



"In Tow"

Quarterly Newsletter of the Coast Guard Tug Association



www.cg-tugs.org

Volume 1, Number 1

"SEMPER PARATUS"

Winter 2006

CGTA Reunion 2005 - Coast Guard Academy

Second annual reunion of the Coast Guard Tug Association was a wonderful success

The Coast Guard Tug Association held their 2nd annual reunion on October 14th and 15th at the USCG Academy in New London, CT.

CGTA reunion honcho, Sandy Schwaab, put together an unforgettable and flawless reunion this year with many wonderful events planned for attendees.

All attendees mustered at 1500 at the Academy Officer's Club. Our reception room was set up with drinks and hors d'oeuvres along with tables of member's photo albums and memorabilia. There was a running slide show chronicling the progress of the former CG Tug *Snohomish* as she traversed the Erie Canal. All had a great time getting to know each other and swapping sea stories.

At 1530, we all gathered at the SCANTS (Shipboard Command And Navigation Training Simulator) facility for a fascinating demonstration of some high tech tools used to train Cadets in ship



At Left - CGC Eagle moored at public pier, Fort Trumbull in New London

handling. The SCANTS Simulator was a real-time mock-up of a ship's bridge with all the NAV, control, and communication equipment you would find aboard a real ship. Outside the bridge windshields was a wrap around IMAX movie screen which would display scenery of the seas and other vessels.

This combined with the sounds of the seas and engines to make for a very realistic experience. Some may have needed Dramamine. (Cont. Page 4)

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You Know You're "Old Guard"
When you used a Detex Clock on watch

Mr. Lighthouse Honored

The Coast Guard Tug Association's very own Ken Black ("Mr. Lighthouse") was honored at the 2005 reunion of the CGTA. The Tug Association's "Ancient Tuggers" award was presented to Ken to commemorate his many years of dedication to the U.S. Coast Guard and for his work in preserving the heritage of the Lighthouses of the USCG. Presenting the award is CGTA member and Vice-President, George Staples.

Ken, who enlisted in the Coast Guard in 1941, is founder of the Shore Village Lighthouse Museum in Rockland, ME and has received

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Making Ancient Tuggers Award presentation is CGTA member George Staples



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"From the Editor..."

Welcome to the first edition of "IN TOW," the quarterly newsletter of the Coast Guard Tug Association. With this new addition to our already popular CGTA web site, we hope to keep our members up to date on our activities, new members, upcoming news, and provide some history, trivia, and a few "chuckles" that aren't part of the regular site.



"In Tow" Editor, Sandy Schwaab

We hope that you will all find this a meaningful addition to our organization's continuing effort to provide our members with current information on the past, present, and future of USCG Tugs, their personnel, and our association.

I wish to express my personal thanks and a big "BZ" to our President, webmaster, and initial organizer, Doug O'Dell, for his perseverance in making this, the Coast Guard Tug Association, a first-class organization devoted to those of us who sailed in CG Tugs. Without his prescience and dedication, this organization would not be the unparalleled USCG Vet's organization we have become over the last two years. Thanks, Doug.

As we begin another year of camaraderie and dedication to our collective pasts, I wish you all Happy Holidays and best wishes for a prosperous New Year.

SEMPER PARATUS,
Sandy Schwaab



US Coast Guard Cutter *Line*—WYTL 65611

numerous honors and awards. He is noted as one of the foremost authorities on Coast Guard Lighthouses. Ken is also Honorary Chairman of the American Lighthouse Foundation. Ken has had an illustrious career in the United States Coast Guard.

After Coast Guard Boot camp in '41, Ken was assigned to the USCGC *Spruce*, which was sent to San Juan, Puerto Rico to replace her sister ship, *Acacia*, which was sunk by a German submarine. He then moved to the Attack Cargo Ship *Theenim*, which operated in the Pacific Area and participated in the invasion of Okinawa. In the late 40s and early 50s, he transferred around from Virginia, to New York, to

Boston, until 1954 when he was promoted to Warrant Officer. Ken then served as Group Commander, Quoddy Head, ME. He was Commanding Officer of Pollack Lightship, LV 114 / WAL 536, in 1956 to 1957, and, in the early 1960s, Ken served as CO of CG Station Point Allerton, MA and CGC *Ojibwa*, WYTM-97, from 1963 to 1965. Before retirement in 1973, CWO4 Ken Black served as CO of Group Rockland, Maine.



