



# "In Tow"

Newsletter of the Coast Guard Tug Association



[www.cg-tugs.org](http://www.cg-tugs.org)

C. G. Tug Association

"SEMPER PARATUS"

Winter/Spring 2015

## 2014 Coast Guard Tug Association Reunion at Annapolis, MD

by Jim Flynn, CGTA Historian



This report is being written months after the fact and for that I apologize. From my perspective this was one of the most enjoyable of the four which I have attended. The Facility at the Navy Lodge (shown above) on the edge of the US Naval Academy grounds was first rate and its proximity to the Navy Exchange was a bonus. If there was a downside it was that dining facilities were lacking within walking distance other than the partially completed Food Court of the Exchange/Commissary. But this turned out to be a benefit as we were able to buddy up with other attendees and strike out for local Annapolis eateries and enjoy adventures as we took the scenic routes to find our chosen restaurants.

Our Hospitality Suite was more than adequate and from the early check-in until the end of the meeting we spent some most enjoyable time together swapping sea stories and "remembering when." As always it was great to be together with old friends and to make some new ones as well.

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**You might  
be a Coastie  
if:**

*You CURSE (or  
cough) at the  
Mesothelioma  
and Asbestos  
lung cancer  
commercials that  
only include the  
"exposed" Navy  
and Shipyard  
workers!*



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## **"From the Editor/Prez"**

A belated HAPPY NEW YEAR from your dedicated staff at the CGTA. We hope all our members and the organization will have a very prosperous 2015!

First, I must apologize for the untimely delay of this winter's issue (now Winter/Spring). However, in the defense of our officers, staff, and contributors, all of whom live in the winter-ravaged Northeast (RI, CT, OH, & PA), we all spent the winter months digging our respective butts out of more feet of snow than any of us were prepared to deal with! While this was not my personal "worst" winter (after 2-1/2 yrs in Buffalo and the Blizzard of '78), it got very close!! For those of us who have had the experience, this was NOT a pleasant New England winter! Hope everyone stayed warm wherever you were.

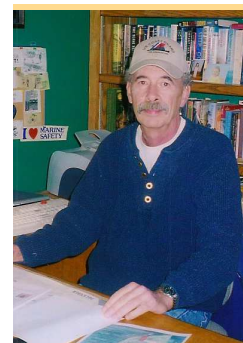
The featured article of this issue is dedicated to our latest Reunion in September 2014 in Annapolis/Baltimore, MD. As usual, another smashing success. We welcomed several new members/participants in Annapolis, including a few long-lost former shipmates that some of us hadn't seen in over 40 years, myself included; one of the prime reasons we come together as a USCG veteran's association.

Also in this issue, we ask for your input in a couple of areas. First, the location of our next reunion is generally decided at the last meeting. This year, several members asked for more input before deciding. As you get this newsletter, take the time to respond on that next location. Second, help us locate the Association's "Ancient Tugger." Both these questions are fully addressed in individual articles, so please help us by giving your votes and information.

You may have noticed in this issue that the majority of articles are written by the same person. While I thoroughly enjoy being the editor of this "nationally-renowned" publication, coming up with several action-packed and/or informative articles for every issue is very time consuming, and ultimately, one-sided; we need some 'new blood.' All Association members are welcome and invited to contribute articles to *In Tow*. Write about your experiences in the USCG (particularly tugs), any tug historical articles & photos, or just what's currently going on in your life, and any other areas that may be of interest to our members.

We look forward to seeing you all in September 2016—wherever YOU decide—and continue to strengthen the bonds we have built in the Association.

Semper Paratus,  
Sandy



In Tow Editor/Prez,  
Sandy Schwaab

## **Crossed the Bar** - by Sandy Schwaab

A Tug Association tradition, begun by the Historian at our second (2005) reunion, is to bid a fond, military farewell to any of our members or their spouses who had passed away in the previous period. At our official reunion membership meetings, the names are read and the bell chimed. Since this humble beginning, we have now lost and recognized well over a dozen of our former shipmates and two esteemed spouses. As this has become the President's duty to perform, I was delighted to announce at the September 2014 reunion that, to our knowledge, none of our colleagues had passed since 2012, or so I thought.

