



## GOING DEEP

Firm specializes in marine surveying.

BY ANDY ASHBY

Stan Johnson, president of Riverport Marine Surveying Inc., got into his business through gradually building up experience.

He started as a boat dealer in 1970 on Getwell Road. The business, Watersports Inc., sold and serviced different types of boats. It also had a really good repair shop.

"We got a good reputation with the insurance companies doing repairs," Johnson says. "Through that, I got into marine surveying and eased myself out of the recreational pleasure craft business."

Johnson became a full-time marine surveyor in 1980. Riverport Marine Surveying generally charges by the hour, which is an \$85-an-hour rate.

It's a pretty broad field, with some surveyors in other parts of the world specializing just on large harbors. In Memphis, the industry is fairly small,

so Johnson and his son, who goes by Stanley Johnson, do several types of surveys.

One of his main challenges is to inform and educate potential customers about what a marine surveyor actually does and how it can benefit their business.

Basically, Johnson's company is called in when a vessel or its

shipment is damaged. Johnson assesses the damage and investigates who or what was liable for the damage, for insurance reimbursement purposes.

Riverport Marine Surveying is involved in the commercial marine business, the cargo business, the steamship business and yachts, among other businesses.

"Some people only know me from barge surveyor, some would know me as sailboat or power yacht surveyor and a lot of people don't realize we do all these other things as well," Johnson says.

Riverport Marine Surveying overcomes that challenge by staying involved with local and national organizations and attending trade shows. The company also overhauled its website this past year, showcasing the various jobs it has done.

Johnson has been past president of the Memphis Propeller Club and the Memphis World Trade Club. He is



ALAN HOWELL | MBJ

Father and son team Stanley Johnson and Stan Johnson investigate damaged vessels and shipments, providing a valuable service to companies moving freight.

## Protecting the bounty

Riverport Marine helps commercial shippers navigate options when troubles arise

currently president of the Memphis Claims Association.

"One way I found of getting the word out is to get involved in these various clubs," Johnson says. "You meet a lot of people you probably wouldn't meet anywhere else. You also learn a lot because these clubs have various speakers and seminars."

Johnson also belongs to the Society of Accredited Marine Surveyors, the International Association of Marine Investigators and the National Association of Marine Investigators.

Another challenge is getting good, timely information out.

"This is critical, especially in the global economy," Johnson says. "Being in Memphis, we're involved with international shipments from all over the country and the world, from India to Indiana."

With equipment they have today, they can be on the job and talking with someone overseas and sending real-time photographs. Back at the office, they can send legal documents with photos the same day. Clients are gener-

**Challenge:** Educating potential customers about variety of services.

**Solution:** Become involved in local, national and international organizations.

**Challenge:** Getting good, timely information to clients around the world.

**Solution:** Keep current with technology.

ally interested in the nature of damage, the cause of the damage and the extent of the damage.

"When we get done with our report, I want those three items documented clearly and legally written," Johnson says.

Aero Bonded Warehouse Co. Inc. has been doing business with Riverport Marine Surveying for more than 25 years. Aero was one of the first container depots in Memphis in the 1970s, according to warehouse manager John Perry.

Johnson would do container surveys for Aero, determining what kind of damage was done and which party might be responsible.

"It was investigative work on his part," Perry says.

For example, if cargo was damaged by water, Johnson would determine what kind of water it was. If it was salt water, the damage probably happened during shipment over sea. If it was freshwater, maybe the damage occurred in transit along the rail lines.

Aero is no longer in that business, but still uses Riverport Marine's services.

Aero now receives, unloads and de-consolidates overseas containers, breaking down shipments bound for multiple cities. The company will hold freight for a company until there is enough to fill a full trailer to a destination. It also stores items for the federal government, such as seized counterfeit merchandise.

The company recently hired Riverport Marine to oversee Aero moving products from a damaged container to another container. The customer wanted to make sure that no one was injured if the freight had shifted in the damaged container.

Over the year, Aero keeps coming back to Riverport Marine Surveying.

"Basically, because they do really good work and they're very accommodating," Perry says. "In their business and our business, you have to be. If there's a problem, you have to handle it right then. You can't put it on the back burner."

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