



the Quarterdeck Log

Membership publication of the Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association. Publishes quarterly — Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter. Not sold on a subscription basis. The Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association is a Non-Profit Corporation of Active-Duty, Retired, Reserve, and Honorably Discharged Former Members of the United States Coast Guard who served in or provided direct support to combat situations recognized by an appropriate military award while serving as a member of the United States Coast Guard.

Volume 30, Number 3

Fall 2015

Welcome Back to the Fleet, Heriberto Hernandez!

CGCVA Officers and Members Attend Commissioning of New Cutter Named For Vietnam Hero

Seven CGCVA members made the trip to San Juan, P.R., to participate in and observe the commissioning of the Coast Guard's newest Sentinel Class Cutter last month. A full list accompanies this article, along with a reprint of the Heriberto "Eddie" Hernandez story, and many photos.

The trip began with Association President Mike Placencia and VP Steve Petersen meeting up in San Juan on Wednesday, Oct. 14th. Lt. Colleen Denny, one of the two commissioning project officers, met with them on the first day and provided a full briefing on the schedule of events. They later learned that Lt. Denny had been named the prospective CO of the *CGC Donald Horsley*. The *Horsley* will

continued on page 16



The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez salutes the official party of the cutter's commissioning ceremony at Coast Guard Sector San Juan, Puerto Rico, Oct. 16, 2015. The cutter Hernandez is the Coast Guard's 14th commissioned 154-foot Fast Response Cutter.



CGCVA President Mike Placencia presents a CGCVA plaque to Lt. Charles Bare, CO of the CGC Heriberto Hernandez at the ship's commissioning ceremony.

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Coast Guard Combat Veterans Association

ELECTED OFFICERS

National President — Michael Placencia, LM
National Vice President — Stephen Petersen, LM
National Secretary/Treasurer — Gary Sherman, LM,

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Chairman — PNP Ed Swift, LM
Two-Term — Bruce Bruni, LM & Robert Macleod, LM
One-Term — William Figone, LM & Floyd Hampton, LM

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE*

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*use the Administrative Office for contact with the CGCVA on all matters except *QD Log* submissions.

THE QUARTERDECK LOG

Editor In Chief — PNP Ed Swift, LM
(Send submissions to swiftie1@verizon.net)

AUXILIARY OFFICERS

National President — Betty Schambeau
National Vice President — Beverly Johnson
National Secretary/Treasurer — Mimi Placencia

APPOINTED OFFICERS

By-Laws — Thomas W. Hart, LM; **Convention Planners** — Steve Petersen, LM, Mike Placencia, LM; **Membership** — PNP Joe Kleinpeter, LM; **Parliamentarian** — Terry Lee, LM; **Historian** — PNP Paul C. Scotti, LM; **Service Officers** — Thomas Huckelberry, LM; Richard Hogan, Jr., LM, and Floyd Hampton, LM; **Budget Director** — Gary Sherman, LM; **Chaplain** — Vince Patton, LM; **Master at Arms** — Ed Floyd, LM; **Webmaster** — Richard Ames; **Nominating Chairman** — Bill Figone, LM; **Cape May Liaison** — Terry Lee, LM; **Investment Committee** — Gary Sherman, LM; Steve Day, PNP Joe Kleinpeter, and Ernest “Swede” Johnson, LM

From the President

Greetings

It has been an exciting three months. Several Association members were on hand to see the *CGC Heriberto Hernandez* put into service in San Juan, Puerto Rico last month. You will find pictorial essay in this issue. We are also re-printing the Hernandez story which first ran in the Summer 2013 issue. It ties everything together quite nicely.



Mike Placencia

I mentioned in my last column that we will be stepping up our participation in the 50th commemoration of the Vietnam Vet. We often get late notice of some of these events. And too late for the *QD Log*. PLEASE CHECK THE WEBSITE as we will make a concerted effort to keep it up to date. Rich Ames is doing a great job keeping our website up and running. Also, if you do attend an event, be sure to let PNP Paul Scotti know. Get him the story and provide a picture. He can be reached at: psuscg@aol.com.

As you know, Chieu Hoi is in California. He has been making the rounds with the VFW Post 5059 in Turlock, under the leadership of post commander Mike Seward. I had Chieu Hoi at my high school reunion, but never left the wine bar in the hotel suite. He also attended a VFW Post 1267 event in Sacramento. He'll rest up at the Bakersfield Vet Center before heading back north for Veterans' Day.

Lastly, I was selected to appear on the Wheel of Fortune game show as the Coast Guard veteran representative. It was an honor to be selected and a lot of fun! A couple photos appear in this issue.

As we approach the holiday season, I wish you good health and high spirits. Semper Paratus, **Michael Placencia**

New Committees Formed

I recently appointed the following ad-hoc committees:

- **Small Stores:** This committee will look into increasing a variety of new CGCVA logo items.
- **CGCVA Operations Manual:** This document, primarily used by the elected officers and trustees, is long overdue for a revision.
- **CGCVA Brochure:** In order to coast efficiently provide information on and promote our Association, we

Next QD Log deadline is February 1, 2016. Please email articles and photos to the editor at: swiftie1@verizon.net

From the President (cont.)

are looking into producing a one-page, tri-fold, multi-color brochure for recruitment purposes.

- **FRC Commissioning Plaque:** This project has already begun and I had the honor of presenting the first such plaque at the commissioning of the *CGC Hernandez*. A photo of the plaque is included in this issue's Hernandez article.

- **Corporate Sponsorships:** Looking into ways to increase fund-raising efforts by providing opportunities for corporate sponsorships and taking some of the burden off

our members.

- **CGCVA Banner:** We need to produce a new one that shows the public who we are and what we have done. Previous banner is out-of-date.

• *If your car could travel at the speed of light, would your headlights work?*

• *How do you tell when you're out of invisible ink?*

From the Vice President

Ahoy Shipmates:

Lots of events going on with representation from our association. Big one was *CGC Hernandez* commissioning but I also had the honor to represent our association at the Sept. 3rd Annual Military Warrior Support Foundation Dove Hunt at the Pawelek Ranch in Charco, Texas. What a great event honoring our wounded service members and families. Randy and Debbie Pawelek, with volunteers, provided dove hunting, skeet shooting, and meals to all. If that was not enough, all five warriors received new 12-gauge shotguns that were generously donated.

Had a great visit with Phil Kies while traveling to Florida and Puerto Rico. While there, got to ride in his new Beamer convertible with his Mississippi CGCVA license plate (see photo below). Everyone on the coast knows Phil and now they will know our association.

Florida member Jim (Flag Bag) Fay has another nautical term for all of you to look up — Fiddlers Green. It's 19th century folklore. Keep it up Jim!

Another reminder, please submit your 2017 reunion site choices to me as soon as possible. Please review the criteria published in this *QD Log* issue.

Big Blocks, Small Lines.

Steve Petersen

The Lucky Bag

Do you remember the Lucky Bag that was run by the Master at Arms at your unit? He collected loose, unsecured clothing items from those that chose not to properly stow them or were transferred. When the amount of collected clothing got out of control, a sale was conducted on the mess deck and the monies received were donated to the morale fund.

Well, the newly formed CGCVA Lucky Bag has started receiving donations. Sy Siegel, WWII veteran, donated his

tailor made blues; Bill Lovern donated Bender blue Captains jacket with enlisted boot camp issued neckerchief, and Phil Kies, a complete Captains uniform. Wow! Two guys who went from E1 to O6 (Mustangs). Thank you all for supporting this cause.

I am in need of the following items to complete a uniform set that will be donated to a museum: (1) Dixie cup hats, (2) neckerchief, (3) Blue shirts, (4) Shoes, (5) Flat hat (black or white). Please send uniform items to me at: Steve Petersen, P.O. Box 128, Pettus, TX 78146.



Steve Petersen



Customized "CGCVA" license plate from Phil Kies' "Beamer" in Mississippi. CGCVA members in three states now have their tags customized for our fine association. Any others out there?



Gary Sherman

Attn: World War II Life Members

In the past few years, we have sadly lost many of our WWII association members. It is a difficult fact of life.

With our Regular WWII Members, when your dues are late, we send you a reminder notice and if we don't hear from you, your membership is suspended pending the member contacting us (usually with a new

address).

However, with our Life Members, we keep sending out the magazine but we have absolutely no idea whether you are getting the magazine or not. Our suspicion is that many of our Life Members have actually "crossed the bar" but no one has reported the member's passing to us. In such cases, *QD Logs* arrive at our members' former addresses and are discarded by the current resident.

For those of you who are World War II Life Members, I would ask that you report in to us, so we know you are getting your *Quarterdeck Log* on time, and getting every issue.

Please email me at cgcva@comcast.net, or call me at 610-539-1000 (or have your family member let us know that you are receiving and still enjoying the magazine).

All of us know that you guys saved the world and it's our job to keep you in good Coast Guard reading material, for as long as possible. God Bless all our World War II members! Sincerely, Gary Sherman

Attn: Desert Storm Members

On Monday, May 30, 2016, the National Memorial Day Parade 2016 will be held in Washington DC and will salute the 25th Anniversary of Desert Storm.