It came to my attention, not two weeks following the reunion, that I was wrong; members had passed that we were not aware of! To make up for the deficit and to present our condolences, the following members deserve appropriate recognition (to be officially followed up at our 2016 reunion).

### **LCDR Brent Michaels, USCG, Ret**

Brent enlisted in 1969 and climbed the hawse pipe from FA, to retire as a LCDR with 30 years' service. While an enlisted man, he served as an engineer in the tugs *Kaw* and *Ojibwa* and, as an officer, served as EO of CGC *Mackinaw*. Brent was born in Michigan and was a long-term Great Lakes sailor. He was 62 years old.

### **EN1 Nicholas Rorro, USCG, Ret**

Nick was 81 at the time of his passing from our ranks. Entering the Coast Guard in 1951, born & raised on Staten Island, NY, Nick spent a good portion of his 23 year career in the New York City area. As a “tugger,” Nick served in *Tuckahoe*, *Manitou*, *Mahoning*, and *Sauk* as well as 64 & 65-ft tugs and small boats at CG Base New York. Keeping to the marine world after USCG retirement, Nick also sailed with the Staten Island Ferry service as a marine engineer for 23 years.

To both our shipmates we wish “fair winds and following seas!”

## **Search for the next Ancient “Tugger”** – by Sandy Schwaab

Tradition is a strong force in the camaraderie of past & present military members – the Coast Guard is no exception! In the Sea Services, we “traditionally” cross the International Dateline, Equator, Arctic & Antarctic Circles and other notable special occasions. We commemorate and confirm these moments by our participation in time-honored ceremony and personal recognition, joining the ranks of our predecessors as Shellbacks, Golden Dragons, Blue Noses, etc.

A specific Coast Guard tradition is that of recognizing the “ancients” – those enlisteds and officers (Silver or Gold, respectively) who have the most service in certain mission fields: Ancient Mariner (Sea Service/Cutterman), Ancient Keeper (Stations/Lighthouses), and Ancient Pterodactyl (Aviation). Active duty “ancient” awards are based on service in their respective missions and pass to the next recipient at the current ancient's retirement. Several years ago, the CGTA inaugurated the Ancient Tugger award for service in USCG Tugs, by age. That tradition has lapsed over time with CWO Ken Black being the first and only recipient thus far.

In order for us to regenerate that award and continue this new tradition, we need your help! If you or any member you know is over the age of 70, we want to hear from you. Please forward your name, date of birth, and tug (s) served in to our Membership Chairman (oh yeah, that's me) via email to [snsschwaab@cox.net](mailto:snsschwaab@cox.net). I will sort through the responses submitted and come up with the eldest members of our “Band of Pirates.” The name of the winner will be announced in the next issue of In Tow and plans will be made for a personal presentation of the award at the next reunion.

## **Treasurer's Report for 2014** – by Treasurer, Bob Gesking

Coast Guard Tug Association  
2014 Year End Financial Report

Starting Balance 1/1/14    \$5,876.76  
Dues    \$878.26  
Donations    \$1,146.49  
Ships Store Sales \$260.35  
Savings Account Interest \$0.50  
2014 Reunion    \$1,470.00  
Total Income    \$3,755.60

Website maintenance    -\$565.54  
2014 Reunion    -\$2,891.66  
Ships Store Stock -\$593.75  
P.O. Box rent -\$92.00  
Total Expenses    -\$4,142.95  
Ending Balance 12/31/14    \$5,489.41

The 2014 Reunion expenses include the cost of the dinner at the Fleet Reserve Center, the bus trip to Baltimore, and the liberty van rental. The 2014 Reunion income covered the cost of the dinner.

Robert Gesking CWO4, USCG (Ret.) Treasurer

## **Minutes of 2014 Membership Meeting** – by Secretary, Garry Domnisse

Coast Guard Tug Association Bi-Annual Meeting  
19 September 2014  
Annapolis, Maryland

The meeting was brought to order by President, Sandy Schwaab at 1930 hours. Board members present were: Garry Domnisse, Secretary, Bob Gesking, Treasurer, and Historian, Jim Flynn. Absent was VP, Justin Vandenheuvel. General membership present was 40.