Ken Black is held in high regard by not just those that have known him for many years but by those who have gotten to know

him in more recent years. We're certainly lucky to have Ken as one of our own.

Ken We Salute You



USCGC *Comanche* WMEC-202



USCGC *Chilula* WMEC-153



USCGC *Yocona* WMEC-168

"Chug-a-lug, Tug"



CAPTIONS—O'DELL / SCHWAAB

Can you think of something comical that you'd hear aboard a CG Tug, something that would fit the dialog boxes seen in this picture, or something like it? Send us your joke. We'll publish it along with your name.

Interested in receiving a CGTA roster list? Contact us through the website and we'll arrange to mail you one. Would you prefer to not be on this list? Contact us and we'll block out your name. **SASE REQUIRED**

Attending the 2005 CGTA reunion were; Joe Breneman (*Mahoning*), Tom Cicala (*Mahoning*), Mike and Sandy Del Monte (*Mahoning*), David Vaughn (*Snohomish*), John Copland (CG Associate – CGC *Eastwind*), Clyde Norstrand (*Chinook*), Dave Mathieson (*Ojibwa*), Sandy and Shirley Schwaab (*Ojibwa*), George Staples (*Snohomish*), Ken Frische (*Arundel*), Roger Jones (*Snohomish*), Ed and Sandie Anderson (*Apalachee*), Bob and Barbara Thibault (*Tuckahoe*), Doug O'Dell (Kaw) and brother Tim O'Dell, and last but not least, Ken (Mr. Lighthouse) and Dot Black (*Ojibwa*).

What a wonderful group of people. This was truly a "Family Reunion." Happy hour in the Club's "Lee Rail" room was enjoyed by all with old friends meeting after many years and new friends being

made. It was hard to tear folks away for the banquet dinner when the bell sounded. On the menu was the Club's "Steamship Dinner" with tossed salad, Seafood Newburg and Rice, Sliced Roast Beef and Gravy, Red Bliss Potato with Parsley Butter, Fresh Vegetable Sauté followed by New York Cheesecake. There was a cash bar the whole time and spirits were high and flowing freely. What a feast we had.

After a short visit (once again) to the Lee Rail, members of the CGTA assembled in the Banquet room for our annual business meeting. Acting as master of ceremonies, Sandy Schwaab provided opening comments and then introduced George Staples to make a surprise presentation to CGTA member Ken Black.

Honored for his years of dedication to the U.S. Coast Guard and, in particular, the preservation of Coast Guard Light houses and artifacts, Ken was presented with the CGTA's "ANCIENT TUGGERS AWARD", along with an art print of a Coast Guard WYTM tug. Unfortunately, the art print sustained some damage in transit and had to be replaced. It might be a good thing because the art print presented was of the CGC *Sauk*. It should have been the CGC *Ojibwa*. With our apologies, the CGTA promised to replace it with a print of the Jib.

Dave Mathieson, who has worked many years at the Mystic Seaport Museum as Supervisor of Conservation, was invited to the podium to give an overview of the work he does with the museum and offer invitations to all CGTA members for a "behind the scenes" tour of the museum collection. A full 90 percent of the museum's holdings are kept in storage, and would be opened up to our group for a very privileged sneak peek.

The gavel dropped and the business meeting of the CGTA convened with President, Doug O'Dell presiding. Approved and enacted were the CGTA By-laws as written. A motion was made to hold the annual meetings & reunions in the Fall of the year as opposed to Spring. It was decided at this time to hold an annual meeting as opposed to every other



The 2005 Reunion Group

year. Motion was seconded & approved.

A motion was made to have next year's Annual Reunion at the Coast Guard Academy again. Motion was seconded & approved.