In cooperation with The National Desert Storm War Memorial Association, I will be coordinating the group of Desert Storm Veterans who will be marching in the Memorial Day Parade. This will be a group of 250, divided among Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps and Coast Guard. In addition, we will accommodate a group of 20 who are unable

to march in the parade, but will be transported in a military vehicle.

These 270 will need to be Desert Storm Veterans who deployed (in theater) during Desert Storm. All Parade Participants will need to be present in Washington D.C. on Sunday, May 29th for a special meeting of the troops prior to the parade on May 30th. The parade uniform will be a specially designed shirt with two pant options.

If you are seriously interested in participating, please contact me and tell me your unit and what branch of the service. When all slots are filled, we will keep a wait list.

Parade Contact: **Jill Etter**

Facebook: Jill Dooney Etter

Email: DesertStorm25th@gmail.com

Welcome New Members

New Member (Sponsor)

Steven M. Fields (Mike Placencia)
Robert T. Hendrickson (Mike Placencia)
Brett A. Stewart (Mike Placencia)
Wayne R. Till, LM (Mike Placencia)
Russell A. Allyson (Richard Ames)
James A. Altieri (Bruce Bruni)
John C. Elkins (The Association)
Fred S. Golove (The Association)
Andrew S. McKinley (Bruce Bruni)
Justin P. Nadolny (The Association)
George L. Pasero (Rich Ames/Harry Trip)
Michael L. Regrut (Terry Lee)
Emmerson E. Chambers (Tony Lloyd)
Joshua R. Dixon (The Association)
Walter R. Guest (The Association)
Roy A. Rodgers (James Devitt)
John J. Fanelli (Robert Macleod)
Aaron L. Urbanawiz (The Association)

Crossed The Bar

Howard G. Kicherer, LM
BMCM Arthur D. Michell

Greetings

On Sept. 19th, my husband Jerry and I were honored to attend the unveiling of the *USCGC Sebago* (WPG/WHEC-42) State of Florida Historical Marker in Pensacola, Fla. Approximately 250 people, including 52 former *Sebago* shipmates attended. Unveiling the Marker was Michael



Participants in the unveiling ceremony of the Sebago State of Florida Historical Marker in Pensacola.

Hart, Florida Dept. of State Historic Sites Specialist of the Bureau of Historic Preservation.

Among the dignitaries who spoke at the ceremony were Coast Guard District Eight Commander Rear Adm. Callahan, and Rep. Jeff Miller, 1st District of Florida and Chairman of the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

We met Lee Wonnacott who spent many hours making the event a reality, with assistance from many others. We thank them all and for the entertaining “Meet and Greet” the evening before the unveiling when all the former shipmates were introduced and made comments.

Sebago was commissioned in 1945 as an Qwasco-class high endurance cutter, 254-feet in length, 43-feet in beam,



Lee Wonnacott and Jerry Schambeau.

with a crew of 10 officers, 3 warrants, and 130 men.

Sebago served on law enforcement, ocean station, search and rescue (SAR) operations, weather patrols, rendered medical aid, and assisted disabled boats. She served in San Francisco, Staten Island, Norfolk, Boston, Mobile, Pensacola and Vietnam.

Sebago was assigned to Coast Guard Squadron

Three in Vietnam under the command of Cdr. Dudley C. Goodwin. She was assigned to support Operation Market Time, including the interdiction of enemy supplies heading south by water and naval gunfire support (NGS) of units ashore. She conducted 12 NGS missions, destroying 31 structures, 15 bunkers, 2 sampans and 3 enemy “huts.” While in Vietnam she also, because her medical staff included Public Health Service doctor Lt. Lewis J. Wyatt, conducted humanitarian missions and treated more than 400 villagers. Her crew also built an 18-foot extension to a waterfront pier for the villagers. *Sebago* also served as a supply ship for Coast Guard and Navy patrol boats.

Sebago was decommissioned in 1972 under the command of Cdr. James G Wilcox, whom, along with family, were present for the Dedication Ceremony.

Location of the Historical Marker is in Plaza de Luna at the foot of Palafox Street in Pensacola,

Fla. This location is not by chance for the *Sebago* was homeported and moored in downtown Pensacola at the pier at the foot of the main street for almost eight years.

Betty Schambeau



Betty Schambeau



Cdr. James G. Wilcox, USCG (Ret.), the Sebago commanding officer at the time of her decommissioning.

Is Everything All Right?

Apparently grass gets cut even out at sea! I was the CO of the Lightship *Nantucket Shoals* out of Boston and a few days before departing for station my engineering petty officer asked if he could bring his old lawn mower on board to work on it during his time off while on station. Being in a good mood, I consented but told him to drain the gas out of it (fire prevention). Since we would be on station for a month, this seemed to be a good morale booster.

Some weeks later, he asked for permission to bring the mower up on deck and could he have a cup of gasoline to test run the engine. Again, I agreed. The mower was painted up and looked like a brand new one. The engine started on the first pull of the lanyard and the engine purred like a kitten. He then proceeded to run the mower up and down the steel deck until the gas supply ran out and the engine stopped. End of story???

Not quite! A few days later, a buoy tender approached and began running circles around us, getting closer on each run. I had my binoculars on his bridge as he did on me. Finally, he called over, "Is everything all right?" I replied, "Fine." He then asked to speak with an enlisted man. He asked him if he wanted off the ship and was everything all right. He replied, "Fine" and with that the tender departed.

Many weeks later, when back in port, I learned that a passing ship saw my engineer pushing the lawn mower topside and radioed CG headquarters in Boston that they better check out their lightship crew.

CWO4 Herman Schmidt (Ret.)

Effort Underway to Erect Persian Gulf War Memorial

A proposed memorial in the vicinity of the nation's capital to the 293 Americans who died in the Gulf War is estimated to cost \$25-million. Some 148 GIs were killed in action and 145 died from non-hostile causes during 1990-91. Scott Stump, CEO and president of the National Desert

Storm Veterans War Memorial, is hoping to raise \$200,000 seed money.

In 2014, the VFW passed Res. 305, endorsing the construction of the memorial as a "lasting tribute to the bravery, courage, commitment, service and sacrifice" shown by those who served in that war. For more information, visit: nationaldesertstormwarmemorial.org.

All Vets Eligible for ID Cards

A law enacted in July directs VA to provide all honorably discharged veterans with an identification card. The Veterans ID Card Act of 2015 enables any veteran who is not already enrolled in VA's health care system or receiving military retired pay to obtain the card simply by asking. Military retirees and veterans receiving VA care or service already have an ID card.

The card will display the veteran's name and photo and will serve as proof that the veteran has a valid DD-214. The card will not serve as proof of entitlement to any benefits, nor can it be used to prove veteran status when applying for a job. Rather, the card can be used to prove veteran status for obtaining discounted goods and services without needing to show a DD-214. It is not known at this time when the cards will be available or their cost.

"The Finest Hours" Revisited

In the Summer 2015 *QD Log*, the Editor's Note on "The Finest Hours" article incorrectly said "his two-man crew" when there was actually a total of four men aboard *CG-36500* when it responded to the rapidly sinking *SS Pendleton*.

Former EN2 Andy Fitzgerald, the only living member of the crew, lives a few miles from me and has shared the story of the rescue many times over the years. He will be on TV



MCPO Jack Hunter (Ret.) at the helm of CG-36500 at Chatham, Mass.



Lightship Nantucket Shoals on station

Notices & Association News

promoting the movie when the time comes.

On Aug. 4th last year, my wife and I went with Andy, his wife and family to Chatham, Mass., and we sailed on the CG-36500. Of course Andy shared his story with the station crew. He was happy to see a framed photograph of the CG-36500 crew on one of the station walls.

The History Channel made a movie a few years back. I have a copy of that movie but it was more of a "love story" movie than what actually took place back in 1952.

MCPO Jack Hunter (Ret.)



(Left) The men of CG-36500, exhausted but grateful to be safe back on dry land. Ervin Maske (far right) was a total stranger to the crew when their ordeal began several hours before. (photo courtesy of Richard C. Kelsey)

Individual Unemployability

Over the past few months, the issue of Individual Unemployability (IU) has been both a topic of discussion and one of rising concern by veterans organizations. A hearing regarding IU was held before the House

Veterans' Affairs Subcommittee on Disability and Memorial Affairs on July 15, 2015.

According to the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), for eligibility to IU, a veteran must be unable to maintain substantially gainful employment as a result of his or her

QD Log Booster Club

The printing and postage for the *QD Log* is by far the largest expense item we have and it was determined that if every member contributed \$5.00 to the CGCVA each year it would pay for all the expenses that go into the magazine. The idea was hatched at our Tampa Convention and several members contributed at that time, thereby creating the QD Log Boosters Club. Donations can be sent to the Administrative Office (marked as "QD Log Booster Club") and all those contributing will have their names listed in the subsequent magazine. Contribution amounts will not be published but all contributions are greatly appreciated. We have been told many times we have the best reunion magazine out there and we'd like to keep it that way.

