

May 2025

EIGHT BELLS

QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER- CMM SRI LANKA



MEMBERSHIP DASHBOARD
TOTAL MEMBERS

423

LIFE MEMBERS

359

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Editor's Message

Greetings from the Company of Master Mariners of Sri Lanka!

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the second quarterly edition of our newsletter for 2025. As we navigate through an ever-evolving maritime landscape, our focus remains steadfast — to inform, engage, and inspire our valued members and the broader maritime community.

This quarter has been marked by significant developments, both globally and locally. From advancements in maritime technology to renewed discussions on sustainable practices, the industry continues to adapt and transform. In this edition, we highlight key events, share insights from distinguished professionals, and showcase the activities and achievements of our members.

We are particularly proud to feature initiatives aimed at supporting the next generation of seafarers and enhancing professional standards within the sector. The resilience, innovation, and leadership demonstrated across our community are truly commendable.

As always, we warmly invite your contributions, feedback, and suggestions. It is your active participation that strengthens our fraternity and enriches this publication.

Wishing you smooth seas ahead!

Warm regards,

Capt. Rajitha Semage

Editor

(Mob: +94-773177143)

Company of Master Mariners of Sri Lanka

aGM nnouncement ■

It is with great pleasure that we announce the Annual General Meeting and the get together of the CMM for the year 2025/2026. This time the AGM and the get together is scheduled to be held in the picturesque Kandy at the Amaya Hills resort.

LETS GET TOGETHER TO REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE DEVELOPMENTS THAT HAS HAPPENED OVER THE LAST YEAR. AND LETS ALSO GATHER FOR A NIGHT FILLED WITH CAMRADERIE AND FELLOWSHIP. A RARE OCCASION WHERE ALL THE MASTER MARINERS, YOUNG AND OLD GATHER AND BUILD BRIDGES, EXCHANGE IDEAS FOR THE NEXT YEAR. LETS MEET EACH OTHER AND BUILD FRIENDSHIPS THAT WOULD LAST A LIFETIME. REFER TO THE NEXT PAGE FOR THE INSTRUCTIONS TO CONFIRM YOUR PARTICIPATION.



**ITS THAT TIME OF
THE YEAR-
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING AND GET
TOGETHER**

THE TITAN LOSS!!

An expensive joyride or another lesson to be learned? By Capt. Mehran Wahid

Introduction

Film producer and deep sea enthusiast James Cameron referred to the tragic loss of the Titan submersible which took tourists down to see the Titanic wreck, at a depth of 3,800 metres as “fundamentally flawed” – he would know. He not only made the infamous wreck famous with his movie Titanic”, but has also dived in his own submersibles and reached far greater depths than where the Titan went at about 11,000 m. The loss of the Titanic and more than 1,500 of its passengers over 100 years ago galvanized the then lethargic shipping industry regulators into bringing into effect the SOLAS regulations which now govern the safety of our lives at sea by tightly regulating nearly all aspects of it – or so we thought until now! And it looks like the Titanic’s work is not yet done...

RECAP

Friday 16th June

An expedition set sail from St John’s, Newfoundland, Canada (the nearest port to the wreck of the Titanic). The vessel was the Polar Prince (registered in Canada) – a former Canadian Coastguard icebreaker now owned by OceanGate, the Company arranging the dive, and now acting as support vessel or tender to the submersible.

One of the first photos taken of the submarine Titan after the incident. Source:

https://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/1fidjqb/the_first_photo_taken_of_the_titan_submersible_on/



THE TITAN LOSS!!

RECAP- Sunday 18th

0400 GMT – The Polar Prince reached about 640 kms south-east of St. John's and the submersible descended into the Atlantic from above the wreck of the Titanic with five rich Titanic enthusiasts on board including the CEO of OceanGate, Stockton Rush, an engineer who had designed small aircraft and submersibles but with a gung-ho attitude about taking risks which he put across to others as being very calculated but with a great deal of safety and engineering foundation which it really was not (his wife is great-great-granddaughter to Isidor and Ida Strauss who died on board the Titanic when it sank). The other passengers, paying USD 250,000 each, were a very experienced and famous French Navy diver (Paul-Henri 'PH' Nargeolet), British adventurer Hamish Harding and British-Pakistani tycoon Shahzada Dawood and his son, Suleman.

