

The Old Salt's Journal

Volume IV No. 2 Winter, 2002

The Coast Guard Sea Veterans of America National Newsletter
"Guardians of the Tradition"

Wooden Boat- Betsy Powell, Editorial Assistant of "Wooden Boat" magazine, sent a copy of August's "On the Waterfront" column in which she notes the CG SVA is mentioned. The column notes the SVA and suggests the reader contact Ken Long if they need information.

83' Sailor Reunion- The 83' Sailors had their reunion in Port Townsend, WA, in August of this year. The turnout was very good, according to Wendell "Wink" Weber. He also forwarded a poem written by Bob Balsdon, SC2, and member of the 83' Sailors.

Rickety Coast Guard struggles to do more
Annotated from the New Bedford Standard-Times

On Sept. 11, worries about United States security turned to the country's 95,000 miles of coastline, dotted with nuclear power plants, bridges and countless other targets. That day, the first call Adm. James M. Loy, commandant of the Coast Guard, says he received came from the Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vernon Clark, who said: "Just let us know what you need when you need it." Since then, the Coast Guard has surged in visibility and importance. In a speech to the nation on Nov. 8 in Atlanta, President Bush singled out the Coast Guard as a key provider of homeland protection, noting that the service "has taken on expanded duties to protect our shores and ports."

But there is some question about whether the Coast Guard, which was already stretched to cover its ordinary jobs of maritime rescue and crimefighting, can handle the new post-Sept. 11 duties. The service has an antiquated communication system, an aging fleet and a green, overworked crew. Although known as the fifth armed service, it belongs to the Dept. of Transportation, where it landed in 1967 after getting kicked around other agencies.

The 83 Footer

It wasn't a ship, it wasn't a yacht,
The 83 was a wooden boat,
and that's what you got.
Spacious quarters, lots of room,
and a head as big as a tomb.
Storage space was more than ample,
the cooks' locker, for example.
And the sonar shack could hold a crowd,
but only midgets were allowed.
The skippers quarters, fit for a king,
but not even a cat could you swing.
Bread storage was a delight,
as roaches marveled at the sight.
Not a slice was cut, goes the fable,
until the loaf was banged on the table.
At least the roaches were fast and quiet,
but the crew hated them in their diet.
On spacious decks, where games were played,
one felt great, while being sprayed
Rough riding in calm and gales,
The 83's still left some trails,
of honor and duty that still prevails.
In war and peace these boats served with
pride,
so salute crews gone and at your side.
And here's a "Thank you" and a "Well
done" to you,

(...continued page 2.....)

members of the Coast Guard 83' crew.

Rickety Coast Guard (...continued from page 1....)

Its projected budget for 2002 won't even keep all its current aircraft aloft and vessels afloat.

"I have always said that the Coast Guard was the orphan stepchild at a family reunion, given the crumbs off the table," says Rep. Howard Coble, a North Carolina Republican who sits on the House subcommittee that oversees the Coast Guard. Sept. 11 hardly changed any of that. The terrorist attacks brought expanded responsibilities but little new resource. The tally so far: six 170-foot coastal patrol ships on loan from the Navy for six months and a supplement to the services' 2001 budget of \$18 million from Congress to fund the call-up reservists. The Coast Guard's 2002 budget is still pending in Congress. Meanwhile, a major revamp and acquisition program that the Coast Guard has been struggling with for seven years probably won't bear fruit for several more. A White House spokesman says that Tom Ridge, director of the new Office of Homeland Security, is studying all of the country's security needs, including those of the Coast Guard. Mr. Ridge is expected to make budget recommendations to President Bush, perhaps early next year.

From its founding in 1790, the Coast Guard was charged with providing security. Coasties, as they are known, have served in all of America's major wars. But in practice, the Coast Guard has often provided services unrelated to the military or to security. Initially, it enforced tariff laws. Over the years it added enforcement of fisheries laws, interception of illegal immigrants and other duties.

