

*Design and oversight flaws doomed Titan submersible*

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# PROFESSIONAL MARINER

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ON THE PURE PINEAPPLE RUN  
WITH  
PASHA HAWAII



- » How smart processing is reshaping marine radar
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# Pasha's pure pineapple run keeps the Hawaiian Islands stocked

By Tim Henry

**G**eorge II departed the Port of Long Beach before dawn on Nov. 12, 2025, bound for Oahu, Hawaii, with 27 crew on board, including myself. The vessel, owned and operated by Pasha Hawaii, slipped past the Channel Islands on a gray morning, making its twice-monthly “pure pineapple run” between Long Beach and Honolulu.

Now 45 years old, the 892-foot, nearly 45,000 gross-ton, 2,269-TEU *George II* is a thoroughly unique and forward-looking containership, combining modern dual-fuel capabilities with elegant old-school looks. The retrofitted vessel, which began service for Pasha in early 2024, has a clean sheer line, long forecandle and a raised, streamlined bridge with smooth, rounded wings, giving it a clean, almost ocean-liner-like silhouette. But the giant LNG tanks on the stern and sponsons extending off the transom show both *George II's* foothold in the modern maritime world along with

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Pasha Hawaii

its unique history. Operating in a Jones Act niche that serves mainland-Hawaii trade, Pasha Hawaii provides some 30 percent of goods to the Hawaiian Islands.

For the crew, the pineapple run is among the most coveted hitches a mariner can work.

“It’s the best job you can have,” said Capt. Mark Tuck, who hails from West Texas and is a 50-year veteran of the maritime industry. “It’s one port a week down through the lower, southern latitudes. We get a minimum of nasty weather. We don’t have to deal with foreign ports. It’s a sweet gig — as good a job as you can get.”

The two-dozen-plus people aboard *George II* for the 2,602-mile voyage, which would take four days, 19 hours and two minutes, represented mariners in every phase of their careers, from permanent crew and seasoned veterans approaching retirement to hawsepipers and a cadet on their

first billets. Professional achievements varied from rapid progression to the long haul toward career goals.

Most of the crew echoed Capt. Tuck’s sentiment about the pineapple run, though many people added that, at the end of the day, it was also just a job. “We know we’re on the best run — there’s nothing better than going from California to Hawaii,” said chief mate Sorin Rosca. “But it’s still work. We do the same thing every two weeks. There’s always something that breaks or something to fix. That’s the job.”

*George II* was launched as *Edward Rutledge* from the now-shuttered Avondale Shipyard in Bridge City, near New Orleans, in 1980. Designed as a steam-powered Lighter Aboard Ship (LASH), *Edward Rutledge* was built to carry barges, or “lighters,” that were launched over

the stern via a 510-ton gantry crane running along the length of the ship. (The crane rail’s skeleton is still visible on *George II*.) LASH ships were technically innovative but commercially short-lived and quickly replaced by containerization. *Edward Rutledge* was converted to a high-speed container-ship and passed through several names and operators.

In 2015, the Pasha Group and Matson purchased assets of the Hawaii trade lane business of Horizon Lines, with Pasha acquiring what was then *Horizon Reliance* and three other U.S.-flagged containerships. Pasha then embarked on an ambitious rebuild of *Horizon Reliance*, stripping it to bare steel at an international shipyard, then refitting the vessel with a MAN B&W 8G60ME-C10.5-GI-EGRBP engine, an eight-cylinder, two-stroke ‘ME-GI’ dual-fuel power plant equipped with exhaust-gas recirculation and a blower-pump boost system.

“Converting *George II* elim-

Left and above, the one-of-a-kind, dual-fuel boxship *George II*. Below, chief mate Sorin Rosca.



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## vessels at work



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inated the emissions of some 15,000 metric tons of newly cut steel that would have gone into building a new ship,” said Ed Washburn, the senior vice president of fleet operations for Pasha Hawaii. The company says its three LNG-powered ships virtually eliminate sulfur and diesel particulate matter and cut nitrogen oxides by about 90 percent, while reducing carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 25 percent compared with conventional diesel ships.

Both Pasha and Matson — which are widely recognized as the only two major U.S.-flag container-shipping carriers servicing the Hawaii-mainland Jones Act lane — have invested heavily in modern, LNG-powered or LNG-ready ships. (Pasha currently has another LNG conversion underway.)