0545 GMT – Communications with the on board ultra-short baseline acoustic positioning system was lost. This was their combined communications and navigation system which works on sound signals under water as radio, radar and GPS would not work as their signals do not pass through water. James Cameron would later say that when he heard this had failed, he knew all hope was lost but did not announce this as one could never be absolutely sure. At the same time powerful US Navy hydrophones listening secretly for underwater sounds like enemy submarines or explosions, heard what must have been the submersible imploding on its way down to the Titanic wreck. As it was uncertain without actually sending another submersible or ROV down that the sub had been destroyed, and classified Navy information takes time to reach even the USCG, this was not announced and the SAR operations continued both on the surface and underwater as if the occupants of the Titan were still alive. Sonobuoys dropped from aircraft picked up what seemed like distress signal noises being made underwater but in retrospect this could have been for example maintenance sounds from one of the ER workshops of any of the many ships involved in the search around the area at the time.

THE TITAN LOSS!!

RECAP- Tuesday 21st

Pelagic ROV discovered remnants of the Titan after the USN informed the USCG about the implosion noise they picked up and homed in on the precise location.

Later parts of the submersible were brought up to the surface and the Marine Board of Investigation (the highest level investigation of a marine accident by the USCG), the NTSB (National Transportation Safety Board of USA in charge of investigating air or sea accidents in the USA) and the Canadian Coast Guard announced that they would start investigations in collaboration with the UK's Marine Accident Investigation Branch and French authorities.

OVERVIEW

Immediately when the news of the accident broke, a lot of comments appeared in the news from noticeable personalities like James Cameron, those at the top of the undersea exploration community and those in the construction business of the submersibles. Many referred to their own warnings to the OceanGate CEO and those of some senior managers of his Company whom he fired for daring to question or criticize the safety of the vehicle.

For details of the construction of the Titan submersible see the very descriptive YouTube video [RECAP- Tuesday 21st](#)

[Pelagic ROV discovered remnants of the Titan after the USN informed the USCG about the implosion noise they picked up and homed in on the precise location. .](#)

Normally submersibles were built of steel or titanium and spherical shaped to better withstand the pressure at the enormous depths they went to.

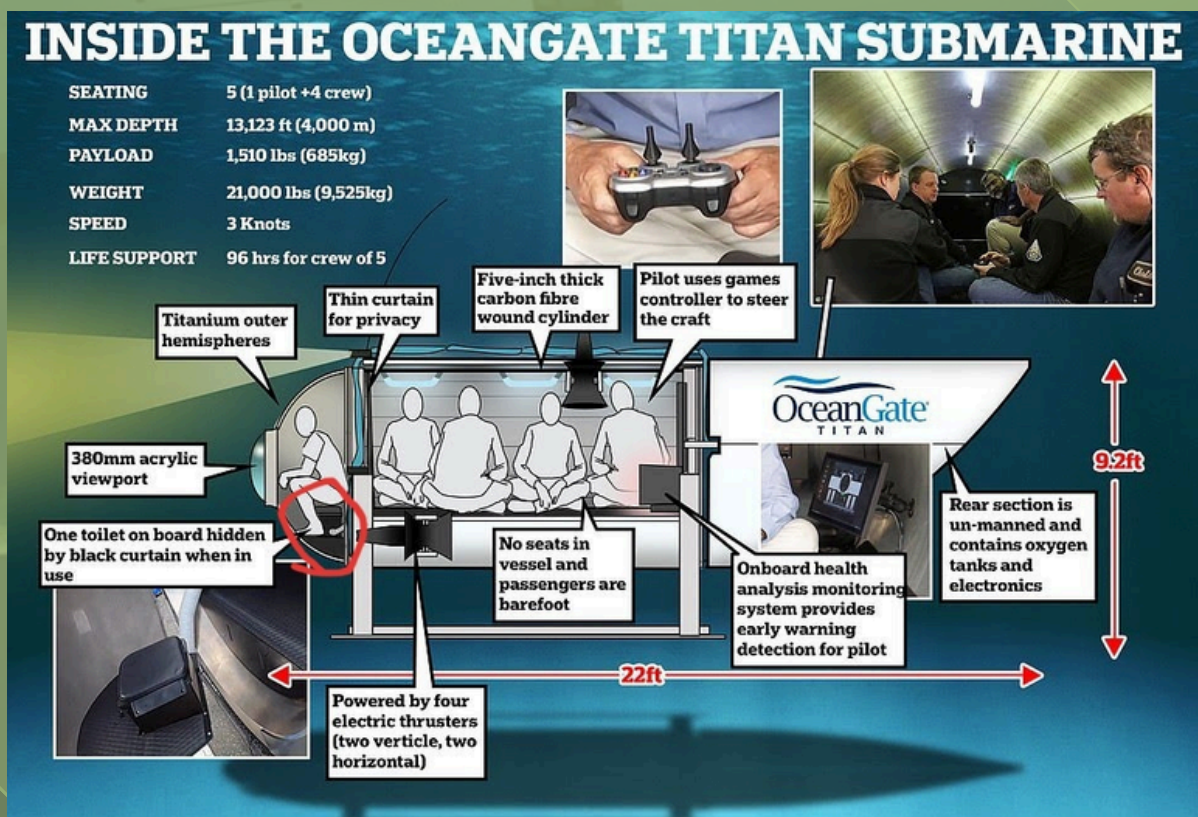
Stockton Rush however had designed the Titan in a tubular shape and made of carbon fibre which was light-weight but strong – but not strong enough for the depths involved. This was what the rest of the submersibles community had strongly criticized while the CEO blindly went on with his innovative design saying that he would be remembered for the rules he broke! He also had knowledge of this used in aircraft construction which did not apply to the opposite forces under the ocean.