A motion was made to form a local committee to assist Sandy Schwaab in making the next reunion happen. This decision was made in order to take some of the load off Sandy. Dave Mathieson and Joe Breneman agreed to assist. Motion was seconded & approved

Dave Vaughn was nominated & elected as Treasurer of the CGTA. All other officers maintained.

Down came the gavel once again and the meeting was adjourned.

The remainder of the evening was spent telling more Sea Stories and reminiscing. A more perfect 1st day of a reunion could not have been had. All there thoroughly enjoyed it.

Day two of the CGTA reunion found all hands mustered outside the main door of the CG Academy Library and the USCG Museum for a tour of the exhibits on display; we were also treated to a behind the scenes look at the storage area of the museum.

(Cont. page 5)

Sandy Schwaab, who has worked as a volunteer at the museum for many years, gave all a walk through of the storage room for a very informative and interesting view of the many artifacts held at the museum. There were a good many items held by the museum, categorized as "antiques," that most of our group found very familiar. Many of us found ourselves saying "I remember this" or "this is what we used." Kind of makes you wonder, are we a museum piece? The Coast Guard Museum is far more extensive than one might think by viewing the museum website. They have everything under the sun relating to Coast Guard history, too numerous to mention here. Suffice it to say, the CG Museum tour was a real treat and well worth the three hours we spent there. Thanks so much to Sandy for providing this opportunity to see "Coast Guard History" in person.

After the CG Museum tour, all hands drove over to Mystic Seaport for another fantastic behind the scenes tour of the Seaport's storage and conservation department. CGTA member Dave Mathieson guided us into their storage facility for a peek at the Seaport's holdings. Everything contained there was meticulously cared for and the entire facility was climate controlled. It was a fascinating walk back in time with an informative look at this country's maritime history. Again, thanks to Dave Mathieson for this very privileged look at Mystic Seaport's collection.



Salty Dogs Doug O'Dell, George Staples, Dave Vaughn & Roger Jones

Following our tour, a few of our group walked across the street to the Mystic Seaport Museum for a walk through history. We were fortunate to have offers from Dave Mathieson for free passes to the Seaport. Thanks again, Dave.

The sun finally began to break through the rainy, overcast skies which were upon our reunion since it's commencement. Our trip through the seaport was a short one because they shut down the exhibits at 1700 and closed at 1800. We were only able to visit for about two hours - not nearly enough time to thoroughly tour the seaport. We'll just have to plan for one additional day next time.

So, with the sun slowly setting on a very successful 2nd reunion of the CG Tug Association, we all bid our farewells and look forward to reunion number three in 2006. This reunion could not have been better. The only thing that might have made it better would have been the absence of rain.

CGTA Member Dave Mathieson, (CGC Ojibwa), shown at right has worked for Mystic Seaport for 30 years



Welcome Aboard New CGTA Members Since October 2005

Paul C. Hankle (*Arundel*)
 David Drickhamer (*Raritan*)
 Dick Levesque (*Comanche*)
 John Copland (*Eastwind*)
 Joe V. Peterson (*Modoc*)
 Larry Krishnek (*Modoc*)
 Gerald Pierce (*Modoc*)
 Bill Doherty (*Tamara*)
 Curtis D. Colvin (*Bollard*)
 Richard Cormier (*64314*)
 Bruce Painter (*Manitou/Comanche*)

Tony Sutherland (*Arundel*)
 Bob Closson (*Sauk/64310*)
 Scott A. Schultz (*Snohomish*)
 Robert "Bob" Hubbard (*Modoc*)
 Robert Simpson (*Navesink/Mahoning/Cleat/64308/64310*)
 Paul Magdarz (*Chilula*)
 Richard Clark (*Modoc*)
 Vincent Alber (*Modoc*)
 Blair Miller (*Mahoning*)
 Ed Toney (*Chilula*)

Total Members—224

The "Prez Sez"

By Doug O'Dell - CGTA growth

Since the summer of 2003, when the CG Tug Assoc. had it's inception, growth has been phenomenal, to say the least. Beginning with three guys from the CGC *Kaw* and growing to over 200 members, the CGTA is fast becoming "The authority" on tugboats of the U.S. Coast Guard.