Since publication of our last magazine, the following individuals have made donations and become members of the QD Log Boosters Club:

Richard Pelley	Jordan McInnis	Gerald Ballard	Nicholas Rossi
Anthony Kopke	John MacFeat	Thomas Weber	Richard Barren
Herbert Cohen	Thomas Patterson	Arnie Adams	Elmer Dulong
H. "Farmer Don Smith	D.A. Desiderio	James Aziz	John Ebersole
Gordon Halsten	Michael Kristula	Jack R. Hamlin	Stanley Beras

Jon Uithol IMO CGC Point Clear, Vietnam 1965-66

Gene Costill IMO S/1c Robert Costill, USS Joseph T. Dickman (APA-13)

Charles R. Bevel IMO Joyce Ann Bevel

Christopher Wood IMO his departed shipmates who have "Crossed the Bar"

Thanks to all to have become QD Log Booster Club members so far! All contributions are appreciated! And remember, these deductions are tax deductible as we are 501.c.

service-connected disabilities. Marginal employment, such as an odd job, is not considered “substantial gainful employment” for VA purposes. In addition to the employment barrier, a veteran eligible for IU must have one service-connected condition ratable at 60 percent or more disabling, or two or more service-connected disabilities, at least one condition that is ratable at 40 percent or more disabling, with a combined rating of 70 percent or more disabled.

Reports published by the Congressional Budget Office in August 2014 and the General Accountability Office in June 2015 made recommendations for substantial changes to the IU program. If implemented, these changes would cause significant financial harm to wounded, ill and injured veterans, their survivors and dependents.

Many of the views expressed within these reports are quite troubling, particularly the notions of restricting, limiting, or eliminating entitlement to IU on the basis of age and offsetting IU benefits when veterans are in receipt of other earned federal benefits such as military compensation or Social Security benefits.

No legislation has been introduced to address IU, but discussions are underway. Interested parties are encouraged to contact their elected officials with their concerns on this issue.

VA Backlog Reduction

The Department of Veterans Affairs indicated recently that its disability claims backlog has fallen below 100,000 for the first time after reaching an historic high two years ago. The current backlog of 98,535 claims older than 125 days is the lowest since the agency started measuring the claims backlog in 2007. In addition, accuracy of disability decisions has improved from about 83 percent in 2011 to 91 percent today.

Avoid Urgent Care in

Medical Emergencies

If you are a TRICARE beneficiary and you have an emergency, make sure you go to an emergency room in order to ensure insurance coverage of cost. Use of urgent care coverage depends on your plan and, unlike emergency care, requires an official referral in order to be covered. More about urgent care coverage at: <http://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/UrgentCare.aspx>.

For advice, you can also call the TRICARE Nurse Advice Line at 1-800-874-2273, option 1. When calling the Nurse Advice Line, you will talk with a registered nurse who can give you healthcare advice, help you find a doctor or schedule a next-day appointment at a military hospital or clinic.

There are even pediatric nurses who can assist you and will call you back to check on your child. For more information, visit the TRICARE Emergency Care website: <http://www.tricare.mil/CoveredServices/IsItCovered/EmergencyCare.aspx>.

VA Aims to Offer One-Stop Website

In a bid to improve customer service, VA is consolidating its websites so veterans can log on just once to manage their benefits and health care. The goal will be that veterans will eventually be able to get everything taken care of online with a single sign-on. They will be able to add a

Munro Remembered at USCG Training Center Cape May



Wreaths are laid at the foot of the Douglas Munro statue during a ceremony honoring the 72nd anniversary of his sacrifice, Sept. 27, 2014. Munro is the only member of the Coast Guard to receive a Medal of Honor for his heroic actions at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal where he gave up his life to save 500 Marines who were pinned down by enemy gun fire. Presenting the CGCVA wreath was CGCVA Cape May Liaison John Seubert (USCG photo by CWO John Edwards)

dependent, change their address, schedule an appointment, check on their claim status and get everything done online in a seamless way versus what they are doing today across multiple websites.

The new website — veterans.gov — went live May 20th but is still evolving. By the end of 2015, VA hopes that all veterans will be able to manage more than 350 benefit programs without having to switch websites. VA is integrating more than 200 different databases in its network to compile information on a veteran's military service, contact information, demographics and the types of VA services he or she currently uses.

Boot Camp Awards

At each graduating boot camp company at Training Center Cape May, N.J., the recruit earning the Physical Fitness Award is presented a CGCVA watch and certificate, in memory of PNP Jack Campbell who initiated the award several years ago. The following graduating recruits have been presented the CGCVA/Jack Campbell Physical Fitness Award since the last *QD Log* issue:

SA Riley J. Price (Mike-191) of Louisville, Ky., reports to *CGC Sherman*, San Diego, Calif.

SA Clinton E. Johnson (November-191) of Colton, Calif., reports to USCG Training Center Cape May, N.J.

SN David A. Galat (Oscar-191) of Miami, Fla., reports to *CGC Munro*, Kodiak, Alaska.

SN Philip Vizzini (Papa-191) of Wilmington, N.C., reports to *CGC Forward*, Portsmouth, Va.



(Left) After presenting the CGCVA/Jack Campbell Award, CGCVA Cape May Liaison John Seubert congratulates SA Hugo N. Alonzo of Sierra 191 company during graduation ceremonies. (USCG photo by CWO John Edwards)

Annual Cle Elum Ceremony at SM1 Douglas A. Munro Gravesite



(Above) CGCVA LM Ernest (Swede) Johnson prepares to lay the CGCVA wreath at the Douglas Munro gravesite during ceremonies at Cle



Elam, Washington on Sept. 26th. (Above Right) Signalman 1st Class Douglas Munro's grave marker is surrounded by challenge coins, saint pendants, rate and rank insignia, and other items that have been left by military members and veterans. Sept. 27th marked the 72nd anniversary of Munro's death at Guadalcanal during World War II. (USCG photos by CPO Kyle Niemi)

SN Mark W. Nelson (Quebec-191) of San Diego, Calif., reports to Station Siuslaw River, Florence, Ore.

SA James C. Ball (Romeo-191) of Richmond, Va., reports to *CGC Hickory*, Homer, Alaska.

SA Hugo N. Alonzo (Sierra-191) of Los Angeles, Calif., reports to *CGC Steadfast*, Warrenton, Ore.

FN Steven E. Auché (Tango-191) of Jacksonville, Fla., reports *CGC Marlin*, Fort Myers Beach, Fla.

SA Joseph B. Savoe (Uniform-191) of Providence, R.I., reports to *CGC Spencer*, Boston, Mass.

SN Antonio S. McNeil (Victor-191) of Ventura, Calif., reports to Station New Orleans, Metairie, La.

FA Connor D. Graham (Whiskey-191) of Columbia, S.C., reports to *CGC Margaret Norvel*, Miami Beach, Fla.

Reunion Site-Selection Criteria

A variety of factors come into play when the reunion committee considers future reunion sites. For 2017, plans are to hold the CGCVA Convention west of the Mississippi so when recommending possible reunion sites please keep the following factors in mind:

- Does it have easy access by plane, train, car, etc.
- Airport transportation to/from hotel — is it free or is there a reasonable shuttle fee.
- Does the hotel offer free parking or at a special rate.
- Is the hotel large enough to accommodate everyone.
- Are the hotel room rates reasonable.
- Will the hotel provide a Hospitality Room with food and beverage privileges.
- Does the hotel have an on-site eating facility.
- Does the hotel provide in-house food preparation for our scheduled luncheons and banquet.

- Is the hotel within walking distance or is there free shuttle services to shopping/eating places,
- Is there a Coast Guard unit or military base nearby.
- Location: In-season/time of year determines many costs.

It's a Family Affair

During the end of August, CGCVA Trustee Robert Macleod and his wife Janice, the president of the North Carolina American Legion Auxiliary Department, were in Baltimore attending the 2015 American Legion National Convention. Both kept the Coast Guard on the forefront of their schedules.

Robert had made advance plans to hold a ceremony on board *CGC Taney* in hopes of attracting more American Legion members to the CGCVA. He ran a notice in the *Coast Guard Retiree Bulletin* and *American Legion* magazine. Eventually it became a POW/MIA event coordinated with the Taney Association. During the Aug. 31st event, Robert provided introductions and presented a POW/MIA flag.

Vietnam Memorial Project Las Cruces, New Mexico



Jay Lloyd, the Sixth Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard is heavily involved in promoting the Vietnam War Memorial in Las Cruces, New Mexico and reaching out to CGCVA members. The Coast Guard will be prominently featured on a panel that has an account of Coast Guard operations in Vietnam, including pictures from Coast Guard Squadrons One and Three, Explosive Loading Detachments and Aids to Navigation Deployments. For additional information, please contact MCPO-CG (ret.) Jay Lloyd at: rjlloyd@comcast.net.



Barbara Graybill (President of North Carolina's Edenton #40 Unit of American Legion Auxiliary, Lt. Amanda Denning and American Legion Auxiliary North Carolina Department President Janice Macleod at the American Legion National Convention in Baltimore.



CGCVA Trustee Robert Macleod provides opening remarks and introductions at an Aug. 31st patriotic ceremony on board CGC Taney in Baltimore.

Meanwhile, Janice was seeing the results of her efforts to have a Coast Guard woman nominated for the American Legion Auxiliary's Serviceperson of the Year. Well before the convention, the state of North Carolina American Legion Auxiliary selected Lt. Amanda Denning of Air Station Elizabeth City as their representative for the honor. Ultimately, Lt. Denning was chosen as the Coast Guard's national representative and, at the Auxiliary's National Convention was selected as their 2015 Serviceperson of the Year.