1. Sandy spoke of the strength of the organization and our continued search for a permanent USCG tug resource to have in Toledo, OH in connection with the "Station Liberty" Sea Cadet program. The ship would be used as a cadet training vessel, owned & operated by our organization, and the facility would provide the CGTA with space for a CGTA museum venue.
2. The tradition of memorializing our CGTA members "crossing the bar" was unnecessary at this meeting. Thankfully, none of our members or spouses had passed away since the 2012 reunion.
3. Garry Domnisse read the Secretary's Report. All members were provided with a copy beforehand. A motion was made and accepted to approve the report.
4. Bob Gesking presented the Treasurer's Report. The balance in the account is \$5981.83 as of September 15, 2014. Motion to approve was carried by all present.
5. Historian, Jim Flynn, spoke about his plan to initiate a short, monthly notice to the membership on the progress of the organization and current USCG info to our members. He asked for info to be sent to him for inclusion in that newsletter... He and Sandy are also looking for photos, articles, and memories to include in the renewed, quarterly In Tow newsletter.
6. Sandy brought up the topic of where to hold the next (2016) reunion & meeting. The locations offered by the members (and present votes) were: Savannah, GA (14), New London, CT (2), St. Louis, MO (1), New Orleans, LA (7), Virginia Beach, VA (1), Norfolk, VA (1), Seattle, WA (6), and San Diego, CA (6). It was voted to withhold the final decision on the location until we get updated info on each venue and the opportunities available at each (Sandy to research). Final voting will be conducted by membership-wide email as soon as possible. All members are asked to provide/update their current email addresses for this vote and our current files (please go to the new Membership Chairman contact on our web site).
7. Nominations were opened for the 2014-2016 Board of Directors. Nominations began with President, Sandy Schwaab (again), and carried; Vice President, Justin Vandenheuvel, carried. With a pause by the President, a simple vote was suggested for the current status quo. As no new nominations or volunteers were presented at that time, the Board of Directors was unanimously renewed: Pres: Sandy Schwaab, VP: Justin Vandenheuvel; Sec'y: Garry Domnisse; Treasurer: Bob Gesking, Historian Jim Flynn; unanimously carried.
8. Motion to adjourn at 2100, motion carried.

Submitted by Garry Domnisse, Secretary



## 2016 Reunion Location – From your Prez...

At each of our Association reunions, part of our membership meeting is to suggest, consider, and vote on the location for our next reunion – **coming up, September 2016!** At the 2014 meeting, several locations were suggested and voted on by the 40+ members present – with no decision (see item 6 in the meeting minutes included in this issue).

The current choices (and votes [ ]) are listed below. After research, the general “perks” associated with each venue are noted: (E – exchange/commissary; M – museums; C – casinos, W – warm)

**Savannah, GA** [14] – ex-CGC *Ojibwa*, historic city & waterfront, W

**New London, CT** [2] – CG Academy (E, M), CGC *Eagle*, Mystic Seaport (M), C, Navy Sub Base (E), USS *Nautilus* (M)

**St. Louis, MO** [1] – CGC *Cheyenne*, Zoo, Bud brewery tours, Gateway Arch, C

**New Orleans, LA** [7] – Naval Sta NOLA (E), CGAS/Base NOLA (E), CGC *Pamlico*, French Qtr, M, C, W

**Virginia Bch/Norfolk, VA** [2] – USN Base (E), beaches, W

**Seattle, WA** [6] – ex-CGC *Comanche*, *Modoc* (M), CG Base Seattle/CG Museum NW (E, M), CGCs *Mellon*, *Midgett*, *Healy*, *Polar Star* & *Polar Sea*, C

**San Diego, CA** [6] – CG Sector/Airsta (E), Maritime Museum, USS *Midway*, (M), CGC *Boutwell*, Zoo, C, beaches, W

With that said, I would like to hear from all members receiving this newsletter. Please register your vote on the choices already proposed and feel free to throw new locations and points of interest into the mix. Send responses to [snschwaab@cox.net](mailto:snschwaab@cox.net). The winning site will be announced in a member-wide notice as soon as the final tally is made.