CGTA President - Doug O'Dell

A short recap on how the CGTA came about is in order. The three guys from the *Kaw* who came up with the notion of a Tug Association were myself, Jerry Dalton, and Dan Ashland. Originally called the CGC *Kaw* Association, word soon got out at places like "Fred's Place," that a group of CG Tug sailors were forming a veteran's organization. Inquiries began to come in and it was quickly learned that there was a lot more interest in our organization than just *Kaw* sailors. Other WYTM sailors expressed an interest and it was soon decided to change the focus of the group from the *Kaw* to all WYTM's. We soon had many other CG Tug sailors contributing to the efforts and soliciting interest and members from all the WYTM's. Ed Anderson (Apalachee) was instrumental in recruiting many of our early members and we soon had several other like-minded, ex-tuggers such as George Staples (Snohomish) and Sandy Schwaab (Ojibwa), volunteering their time and efforts towards the growth of the organization.

The name became the WYTM Association. At the time of our first reunion, held at the CG Moorings in Cleveland, Ohio in the fall of 2004, we had some 80 members and had changed our name to CG Tug Association. At the time of our most recent 2005 reunion at the CG Academy, we were over 200 members strong and still growing. Eighty members the first year and 120 new members the second year. That is a pretty good growth record. This year we hope to double in size again.

As a guide line for what ships were included in our organization, we had decided on WYTM, WTGB, and WYTL classes of CG vessels. The problem was, there have been many more CG tugs than just these classes of ships. So it was decided to include "ALL CG Tugs." This last summer, we expanded our membership to

include other classes of ships in the CG classified as Tugs. This included such ships as the 85' harbor tugs, 100' harbor tugs, 64' yard tugs, 143', 205' & 213' ocean going tugs. This has opened up a flood gate to new members and provided our organization with the opportunity for some serious growth.

The original concept of the organization was to form a group of like-minded, former and retired Coast Guard tug sailors, that would foster a sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps, and commemorate the men and women who served in CG Tugs. It was also our aim to educate the public of the vital role these cutters played in search and rescue, icebreaking for commercial shipping, maintaining aids to navigation, and highlight the important role they played in our maritime history.

To this end, it is my opinion that the CGTA has become a force to be reckoned with. We have certainly surpassed any expectation I may have had. And just let me say, it is the genuine interest of the membership of this organization that has propelled the impressive growth of the Coast Guard Tug Association. My hat's off to all our members and to the self-sacrificing work and dedication they have brought forth. It is indeed, in keeping with the highest tradition of the United States Coast Guard - - **BRAVO ZULU !**

"Where are they now?"

Snohomish stricken from the "Reef List"

The Coast Guard Cutter *Snohomish*, built in 1943 by Ira S. Bushey and Sons in New York, after serving an illustrious career in Rockland, ME. was decommissioned in 1986.



Snohomish as she waits in Charleston Harbor

Sold into civilian hands, she was renamed the *Sarah Rose* and spent many of the last years dock-side in Charleston Harbor, SC. Her owners were seriously considering donating her to

the S.C. Department of Wildlife to be taken off coast and scuttled to create an artificial reef.

The CG Tug Association got wind of this development and began a crusade to find an alternative to her being

lost forever to the deep. Several perspective buyers were contacted and she was finally purchased by the Northeastern Maritime Historical Foundation of Duluth, MN.

The Northeastern Maritime Historical Foundation (NMHF) had in their museum fleet several steam and diesel tugs, but were very interested in making the *Snohomish* a permanent part of their fleet. Their intention was to restore her to original Coast Guard configuration and turned into a floating CG Museum exhibit.

NMHF Founder and owner of Zenith Tugboat Company of Duluth, Franz Von Riedel, began formulating plans to move the *Snohomish* from Charleston to the fresh water of the Great Lakes in 2004. Originally scheduled to make the journey in the fall of 2004, time and weather caused the trip to be delayed until 2005.

Laid up in Charleston Harbor, she awaited the opportunity to head west into the Great Lakes. A float plan was finally made and the *Snohomish* trip would soon become a reality.

