

## **Baltimore Sun**

### **Capt. E. Lorenzo DiCasagrande**

#### **Shipping executive played influential role in port containerization**

By Frederick N. Rasmussen, The Baltimore Sun

Capt. Emanuele Lorenzo DiCasagrande, vice president of Mediterranean Shipping Co. who played a key role in making Baltimore a major national container port, died Friday of lung cancer at Upper Chesapeake Medical Center in Bel Air. He was 69.

"Captain DiCasagrande was an icon in the port of Baltimore and we've lost a good man," said James J. White, executive director of the Maryland Port Administration.

"He played a major part in making our port somewhere between the 13th and 15th in the country in containerization, and he deserves a lot, if not most, of the credit," he said.

Helen Delich Bentley, a former congresswoman and chairwoman of the federal Maritime Commission, was a longtime friend.

"He was still like the captain of a ship. He was the boss and he was the leader. Those are the traits he continued in his work in Baltimore," said Mrs. Bentley.

"He could be a garrulous showman at times, but he was well-liked and respected. He was a strong, strong advocate for the port of Baltimore," she said.

"And he didn't mind fighting with his company to make sure Baltimore got its share of business, and when there was new business, he made sure that Baltimore was always in the running," Mrs. Bentley said.

Captain DiCasagrande was born and raised in the ancient seaport city of Genoa, Italy, birthplace of Christopher Columbus.

After graduation from high school, he enrolled at the Italian Maritime Academy, from which he graduated in 1961. He earned a master's degree in maritime transportation from the State University of New York Maritime College at Fort Schuyler.

"We were boyhood friends. I first got to know him about 60 years ago," said Capt. Nicola Arena, chairman of the board and CEO of Mediterranean Shipping Co.

"We went to the same high school and the Merchant Marine Academy together," Mr. Arena said. "He began his career sailing on tankers and bulk carriers."

In 1967, Captain DiCasagrande was promoted to staff captain by Marathon Oil and Phillips Petroleum Corp., and sailed for the company until joining Maritime Overseas Corp. in 1971 as master of large crude carriers.

He oversaw the building of the company's T/T Western Lion, T/T Southern Lion and T/T Kazuko at a shipyard in Japan, and was also responsible for crew and operation training.

In 1976, he joined the company's headquarters in New York, where he served as port captain, and a year later, was in charge of Maritime Overseas Corp.'s fleet of 39 ships.

While working for Costa Line from 1982 until 1987, Captain DiCasagrande oversaw operations for the company's fleet of container, ro-ro, beak bulk and liquid cargo vessels operating from Miami to Mexico.

When he joined Mediterranean Shipping Co. in 1987 as vice president of the Baltimore region, he was reunited with his old childhood friend, Captain Arena.

A year later, Captain DiCasagrande had established weekly service for the line from East Coast ports, including Baltimore's South Locust Point Marine Terminal, which had formerly been served by one ship every two weeks.

As a relative newcomer to the Baltimore market, Captain DiCasagrande worked hard to win customers and build a rapport with the port community.

"A charismatic captain with a thick Italian accent, DiCasagrande worked long days and slept on a couch in his office while Mediterranean was getting established," said a 2003 profile in The Baltimore Sun.

In May 1990, Mediterranean became the first tenant when it moved its operations from South Locust Point to the newly completed Seagirt Marine Terminal.

It also inaugurated service to the new terminal in early September when the *Rafaella*, one of the ships of the Geneva-based shipping company, arrived.

"When we started at Seagirt, we had 8,000 containers a year moving in and out of Baltimore, and now we're doing more than 150,000," said Captain Arena.

"He was always interested in growth and developing good connections with the governor, mayor and the unions," he said. "I don't think anyone in Baltimore was more popular than Lorenzo. He was just an extraordinary person."

"We now have five ships a week calling, which is a tremendous shot for the Maryland economy," Mr. White said. "We owe a lot to this man."

Captain DiCasagrande enjoyed wooing customers and conducting business from his regular table at the old Boccaccio's restaurant in Little Italy, where he had no trouble fitting in with the city's other power brokers who called the late, lamented restaurant home.

Mr. White praised Captain DiCasagrande's skills.

"First off, he's a real captain. The rest of us are desk sailors," he said, with a laugh.

"When you were negotiating with him, he could be a fierce negotiator; there was never any BS because he learned and knew the business from the bottom up," he said. "And when it was all over, he was your best friend. He never carried a grudge."

Mrs. Bentley added that he "never hesitated to speak up and give his opinion on an issue. Any issue."

Captain DiCasagrande, who lived in Churchville, retired a week before his death because of failing health.

In recognition of his long service to the port, Mr. White ordered that all state flags at Maryland Port Administration facilities were to be flown at half-staff.

"All flags on Mediterranean's 400 vessels across the world will be flown at half-mast in his honor," said Captain Arena.

The first Panamax container crane to be installed soon at Seagirt will be named for Captain DiCasagrande, Mr. White said.

Captain DiCasagrande enjoyed ocean swimming, collecting stamps and coins, and sharing fine food and wine with family, friends and business associates.

He was a communicant of St. Margaret Roman Catholic Church in Bel Air, where a Mass of Christian burial was offered Monday.

Surviving are his wife of 42 years, the former Mirella Pasini; two sons, Luca P. DiCasagrande of Bel Air and Marco W. DiCasagrande of Baldwin; a daughter, Rita DiCasagrande Olsen of Washington; and seven grandchildren.