But *George II* is in a class of its own.

“No one has done this,” said chief engineer Luis Navarrete.

“No one has taken a 40-year-old ship — let alone a 40-year-old steamship — ripped out the steam plant and put in not just a diesel engine but a dual-fuel engine that can run on LNG. It is a one-of-a-kind feat.”

The house on *George II* was at first to me a maze of stairways and doors. My cabin was one deck below the bridge, spacious and had a private head and large TV. The ship is equipped with high-speed internet. I watched a few live NBA games, streamed music and worked on this issue of *Professional Mariner*. There’s also a large, well-equipped gym deep in the ship.

About three or four days away from Honolulu, the weather went from flat calm to force 5 winds from the north and 13-foot seas from the north-northwest that caused *George II* to pound into the swell and compelled the crew to alter course to find

*George II*'s LNG tanks, as seen from the vessel's sponsons.

a softer angle to take the seas. (Waves would occasionally boom against the hull.) The weather would gradually ease and swing around some 180 degrees as we approached the Hawaiian Islands, and the ship went from a pitch to a gentle-ish roll. Capt. Tuck said it was fairly typical weather for the time of year — the same energy that brings the famed surf on Oahu’s North Shore to life.

Rosca took me on the first of several tours on day two. We walked to the bitter end of the protruding sponsons as *George II*'s wake roiled underneath — the massive LNG tanks dominated the ship’s stern. Moments later, we climbed to the top of the tanks, where sections of the elaborate piping were frosted over from the extreme cold of the gas.

Among *George II*'s many unique features is its split house, with the engine room sitting at roughly midships. The multi-story MAN 8G60ME-C10.5

engine labored, propelling the ship forward at some 20 knots. The engine control room, like many spaces aboard *George II*, was adorned with small Hawaiian-themed trinkets and a constant reminder of the route the ship serves.

Walking below deck from the stern, huge runs of the double-walled LNG pipes — the inner pipe holding the high-pressure gas and the outer pipe under a vacuum — lined the corridors.

Back on deck and walking forward, Rosca heard a sputtering from one of the refrigerated containers. “I’ve been doing this so long, I can hear that condenser is about to go out.” As the chief mate, Rosca’s responsibilities are broad. Among other things, he is responsible for the cargo and the crew, both of which could either be hassle-free or require tending to. He is “the glue guy,” a sports term describing a player who holds a team together through attitude and example. He does paperwork, stands a watch and walks up to 26,000 steps per day across *George II*’s steel decks.

“I feel like my crew will tell you that they like working for me. And they’ll also tell you that I’m not easy to work for,” said Rosca, who is originally from Romania but who grew up in the U.S. (He speaks five languages but has no accent.) “I demand a lot; I’m quite strict. But I don’t think anybody’s going to tell you that I’m not fair. I think I found a medium where people are happy, but I also get the work out of them that needs to be.”

Standing a watch takes Rosca

away from his numerous administrative duties. “I have so much stuff to do that I’d rather not be looking out the window versus being on the computer doing my paperwork.”

One of the most common questions I was asked prior to embarking on *George II* was, “What’s in the containers?” When asked, Rosca said, “If it’s not hazardous or refrigerated, I don’t need to know.” Later at his desk, he pulled up the hazardous cargo manifest, which had a few cryptic descriptions, such as “flammable printer ink, less than one pound” and “liquid fuel vehicle,” the latter of which Rosca said was probably a car.

There are numerous anecdotes and hard statistics about

the state of Hawaii’s reliance on imports. “Hawaii must import food, fuel, raw materials, and most consumer goods, not only to support growth, but to maintain its current quality of life,” the Hawaiian state government said in a 2018 report. Capt. Tuck said that Hawaii is anywhere between five days to two weeks away from famine. The U.S. Department of Commerce says between 85 and 90 percent of Hawaii’s food is imported; one report said that roughly 3,000 tons of food goes through Honolulu Harbor every day.

**A** one-of-a-kind engine powering a one-of-a-kind retrofitted ship is bound to produce some quirks. Chief engineer

Left, Capt. Mark Tuck, a graduate of Texas A&M Maritime Academy, in the Captain’s day room. Right, AB Jaquaz Jenkins went to Paul Hall Center for Maritime Training after high school and has been working in the industry for six years.