In recent years, it has been a de facto branch of the Drug Enforcement Agency, with law enforcement accounting for nearly a third of its budget last year. The Coast Guard seizes more than 360 pounds of cocaine every day on average. It also provides year-round marine rescue services. According to its own records, the Coast Guard saved 3,365 lives last year.

But most of the work since Sept. 11 has involved watching and waiting.

Like firemen, Coasties normally spend most of their time on standby ashore. During the relatively busy summer season, a crew still logs only about 166 hours a month on the water, mostly aiding recreational boaters.

However tedious, the long hours are stretching thin a force that is already overworked. Although the official workweek of the Coast Guard is 68 hours, 90 percent of 188 search-and-rescue stations operate with staffing levels so low that the boat crews must work an average of 84 hours a week to maintain a station's readiness.

The long hours also prompt most Coasties to leave the service when their term—typically four years—is up, creating a shortage of experienced hands. Last year, the search-and-rescue station at Fort Lauderdale, Fla., had only 59 percent of its authorized positions filled with certified personnel, according to an audit published in September by the DOT's Inspector General. The figure was 52 Percent at the station in South Padre Island, Texas, and 49 percent at Fire Island, NY

The effects of inexperience permeate the Coast Guard. A shortage of electricians causes delays in repairs and requires equipment be taken out of service. Accidents involving Coasties' rescue boats soared to 130 in the year ended Sept. 30, 2000, a more than threefold increase from the 40 accidents in fiscal 1998. More than half of these

accidents were caused by navigational errors, operational mistakes or poor judgment, according (...continued on page 3....)

(...continued from previous page....) to the Coast Guard's own analysis as recorded in the DOT audit. At time, the cost of inexperience has been tragic. In the early hours of Dec. 29, 1997, while trying to enter the harbor at Charleston, SC, the 34-foot sailboat Morning Dew struck a submerged jetty and began to sink in less than 20 feet of water. Aboard were 49 year old Michael Cornett, two of his sons and their cousin. They were just over a mile from shore, easily close enough to be rescued. But the lone Coast Guard watchman on duty that night, a 23 year old with just five months of experience, never heard their mayday call. He was eight hours into a 12 hour shift, standing across the room from the radio when the call came in. The only words he heard were, "United States Coast Guard."

Thinking nothing was amiss, he didn't rewind the tape recording of the transmission and listen again. Nor did he wake his sleeping boss, who was partway through a 24 hour shift because of personnel shortages. All four about the Morning Dew drowned. Adm. Loy, the Coast Guard commandant, acknowledges that the deaths might have been averted if a more-experienced watchstander had been on duty that night.

The system the Coast Guard uses to receive distress calls and track emergencies is full of holes. Its principal radio system- known informally as Maritime 911- is 30 years old and it doesn't work in about 14 percent of the Coast Guard's area of responsibility. There are 88 gaps in the distress-and-response system, some as large as 800 square miles, in which mayday calls simply aren't detected. Those are potential windows of opportunity for terrorists. The Coast Guard expects to begin upgrading the system next year.

The Coast Guard's ability to respond to an emergency also is questionable. During fiscal 2000, 84 percent of the rescue boat fleet inspected by the Coast Guard was found "not ready for sea." Of its fleet of 41-foot utility boats, a two-year-old study found 99 percent "not ready for sea."

In 1999, the Coast Guard's big ships- its high and medium endurance cutters more than 200 feet long- were free from serious equipment problems only 40 percent of the time. In September, even as its responsibilities deepened, the Coast Guard was forced to take two of its most problem-ridden ships, the Durable and the Courageous, out of service. But upkeep on the ships, both of which are more than 30 years old, was just too expensive. So now they sit in the Coast Guard yard in Baltimore instead of patrolling the seas.

Last November, Coasties on a 58-year-old ship tried lowering a small boat over the side to intercept a Chinese fishing vessel poaching in American territorial waters in the Bering Sea. But the arm supporting the boat broke into pieces, dumping nine Coasties into the frigid sea, where they nearly died. The Chinese vessel got away.