With travel costs being held to a minimum and time short for fair weather in the Maritimes, the decision was made to bring the *Snohomish* westward into the Lakes through the Erie Canal.

Traveling through the Erie Canal posed some problems with bridge clearance and with draft considerations that would require some radical solutions. With this in mind, she began her voyage from Charleston, being towed by the Tug *Sharon Elizabeth*, up the east coast to New York City and on up the Hudson River to Troy, NY. Once in Troy, she would have all steel above the bridge removed, as well as the top of her stack. All tanks, fuel and ballast, would be emptied to lessen her draft.

Transiting the shallow depth of the canal and clearing the numerous low bridges would still be a challenge. When passing under a low bridge, she would fill her tanks with water to increase her draft so that her

superstructure would clear the bridges and drag her through the canal past the bridge, then pump out the tanks and continue on her way. Who says you need

a dry-dock to scrape the grass off a hull? Assisting Zenith Tug *Sharon Elizabeth* with the *Sno* was the Gladding-Hearn tug, *Benjamin Elliot*.

The *Snohomish* and Zenith tugs made their way up to Oswego, NY and prepared for the open water part of their trip through Lake Ontario, the Welland Canal, and across Lake Erie. She is now being refitted for service and will be on charter for the

next four years, when she will return to her new and permanent home with the NMHF as a museum piece.

The CG Tug Association is watching the affairs of the *Snohomish* with great interest and hope to become a supporter of her as a CG Museum ship some time in the future. Our thanks to Franz Von Riedel for providing us with details of the *Snohomish's* ventures.

Snohomish has been delivered to Ludington based Sable Point Marine, owned by Charles Cart for an undisclosed period of charter. She will be refitted and upgraded for her new job and will get her feet wet once again breaking ice in the winter time and assisting ships the rest of the time. Charles (Chuck) Cart is chief engineer for the *SS Badger* hailing out of Ludington Michigan. The *Badger*, a 410' Steam passenger ferry, provides cross lake passage for people and vehicles between Ludington and Manitowoc, WI. A nice diversion for travelers wishing to bypass that maddening drive through Chicago.

The *Snohomish* is beginning a new career doing what she does best - BREAKING ICE - and the CGTA will be kept informed of her progress as she is refitted. We look forward to hearing about her exploits and will update our readers as things develop.



Snohomish transits one of the many locks of the Erie Canal,



"Historical Tidbits and other Maritime Trivia"

by: Sandy Schwaab

In each issue, I will try to bring you an interesting piece of USCG history. Some will be in the form of full articles, mainly on tugs, while others may just be in the form of CG or maritime trivia that will tickle your memory and add to your "seabag" of "useless" party conversation pieces. Here's the first entry and one we can all be proud of.

Creed of the U.S. Coast Guardsman

I am proud to be a United States Coast Guardsman.

I revere that long line of expert seamen who, by their devotion to duty and self-sacrifice have made it possible for me to be a member of a service honored and respected, in peace and in war, throughout the world.

I never, by work or deed, will bring reproach upon the fair name of my service, nor permit others to do so unchallenged.

I will cheerfully and willingly obey all lawful orders.

I will always be on time to relieve, and shall endeavor to more, rather than less, than my share.

I will always be at my station, alert and attending to my duties.

I shall, so far as I am able, bring to my seniors solutions, not problems.

I shall live joyously, but will always with due regard for the rights and privileges of others.

I shall endeavor to be a model citizen in the community in which I live.

I shall sell life dearly to an enemy of my country, but will give it freely to rescue those in peril.

With God's help, I shall endeavor to be one of His noblest works... a United States Coast Guardsman.

Editor's note: *The Creed of the U.S. Coast Guardsman was written in 1938 by VADM Harry G. Hamlet, USCG Commandant, 1932-36.*

Muster On The Mess Deck - *Local Notice To Members*

We would like to take this opportunity to invite CGTA members to submit sea stories, mission reports, photos, and other interesting bits of information for publication in "IN TOW."