## PCS Orders – by Sandy Schwaab

As we all recall, transfer time rears its ugly head when least, or sometimes most, expected. Rotational time at a unit, re-enlistment, separation/retirement, or promotion all play a role in that transition. Bottom line, it's time to move on – generally to bigger and better things! Such is the case this coming summer for our active duty Vice President, LT Justin Vandenheuvel - in his case both rotation and promotion.

Justin (**1JV**, as we've come to know him [*go back to your shipboard comms circuits*]) will be departing his current position as Chief of CWO Professional Development School at the Coast Guard Academy Leadership Development Center and will be assuming command of USCGC *Aspen* (WLB 208), homeported in San Francisco, CA; not his first “rodeo,” as he has been both an OINC (*Line*) and CO (*Joshua Appleby*), but most definitely, bigger & better!

Justin, XO Jennifer, and their “crew” will be departing the New London area in late May/early June for the “left coast” to set up shop. His promotion to LCDR takes place on 1 July with subsequent assumption of command. The CGTA is proud to have Justin on our Board and he will continue as our VP. We wish him and his family a great tour of duty.



**Tuggers in attendance**

*Front Row (kneeling): Jim Flynn, Joe Nayden, Dave Cunningham, Tom Cicala, Vinny Frititta, and Craig Reynolds*

*2nd Row: John Hicks, George Staples, Dee Sadler, Tom Caroon, Curtis Colvin*

*3rd Row: Perry White, Gary McGinnis, Ed Anderson, Beb Gesking, Sandy Schwaab, Garry Domnisse, Dave Vaughn, Felix Chambers, Doug O'Dell, John Copeland, and Jack Naus*



**Treasurer Bob Gesking & wife Helen at the Check-in Booth on Thursday Day One**





**Dave Cunningham and fiancée Lynn Peeples**



**Gail Hammer relaxes in the Hospitality Suite**

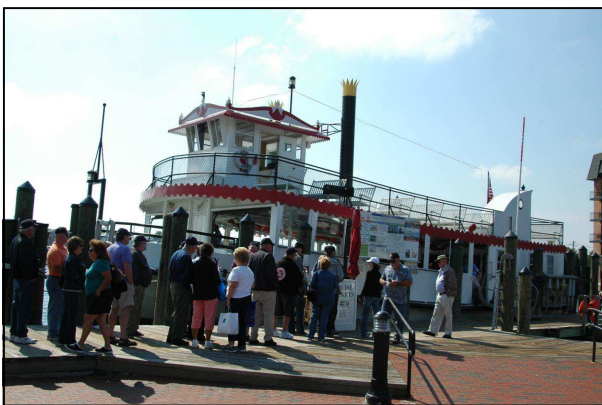


**John Copeland and Dave Vaughn Arriving**



**Vinny and Germain Frittitta with Shirley Schwaab and Helen Gesking**

## **Friday in the Annapolis Harbor Area before our Chesapeake Cruise**



**CGTA MEMBERS AND GUESTS WAIT TO BOARD the HARBOR QUEEN for our Bay Cruise**



**Awaiting the call to board**



Naval Academy -- Distant view of Beach Hall



Naval Academy - Piers for YP Training Craft

Our trip around the Chesapeake aboard the ***Harbor Queen*** was delightful. The narration by the crew provided us with the History of the area and of the US Naval Academy. The grounds of the Academy fun as we more mature passengers. Back up the Bay from Annapolis is the route to the Port of Baltimore and several merchant ships were anchored in the estuarare quite expansive and most scenic and the surrounding area is a delight to behold. A full complement of school children were aboard too and they seemed to have as much y awaiting their turn to proceed into Port. I had no idea that the Academy employed so many YP's (Yard Patrol Craft) as training platforms for the Navy Midshipmen.