The Coast Guard's offshore fleet is supposed to be replaced through a massive and controversial program known as the Deepwater project. The Coast Guard has spent nearly seven years and \$117 million designing the project, but it has yet to buy a single boat or plane. The Coast Guard says that should start next year.

Surf Soldiers

Annotated from 'VFW', August, 2000

Over a century and a half, the Coast Guard has saved the lives of thousands of seafarers, but few Americans are aware (...continued Page 4....)

Surf Soldiers (...continued from previous page....) **December**

of the Coasties who themselves died in the line of duty. As an assistant inspector one wrote: "These men took their lives in their hands, and, at the utmost imminent risk, crossed the most tumultuous sea...and for what? That others might live to see homes and friends." During their heyday, lifesavers were heroes and called "Storm Warriors" and "Soldiers of the Surf". During WW1, 202 Coasties lost their lives. During WW2, 1,878 Coasties were killed saving Europe from conquest. Countless Coasties have died in search and rescue missions. The time has come for a national memorial for all Coasties killed in the line of duty. There are memorials scattered about the country for different loss categories, such as aviation, or for single incidents, like the loss of CGC Blackthorn. Perhaps someday there will be one memorial in the nation's capital dedicated to all those who served the Coast Guard.

8PM Travel Channel, "Amazing Sea Rescues" (Ed note: this could be a duplicate of the above).

Also in December (no date yet) Travel Channel; Miami on the Beach, Episode 4 "The Promise" documents the law enforcement activities of PO Chris Graddon of Station Miami Beach and "Forbidden Places" which showcases the CG as a multi-mission service highlighting the CG's activities in the wake of the 9/11 attacks.

Hurricane Hero

The Coast Guard named its newest cutter, a 175' buoy tender, for a hero of the Lighthouse Service. In 1900, the worst hurricane on record struck Galveston, TX, killing 6,000 people. Lighthouse keeper Harry Claiborne provided shelter and food for 125 people stranded on Bolivar Point throughout the hurricane. The damaged lighthouse was rebuilt, having been damaged in the storm. In 1915 another hurricane came ashore in Galveston, and Harry was busy again providing food, shelter and warmth for 50 people who were trapped on the point during the storm. He supervised the rebuilding of the lighthouse, resumed his duties and passed on three years later. Rear Adm. Paul Pluta, commander of CG Dist. 8, commented, "Not only did he keep the light burning for many

CG on TV during

During December, the CG will be featured on several televised programs, all EST:
12/9 9AM DiscoveryChannel
"Storm Zones" documenting the effects of an Antarctic storm.

12/9 9PM Learning Channel
"Incredible Child Rescues"

12/21 1PM and 7PM
Discovery Channel "The Great Ships: Coast Guard Ships."

12/23 8PM Travel Channel,
"Perfect Storm Rescues"
using CG footage and interviews of survivors of the 10/91 rescues including Tamoroa's rescue of the s/v Satori. 12/23

years, but his sense of compassion for others distinguished him.” The new cutter’s motto? It translates as “We do as he did.”

Editor’s Comment

Ken Long did not get paid enough to put the newsletter together. He deserves a medal for what he did.

Eagle visits New Bedford

Annotated from the New Bedford Standard-Times, August, 2000

The Coast Guard square rigger “Eagle” made a visit to New Bedford, MA last August 4th and 5th as part of the annual summer cadet cruise. To mark this occasion, the two New Bedford based cutters, Tahoma and Campbell, held an open house with the Eagle. The summer cruises offer cadets their first experience on a Coast Guard cutter. Capt. Ivan T. Luke, Jr, the Eagles’ skipper, commented “The best part of this job is watching the young people grow. They come aboard scared, but in a short time they jell as a team and overcome their fears.” He watched Eagle enter New Bedford harbor on the summer cruise in 1986 and made the decision then he’d serve the captain. Cadet Reyna Hernandez, of Roswell, NM, is a third year cadet at the Coast Guard Academy. “I had never seen the ocean until my first summer on the Eagle”, she said, “...but I’ve always loved the water and wanted to go to sea.”