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## vessels at work



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Navarrete and first assistant engineer Austin Jensen were honest about the difficulties of working on something so technically bold and unprecedented, but appreciative of the career opportunities.

“It’s an extremely challenging ship because you’re working with what’s basically a prototype,” Navarrete, who is from the Bay Area and is a graduate of Cal Maritime, said. *George II’s* MAN engine was designed to produce big-ship horsepower from a relatively small package, running closer to maximum than most engines do.

“No one has ever taken the eight-cylinder engine with a 600-millimeter bore, combined it with LNG and actually tried to get enough horsepower out of that kind of engine to make this thing go 20 knots,” Navarrete said. “We’re dealing with this really advanced engine that hasn’t been proven. We are the ones proving it.”

Jensen added, “It’s like if you plugged a tuner into your car and turned off every limiter. No rev limit, no safety margins, just, ‘Give me everything you’ve got.’ That’s basically this engine.”

Given the horsepower demands, high-pressure hydraulics are used to actuate exhaust valves and fuel equipment, putting more stress on seals, O-rings, valves and piping and creating issues with exhaust valve actuation. What’s more, the double-walled LNG pipes’ vacuum systems and sensors create a safety net, but in practice, engineers must hunt for microscopic leaks. Jensen and Navarrete also pointed out that *George II’s* engine is cam-less and governed by printed circuit boards, sensors and software, making it far more complicated and less forgiving than the mechanical counterparts they’ve worked on previously.

The prototypical nature of *George II’s* engine has created a working research-and-development relationship with MAN. “They’ll ask, ‘Are you guys willing to try this out?’ Then we’ll experiment and find out if things work or don’t work. In a way, we’re part of their R&D.”

Navarrete said the engineers have always found a way to keep *George II’s* rigorous schedule between Long Beach and Honolulu. It’s a labor of love.

“I consider myself kind of

like a gearhead. I love cars and engines. Austin’s the same way — he’s a huge car and engine guy. Ed Albrecht, our second engineer, is an absolute whiz when it comes to hydraulics and technology and loves this stuff too. We’re the permanent engine guys.

“The team we have is unreal.”

The food on *George II* was incredible. Most of the crew admitted that though they usually ate well, the meals on this voyage were a step above. The head chef, Abraham, said that he makes most food from scratch. Chief steward Jasmine Garrett, who is from Pennsylvania and has been working in the industry for 15 years, made freshly baked dinner rolls, banana cream pudding and an assortment of cookies, among

Above, engineer Kevin D’Amico climbs down *George II’s* MAN 8G60ME-C10.5 engine. Right, chief engineer Luis Navarrete.



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other treats. “I love making people happy, and food is a great way to fulfill that need,” she said. “They rely on food out here and I take that very seriously.” Garrett agreed that the pineapple run was a sweet gig. “It’s a really good run. The time flies. You can see how happy people are because they’re going to see their families.”