A view of the David Taylor Research Center noted for it's Ship Model Test Facility employed in new ship design

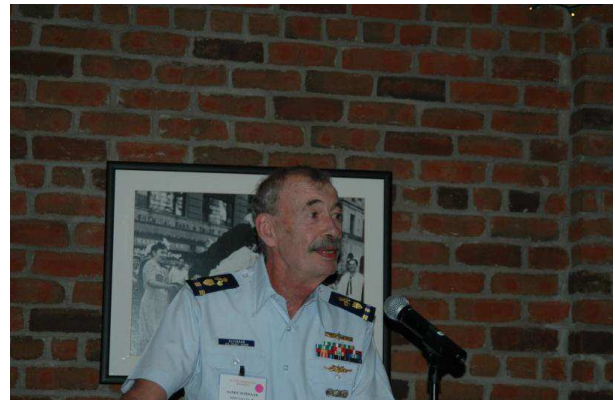
I didn't get an accurate count but we could see that about 20 training craft were tied up in their base and another was underway ahead of us in the Bay.



## Friday Evening Dinner Meeting at the Fleet Reserve Club



**Entrance to the Fleet Reserve and Biennial Member Meeting**



**Sandy Schwaab presides at Business Session**



**CGTA Reunion Group at Dinner in the Fleet Reserve Club Annapolis, MD**



**Perry & Michele White and Doug, Tim & Chris O'Dell**



**Tom Cicala & Patty Siegfried along with Germaine and Vinny Frittitta**



**Gail Hammer & Curtis Colvin and Jack and Sharon Naus**



**Shirley Schwaab and Helen Gesking, Cindy and John Hicks**



**Tom Caroon & Linda Caroon and Helen Sadler**



**George Staples Jim Flynn and Dave Cunningham**



**Bob & Helen Gesking, Cindy & John Hicks and Jim & Diane Flynn**



**Dave Cunningham and Fiancé Lynn Peebles**



**Gary Dominisse**



## Coast Guard Yard, Curtis Bay



LT Paul Alexander was a great guide and showed us about every nook and cranny of the Coast Guard Yard and Station Curtis Bay. The first thing that I took note of was a decommissioned 110-footer along with a trio of the 123-footers awaiting disposal in Arundel Cove. Personally I enjoyed seeing and photographing all of the cutters which were in the Yard for maintenance and repairs as well as the black hulls stationed at Curtis Bay. Then too, since I'm an aficionado of CG small boats I enjoyed the variety of Cutter Boats, Response Boats and other craft tied up at there. There was even a decommissioned 41-footer still afloat at the station. After our return to the Main Administration Building for a comfort break and to receive some attractive take away Visitor Packets we re-boarded our bus and departed lunch and sightseeing in Baltimore's Inner Harbor.



**USCGC EAGLE WIX-327 - high and dry for maintenance and repair**





**WTGB-106 Morro Bay**



**EAGLE**



**LT Alexander explains the activity around us**



**WPB-1316 Nantucket** from Miami, FL recently completed her turn in the Yard for a MEP overhaul



**WLIC-75303 Sledge** a 75-foot construction tender with her barge and crane



**Gary McGinnis & Tom Caroon** at the brow of their former ship



**WYTL-65602 Chock** in 2012 upon transfer to CG Yard





**WYTL-655602 Chock at the dock**



**One of the Highlights of the Inner Harbor is the *Taney* WPG/WHEC-37**



Built in the 1930's she still looks good

The ***Taney*** was present at Honolulu, Territory of Hawaii on December 7, 1941 and is one of the last survivors of the Japanese sneak attack. She is well preserved over 70 years later and served the Coast Guard well for half a century. In addition to the ***Taney*** Baltimore also has three other historic CG and Navy vessels to visit; the Lightship ***Chesapeake***, the sloop of war ***Constellation*** and the fleet snorkel submarine ***SS-423 Torsk***. Other major attractions in the Inner Harbor area are the National Aquarium and the Maryland Science Center.

George Staples and I grabbed a burger and brew at the Hard Rock Cafe and then set out to see the sights after a brief preliminary visit to the ***Taney***. The old gal is in fine shape for being more than 70 years old. She's a veteran of three major wars; World War II, Korea and Viet Nam. All in all we enjoyed just a wonderful day.