Neither of these events would have happened without Robert and Janice's deep commitment to the Coast Guard. Well done!

Reconstructing Lost Military Records

The blaze that ripped through the National Personnel Records Center in a St. Louis suburb shortly after midnight on July 12, 1973, consumed 16-18 million official military personnel files in the days before computers kept such records safe. Few could have predicted the harm it would visit on the veterans who were denied VA benefits — some to this day — because they could not reconstruct their

Parents Weekend at Academy



CGCVA LM Ed Bachand (right) stands with Coast Guard Academy Superintendent Radm James E. Rendon and 4/c cadets Benjamin Taminger and Anita Green following the presentation of CGCVA watches. Our Association annually acknowledges the male and female 4th class cadet excelling in the Obstacle Course and Entry Physical Fitness Exam.

military service files.

Veterans whose records have been lost can fill out a specific form at the National Archives website (<http://www.archives.gov/st-louis/military-personnel/na-13055-info-2-reconstruct-medical-data.pdf>) that authorizes the National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) to search for other types of documents that would assist the veteran with their VA healthcare access or compensation claim, or for valuable research their family member's service history.

For more information, visit the Department of Veterans Affairs website for veterans whose records were destroyed: <http://www.benefits.va.gov/COMPENSATION/NPRC1973Fire.asp>.

What happens if you get scared half to death twice?

**Naval Air Station Oceana
Air Show Recognizes 50th
Anniversary of Vietnam**

CGCVA Trustee Floyd (Butch) Hampton represented not only our association but the Coast Guard as well at the Oceana, Va., Air Show recently. Theme for this year's air show was to recognize the 50th anniversary of the Vietnam War. Hampton is a Vietnam veteran and recipient of the Purple Heart.

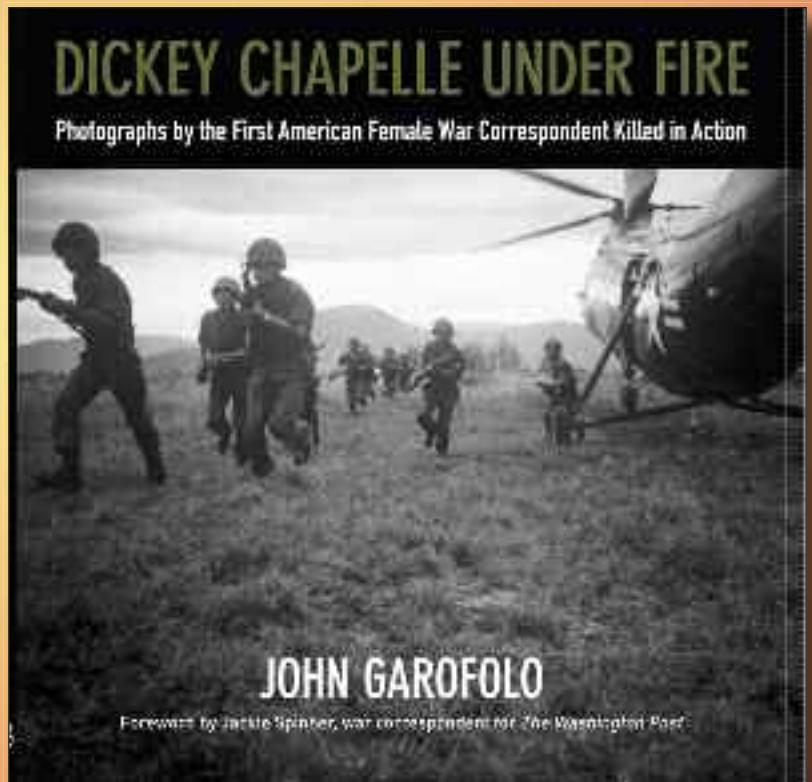
Sitting in his home filled with Coast Guard memorabilia, Hampton provided an interview with *Daily Advance* staff writer William West of being escorted to the event's VIP tent

(Right) Butch Hampton at his home. (photo by Thomas Turney, Daily Advance)



Georgette Chappelle — Combat Photographer

CGCVA member Cdr. John Garofolo, USCGR, an Iraq War veteran, has assembled the first-ever collection of the work of Georgette “Dickey” Chappelle, who pursued a photojournalism career at a time when practically no women did, beginning in WWII. The Wisconsin native’s love of aviation and photography led her to abandon her studies at MIT and hang around military bases instead. She flunked out, married, and persuaded the Navy — despite her Navy husband’s objections — to let her cover the front lines in the Pacific. Chapelle eagerly went on to cover events in Hungary, Algeria, Cuba, Lebanon, the Dominican Republic, and, fatefully, Vietnam. Despite winning awards for her work, she struggled for assignments and when she got them, she earned less pay than her male counterparts. Her arresting black and white photos capture lasting scenes: grotesquely wounded soldiers, children caught in conflict, and summary executions of combatants. But it’s a colleague’s photo that haunts this book: the 47-year-old Chapelle laying mortally wounded after being hit by shrapnel while on patrol with Marines in South Vietnam. The commandant of the Marine Corps called Chapelle “one of us,” and her body of work surely deserves the wider recognition this book provides. It is available now at Barnes & Noble.



and then riding in a blue 1970 Corvette, as part of a caravan on the tarmac to the grandstand, with the Patriot Riders motorcyclists proving an escort.



Butch Hampton with the Naval AirSta Oceana CO, Capt. Louis Schager, Jr., and his wife.

Hampton and fellow veterans went to the grandstand, where active members of their respective former service presented them with American flags. "I was very honored to represent not only the Coast Guard, but also all Vietnam veterans," he said.

Proud of Squadron 1 Service



CGCVA member Joseph Lisko has this customized spare tire cover on his Jeep Wrangler.

Hitting the Beach



My nephew Dave Finn bought this kit and put together the model for me. It a Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel (LCVP) and those are what I ran during five beachheads in the Pacific in WWII. It is Italeri model #6441 and may be available in shops that sell miniature building kits, or ordered online at www.italeri.com. Herb Cohen

CGCVA Visits AirSta Borinquen

Association President Mike Placencia, VP Steve Petersen and Trustee Bill Figone, after arriving in Puerto Rico for the *CGC Heriberto Hernandez* commissioning, took a side trip to Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen where



Crew of Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen.

CGCVA Prez on Wheel of Fortune



(Left) Photo of CGCVA President Michael Placencia taken at the Wheel of Fortune taping on August 21st. The show aired on November 13th, part of "Veterans Week" at Wheel of Fortune. Mike was one of fifteen current and former military members (and the lone Coast Guardsman selected) from the five services to tape five shows. Apparently, Mike celebrated his successful venture at an "airing party" at a local wine bar.



Coast Guard Heritage Museum



*My wife Shawnee and I took a getaway out to Cape Cod a few weeks ago. We stopped at the Coast Guard Heritage Museum in Barnstable, Mass., on September 15th to see the new CGC Chase Ribbon Board / Life Ring display and the CGC Point Young wooden ammo box cover display, as well as other new items. This museum truly has an awesome collection and the volunteers have paid very close attention to detail and respect on their displays. Top kudos to the CGHM crew.
CGCVA LM Christopher Wood*

Mike addressed the crew. He spoke about the CGCVA's 30-year history and about the Coast Guard's wartime activities in Vietnam. Later the group received a guided tour of the air station.



(L to R) Trustee Bill Figone, CW03 Greg Johannessen, Captain Patricia McFetridge (Airsta CO), President Mike Placencia, VP Steve Petersen, CPO Pate, SCPO Rich Harvey, PO2 Dominique Wiggins and PO1 Juan Cadiz on the air station flight deck.

Chieu Hoi Appearance

Not only have Association officers and members been traveling around spreading the word about the CGCVA but our lovable mascot Chieu Hoi has done so as well. On Oct. 24th, he made an appearance at the 50th Commemoration of the Vietnam Veteran ceremony at VFW Post 1267 in Sacramento, Calif.



Wayne and Charlotte LaDue flank CGCVA mascot Chieu Hoi. Charlotte was the Chairwoman of the 50th Commemoration of the VN Vet at the VFW post 1267.

CGCVA Members at CGC Heriberto Hernandez Commissioning

Michael Placencia, National President (Coast Guard Squadron One, Cat Lo); Steve Petersen, National Vice President (Explosive Loading Detachment, Danang); Bill Figone, Trustee (Coast Guard Squadron One, Cat Lo); Butch Hampton, Trustee (CGC Point Dume, Danang); Alan Dillenbeck, (CGC Cypress, An Thoi); Gordon Gilles (CGC Cypress, An Thoi); and Gordon Gilles (CGC Cypress, An Thoi). Thank you all for attending!

D-Day 71st Anniversary

CGCVA Life Member Jack Hamlin, a D-Day veteran, travelled to France for the 71st anniversary of the commemoration of D-Day. He was there with four D-Day veterans of the 101st Airborne. Together, they visited Coleville American Cemetery by Omaha Beach and stayed at the Band of Brothers Headquarters barracks, owned by Dave and Sue Chapman. Jack brought along a Coast Guard flag and in an impromptu ceremony, raised it at the Band of Brothers Headquarters. Members of the 101st Airborne attended the ceremony, as did Band of Brothers barracks owner David Chapman who remarked it will remain flying as long as we live here.