To the USCG Sea Vets

This is a kind of “My House to Your House” sort of thing. My House being Lightship Sailors and yours being Sea Vets. Our common thread, of course, is the US Coast Guard. and we all served aboard various and sundry types of vessels. Some of us served in ships with white hulls and others served in black. If you’re a bit longer in tooth you may have served when everything was gray. Then we have a few strange ones that did their time in “Red Cutters”. No, not icebreakers. They only got painted red in the last few years. I’m talking about the ones that sat out there at anchor for months at a time, flashing their light, making terrible noises (heard for miles) and sending out unusual radio signals. Yeah, you got it, they were called “Lightships”, and a lot of other not too complimentary things. They’re all gone now, except for the museum pieces and most of the people as well. (Some museum pieces there too) But despite all that, we lightship sailors are really not a bad crowd and we want to take this opportunity to wish all the people in Your House the very best of the season’s greetings. May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Semper Paratus

Jim Gill

President, Lightship Sailors

THE SLOP CHEST

The Coast Guard SeaVets has a number of other items for sale. Call (360) 856-2171 to place your order.

Garrison Cap \$12 + s&h

SV cup \$12.00, price includes s&h

Ball Cap C.G.S.V.- \$12.00 + s&h

S.V. Pin - \$6.00 +\$0.57 s&h

S.V Patches - \$6.00 + \$0.57 s&h

FROM THE FORECASTLE POSERS

1. What was the purpose of the flap collar on the Navy type sailor suit worn by enlisted men, E-6 and below prior to 1975?
2. What was the symbol worn on the surfman's dress uniform cap?
3. Name the three Departments the Coast Guard has operated under since 1942.
4. What three rates were combined to make machinery technician.
5. How many stripes did a Commodore wear on his sleeve?

The Answers to Previous Posers:

1. Where were the first ten Revenue Marine Cutters built? *Newburyport, Massachusetts*
2. By tradition who polishes the ships bell? *The Ships Cook.*
3. What was the ultimate disposition of the Cutter's Bibb and Duane? *They were sunk off of the coast of Florida and used as artificial reefs.*
4. Why are Ice Breakers painted red? *So they can be seen more clearly when operating in the ice.*
5. Which of the following movie actors served in the Coast Guard? Buddy Ebsen, Victor Mature, or Nick Nolte. *All of them did.*

THE OLD SALT'S JOURNAL ON THE INTERNET

There is an Internet edition of the Old Salt's Journal and it can be found at the following address:
<http://www.jacksjoint.com/oldsalt.htm>.

Back Issues are also posted except for issue number 9, the last issue. This site can be accessed 24 hours per day. The Internet edition does NOT appear before the printed edition is mailed to the members of the Sea Vets.

NON- PAYMENT OF DUES

The President and Secretary have requested that a note be inserted in this edition of the OSJ about dues payment. Several members are in arrears at this time. Membership will lapse and you will be discharged from the organization. We want you on board to help us grow anew.

If your membership lapses, you will have to pay the full initiation and dues of \$25.00 to be reinstated in lieu of the \$15.00 for re-enlisting.

Note from the President

We have a lot of the coffee cups in the inventory. If you need a coffee cup, also suitable for tea, mochas, fruit juice, ice water, and other beverages, contact Ken Long and he'll fix you right up. I use one at work, and it's pretty nifty. It's started conversations about the CGSVA and I've been able to talk about the goals of the organization, get some interest up.

GRUMBLINGS FROM THE ENGINEROOM

Editorial Comment

Our organization is dedicated to telling sea stories and maintaining our traditions. As a general rule it stays out of the political arena. But,, things are going on today that go beyond the scope of our mission statement and they should be addressed. These are the personal feelings of the writer.