JIM FLYNN, CG Tug Assn. Historian



## TUGS IN SCALE

by Robert Gesking



I've been building radio control boat models for 40 years. Most of my models tend to be USCG cutters and boats. I thought the CGTA membership might like to see some of my tugboat models



My model of USCGC *Tamaroa* (WMEC 166), is built on a Scale Shipyard fiberglass hull in 1:48 scale. The model is 51 1/4" long and weighs 30 pounds. The model is radio controlled and features a working horn and fire pump. The fire monitor and 3"/50 gun are linked and turn together. I had this model at the 2010 Reunion in Rockland, ME.

A day at the lake with some of my models. From the left: CGC *Tamaroa* in 1:48 scale; CGC *Cherokee* in 1:96 scale; and CGC *Dutch Harbor* (WTGB 114) [fictional name] in 1:96 scale.



Behind *Cherokee* is a harbor tug. All are built from Scale Shipyard fiberglass hulls. CGC *Dutch Harbor* is built from a Baltic Sea icebreaking tug hull. Using artistic license, I made it into a USCG tug, based on the 140' class.

Here's USCGC *Hawser* (WYTL 65610) in 1:32 scale, a model that I scratch built from various sets of plans. *Hawser* was built mainly from thin plywood. This model won 1<sup>st</sup> Place at the Toledo Weak Signals RC Show in 2013. I displayed this model (*in the hotel pool – ed.*) at the 2012 Reunion in Erie, PA.



This is USCGC *Illini* (WYTM 64), another fictional cutter. This model started out as a Scale Shipyard semi-kit of the *Carol Moran*. The hull, deckhouse, pilothouse, and stack are fiberglass moldings. The hull is almost right for the first class of 110' WYTM. This model has a rotating radar, working lights,



horn, and fire pump. Both fire monitors shoot water, but are set at different angles. On the fantail is a rescue towline consisting of some orange shot line and a yellow buoy with hooks. To tow in a disabled model, the towline is deployed manually, the tug is run out and around the disabled boat, and the buoy snags the rudder post of the disabled boat model.

Most of my models took over 200 hours of labor to build. Most of my models cost several hundred dollars for materials and electronics, a few have cost over \$1,000. A basic radio control system provides throttle and rudder operation. More advanced systems allow me to operate other features such as horns and fire pumps. Some parts, like doors, hatches, and life rings, are available from commercial sources. Other parts, like railings, davits, and fire monitors are custom built from brass or plastic.

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Here's a list of suppliers.

Bluejacket Shipcrafters, [www.bluejacketinc.com](http://www.bluejacketinc.com), has a wood kit, diesel tugboat of the classic 85' Army ST class, (USCGC *Messenger*). The model is 16" long.

Iron Shipwrights, [www.ironshipwrights.com](http://www.ironshipwrights.com), makes a series of cast resin model kits in 1:350 scale. They offer models of the 143' ATA/ATR and 205' ATF (about 6.5" LOA) class tugs. The kits include instructions and some photo etched brass detail parts.

The Scale Shipyard, [www.scaleshipyard.com](http://www.scaleshipyard.com), makes fiberglass hulls and resin fittings in several scales. They offer the 205' ATF/WMEC in 1:96 scale and 1:48 scale. The 1:96 scale version is 25 1/2" long and includes a fiberglass superstructure. The 1:48 scale version is 51 1/4" long. Both hulls come with a set of general arrangement plans.

Loyalhanna Dockyard, [www.loyalhannadockyard.com](http://www.loyalhannadockyard.com), produces some fiberglass hulls, and sells hulls and fittings from other manufacturers. Their Hartman Model Boats and Dynamic Models lines both include a 1:48 scale 205' ATF/WMEC. Loyalhanna Dockyard carries the Coast Guard Models line of fiberglass hulls with plans. Coast Guard Models makes tug hulls in 1:48 scale. Their 110' WYTM is 27" long, and the 140' WTGB is 35" long.

*Bob Gesking is a retired USCG CWO4 (MAT). He is currently the Treasurer for the CG Tug Assoc. and the former CGTA Port Engineer for our beloved CGC Apalachee while she was berthed in Cleveland, OH. for restoration. – ed.*