



Contact: Dave Gerr
860-572-7900, ext. 50
dgerr@westlawn.edu

Westlawn's Fourth Annual Mystic Meet Draws 47 Youngest Graduate Receives Diploma; First Cum Laude Graduate; Another Graduates in just 2-1/2 Years!

August 6, 2009, Mystic, CT: On Saturday, July 25, forty-seven distance learning students and guests turned out for Westlawn's fourth annual student Mystic Meet. The event takes place each July at Westlawn's campus located in Mystic Seaport Museum.

Students and guests were treated to a rare behind-the-scenes guided tour of *The Charles W. Morgan*—the oldest whaling ship in the world and the last surviving ship of her kind. The Mystic Seaport Museum hauled the ship out for restoration and generously provided Westlawn students with the opportunity to closely study her construction from the inside.



The Charles W. Morgan

Westlawn Director, Dave Gerr, awarded diplomas to two of Westlawn's recent graduates: **Milo Fienberg** for completing Elements of Technical Boat Design, and **Christopher O'Connor** for earning his Professional

-- more --

Diploma in Yacht and Boat Design; both remarkable students in their own right for their particular achievements.



Dave Gerr (left) presents Milo Feinberg with his diploma

Milo, age 18, is the youngest student ever to enroll in and also the youngest student ever to graduate from a Westlawn design course. Starting the 1-module Elements of Technical Boat Design course when he was just 16, Milo had begun sailing in Castine, on the Penobscot Bay in Maine, at the age of five. He's had the opportunity to sail on everything from a replica sandbagger, to a New York 32, to a W-76, to a Concordia Yawl. He's even had the chance to race with Olin Stephens! Milo is now headed to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this fall, where he plans to pursue a degree in mechanical engineering with a concentration in ocean engineering.



Chris O'Connor (left) receives his diploma from Dave Gerr

-- more --

Chris O'Connor, is a 1983 graduate of the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy, at Kings Point, NY, and of the U.S. Navy Officers' Nuclear Propulsion Program in 1984. Completing the entire, 4-module Westlawn Yacht & Boat Design program in four years, he is the first student to be awarded *cum laude* honors from Westlawn for receiving a grade higher than 90% on his final design thesis.

Westlawn's Director, Dave Gerr, stated, "It's a rare treat, as director of a distance-learning school, to be able to award diplomas in person. It was even more satisfying to be presenting these awards to two such dedicated and talented individuals."

After the graduation ceremony, Gerr presented a seminar on planing hull design. It was an in-depth and detailed presentation with plenty of examples of real boats with problems as well as examples of boats that ran well. Students were then challenged to demonstrate their understanding by analyzing the behavior of existing vessels that had had difficulties. Gerr noted, "I've given this seminar several times before in other venues, and this was the first time that, by the end of the talk, the attendees actually identified almost all the features that were causing problems."

During a break and lunch at the Seaman's Inne, students, alumni, and guests took advantage of the congenial atmosphere to get to know each other better, renew old friendships, and to discuss the morning activities; a rare activity for those enrolled in a distance learning program.

Later that afternoon Gerr presented his second lecture on *Critical Details in Boat Design*, in which he discussed such subjects as dry and wet exhaust systems, sea chests, rudder foil shape optimization, remote helm stations, soft patches and the importance of machinery access, roll reduction, anchor handling considerations, and more. The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to one-on-one reviews and critiques of design work which students had brought to the meeting, as well as to answering student questions.

As in past years, students said they were reenergized and excited by the Meet and they all expressed the sentiment, "We have to do this again next year."

Student Graduates in Just 2-1/2 Years!

Still another remarkable student graduated from Westlawn this summer but was unable to attend the Mystic Meet to receive his diploma in person. Eric Holohan enrolled in Module 1 of the full Yacht & Boat Design Program in January 2007. He completed his design thesis for Module 4 in July 2009. Graduation from the full Westlawn program in 2-1/2 years is one of the fastest times ever, and—while doing Westlawn—Eric also

-- more --

completed the Lloyds marine surveying course as well as becoming an ABYC Marine Master Tech!



Eric Holohan

Founded in 1930, the [Westlawn Institute of Marine Technology](#) is the only nationally accredited and state-certified distance-learning school of small-craft design in the United States. As the not-for-profit educational affiliate of the [American Boat and Yacht Council](#), the mission of the Westlawn Institute of Marine Technology is threefold:

- To provide our students with the skills and knowledge required to build a rewarding career in the profession of yacht and small-craft naval architecture.
- To support continued growth of the recreational and small-craft marine community through the development of well-trained, safety-oriented, boat designers developing better products for the benefit of the boating public.
- To provide continuing education to marine-industry professionals.

To learn more about Westlawn, please call (860) 572-7900 or visit the Westlawn website at: www.westlawn.edu.