouse under the terms of your divorce.

Tenth, start this process at least four months prior to the time you would like to retire.

Eleventh, make sure whatever advice you get, you check to ensure it is applicable to you. If you have additional questions, make sure they are addressed before making any election.

Lastly, keep copies of all the paperwork you send to all agencies by mail. Send these documents in a way you can track delivery service.

Resources for Retirement Education:

- Retirement Counselor and Consultant Tammy Flanagan <http://www.retirefederal.com/weekly-column.html>

- OPM <https://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/> and <https://www.opm.gov/retirement-services/my-annuity-and-benefits/>

- Federal Retirement Planning <http://www.federalretirement.net/index.htm>

- Intentional Retirement <https://intentionalretirement.com/>

VP Mangram Retires After Decades of Service

Continued from page 1

Kermet," said Port of Norfolk Secretary Shelia Burton. "Under his leadership, I've learned a lot and felt comfortable in my job here at SIU. Kermet truly cares about the membership and his employees. He will surely be missed."

As the vice president of the SIU Government Services unit, Mangram worked with the assistant vice president of Government Services, Chet Wheeler, and the Government Services representatives to enforce the collective bargaining agreements, Instructions and policies covering federal mariners at the Army Corp of Engineers, NOAA, MSC and Suisun Bay Reserve Fleet.

Mangram participated in many negotiations on behalf of federal mariners, including CMPI 610 and the Comp Time for Travel negotiations between the SIU and MSC. Mangram also worked very hard to prepare for the recently completed NOAA negotiations. He worked to recruit and establish the bargaining committee and organize and develop the proposals to be negotiated during the bargaining sessions.

Mangram was one of the few SIU officials who had experience in both private and government services sectors. He used his knowledge from both operations to ensure that the federal mariners received the greatest protections possible whether serving on ships or waiting for assignments.

Mangram, who hails from Jacksonville, Florida, graduated from Florida A&M University in 1977 with a degree in business administration. He joined the union after being unable to find suitable employment elsewhere.

"I had a number of family members who were in the National Maritime Union," he recalled. "And before going off to college, I tried to join the NMU but was unsuccessful. This was largely because none of them offered any assistance toward getting me in.

"My sister was married to a member of the SIU at the time," Mangram continued. "I remember him coming home when I was working in a local business as a manager. He came home with a check for about \$700 in his pocket. He had left on a Friday and the following Monday was a holiday; so, he came by Monday night with that check.

"I remember thinking long and hard about that check because I had worked the whole week and only received about \$80 dollars," he said. "So, I went to work the next day and I quit. I asked him (sister's husband) to take me to the union hall. I eventually ended up at Piney Point and the rest is history. That was in 1978."

Mangram is a graduate of Class 259 from the Seafarers Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point,

Maryland. His first assignment was aboard the *Sea-Land Seattle* as a steward assistant. "I received the same basic training as most Seafarers still receive today," recalled Mangram. "That included firefighting, water survival, first aid, CPR, industrial relations and social responsibilities aboard ships.

"The training I received at the school thoroughly prepared me for the complexities of my first job aboard ship – that of washing dishes," Mangram continued with a chuckle. "I really had that part down to a science. I must admit though, that I was not prepared for many of the social tribulations that I experienced aboard ship during my early days of going to sea.

"Clashes among crew members were commonplace back in those days and there's no doubt in my mind that many of them were racially motivated," Mangram said. "I admit that I had my share of them, but I never blamed the union for that; I still don't. I blamed the people who caused the incidents in the first place.

"Back in those days, the concepts of teamwork and brotherhood across racial lines were in their infancy aboard vessels," he continued. "But thanks be to God and the union's modern leadership, it's not like that anymore. There's definitely more camaraderie among rank-and-file members aboard ship today, compared to when I joined."

Mangram's shipboard career included voyages aboard the *Sea-Land Seattle*, *Sea-Land Tampa*, *Sea-Land Akawai*, *Delta Uruguay* and *Point Revere*. Although he worked mostly in the steward department, he also sailed in the deck department, where he achieved the rate of ABM.

"The *Point Revere* was my last and perhaps worst ship that I worked on during my career," Mangram said. "We were not being treated very well as a crew in a number of ways. The thing that really got next to me though was the officers were taking away our overtime despite the fact that we had worked. That happened on a number of occasions, and that for me was the last straw. I knew then that I wanted to do whatever I could to prevent other members from having to endure this type of treatment.

"Like I said earlier, I did not blame the union for things that happened to me at sea because the SIU had always been in my corner," he continued. "As a matter of fact, my oldest daughter was born while I was at sea. At birth, she had respiratory issues and by the time she was four years of age, had been hospitalized 48 times. The union paid all of her bills; I did not have to pay anything."

Eager to help fellow Seafarers, he came ashore in 1980 as a union education instructor at the Paul Hall Center. He became a patrolman in the port of New York in 1981, then port

agent there in 1987. Mangram was named assistant vice president for contracts and contract enforcement by the executive board in 1992. He was re-elected to the post in 1996.

"The guy who really opened the doors for me to get into the union was Frank Mongelli," Mangram said. "I learned a great deal from him, including his advice that once a member showed you his/her membership book, that was really all you need to know.

"One of the smartest people I ever met during my career was Red Campbell and I thank him for everything he taught me," he continued. "The same goes for Leon Hall who taught me that as a union official, you could either be someone who hurt people or someone who helped them. I always tried to be that person who helped my people."

When asked to appraise his career, Mangram said his greatest accomplishment as an official was the assistance he provided rank-and-file members. "I feel that I helped a lot of people – especially in the Norfolk area – get off to a good start in their lives and position themselves to provide for and help their families. For me, it was always about the rank-and-file members," he said.

Mangram said his proudest moment as a union official came in 2008 when SIU President Sacco backed Barack Obama in his bid to become president of the United States. "I can't express my profound gratitude toward Mike for his stance on this," he said. "I was proud to serve by his side because he was the first SIU president to back an African American for president, to become leader of the free world. It's something that I never thought I'd witness in my life."

On the opposing side of the spectrum, Mangram shared his most painful experience of his time with the SIU. "Perhaps the saddest thing to happen in my career has to do with the here and now. Due to personal reasons, I was not able to say farewell," he said. "I had to leave so hastily that I did not get the chance to say goodbye to all the good people that I have met along the way, people of all creeds and social backgrounds whose lives I have impacted and those who have impacted mine. For that, I am truly sorry."

With respect to the union's future, Mangram said he sees it as bright and promising. "The sky is the limit for the SIU and its membership if we stay true to course," he said. "The keys to that success will be continued strong leadership, attention to detail and a constant state of preparedness on the part of rank-and-file members, including their continued contributions to SPAD.... I wish all of the brothers, sisters and companies smooth sailing."