

Cornel Martin

President and CEO, Waterways Council, Inc.

How did you become involved in this industry?
I grew up on Bayou Lafourche, South Louisiana, in an area where the inland towing industry is very

important in supporting the oil and gas industry. My dad owned small passenger vessels that carried oilfield workers and towing barges supporting that important part of the South Louisiana economy.

Upon graduating from Nicholls State University in South Louisiana, I was offered an opportunity to come to Washington to work for our local congressman, Billy Tauzin, as his Legislative Assistant for Maritime Affairs. I handled all matters relating to the Coast Guard, the Corps of Engineers, and the maritime industries. Over the last nearly 29 years, I've always worked on behalf of, or in one of, our maritime industries.

What exciting things is Waterways Council currently working on?

Our number one priority at this time is seeking the adoption and implementation of the Inland Waterways Capital Development Plan. This plan was created after more than 18 months of effort by industry and Corps of Engineers experts. It is designed to resolve shortfalls in the Inland Waterways Trust Fund, improve the Corps' process for managing and delivering projects, and set priorities for waterways infrastructure improvements across the entire system. This plan can set the course for investment in our inland waterways infrastructure for the next 20 years.

Brag on your family a bit.

My wife of 28 years, Cindy, is an RN and currently manages the outpatient surgery unit in an urgent care facility in downtown Los Angeles.

My daughter, Samantha Elizabeth, studied theatre at The Catholic University of America and the film and television industry at the New York School for Film and Television. She currently works for a very successful producer in Hollywood and is currently working on several big projects that are sure to be big hits in the next year. She is also helping to produce a major charity gala at this year's Kentucky Derby.

My oldest son, Cornel James, Jr., is a pilot. He completed his training and earned his multi-engine commercial license at Delta Connection Academy in Sanford, FL. He flies for a business owned by my brother and sister in South Louisiana.

My next son, Graham Patrick, is an actor. He has been working professionally since he was 11 years old. Currently, he has a role as a recurring guest star, Eldridge McKelroy, Jake's friend, on the CBS

hit comedy, *Two-and-A-Half Men*. He first appeared at the end of season seven earlier in 2010, and his character has continued with regular appearances

in season eight in the fall of 2010 and into 2011.

My youngest son, Duncan Alexander, is a Sophomore at Notre Dame High School in Sherman Oaks, CA. He is a defensive lineman on the football team, plays tuba in the band, studies Kung Fu at a local Shaolin Temple, and is an active Boy Scout.

What was your favorite project or assignment you've been involved in during your career, and why?

Prior to this year's effort on the Inland Waterways Capital Development Plan, which

is critical to the future of all who depend on our inland waterways, it would have to be my work for American Classic Voyages, which was the parent company of The Delta Queen Steamboat Company. While there, I worked on efforts to successfully secure a 10-year extension of the Congressional exemption that allowed the Steamboat Delta Queen to continue operating until November 2008, and The Project America legislation which allowed the reflagging of a large cruise ship into the US Fleet and construction of two other large cruise ships to be added to the US fleet. One of those vessels still operates in Hawaii today.

What was your least favorite?

I really can't think of a project that I didn't enjoy over the last nearly 29 years, but the one I am most disappointed in was my inability to secure investors to acquire and keep the vessels of the Delta Queen Steamboat Company operating after the bankruptcy immediately following the tragedy of 9-11-2001. The loss of those steamboats was a loss of part of our heritage.

What's the last song that played on your CD or MP3 player?

I'm more of a talk radio person. I know, "boring!" It drives my wife and kids nuts. I do love all kinds of music, but if I had to pick, probably something by Frank Sinatra or Harry Connick, Jr.

What accomplishments are you most proud of?

I was actually very proud to be selected as CEO of Waterways Council, Inc. After having been away from Washington for several years, I was honored to be asked to come back to DC to represent our industry at this critical time.

If you could go back and tell your teenage self one thing, what would that be?

Don't ever let geography limit your goals and desires. I guess I've successfully taught my kids that, which is why we've lived in New Orleans, New

York, and now Los Angeles in support of our kids' goals and desires.

Without naming names to protect the innocent (or guilty), what is the single most unbelievable thing you have seen happen on a project in your career? Impossible to protect the innocent, so I'll pass on this one.

What do you want to be when you grow up?

Captain of my own boat (yacht) touring America by water.

Tell us something no one knows about you.

I can't think of anything that no one knows about me.

If you could make those in power at the local, state, and federal levels understand one thing about the inland port and waterways industry, what would it be?

There are many beneficiaries of our inland waterways, including recreational boaters, utilities and manufacturers who use water in their manufacturing process; municipal water supplies, farmers and others who rely on low cost waterways transportation; and those who benefit from flood control, hydropower, and the steady reliable pools of water created by our locks and dams. We must invest in our inland waterways infrastructure to continue to enjoy these benefits.

If you make the general public understand one thing about the inland ports and waterways industry, what would it be?

We must invest in our ports and inland waterways because they are good for our environment, help our farmers and many other exporters to be more competitive in world markets, create and support good American jobs, and are critical to the future economic well-being of our country. Our inland waterways "Keep America Moving!"

What's your favorite?

Movie: *Animal House*

Book: *The Bible*

TV Show: *Two-and-A-Half-Men*, of course!

Sport: New Orleans Saints and LSU football

What piece of equipment has not been invented yet, but will revolutionize the inland port industry when it is?

A lock that doesn't fail.

If you could change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

I'd be younger.

What was the first concert you ever attended?

Sonny and Cher at the Illinois State Fair in the late 60s or early 70s.

Give us your thoughts on the current state of the inland port waterway industry, where it has been, and where it is going. How can a publication like Inland Port Magazine help?

We are in desperate need of investment in our inland waterways infrastructure in new construction, major rehabilitation, and operations and maintenance. We must dredge our ports and waterways to their authorized depths and expand those needed to support expanded exports.

We have a great story to tell about the value and importance of our ports and waterways and their contribution to America. *Inland Port Magazine* can help by telling our story over and over again until our leaders in government and our citizens finally get it. **IP**