THE TITAN LOSS!!

The other problem was that the craft had not been subjected to surveys to prove its capability as a submersible leave alone its safety for carrying passengers for any purpose. Most people in the shipping business hearing this for the first time would be quite shocked – I know I was! Our procedures of weekly and monthly checks, annual surveys, dry-dockings, etc, are quite normal and save lives in the end. They look expensive but have a good reason going back to a cold but clear night in this same location in 1912!

Such surveys and tests were referred to by the OceanGate CEO as needlessly prioritizing passenger safety over commercial innovation!

We are so used to vessels being surveyed regularly not only to prove that they are capable of being used for their advertised purpose but to show that they were still sufficiently maintained. But in this case it had slipped through a gap in the system and did not require to be surveyed although the CEO had said that it had been tested and used famous names like NASA, Boeing and the University of Washington all of whom had denied their involvement. Stockton Rush also had a aircraft engineering background which he used in impressive speeches to make people think the Titan was very safe. This obviously worked since people did go down the immense depth of the Titanic believing that they were safe including some professionals. So why did he do it??



Source: <https://bbs.boingboing.net/t/one-of-the-many-terrible-things-about-the-titan-submersible-is-the-bizarre-seating-arrangement/251349>

THE TITAN LOSS!!

ANALYSIS

This article is not about what happened but why it happened and the parallels we can draw with our own profession. It really boils down to the safety culture we have been trained in and constantly train others to both believe in and follow. It isn't enough to follow – you have to actually believe in it! Many years ago I remember when waiting in Qatar or Dubai airport for a connecting flight, with announcements regularly being made about not leaving luggage unattended due to suspicion of bombs, I was horrified to see a lady leave her suitcase on an upper floor and take an escalator down to the duty-free section and disappear. I immediately informed an official about this, and when he didn't seem interested, proceeded to contact a more senior person who also calmed me down saying 'not to worry'! (Thereafter until my flight was called I found the furthest point in the airport from this area and waited there!). While nothing happened in this case (at another time I did miss in Colombo the Central Bank bomb by about 10 mins), this is a case of 'following' procedures but not actually 'believing'!

While Stockton Rush had been trained in engineering (with aircraft), his mind was only focussed on his ambition to take passengers down to the Titanic and was totally ignoring any risks involved – they had absolutely no safeguards built in to the Titan submersible! The hatch for entering the sub could only be opened from the outside and the passengers could not open it from inside and free themselves in an emergency if they surfaced without specialized help near at hand. There were a lot of other indications such as a lack of robust controls (the one in use was a PlayStation joystick), and an EPRIB (emergency position indicating radio beacon).

Titanic wreck nearly 4km down



THE TITAN LOSS!!

I have once scuba dived to a mere 100 ft together with Navy divers in Trincomalee – within that relatively short depth the pressure rapidly increased (we cleared our ears in a similar way that you clear them going up in a airplane but for the opposite reason), but when scuba diving our bodies automatically adjust to the change in water pressure except that the Eustachian tubes in our ears which need to be cleared sometimes get blocked when one has a cold or an infection which can be painful and a diver experiencing this would then cancel going down and resurface. At the immense depth of the Titanic, the pressure was similar to that of hundreds of elephants stomping on one!