Raising the Coast Guard flag.



Jack chats with Helen Patton, granddaughter of General George S. Patton.



Jack alongside one of the D-Day re-enactor vehicles at "Camp Arizona" in Carenton, France.



Jack meets General Nadgen, commander of the U.S. Army Forces in France.

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be commissioned in the spring of 2016.

Early the next day, Mike and Steve met up with Trustee Bill Figone and together drove to Coast Guard Air Station Borinquen. The 77-mile trip to the northwestern shore of Puerto Rico took more than two hours. Upon arrival, they were greeted by Senior Chief Rich Harvey and escorted to the hangar to meet the CO, Captain Patricia McFetridge. Mike addressed some of the air station personnel about the CGCVA, its 30-year history and the reason to be in Puerto Rico. He also gave a brief talk about Coast Guard activities in Vietnam. Senior Chief Harvey provided a personal tour of the air station and surrounding facilities, including base housing and the exchange.

Later in the day, the trio caught up with CGCVA Trustee Butch

However, the biggest surprise was the entrance of Mrs. Juanita Segovia, Eddie's mother, who had traveled from San Antonio, Texas for the commissioning ceremony. Another CGCVA Member present, was former Lt. (j.g.) Gordon Gillies who was the XO of the *CGC Point Cypress*, and severely wounded during the attack that took Eddie's life on December 5, 1968, up the Rach Nang River in South Vietnam. The reception concluded with the ship's company receiving their individual plank owner plaque.

On Oct. 16th, the day of the *CGC Hernandez* Commissioning Ceremony, and under the threat of rain, guests began to arrive and were greeted with the musical sounds of the Puerto Rican 248th Army Band. A huge canopy was visible within a stones throw



Juanita Segovia boards the cutter shortly after it was commissioned at Coast Guard Sector San Juan, Puerto Rico, Oct. 16, 2015. Segovia was Heriberto Hernandez's mother.

of the ship, complete with a dais for dignitaries and chairs for over a hundred placed underneath. Shortly after everyone was seated, the skies opened up for a deluge that lasted a mere 15 minutes, followed by sunshine. In the



VADM Lee flanked by Steve Petersen and Bill Figone.

audience was another CGCVA Member, BMC (ret.) Tom Hogan, who was on the *CGC Point White* in An Thoi before transferring to the *CGC Point Clear* in Cat Lo.

The first speaker was Association President Mike Placencia who made presentations to Lt. Bare — a specially designed CGCVA plaque and a copy of



Butch and Kim Hampton with VADM Lee.



(Above) LT Bare presents a plaque from the cutter to Juanita Segovia, sponsor of the Coast Guard Cutter Heriberto Hernandez.

(Above right) The CGCVA plaque presented to the new cutter by President Placencia.

Hampton and his wife Kim, as well as CGCVA Member Alan Dillenbeck and his wife Caran. Alan was a BM3 on the *CGC Point Cypress* in An Thoi and a very close friend of Eddie. He finished his enlistment as a BM2. That evening, they traveled together to CG Sector San Juan for a special reception and the first glimpse of the Cutter *Hernandez* tied up dockside. They met the CO, Lt. Charles Bare and his XO, Lt. (j.g.) Christopher Martin at the ship.

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the book, "Coast Guard Action in Vietnam, personally inscribed by author and Past National President, Paul Scotti. A host of dignitaries followed to the podium, including Gordon Gillies who presented the Long Glass. It wasn't long before Lt. Bare took command of the *CGC Hernandez*, ordered the crew to fall out of formation and bring the ship to life. Orders were given to break the admiral's flag and set the first watch. Impressive to say the least. Mike had this to say: "This crew is sharp, never seen better. I tell myself that they do not give a ship like this to just anyone. They earned it."

Alan Dillenbeck had this to say, "I had the great honor of being invited to the commissioning of the *CGC Heriberto Hernandez*, in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Eddie was a shipmate and friend of mine on the *Point Cypress*. I got

(Right) VADM Lee addressing the audience.



ence which I will never forget. I am filled with pride to have been a member of the Coast Guard and to be a member of CGCVA. Thank you all."

Gordon Gillies had this to say, "I am glad that the organization (CGCVA) was represented.

Eddie Hernandez was a crew member with whom we'd all like to serve. He was smart, fit and good humored, and always wanting to do the job. The *CGC Heriberto Hernandez*, I am sure, will proudly carry his name and this beautiful cutter is a tribute his memory deserves."

Mike Placencia

Editor's Note: The Association would like to give a High Five and Bravo Zulu to Lt. Colleen Denny. She was instrumental in



LT Bare accepting command from RADM Buschman.



LTJG Christopher Martin, XO of the Hernandez; CGCVA Trustee Bill Figone; CGCVA President Mike Placencia; Alan Dillenbeck; LT Charles Bare, CO of the Hernandez; and CGCVA Vp Steve Petersen.



LT Colleen Denny and LT Nicholas Herndon, commissioning project officers. LT Denny is the prospective commanding officer of the CGC Donald Horsley.

to spend some time with CGCVA President Mike Placencia, VP Steve Petersen and others from our fine organization. It was a remarkable experi-

providing the CGCVA members a spot on the commissioning program and invitations to all events.



(Left) Gordon Gillies, XO of the CGC Cypress, Mrs. Juanita Segovia, and BM3 Alan Dillenbeck.

(Right) Caran and Alan Dillenbeck in San Juan, PR. Alan was a BM3 on the CGC Cypress in An Thoi, and a shipmate of Heriberto Hernandez.



“Skill, courage under enemy fire, and devotion to duty:” Bronze Star Medal Recipient Heriberto “Eddie” Hernandez and Coast Guard Smallboat Operations in Vietnam

by William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., Atlantic Area Historian

Editor’s Note: All events, descriptions and contextual information in this article derive from official records, original documents, first-hand accounts, and correspondence with Point Cypress crewmembers and members of the Hernandez Family.

Like many Vietnam veterans, Coast Guard boatswain’s mate Tom Hogan returned home from the war with a lot of emotional baggage. He would never lose that baggage. In 2007, at the 25th anniversary of the Vietnam War Memorial, he and his family joined other Coast Guard combat veterans in the nation’s capital. The day he visited the memorial, he searched for the name “Hernandez” among the thousands listed on “The Wall.” Hogan had to kneel before the monument to find the name he wanted. He found “Heriberto S. Hernandez” and brought out a pencil to rub its outline on a piece of paper. The inscription proved so long that he had to line up two sheets of paper to capture the full name on one line.

At that instant, on his knees while tracing the name of a fallen comrade, with his son and his grandson at his side, Hogan’s wartime experiences and pent-up emotions — good and bad — came rushing back. His tears flowed freely and his grandson grew confused asking why his grandfather was crying. It was difficult to explain to a four-year-old boy how Coast Guardsmen had fought and died in such a faraway place. And it was harder still to describe how men like Hogan,

who served in Vietnam, felt the loss of a fallen comrade, even if each had served aboard different cutters. It was as if he and Hernandez were related not just by common purpose, but by blood.

Like their predecessors who participated in every major American conflict since 1790, Coast Guardsmen who served in Vietnam shared a common bond. To many, the experience proved a defining event in their lives, never to be forgotten. While the Coast Guardsmen of Vietnam held within them this shared experience and the emotional scars that came with it, each was a unique individual. Like Hernandez, and Hogan, those who served in Vietnam came from different parts of the U.S. and each man brought to the Service, and the war, his own unique background.

And so begins the story of Heriberto Segovia Hernandez, who was born on July 13, 1948, in Laredo, Texas. His parents, Heriberto and Juanita Hernandez, came to the United States as migrant workers harvesting produce in the farm fields of West Texas. A second son, Hector

Segovia Hernandez, was born two years later and the two siblings grew very close over the course of their childhood. The family settled down in San Antonio, where a younger sister Margaret was born, and Heriberto senior began a long career with San Antonio’s famous Pearl Brewing Company. A hallmark of the Hernandez family was service to others. Pearl Brewing singled out Mr. Hernandez as a model employee and he and his sons were known to stop and assist stranded motorists along the roads of San Antonio



A color portrait of Heriberto Segovia Hernandez during his school days at Kennedy High School in San Antonio, Texas. (Courtesy of the Hernandez Family)

and western Texas.

Heriberto junior was a true Texan. To his family, he was known as “Betín,” but he acquired the nickname “Eddie” because his Anglo teachers and friends could not properly pronounce his first name. He had an extensive knowledge of, and love for, his home state and childhood vacations were spent with relatives living in Corpus Christi, where he enjoyed swimming, fishing and playing on the beach. His favorite song was “Tighten Up,” performed by the Houston rhythm and blues band Archie Bell & the Drells. In describing Eddie, one of his shipmates in Vietnam later claimed, “He was Texas.”