If you have an interesting story, photo or trivial bit of information, please contact us to arrange for submission. To contact us, use the contact form on the CGTA website forwarded to webmaster. Deadline for the spring issue is March 1, 2006. We look forward to hearing from you.

The Coast Guard Tug Association is a non-profit (And Free) organization which is dedicated to it's members, the ex-coasties that served aboard CG Tugs. We depend solely on voluntary contributions for our existence and much help from our membership.

To help in the goal of keeping our organization free and not tax the membership unduly, we are distributing the CGTA newsletter via our website as a downloadable PDF file. Saves cost on postage. If you know of a member who might like a copy of it, please download and print it for them.

THE RUSSIANS ARE COMING!

How I became a Russian Translator Without Really Trying

Joe V. Peterson, Tacoma,
Washington, December, 2005

My relationship with the U. S. Coast Guard has been life-long and most unusual. I was born into it during World War II, the fall of 1944. My Dad, Otto, joined the Guard in 1941 at age 20, seeking adventure on Ice Breakers. He was sent from 'boot' to Honolulu, HI and the Cutter *Taney*, where he was December 7, 1941, at the beginning of WW-II. (See <http://www.uscg.mil/news/wwii/wwii.htm>) At wars end, he was an SK-1, and the paymaster, on the Coast Guard-manned USS *General Muir*, a troop ship, as it entered New York harbor on VJ day in 1945. A couple of years later he got his dream when he joined the crew of the *Storis* to help form the 17th District out of D-13th in Juneau, AK. One of my earliest memories is eating ice cream on the mess deck of the *Storis* in 1948. Dad loved the Bearing Sea patrol and wanted to be a career man in the Guard, but after 12 years of long extended absences my mother had had enough of being a Coastie's wife. He got out and we settled down in Montana. Dad 'crossed the bar', passed away, in December, 2001, a few days after giving his last Pearl Harbor Day interview at the request of the Coast Guard. He was a Coastie at heart to the end of his life. When I was four years old, in Juneau, my grandmother made me a First Class Storekeeper's dress blue uniform, just like my Dad's, complete with flat hat (see picture.) How could I have not joined the Coast Guard?

I joined in August, 1965, at age 20, after a couple of years fumbling around in college. In October, after boot camp at Government Island, Alameda, CA, I was sent to one of the most idyllic Coast Guard Stations one could hope for at Newport, Oregon. It was there, at Yaquina Bay Station, in the Spring of 1966, I



Perhaps the youngest SK
in the Coast Guard.
Joe at age four



A 'cluster' of typical sizes of Russian ships and fishing boats we encountered regularly. Sometimes these cluster would number a dozen or so ships and sometime these would be a dozen of so clusters in one general area.

had my first encounter with the Soviet (Russian) fishing fleet. There was only a three mile limit at sea for the US at that time, and no real treaties to speak of regulating the Russians activities. Often you could see the Russian ships at sea from the beach! At night, they looked like a large, brightly lit city on the horizon. (see picture of cluster of Russian ships.) At one point we counted 110 Soviet fishing vessels just off the Oregon coast. Rumors were rampant of what they were *really* up to.

I was a 21 year old Seaman Apprentice standing watch in the tower overlooking the entrance to Yaquina Bay when the Russians arrived. I could hear them chattering away on the radio. Just for something to do, I bought myself a learn-it-yourself Russian language book and started to study. Early that Spring in 1966, a Medevac call (medical evacuation) came from a Russian ship a 25 miles west of Newport. There was a sick Russian sailor who needed immediate care that the Russian ship could not provide. We were to render assistance.

Just a few days before the Medevac call from the Soviets, I and some fellow Coasties had been in a local waterfront tavern when we encountered a Yugoslavian sailor off a freighter in the harbor. I exchanged a few words with him in Russian, almost my entire meager vocabulary. Unbeknownst to me, the Yaquina Bay Coast Guard Group Commander, a shrewd, weather-beaten W3, was sitting at the bar and over-

heard the exchange. Now a few days later, with the Russian Medevac call in progress - and no one who could understand Russian - he put in a call to CG District -13 Headquarters in Seattle, "We have the man for the job," he had told them. He was referring to me.