In the words of Stockton Rush, “Sometimes Mother Nature works for you,” “And sometimes Mother Nature is a b**ch”. But we cannot depend on Mother Nature or luck as we know!

GLOSSARY

CCG Canadian Coast Guard who are not only in charge of SAR in Canadian waters but also assist the USCG in adjacent waters such as where the Titanic wreck lies off Newfoundland, Canada.

MBI Marine Board of Investigation – the highest level investigation of a marine accident by the USCG.

NTSB National Transportation Safety Board of USA in charge of investigating air or sea accidents in the USA.

OceanGate A privately owned U.S. company in Everett, Washington, that provided crewed submersibles for tourism, industry, research, and exploration and which owned the Titan.

ROV Remotely Operated Vehicle - unoccupied, highly manoeuvrable underwater machines that can be used to explore ocean depths while being operated by someone at the water surface.

SAR Search And Rescue which also has designated areas laid down by international treaty deciding which countries are responsible across all the oceans. The Titanic wreck lies near the border of the USA and Canada areas of responsibility.

THE TITAN LOSS!!

Submersible An underwater craft which needs to be transported and supported by a surface vessel or platform. This distinguishes submersibles from submarines, which are self-supporting and capable of independent operation.

Titan Submersible owned by OceanGate Inc.

USCG United States Coast Guard who are not only in charge of SAR in Canadian waters but also assist the USCG in adjacent waters such as where the Titanic wreck lies off Newfoundland, Canada.

UKMAIB United Kingdom Marine Accident Investigation Branch.

Since this article was written two years ago, the US Coast Guard have just released more information on their findings including a video showing Stockton Rush's wife Wendy monitoring the dive and hearing the sound of the submersible imploding but not realizing what it was because she received a message from the Titan after that. The sound of the implosion travelled faster than the message and she thought all was fine because of this. The video is another sign of people in a potentially life and death situation not looking professional nor looking ready for any emergency - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bq8TCFGaOlc>

Later this year, the US Coast Guard will publish a final report of the findings from its investigation, which aims to establish what went wrong and prevent a disaster like this from ever happening again.

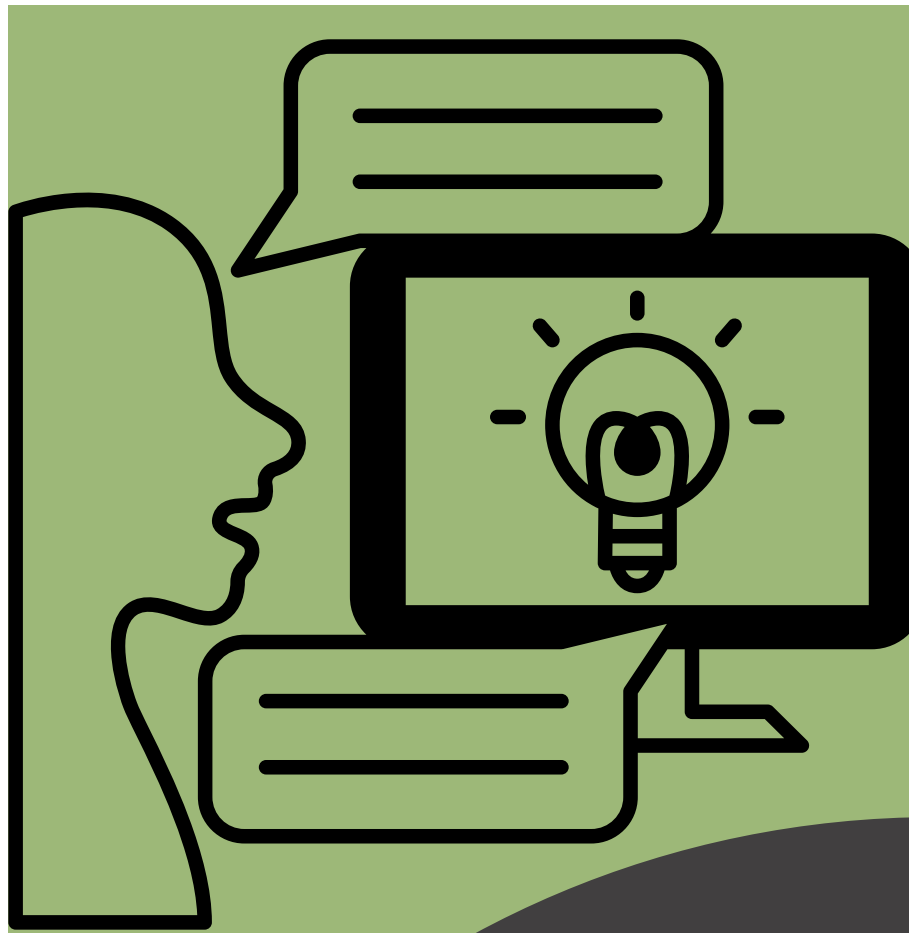
This is a documentary summarizing the story from about a year ago - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=irlsrE3lG_M