DEPARTMENTAL HOPSCOTCH

The Coast Guard long resided in the Department of the Treasury except in time of war where it became a part of the Navy Department under the Department of War which became the Department of Defense. Confused Yet? Parts of the Coast Guard have resided under the Department of Commerce in the past and a player in today's Coast Guard, the U.S. Public Health Service, resides in the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. In the late 1960's, over thirty years ago, the Coast Guard became a part of the Department of Transportation.

Now the Coast Guard is slated to join up with the Border Patrol, the INS, airport baggage checkers, maybe the FBI and who knows what other entity that will be rolled into this new Department of Homeland Security or whatever it will finally be called.

Under the Department of the Treasury the Coast Guard ran it's own show subject to minimal departmental oversight except for finances. The Coast Guard functioned pretty well in those days, expanding when necessary to meet operational needs, albeit quite slowly, working in reasonable harmony with it's big brother, the Navy, and generally doing the job quite well with minimum publicity. Recognition for the troops was strictly internal and few medals were given out for just doing their job.

Under the Johnson administration a movement began within the Coast Guard to move it from the Treasury Department to a yet to be formed Department of Transportation. All of the military movers and shakers involved in this scheme have long since departed the scene if not this earthly vale of tears. The institutional memory has been lost. Over Thirty years have passed and the Coast Guard is poised again to move into a new department, getting in on the "ground floor."

A considerable amount of propaganda was unleashed within the rank and file convincing us how good it will be for everyone after the move is made. The CG will be on the ground floor, one of our best Admirals was organizing the department, and we could all look forward to the land of milk and honey. No more would we have to suffer under the fiscal constraints imposed by the stodgy old Treasury Department.

Something went wrong!

Johnson and the Democrats left. Nixon and the Republicans came. The very capable Admiral who had been doing work organizing the new department was passed over for Commandant much to everyone's surprise and a kindly, grandfatherly man became Commandant. The passed over Admiral retired. *It was*

suspected at the time that the prospective Commandant was seen as too much of a Democrat to the incoming Republicans.

John Volpe, a well heeled Massachusetts contractor was named Secretary of Transportation. He commandeered the Commandant's jet and when the Commandant needed it for Coast Guard business, he went to the Secretary "hat in hand." Soon we moved from the dungeons of 13th and E Streets to the new, modern Nassif Building on the South East side of Washington. The Nassif Building was built by John Volpe, the contractor. Granted the scenery changed and we didn't feel as though we should be wearing flannel shirts and bib overhauls to work anymore.

As the new Department came up to speed it became apparent the FAA would be the dominating agency. The Coast Guard ultimately slipped down in the hierarchy to just below railroads.

The money didn't improve after the move, it became harder to get. Oversight became more stringent. By the late 90's the Coast Guard was even trying to break it's ties with the Navy. (...continued Page 8....)

(...continued from previous page....)

There is no doubt about it, a string of weak Commandant's buckled under to the department and the Coast Guard went into decline. *If you try to get more and more out of less, you eventually have everything to do and nothing to do it with.*

Good fortune smiled when Admiral Loy became Commandant. *He should be revered along with the likes of Hamlin, Waesche, Richmond, and Roland, unarguably the best Commandants.* Maybe the Coast Guard would pull out of the maelstrom with Loy at the helm. He seems to have gained credibility in a department where little previously existed.

Along came September 11th, 2001, a Day of Infamy. New thinking concocted a Super Department devoted to internal security. The Coast Guard is slated to be poured into this new department with new attitudes, new objectives, all yet to be defined.

Will the current "Movers and Shakers" take heed from the lessons of the past or will they fall into another abyss that the Coast Guard will never be able to dig itself out of?

Let's quit playing Departmental Hopscotch!

jae

A CALL FOR STORIES

We need more stories. We need more poems. We need more articles. Before you forget about it, write up your piece and submit it.