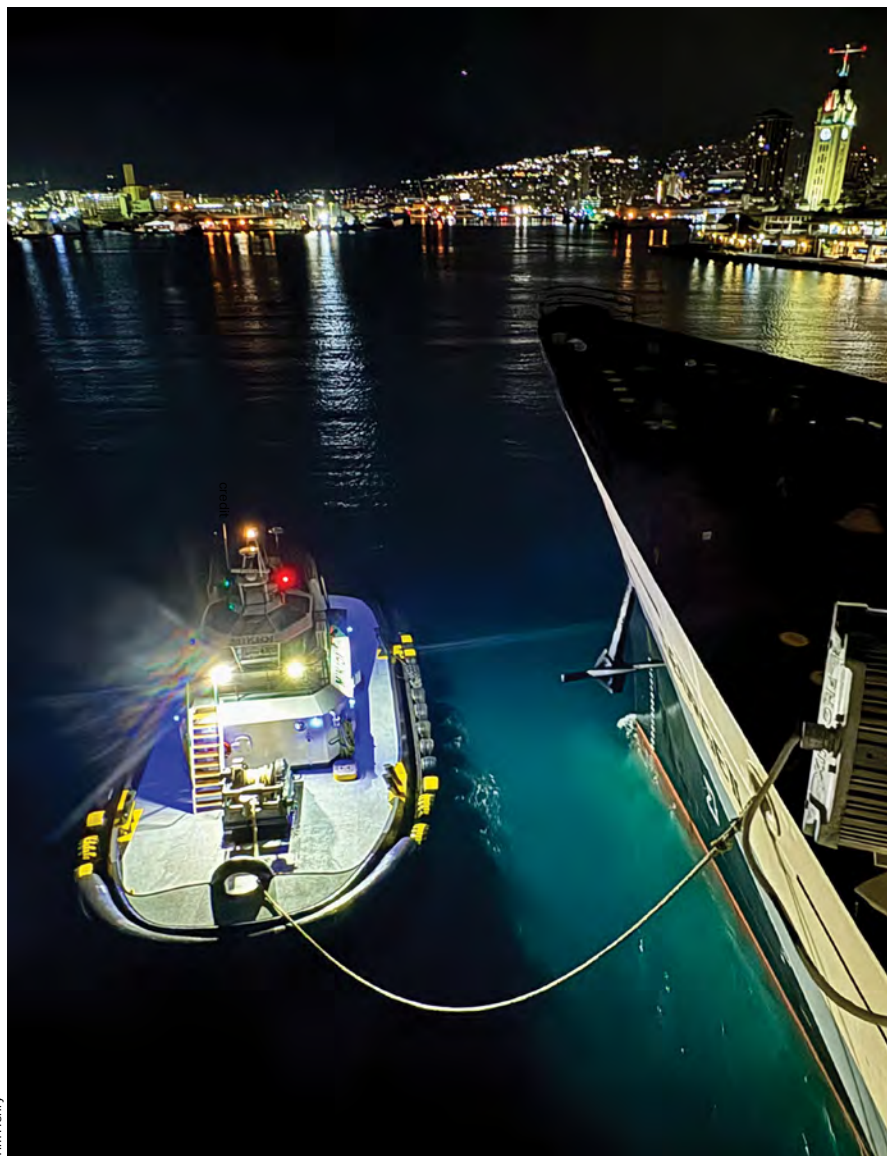
On the second to last day of the passage, there was a barbeque at sunset, with tables set up outside. Jensen pointed out that the conditions were ideal for a green flash, though it didn’t materialize. Squalls clung to the horizon, and the weather was as good as weather gets.

*George II* was only a few hours behind its scheduled arrival in Honolulu on the evening of Sunday, Nov. 16, 2025. Diamond Head Lighthouse flashed in the night shortly before the silhouette of the old volcano was visible. The lights around Honolulu spread across the hills like lava, and soon the skyscrapers of Waikiki and the city at large were as bright as day.

Third mate Chris Rosa donned a bright orange shirt, helmet and headlamp, and met the pilot boat at midships. Jack Crawford, a cadet at the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy who boarded *George II* in Long Beach, showed the pilot to the bridge. “This is a standard job for the cadet,” Crawford said. “Escort the pilot and get them coffee.”

The pilot and an apprentice conferred with Capt. Tuck, then took command. Two Foss Maritime tugs made their way out of

A Foss Maritime tug guides *George II* past the 100-year-old Aloha Tower and into the Port of Honolulu.



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Honolulu Harbor and met *George II*, taking its bow and stern to ease the vessel toward the Aloha Tower, the historic, 100-year-old, 10-story structure.

AB Nate Heart was at the helm, repeating commands from the pilot. *George II* was one of Heart’s first ships. He’d practiced hand steering and holding a bearing a few days prior; he said that he planned to hawsepipe his way up the ranks.

*George II* and the tugs passed the clock tower and a Matson ship, then spun around 180

degrees and went starboard-side to, bow out, at the pier underneath the big cranes. Third mate Antonette ‘Tony’ Gomowad, a graduate of Cal Maritime, oversaw the lines on the bow, fine-tuning the AB’s work. Hand-held VHF’s squawked as Gomowad and the bridge communicated with each other.

*George II* was soon berthed and the cranes began their work. A few barges stood by, ready for containers. The ship would be in port for about 48 hours, then head back to Long Beach. •