See the latest comments from James Cameron at - <https://youtu.be/EwSaZfwBrz8?si=FsO6z-Jv8fGo2JX8>

AN ARTICLE BY:
CAPT. MEHRAN WAHID

Arti Call for Articles.

IT GIVES ME IMMENSE PRIDE TO BE THE EDITOR OF THE PRESTIGIOUS EIGHT BELLS OF THE COMPANY OF MASTER MARINERS OF SRI LANKA. DURING THE FIRST EDITION OF THE QUARTERLY NEWS LETTER AN ANNOUNCEMENT WAS PUBLISHED CALLING ALL MASTER MARINERS TO CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS THE NEWSLETTER. AND CAPT. MEHRAN WAHID HAD GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED THIS REQUEST AND PROVIDED A VALUABLE INSIGHT INTO THE LOSS OF THE TITAN SUBMERSIBLE. LETS MAKE THE NEWSLETTER EVEN MORE INTERESTING. AND SHARE THE KNOWLEDGE AND THE EXPERIENCES OF THE VALUED MEMBERS WITH THE REST OF THE MEMBERSHIP NEW AND ALREADY EXISTING. OUR MEMBERSHIP IS NOW 400+ WITH NEW MEMBERS OBTAINING MEMBERSHIP CONTINUOUSLY. THE MEMBERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN PROVIDING AN ARTICLE PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT ME ON +94773177143. THANK
EDITOR



ITS THAT TIME OF
THE YEAR-
ANNUAL GENERAL
MEETING AND GET
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CMM PARARAPHERNALIA

ITEM	Price
T-Shirt (Old)	Rs. 750.00
T-Shirts (New)	Rs. 1,000.00
Caps	Rs. 300.00
Lapels	Rs. 500.00
Shirts	Rs. 1,500.00
Tie Pin & Cuff	Rs. 2,500.00
Sports T-Shirt	Rs. 1,000.00
Track Bottom	Rs. 900.00



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RECAP OF THE QTR



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P. B. KARANDAWALA MEMORIAL LECTURE 2025

“DRIVE FORWARD A SAFE, SUSTAINABLE
MARITIME ENERGY TRANSITION”



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

MR. UPUL JINADASA

CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER
SOUTH ASIA GATEWAY TERMINALS



21 FEBRUARY 2025
5.30PM - 7.30PM



IESL AUDITORIUM
COLOMBO 07

SCAN TO REGISTER



The annual P.B. Karandawala Memorial lecture was held on the 21st February 2025 at the IESL auditorium. The keynote speaker was Mr. Upul Jinadasa the COO of SAGT. The event was jointly organized by the CMM and the CILT Sri Lanka branch in memory of the late Mr. P.B. Karandawala.

P.B. Karandawala Memorial lecture



MEMBERS EVENT LIFE BEYOND SAILING

The Company of Master Mariners invites you to an engaging and insightful evening at our upcoming Members' Event.

Motivational
Talks

Q&A Session

Networking &
Fellowship



Capt. Keith Obeysekera
Master Mariner



Capt. Taraka Telwatta
Master Mariner
Retired Examiner of Masters and Mates



3rd March 2025
6PM onwards followed
by dinner and fellowship



OPA Auditorium

A members event organized by the CMM on the 3rd March at the OPA auditorium. The event was named as “Life Beyond Sailing”, and our very own Capt. Keith Obeysekera and Capt.

Taraka Telwatta shared their experience in making the transition from the sailing days to the shore based life, the challenges and how to navigate these unfamiliar waters. The event was a resounding success with the members getting to spend time together later on in the day.

The photo album of the event is available in the CMM website if you wish to revisit the event.

Member Event: Life Beyond sailing



END