On the day of the Russian medivac call, I was on the 8 to 12 morning watch in the tower. It was a fine sunny day when suddenly my relief showed up, two hours early! "Pete, the Group CO wants to see you." Not exactly something I wanted to hear! "Wants me for what?," I asked with trepidation. "How the hell

should I know," he said, a bit agitated. My relief was not pleased to go on watch 2 hours early! I climbed down the tower ladder and headed back to the station, about a half-mile away. I knew a medevac with the Soviet fishing fleet was getting underway, but I did not make a connection. After all, I knew little Russian and was just learning it myself at a very slow rate.

There was much activity around the station.

The 52312, Motor Life Boat *Victory*, our largest vessel, was warming up. I entered the Group Commander's office. "Pete," he said, "I have a favor to ask you to do for me *just this once*." What could I say? I was, after all, just a seaman apprentice. I was to go out to the Soviet fishing fleet and translate. "I know you can do it, Pete," he said. And away we went on MLB *Victory*. (*Victory* is still in service at Yaquina Bay Station as the "Queen of the Fleet", oldest such MLB in the CG.)

In the mean time, CG Astoria Air Station, some 100 miles north, had sent out a helicopter to the Soviet fleet. They arrived first, picked up the sick man and brought him to Newport's only hospital. We turned *Victory* around and head back to Newport. At the station the CO handed me an empty brief case, "Makes you look more official," was his comment and I was driven to the hospital in the Group CO's official car. The hospital was the scene of much excitement. This was the first Russian to come ashore, and the news media was there. "Click", as quick as they could take a picture, I became *the* Russian translator for the Coast Guard. This *one time* favor was to become an identity for me for the next three years in the Guard!

The medevaced Russian, a man of about 50 with stainless steel teeth, had appendicitis. I could not understand him. He could not understand me. He had left his glasses on his ship making my task much harder as he could not see the phrases I would point to in my little learn-it-your-self Russian language book. I had to write notes in large Russian letters to communicate. To make it even more difficult, he was nearly illiterate. It was slow and some things got lost in translation. But he was treated well and recovered.

Before returning him to his ship, we took him on a tour of the town. He was amazed by America, or what little he saw of it in Newport, Oregon. We gave him some money – US dollars were worthless in the Soviet Union – and he bought some tennis shoes for his granddaughter. From there on out, every Russian I had charge of on U.S. shores would be taken on a local tour before returning them to their ship. They were always grateful for the hospitality and amazed at our freedom, variety of attainable goods in stores, and the fact that you didn't have to stand in a long line to shop! And they were startled when I told them how much I got paid in the Coast Guard and that I owned a car. Even as a Seaman, I made more than even a Russian offi-

cer! Their favorite items to buy were ball point pens, American cigarettes, and magazines. They wanted beer but unfortunately we wouldn't allow it. At sea we would often trade with them. (See photo of *Modoc* tied to *Churkin*).

I Meet the *Modoc*

Shortly after returning the first Russian medevac to his factory ship, the *Cuba*, with the MLB *Victory*, I received temporary additional duty orders (t.a.d.) to report to the Coast Guard Cutter *Modoc*, WMEC 194, (ex-USN ATA *Bagaduce*), stationed in Coos Bay, Oregon, about 100 miles south of Newport. In late June of 1966, I was driven to the *Modoc* in the Group Commander's official car, with the empty brief case – it became a 'fixture' of mine for the next three years. I had seen the *Modoc* before when it tied up at our station's pier for Armed Forces Day activities on the Newport waterfront in May. The *Modoc*, at 143 feet long, was a big powerful sea-going tug with a crew of about 43.



Tied up along side the *Churkin*

Built in 1943, at Orange, Texas, it was acquired by the Coast Guard the late 1950s. I had not been on a Cutter since eating ice cream as a kid on the *Storis* in 1948. Little did I know that before the summer was over *Modoc* would become my permanent duty station for the next three years! (ex-USCGC *Modoc* is still afloat as the luxury private yacht *Modoc Pearl* at Gig Harbor, Washington, near Tacoma. (See photo of *Modoc Pearl*.)

