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**PRESS RELEASE**

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**Strong ties**

*When Wilhelmsen Ship Services decided in 2015 to add ropemaker Timm Marine A/S and its 243 years of rope making history to their portfolio, Timm felt they couldn’t have found a better buyer.*

And when the Timm team moved into their new home with Wilhelmsen Ship Services (WSS) at the Wilhelmsen offices on the pier just outside Oslo, they felt like they were being welcomed into the family. “Everyone in Timm continued in WSS,” says Product Marketing Manager for ropes Veronika Aspelund, a 12 year Timm employee, now completing her first year with WSS.

WSS was equally enthusiastic about Timm. Danny Ingemann, Business Director Marine Products in WSS had this to say: “Ropes are an integral part of the maritime industry, and the segment was identified as a priority in the WSS Marine Product growth plan. Timm A/S quickly came out as a strong candidate with a relatively standardised portfolio and a well-positioned brand for both conventional and high-tech ropes. With Timm ropes and skilled employees now fully integrated in WSS, we are set to grow the business together.”

Timm was originally founded in Oslo as Christiania Reeperbane in 1772, and was run by the Torgensen family for two generations. In 1857, sailmaker and partner William Timm acquired the firm and renamed it Timms Reperbane. The Timm family ran the company for another two generations, navigating through the transition from sail to steam, and eventually enlisting professional management. The company transitioned again, from natural to synthetic fibres, surviving major shipping crises and moving their main production from Oslo to Slovakia in 2003.

Veronika Aspelund was working with logistics from Austria, helping Timm move their machines from the factory in Oslo to the new one Slovakia, when she was recruited to the Timm head office in Norway. “We all felt like we were a part of the history of Timm,” she tells. “The ropewalk was still at the old offices in Oslo. You could go inside and see the old machines, so the history was with you all the time. It wasn’t just work, it became a part of your life.”

**Building on history**

According to Veronika, “Rope is a traditional industry. Constructions going back to ancient Egypt are still used today. And even though machines do the winding and braiding now, we still need people to perform certain tasks like splicing. There is no machine that can do those jobs.”

From the roots of rope, a modern, high-tech industry has grown up. Machines have taken over the bulk of rope production from humans, just as synthetic materials have taken over for natural fibres in the ropes themselves. “All the ropes we produce are made from plastics of different kinds, and constructed in different ways. There are so many ways to make rope. Our job is to discuss challenges with shipowners and try to find a solution that suits their needs,” says Veronika.

One plastic in particular is currently doing good service for Timm and their clients. HMPE, or High Modulus PolyEthylene, has particularly attractive properties for rope. Timm’s trademark ACERA rope is stronger than steel, and 1/7 of the weight. Though not first on the market with HMPE ropes, Timm has been instrumental in expanding markets for the technology.

**Follow the ships**

The history of rope making in Norway is as old as the history of Norwegian shipping. “The rope industry was, and still is, local. Shipowners bought from local producers,” Veronika tells. In Timm, careers were typically long, leading to long-term relationships with Norwegian shipowners, and following them into global markets.

Timm now serves the biggest shipowners, and the biggest ships in the world, with customers like Maersk with their Triple-E class container ships, The Quantum Class ships of Royal Caribbean Cruises, and more world leaders like Teekay, BW, Höegh, Stolt-Nielsen, and The China Navigation Company. And with bigger ships, come new challenges, and new solutions.

“The biggest cruise vessels wanted conventional ropes, but they had to be so big to handle the weight that they were just too thick, heavy, and hard to handle,” Veronika relates. “We realised we could offer them ACERA ropes that were almost 60% thinner and so much lighter that they could handle two at a time.” This speeded up the mooring procedure, allowing ships to shut down their engines five minutes earlier, saving a single ship up to one hundred thousand dollars in fuel each year.

**Rope is not just rope**

As the example from cruise indicates, there are many factors that go into determining the proper rope for the job. Ship weight varies, vessels are getting bigger, there are special regulations for tankers and fuel terminals, and new requirements for the expanded Panama Canal. Weather conditions also influence needs, as some terminals and ports are more exposed than others. And there is a rope designed to meet each different requirement.

Safety is also a big issue in the rope business. During mooring operations, a rope with high elongation capacity recoils when it snaps, posing a potential danger for handling crew. Low-elongation ropes do not snap back, but a low-elongation solution includes a stretcher that can also recoil. To solve the problem, Timm is working with partners to find a solution to snapback in conventional rope.

To tackle this and other challenges, Timm’s factory in Slovakia has an extensive R&D laboratory and testing facility, including a 300-tonne capacity testbench. The lab is equipped to conduct all types of testing in accordance with OCIMF, CI and ISO certification, and type approval from DNV GL. Timm also invites customers to use the test lab to develop their own complete solutions.

**Learning the ropes**

Integration with the extensive WSS system is giving Timm new opportunities through stronger networks and market knowledge, but there are also new challenges: “We had to decide which ropes we need where,” Veronika says. “There were 4000 products in the Timm database. We can’t offer all these everywhere in the world, so we decided to focus on mooring and towing for now.”

“In Timm, everyone did a little bit of everything,” she says. “Now we have support staff specialising in sales, customer service and supply chain, but we still have to learn to work as a team.”

Timm staff have been training the WWS network in the art of selling rope, a new feature in the WSS portfolio. Even transporting the ropes is a challenge, with their bulk and weight. But most important is to arrive at efficient logistics solutions, to streamline the flow of orders, and make the entire supply chain work as smoothly as possible.

“We are learning to work together,” says Veronika. “The potential synergies between WSS and Timm are exciting. WSS has the best maritime supply network in the world, and now the same people dealing with existing products are the ones selling rope. Their customers can order rope together with other products, from the same supplier.”

**A big, happy family**

After a year together, the WSS buy-up of Timm has been embraced by customers of both companies, and by the employees. Though Timm was of course much smaller, Wilhelmsen is also a Norwegian family company with a long history, and strong values: “We feel welcome here, and there are so many nice people,” says Veronika Aspelund. “They really take care of you!”

But she knows the importance of reassuring loyal Timm customers that some things will never change. Quality and personal service remain at the heart of their business: “Our customers are happy to know that we are still here. What they liked about Timm is now in WSS.”

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