Eddie had two sides to his personality. On one side, he was helpful, easygoing and had the interests of many young men, such as girls and cars. His neighbors in San Antonio described him as “always willing to help in any way possible” and “always trying to better himself in every way possible.” His commanding officer in Vietnam, Jonathan Collom, remembered Eddie as an outgoing person who never bragged about himself and always smiled with “an infectious grin.” On the other side, Eddie could be strong-willed and tough, personality traits



Eddie Hernandez's black and white service portrait showing him prior to his tour in Vietnam. (Courtesy of the Hernandez Family)

shared by his siblings. While attending Kennedy High School, he took up boxing at the local gym and became a highly skilled lightweight boxer. Eddie was well liked by his shipmates in Vietnam, who remembered him for his compact yet powerful build.

It was Eddie's single-minded determination that led him to join the Coast Guard, volunteering as soon as he could. His fond memories of playing in the waters of Corpus Christi attracted him to the Service and, days before his seventeenth birthday, he began collecting the paperwork required to enlist. Against the wishes of his parents and well before he finished high school, Eddie joined the Coast Guard for a term of four years. On July 27, 1965, just two days after his birthday, he

departed San Antonio for the Coast Guard Training Center in Alameda, Calif. He left behind his saddened parents and siblings, and his high school girlfriend, who would wait to marry him after his enlistment ended.

Eddie had no trouble with the physical challenges of testing and training at boot camp. However, his stubbornness did pose problems for him as he learned to subordinate his own will to the dictates of the Service, and to work as

part of a team. Within two months of his arrival in Alameda, Eddie completed his



Profile view of Point Cypress showing 50-caliber machine guns mounted on the fantail and amidships with 81mm mortar/50-caliber combination mounted on the bow. (Courtesy of Gordon M. Gillies)

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training and received the rating of seaman apprentice. And by mid-October, he departed Alameda for Honolulu to deploy with the high-endurance cutter *Bering Strait* (WHEC-382). During his time on board the cutter, Eddie crossed the International Date Line and saw duty in law enforcement, search and rescue, and ocean station missions. His tour in the Pacific must have brought back childhood memories of those hot days on the water at Corpus Christi.

On March 31, 1966, Eddie transferred from the *Bering Strait* to the long-range navigation (LORAN) station at Saipan, Mariana Islands. It was during this one-year deployment on isolated duty that Eddie experienced the greatest challenges of his Coast Guard career. When he first arrived, he qualified as a LORAN watchstander, but in the summer and fall of 1966, he experienced a series of setbacks for absence without leave and insubordination. These infractions led to restrictions to the base and a temporary reduction in rating.

By 1967, Eddie changed the course of his career. In that year, he received no disciplinary action and was reinstated to the rating of seaman apprentice. In April, he transferred back to the States and served a year close to home at Base Galveston, Texas. During his time in the U.S., he received the National Defense Service Medal for honorable service and he earned a high school GED certificate. He was also advanced to the rating of Fireman and volunteered to serve a combat tour in Vietnam. At the end of his tour in



Hernandez with shipmate BM2 Alan Dillenbeck, the WPB's Vietnamese translator and another shipmate standing on the fantail behind the 13-foot smallboat. (Courtesy of Alan Dillenbeck)

Galveston, Eddie bade farewell to his shipmates at a going-away party at Sara's Lounge, the Coast Guard watering hole in Galveston, and then left for two weeks of leave back home in San Antonio.

After his brief stay at home, Eddie travelled to Coast Guard District Eight headquarters in New Orleans to be processed for duty in Southeast Asia. In February 1968, Eddie transferred from New Orleans back to Alameda for his second tour at Coast Guard Island, but this time his regimen included Survival, Evasion, Resistance & Escape (SERE) Training in techniques for survival, evasion of enemy forces, and land navigation. After completing the SERE Training, Eddie took the usual route to Vietnam, joining other military personnel on a contracted passenger jet bound to South Vietnam from Travis Air Force Base, north of Sacramento.

On May 14, 1968, Eddie's jet touched down at Saigon Airport and, for the first time, he tasted the hot humid air of

A smallboat mission with four crew, including Hernandez in the bow. Weapons included smallarms and M16s with battle helmets and flak vests providing crew protection. (Courtesy of Gordon M. Gillies)



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Vietnam. He was assigned to the Coast Guard's Coastal Surveillance Force designated Squadron One, or "RONONE" as it was known. Under the direction of the U.S. Navy, the 26 Coast Guard cutters of Squadron One patrolled the coastal areas of South Vietnam. In 1965, the Navy requested the deployment of these 82-foot patrol boats, or WPBs. This was due to the Navy's lack of a riverine capability and the Coast Guard's reputation for shallow water combat operations, a reputation dating back to the earliest years of the Service. The 82-footers supported the Navy's "Operation Market Time" campaign intended to cut off waterborne movement of enemy personnel and war material from North Vietnam to Viet Cong guerillas in the south. Well before the Navy's Swift Boats and other riverine patrol craft deployed to Southeast Asia, the Coast Guard cutters of Squadron One patrolled hundreds of miles of South Vietnam's coastal waters, which were navigated by thousands of local watercraft.

From Saigon, Eddie flew in an Army helicopter to Squadron One's Division Eleven, based in the village of An Thoi, on Phu Quoc Island. Division Eleven's area of responsibility included the coastal waters of Vietnam's southern tip. And, on May 16, 1968, Hernandez reported for duty to the patrol boat *Point Cypress* (WPB-82326). Once on board, he met the crew, including the captain, LTJG Jonathan Collom, and executive officer, LTJG Gordon Gillies. Like her Vietnam-based sisterships, the *Point Cypress's* missions included maritime interdiction; troop landings and insertion of Special Forces personnel; humanitarian, rescue, and training missions; naval gunfire support; and intelligence gathering missions.

Eddie quickly acclimated to Vietnam's intense heat,



Eddie Hernandez practice firing the M60 machine gun from a standing position on the deck of Point Cypress. (Courtesy of Gordon M. Gillies)

high humidity and drenching rains. He had no choice. He also grew accustomed to the fast tempo of operations on board the *Point Cypress*. The cutter got underway over 70 percent of the time, deploying on five-to-six day missions within her patrol area. During these deployments, the WPB's crewmembers boarded numerous sampans and junks in search of smuggled weapons and enemy personnel. Within weeks, Eddie learned to care for the cutter's engines and qualified to stand watches as *Point Cypress's* Engineering Watch Officer. Later in the summer, he was

recommended to take part in the Coast Guard Service-Wide Examination for the rating of Engineman Third Class.

Point Cypress and the other Coast Guard patrol boats proved very effective in coastal fire support missions. The WPBs were equipped with four Browning .50-caliber M2 machine guns mounted amidships and aft on each side. The 82-footers also boasted a bow-mounted "piggyback," or "over and under," 81mm mortar with a fifth .50-caliber M2 fixed on top. In addition, the cutters carried an array of smaller weapons, including side arms, M16 automatic rifles, an M60



Hernandez on shore with the M60 during a smallboat patrol, also known as Salem Ops. (Courtesy of Gordon M. Gillies)



A smallboat mission showing dense cover provided by foliage along Vietnam's inland waterways. Hernandez is seated in the boat on the left. (Courtesy of Gordon M. Gillies)

light machine gun, and M79 shoulder-fired grenade launchers.

Naval gunfire support missions included “harassment and interdiction” assignments intended to disrupt enemy supply networks and operations, and fire support missions on specific targets, such as enemy bunkers and fortified structures. *Point Cypress* carried out both missions on virtually all of her deployments. In October 1968, units of Division Eleven even received a congratulatory letter from the Division’s commanding officer, stating, “I have been receiving almost daily compliments from both Vietnamese and American authorities on the outstanding performance of Division Eleven units, particularly those providing gunfire support. Recent reliable intelligence indicates that our gunfire has been more effective and has caused greater damage to the insurgents than we had realized.”

Point Cypress also supported smallboat reconnaissance missions, called “Salem Operations” by naval strategists, or “Sitting Duck Ops” by WPB crewmembers. These missions were similar to Special Forces reconnaissance operations and required the use of the 82-footers’ smallboat. Known as a “skimmer” by some Coast Guardsmen, or “bait” by others, the smallboat was a 13-foot fiberglass Boston Whaler, which was the size of a large dinghy and carried no armor or protection for the crew. In addition, the Whaler was equipped with an underpowered and unarmored 35-horsepower outboard motor, which was vulnerable to enemy fire.

Typically carried out under cover of darkness, Salem Ops missions required the smallboats to probe the canals

and waterways of Vietnam’s coast. These missions usually entered enemy-held territory without cover even though they received no U.S. air support. Often under the watchful eye of the Viet Cong, these missions gathered intelligence regarding enemy weapons, troop movements, fortified positions and bunkers. During Salem Ops missions, the smallboats took depth soundings and gathered navigation information, and they observed American artillery barrages and provided gunfire damage assessments for fire support missions. For some smallboat personnel, these missions probably brought new meaning to the old Coast Guard saying, “You have to go out, but you don’t have to come back.”

Eddie served regularly on these hazardous missions and, when in port, he visited other WPBs to get advice and discuss best practices with more experienced smallboat patrol veterans. During smallboat operations, Eddie rode point in the bow of the Whaler holding the M60 machine gun with bandoliers of extra M60 rounds draped over his chest similar to Mexican Revolutionary General Pancho Villa. A well-worn flak vest and World War II-vintage battle helmet provided his only protection from automatic weapons fire or rocket propelled grenades.