Modoc had requested a translator. They had already encountered the Soviet fishing fleet during an awkward incident in early June. The 'mother ship' of the Soviet Fishing Fleet, the *Churkin*, had made a medevac call when the Commander of the Soviet Fishing Fleet had a heart attack. *Modoc* was nearby on a routine patrol and responded to their call. No one had yet been aboard any of the Russian vessels in this vast fleet off the Oregon coast. The *Modoc* arrived on scene and lowered its small boat taking the XO, an engineman, a seamen and a very husky BM to board the *Churkin*, a factory ship about 400 feet long. *Modoc's* only corpsman was on leave that patrol.

First up the side of the *Churkin* were the XO and the EN who was qualified in mouth to mouth resuscitation. Following them was the huge 6' 6" tall BM. The Russians took a step back as he boarded the deck. At another boarding incident, the Russians

would make him an 'honorary cosmonaut' because he was so 'far up into space.' The Soviet commander who had the heart attack was lying on a stretcher on the deck of his cabin. None of the Russians could speak any *understandable* English, and none of the Coasties spoke any Russian of any kind. The EN began mouth to mouth. The lifeless body belched up bile into the EN's mouth which started the EN vomiting, as well as a couple of the living Russians. It was a hopeless situation. The Commander had been dead over an hour now. After a while, the CG boarding party departed. Nothing was said. It was apparent someone was needed to facilitate communication if contact with the Soviets continued, and that seemed very likely.

I arrived at the *Modoc* on a Thursday afternoon in late June, 1966. No one knew quite what to do with me – wasn't I just a seaman apprentice? Friday morning we cast off for a seven day patrol to look for and identify the many Russian ships plying up and down the Oregon and Washington coast. At that time very few of the Russian ships had their name written in Roman (English) lettering on the sides of the bridge. It was difficult to figure out just who was who and many of them were nearly identical. They ranged in size from just under 100 feet, standard trawlers we call BRTs, to much larger factory and supply ships, some of them well over 500 feet long (See photo of cluster of Russian ships.) They even had a sea-going tug a little bigger than *Modoc*. I would begin by translating the Cyrillic Russian into phonetic English, something I could more or less do.

For three years on the *Modoc*, I observed the Soviet Fishing fleet from Vancouver Island to California. In that time I got to know more of the Russian language and they got to know me as the 'official' U.S. representative. Occasionally, they would not talk to anyone unless I was present! Several Russians came to the U.S. for medical treatment. On some occasions, we would "socialize" with them at sea. The Soviets even gave me a letter of 'commendation' for my efforts at translating! Much to my amazement, about 20 years later, when I was doing graduate research at a University, I was approached at an academic conference by an important man from the Soviet Academy of Science in Moscow. He knew my name and he knew what I had done in the Coast Guard with the Soviet Fishing Fleet! I was dumb founded! Fortunately, he spoke very good English and for the next couple of years I was an advisor to the Soviet Academy, U.S. Studies, as the old Communist rule crumbled, to help them understand the mysteries of American society in order to rebuild their own. Later, when one of my friends asked him if I could really speak Russian, he replied, "Joe can speak Russian we Russians have yet to learn!"

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CGC *Modoc* now the "*Modoc Pearl*", a Luxury yacht in Tacoma Washington



Photo of the 2001 *Modoc* reunion on the fantail of the *Modoc Pearl* in Gig Harbor, WA (several of us were involved in the USN tug assist)

The CGTA wishes to thank Joe Peterson for taking the time to write this interesting and historical story.

We hope to provide our readers with many more interesting sea stories, and tall tales.

If you have one and would like to contribute it to "In Tow" for publication, please contact us through our website <http://www.cg-tugs.org>. We welcome anything you may care to submit.



CGC's *Bramble* vs. *Ojibwa*, *Ojibwa* ahead by a nose



Work advances on the first National Security Cutter. The ship has been named USCGC *Bertholf* WMSL-750
Photo courtesy Northrop Grumman

From:



TO:

RETURN IF UNDELIVERABLE