Harley Marine Services has successfully delivered the M/V Susitna from Seattle, Washington to the Philippine Red Cross – a 15,000 nautical mile voyage spanning the Pacific Ocean. A voyage of this magnitude takes a great deal of dedication, hard work and most importantly, team effort.

The tow was initially identified in April 2016 and work began to secure the job for Harley Marine Services. A contract between the Philippine Red Cross and Harley Marine Services was finalized in June 2016. The Olympic Tug & Barge operations team immediately began work on feasibility reports and onboard vessel inspections. Following initial discussions, a “Special Tow Team” was formed that included key stakeholders from each HMS department as well as representatives from the naval architecture firm who originally designed the one-of-a-kind vessel. The team discussed the tow plan, identified capable and competent crew, and determined how to provide logistical support throughout the voyage.

During the tow planning, it was agreed that the Susitna, by itself, was too tender of a vessel to be towed across the Pacific Ocean. Also, the weather along the intended northern route through Alaska, during the time of year
when the tow was scheduled to take place, was quickly deteriorating. Relying on their expertise and past experience the Special Tow Team was able to develop a sustainable plan.

Harley Marine would load the M/V Susitna onto a barge, the Chatham Provider, and proceed using the safest possible route through Honolulu, Guam, and then the Philippines. In order to get the M/V Susitna safely onboard the Chatham Provider, we had to utilize the heavy lift ship, Happy Star. To do this, special lifting padeyes needed to be designed, engineered, fabricated and installed in a very short amount of time. Once positioned onboard the barge, Harley Marine hired a Load Master to ensure the vessel was safely loaded and lashed down prior to leaving. A total of 175 chain lashings and sea stiffeners were added to the vessel to keep the M/V Susitna from moving aboard the barge.

After several weeks of preparations, inspections, audits and a final walk through by the operations team, the ERNEST CAMPBELL departed Seattle on October 3, 2016, bound for her first Port of Call, Honolulu, Hawaii.

Progress of the ERNEST CAMPBELL including satellite positions and weather reports were monitored daily from shoreside Port Captains in Seattle. Communications between Seattle and the crew of the ERNEST CAMPBELL was as frequent as necessary, sharing important information about the vessel, tow speed and condition, and overall trip details.

While onboard, the crew took the initiative to train and mentor each other of their respective positions. Not only were they learning additional boat handling skills including complex maneuvers, but also operational policies and procedures of the company. The crew gained competencies in our Wheelhouse Management System, Vessel Communication System and Marine Operations Manual (MOM). With such a broad spectrum of talent onboard, sea stories became learning experiences and training sessions.

After 18 days at sea, the ERNEST CAMPBELL arrived in Honolulu. The Port Call was short and soon the tow had left for Apra Harbor, Guam. On the leg to Guam, the vessel passed the 180th Meridian. This is generally known to sailors as entering the domain of the golden dragon, considered a milestone in one’s sailing career.

M/V Susitna

The 195 foot vessel, named the Susitna, was constructed in 2010 in Ketchikan, Alaska at the request of the Office of Naval Research. Designed by Lockheed Martin and Guido Perla and Associates, the Susitna was to be a 1:50 scale prototype intended to transport and deliver equipment, machinery and personnel to any location. Eventually the vessel was sold to the Matanuska-Susitna Borough, who intended to use the vessel to provide ferry service between Anchorage and Port Mackenzie.

Although her project never came to fruition, she is quite an interesting vessel and will now serve a great purpose for the Philippines Red Cross.

She is capable of carrying 129 passengers, plus 20 vehicles or one tractor trailer rig. The vessel also incorporates lift technology that will allow the ferry to change from the Small Waterplane Area Twin Hull (SWATH) mode to barge mode by lowering or raising its center deck. The vessel was built with an ice strengthened hull and is beachable.

The vessel will now be used in future lifesaving disaster response efforts by the island nation.
While the vessel was in transit there were many things going on behind the scenes. Vessel agents needed to be contacted, docking and fueling appointments had to be made, procurement of stores figured out, Customs and Immigrations booked, and repairs and maintenance arranged.

After making another Port of Call in Guam, the ERNEST CAMPBELL was on its way to its final destination of Subic Bay to deliver the M/V Susitna to the Philippines Red Cross.

During the transit from Guam to the Philippines, the “Special Tow Team” prepared for the delivery plan, specifically how the M/V Susitna would be offloaded from the Chatham Provider. With some careful planning and a little luck, the shoreside Harley Marine team arranged for the heavy lift ship, Happy Star to meet the Ernest in the Philippines.

Shoreside support and the Load Master flew to Subic Bay to meet the ERNEST CAMPBELL and prepare for the final delivery of the tow. To ensure a safe and efficient offloading, all interested parties including the customer, leadership at Philippines Red Cross, local pilots and agencies met to review the operational procedures and plan they would follow the next day. After two days, the
M/V Susitna was successfully delivered safely to the Philippines Red Cross.

The crew of the ERNEST CAMPBELL prepared for their return trip home, which included Port of Calls in both Guam and Honolulu. After navigating 15,269 nautical miles, the mighty ERNEST CAMPBELL and her crew safely returned home to Los Angeles, California on January 30, 2017 – 120 days after departing Seattle.

We owe the success of this voyage to the numerous Harley Marine employees involved in the project, including the crew, shoreside management, dispatch, and accounting for their contributions in getting the job done safely and efficiently. Special thanks specifically to the crew onboard that were away from their loved ones at home and spent Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years and all other holidays onboard the ERNEST CAMPBELL. “Their dedication, professionalism, and experience was exemplary and makes us all proud to be part of Harley Marine” says Matt Godden, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Harley Marine Services.

Thank you and welcome home ERNEST CAMPBELL and her crew: Jon Larson (Captain), Brandon Cloud, Bart Pinder, Terry Lindsey, Darryn Baker, Lucas Murphy, Adam Lauderdale, and Bryan Willis.
Offshore & Rescue Towing
Positioned strategically across our nation’s coastlines, Harley Marine vessels are available to respond to any general or rescue towing need. Harley Marine provides reliable tugs, barges and resources to assist with any miscellaneous tow requirement. We have the capability to customize any tow response to specifically meet the customer’s requirements, as unique as they may be.

Even more, our tugs can be dispatched within a moment’s notice to act quickly in an emergency situation. With our tugs available horsepower and agility along with the crew’s professionalism and expertise, Harley Marine can safely tow any distressed vessel safely back to harbor.

Harley Marine can provide towing support for a variety of projects including:
- Coastwise and harbor towing
- Tows for general cargo, containers, equipment, gravel, sand, and cement
- Offshore emergency and deadship rescue towing
- Energy services support
- Special project towing services