On Oct. 5, 1968, Eddie participated in a canal probe on the Ca Mau Peninsula in which his force came under heavy enemy fire, but *Point Cypress* and another WPB managed to destroy enemy river barriers, fortified structures, bunkers and armed sampans before withdrawing. And on Nov. 9, he deployed in the smallboat on a gunfire damage assessment mission near Hon Da Bac Island, on the west side of the Ca Mau Peninsula, to assess a fire support mission just completed by a U.S. patrol vessel. During this mission, Hernandez’s smallboat located and destroyed four enemy sampans. After the Navy launched “Operation SEALORDS (Southeast Asia, Ocean, River and Delta Strategy)” in late 1968, Hernandez frequently volunteered for reconnaissance missions into rivers and canals in enemy territory — many of them never before penetrated by friendly forces. These missions helped to determine whether the waterways could be navigated by U.S. patrol craft, such as Coast Guard WPBs, or the Navy’s newly introduced shallow-draft Swift Boats and PBRs (Patrol Boat River).

In the first days of December 1968, *Point Cypress*

conducted daily smallboat operations and gunfire support missions, destroying three enemy bunkers and damaging three more. On Wednesday, Dec. 4, the cutter rendezvoused with a Royal Thai Navy gunboat to embark CDR Charles Blaha, deputy commander for Coast Guard operations in Vietnam. Blaha visited the WPB to familiarize himself with Division Eleven cutter operations and evaluate the effectiveness of Salem Ops smallboat missions. Blaha and cutter CO, LTJG Collom, planned to deploy Blaha and the Whaler the next day to determine the depth of the Rach Nang River for Navy Swift Boat operations, and to see whether the Rach Tac Buo River intersected the Rach Nang somewhere upstream. *Point Cypress's* XO, Lt. j.g. Gillies, would serve as coxswain and Hernandez volunteered to ride point in the bow.

According to after-action reports, Hernandez embarked the Whaler with the two officers at approximately 2:30 in the afternoon, on Thursday, December 5th. Eddie brought the M60, while the others brought M16s, and the men took an M79 grenade launcher with spare rounds. The smallboat proceeded first to the mouth of the Rach Nang River, then over to the mouth of the nearby Rach Tac Buo. The smallboat probed the shores of the Rach Tac Buo for a connecting tributary with the Rach Nang.

The brief survey up the Rach Tac Buo indicated that there was no navigable connection with the Rach Nang, so Gillies steered the Whaler back to the mouth of the Rach Nang. The smallboat crew then radioed *Point Cypress* for further instructions. They received orders to proceed cautiously up the Rach Nang to find the location of "hooches (American slang for village huts)," bunkers and fortified positions for future fire support missions. In

addition, the smallboat was tasked with destroying the nearest hooches using the M79 grenade launcher and highly flammable night illumination rounds. The smallboat proceeded with the mission and closed to within 30 yards of the structures on shore.

As the smallboat approached the hooches, the crew noticed an armed Viet Cong guerilla entering a shoreside bunker. Blaha fired a volley at the fortification with his M16 and the Viet Cong returned fire. As soon as he heard the gunfire, Gillies gunned the engine and the Whaler motored away from shore, but it was too late to dodge the hostile fire. With only their flak vests to protect them

against the enemy rounds, each man suffered severe bullet wounds. Hernandez was hit near the chest and slumped into the bow of the Whaler while the officers received gunshot wounds to the head, back, arms, shoulders, and legs.

Blaha radioed *Point Cypress* that they had been shot-up and were motoring toward the mouth of the Rach Nang. As they proceeded toward the river's mouth, the Whaler received more incoming fire from shore. Blaha did his best to suppress it with bursts from his M16, but the enemy fire held no tracer rounds, so he failed to pinpoint the enemy positions within the foliage on shore. As they approached the rendezvous point with *Point Cypress*, Blaha and Gillies grew faint from blood loss and Hernandez remained slumped in the bow, alive but groaning in pain from his wounds.

After *Point Cypress* received the message from Blaha, Collom had sounded general quarters and sped the WPB toward a rendezvous point at the mouth of the river. Once on scene, the 82-footer embarked the smallboat and wounded men. Next, Collom radioed a request for a medevac from the Navy's floating support base aboard the anchored landing ship, *USS*



Heriberto "Eddie" Hernandez on the deck of Point Cypress in his typical smallboat patrol attire of battle helmet, flak vest and machine gun bandoliers. (Courtesy of the Hernandez Family) Note: Photo has been enhanced from the original.

Washoe County (LST-1156). During the half-hour transit to the LST, *Point Cypress's* crew did their best to stabilize the wounded in preparation for the helicopter medevac from the Washoe County to a local field hospital. When Eddie was brought on board *Point Cypress*, he was still conscious, but the bullet that struck him passed through his upper torso causing heavy internal bleeding. His wounds proved too grave to treat with the limited medical supplies on board *Point Cypress* and he passed away just as the WPB approached the *Washoe County* to moor beside the LST.

After the cutter arrived at the support vessel, the wounded officers were embarked on board the anchored ship. Gillies and Blaha were treated and then medevaced by an Army helicopter to the 29th Field Evacuation Hospital at Binh Thuy, located to the southwest of Saigon. Next, the men were transferred to the 21st Casualty Staging Hospital in Saigon and then flown to a naval hospital in Yokosuka, Japan, for treatment before returning stateside for extended medical care. In the after-action report for the Dec. 5 mission, the recovering Blaha wrote, "For me, this incident was a moment of terror I will never forget — not only because of what did happen, but because I see that it could happen again and again." In the same report, he summed up his thoughts regarding Salem Ops smallboat missions: "If our aim is to control the river banks, this will have to be done by ground forces. To look at it another way, we are asking our untrained small boat crews to do the jobs really in the province of [Navy] SEALs or RACs [Army Riverine Assault Craft forces]."

Eddie's body was flown back to Travis Air Force Base and then returned with a Coast Guard escort to his grieving family in San Antonio. On Saturday, Dec. 14, 1968, his mortal remains were interred at 1 p.m. at San Fernando Cemetery with full military honors. Hernandez posthumously received the Purple Heart Medal and Bronze Star Medal with a "V" device for valor. His Bronze Star citation read, "Fireman Hernandez's professional skill, courage under enemy fire, and devotion to duty reflected great credit upon himself, and were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service." In addition, the Coast Guard named the Fast Response Cutter Heriberto Hernandez in his honor. He is the first Hispanic-American Coast Guardsman to be so recognized for combat operations.

In an ironic twist of fate, in early 1970, Eddie's younger brother Hector found himself serving on a high-endurance

cutter sailing out of the same Hawaiian docks walked by his older brother when Eddie served aboard *Bering Strait*. Hector was very close to Eddie and when word reached home that his brother had died in Vietnam, it had a profound impact on the Hector. Determined to fight in Vietnam like his brother, Hector enlisted in the Coast Guard, underwent basic training at Alameda and was deployed to the Hawaii-based cutter *Chautauqua (WHEC-41)*. Fearful that a second son might be lost in Vietnam, Hector's mother Juanita Hernandez, petitioned her congressman to prevent her second son from serving in combat. Mrs. Hernandez's petition succeeded in keeping Hector out of the war, but it also caused him great disappointment and bitterness. After completing his enlistment in the Coast Guard, Hector returned to San Antonio, where he worked for the local Sears Department Store for over 20 years. After returning home from the Service, and well after the loss of his older brother, Hector still could not talk about Eddie — even with his family. Within a year of his retirement, in April 1994, Hector passed away and was buried beside Eddie at San Fernando Cemetery.

And so ends the story of Fireman Heriberto Segovia "Eddie" Hernandez, a Coast Guardsman with a home, family and friends, and a life different from any man before or after him. And, like any other Coast Guardsman, he was trained to do a job and he did his best to carry it out. A few years ago, while commenting on his friend Eddie Hernandez, another Vietnam veteran stated, "He's still 19, and I'm 61."

Back at The Wall, Tom Hogan tried to tell his grandson how this fallen comrade, who died 40 years before on the opposite side of the world, caused Hogan such sadness and remorse. The aging combat veteran did his best to explain how Eddie Hernandez went in harm's way and died in the line of duty for his country, his shipmates and for what he believed in.

Today, few Americans remember the Vietnam War and even fewer realize that the Coast Guard served in that war from the beginning to the end of the naval conflict. But Service members, such as Tom Hogan remember only too well. Even though they did not serve together, Hogan and Hernandez were shipmates in the most profound sense of the word. They were both members of the Coast Guard family and Hogan felt the loss of his comrade as if they were brothers.

Captain Samuel Travis, Revenue Cutter Surveyor and the Battle of Gloucester Point

by William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., Atlantic Area Historian

In 1813, the British blockade of the East Coast brought the War of 1812 to American shores, especially in the Chesapeake Bay. By this time, revenue cutter *Surveyor* was the last U.S. vessel remaining to show the flag in the Royal Navy-controlled bay. In 1807, the customs collector for the port of Baltimore had built the cutter to serve the Baltimore station; however, during the war, the cutter served in the southern Chesapeake. *Surveyor* measured sixty-eight feet in length with a beam of nineteen feet and drew approximately six feet. The cutter carried a wartime crew of twenty-five officers and men and an armament of six 6-pound cannon. Her captain, Samuel Travis, had received a commission as first mate in 1807 and served on board *Surveyor* in that capacity until his promotion to her master in 1811.