Submit all articles and letters for The Old Salt's Journal

c/o Jack A. Eckert, Editor, 312 W. Washington Street; Port Washington, Wisconsin 53074 --
jeckert@execpc.com

A SOLDIER DIED TODAY

Originally Titled, "JUST A
COMMON SOLDIER"

by A. Lawrence Vaincourt
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He was getting old and
paunchy
and his hair was falling fast

And he sat around the
Legion
telling stories of the past,

Of a war that he had fought
in
and the deeds that he had

done
In his exploits with his
buddies;
they were heroes, everyone.

And 'tho sometimes to his
neighbors,
his tales became a joke,
All his buddies listened,
for they knew whereof he
spoke.

But we'll hear his tales no
longer,
for old Bob has passed away
And the world's a little
poorer,
for a soldier died today.

No he won't be mourned by
many,
just his children and his wife,
For he lived an ordinary
very quiet sort of life,

He held a job and raised a
family,
quietly going on his way;
And the world won't note his
passing;
'tho a soldier died today.

When politicians leave this
earth,
their bodies lie in state,
While thousands note their
passing
and proclaim that they were
great,

Papers tell of their life stories
from the time that they were
young,

But the passing of a soldier
goes unnoticed, and unsung.

Is the greatest contribution
to the welfare of our land
Some jerk who breaks his
promise
and cons his fellow man?

Or the ordinary fellow
who in times of war and

strife
goes off and serves his
country

and offers up his life?

The politician's stipend
and the style in which he
lives
Are sometimes
disproportionate
to the services he gives,

While the ordinary soldier,
who offered up his all,
Is paid off with a medal,
and perhaps a pension small.

It's so easy to forget them,
for it was so long ago
That our Bob's and Jim's and
Johnny's
went to battle, but we know

It was not the politicians,
with their compromise and
ploys,
Who won for us the freedom
that our country now enjoys.

Should you find yourself in
danger
with your enemies at hand,
Would you really want some
cop-out
with his ever waffling stand?

Or would you want a soldier
who has sworn to defend
His home, his kin, and
country,
and would fight until the
end?

He was just a common
soldier
and his ranks are growing
thin
But his presence should
remind us,
we may need his like again.

For when countries are in
conflict,

then we find the soldier's
part
Is to clean up all the troubles
that the politicians start.

If we cannot do him honor
while he's here to hear the
praise,
Then at least let's give him

homage
at the ending of his days.

Perhaps just a simple
headline
in the paper that might say:
OUR COUNTRY IS IN
MOURNING,
FOR A SOLDIER DIED
TODAY.

Letter from the president

Well Sea Vets after
many trials and
tribulations we have a
newsletter again!
Hopefully Eric will stay
on as the new editor and
give us a quality letter
again.

2001 had it's ups and
downs but I think we as
Americans have rallied
and Patriotism is as good
as it was when WW2
started. And hopefully
will be around for years
to come. This time it
looks like the terrorists
have bit off to big a
chunk to chew. And if
they don't stop. it could
be the end of the road
for the Arabs in general.
Bin Laden has not done
his people a favor with
the demise of the WTC.

I could go on and on about him. But it would serve no real purpose. His actions already speak for themselves and we know it. And I do believe the Arab people are seeing through him as well.

You will notice some guest writers from a couple of other CG

organizations and I hope you like what they have to say. We will continue to invite writers in an effort to band together to deal with some of the

plans our lawmakers have for the Coast Guard. Hopefully if we all holler together they will here the pleas of the CG leadership in Washington, DC. Lets hope and pray good times will prevail again by the end of 2002!

Larry Stefanovich.
President. CG Sea Veterans

Final Comment

Phew! The newsletter is done! Thanks all, who took the time to write or

send articles for publication. I didn't realize how much work went into the newsletter. It's a lot. When you have a spare minute, be sure and email or write to Jack and Ken and thank them for all the work they did on the past newsletters. They did a fine job.

Now, as they say in the newspaper biz, it's time to 'put this to bed'. Happy New Year everyone!

Eric

The Old Salt's Journal

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