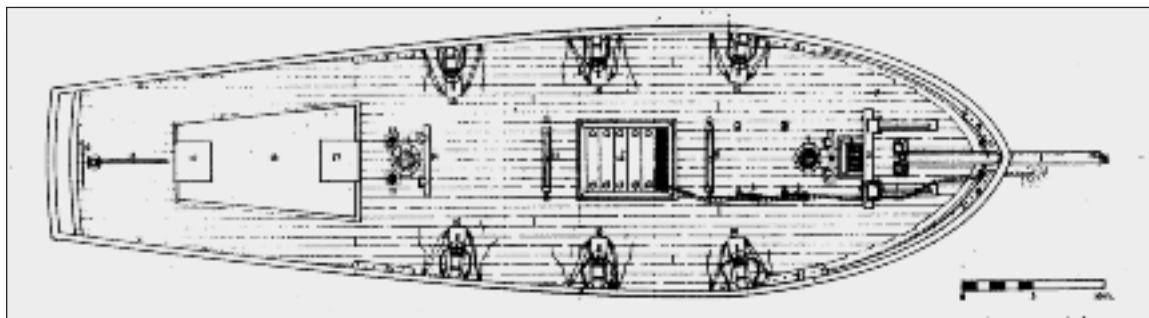
On Saturday, June 12th, 1813, Captain Travis anchored *Surveyor* off Gloucester Point, near Yorktown, Virginia. Not knowing the proximity of British naval forces to his ship, he set out a picket boat with a small crew and installed boarding nets around the cutter's deck. At about midnight that evening, barges carrying a party of over fifty Royal Navy officers, men and marines from the 32-gun frigate *HMS Narcissus* approached through the thick evening haze with muffled oars. The watercraft closed to within 150 yards of the cutter before the picket boat heard them and fired a warning shot. The British moved quickly and kept their barges away from *Surveyor's* main armament of



Patrick O'Brien painting depicting the Battle of Gloucester Point showing Surveyor's vastly outnumbered crew defending their ship on June 12, 1813. (Coast Guard Collection)

six-pound carronades, rendering the cutter's ordnance ineffective. Travis armed his remaining crew of eighteen men with two muskets apiece and ordered them to wait until the enemy closed to within effective range. Travis gave the word to fire and *Surveyor's* crew loosed a volley, killing three attackers and wounding several more. However, *Surveyor's* men ran out of ammunition and the enemy boarding party gained the cutter's deck, overwhelming the outnumbered crew and capturing the cutter.

After the battle, Travis found himself held prisoner on board the British 44-gun frigate *HMS Junon*, anchored near the mouth of the James River. On Tuesday, June 22nd, he witnessed from the deck of the frigate, the Battle of Craney Island in which 2,000 British troops attacked the American fortification at Craney Island defending the outskirts of Norfolk, Virginia. With only 750 militia, regulars and U.S. naval personnel manning the defenses, the Americans drove



*Conjectural deck plan of Surveyor's drawn by noted maritime historian , Dr. John Tilley.
(Coast Guard Collection)*

United States.” By this time, *Surveyor's* two junior officers and fifteen enlisted men had begun their journey into captivity at a British military prison in Halifax. Captain Travis fared better than did his men. In early August 1813, the British released him at Washington, North

off the British who suffered heavy losses. Two days later, the frustrated British carried out a punitive attack against lightly defended Hampton, Virginia, sacking the city and using the captured ex-*Surveyor* to cover the landings.

The Battle of Gloucester Point proved one of the more hotly contested cutter engagements of the war. Ironically, a week after the fight, the Baltimore customs collector wrote that the seven-year-old *Surveyor* “was an old vessel, scarcely worth repairing.” And a few days later, Treasury Secretary William Jones wrote the customs collector that “as a Revenue Cutter can be of no use in the waters of the Chesapeake, during the continuance of the present state of things [British blockade], it will be proper for you to inform the officers and crew of the “*Surveyor*” that they are to consider themselves as being no longer in the service of the

Carolina.

Upon his release, Travis returned to Virginia and lived in Williamsburg for the remainder of his life. After the Battle of Gloucester Point, the Royal Navy lieutenant in charge of the attacking flotilla returned Travis’s sword, commending him for the valiant defense of his ship in the face of overwhelming odds: “Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you had so ably used... I am at a loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement on board the *Surveyor* or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed inch-by-inch.” The ultimate fate of the gallant cutter *Surveyor* remains a mystery to this day.

U.S. Revenue Cutter Miami: Abraham Lincoln’s Presidential Command Ship

by William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., Atlantic Area Historian

In the history of the U.S. presidency, there have been numerous presidential yachts, but the list of presidential command ships is far shorter. It includes *USS Northampton (CLC-1)* a Cold War-era cruiser that steamed off the East Coast serving as a floating White House in case of an attack on the nation’s capital. Fortunately, she never fulfilled her intended purpose.

The first and only one of these unique vessels that sailed in harm’s way under the commander-in-chief was the U.S. Revenue Cutter *Miami*. Purchased early in 1862 and commissioned on January 28th, *Miami* was one of the first propeller-driven vessels in the Revenue Cutter Service. Built in Scotland in 1853 as the *Lady Le Marchant*, the Federal Government bought the commercial steamer for

\$25,000. She measured 115 feet in length with a schooner sail rig and a two-cylinder oscillating steam engine.

Records indicate that Treasury officials had a unique mission in mind for *Miami*. After acquiring her, the Service sent the cutter to the New York Navy Yard, where she received a 24-pound pivot gun aft and a 20-pound pivot gun mounted forward, as well as a gig, launch and two small boats to transfer crew and passengers. Treasury assigned distinguished cutter captain Douglas Ottinger to command *Miami* with a crew of three junior officers, two engineers and thirty-four enlisted men. Secretary Salmon Chase ordered New York’s customs collector to purchase “every particular necessary for comfort,” including spare beds, crockery, champagne glasses, silver ware, and silver

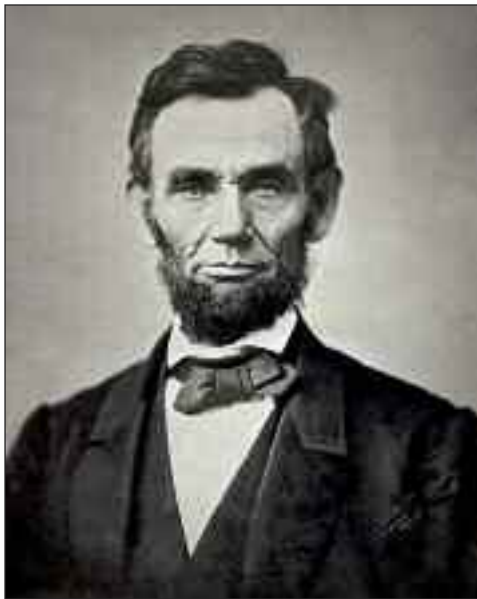
Feature Articles

(Right) Photograph of President Abraham Lincoln a year after he planned the amphibious landing at Norfolk, Virginia. (photo courtesy of Library of Congress)

teapots and coffee urns.

By Friday, April 4th, after completing fitting out and provisioning of *Miami*, Captain Ottinger set sail for Washington, D.C. The cutter arrived at the Washington Navy Yard on April 7th and, within days, Secretary Chase assigned her to sail Federal officials on tours along the Potomac River. Chase hosted Secretary of State William Seward and his family onboard the cutter, as well as Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, Rhode Island governor William Sprague, and Rear Admiral John Dahlgren. Chase also extended an invitation to the President to ride on board *Miami*. Within days, President Lincoln, the First Lady and their two sons boarded the cutter for a cruise from the Washington waterfront, downriver to Alexandria and up the Anacostia River to the Navy Yard.

Technically, the *Miami* sailed under U.S. Army orders; however, the President decided to use the cutter for official business. On Saturday, April 19th, he boarded *Miami* with secretaries Chase and Stanton, Admiral Dahlgren and other military officials, for a meeting with U.S. Army Major General Irvin McDowell. The cutter sailed down the Potomac River to McDowell's headquarters at Aquia Creek, where the President and his entourage anchored for the night. The next morning, Lincoln conferred with McDowell, then the President sailed *Miami* back up the



Potomac to Washington.

In early May, Lincoln chose to use *Miami* for another official trip; however, this time he intended to take the cutter in harm's way. The war effort had bogged down at the front lines in Hampton Roads, Virginia. Fortress Monroe and Union forces commanded the Peninsula on the north side of the James River and Confederate forces supported by ironclad *CSS Virginia* held Norfolk, the Norfolk Navy Yard and the south side of the James. Lincoln was

determined to see first-hand why Union military leaders failed to move on the Confederates occupying Norfolk and the ironclad's homeport at the Navy Yard.

Lincoln soon became the first and only sitting president to direct troops and assets in the field. After meeting with



(Above) Painting of Revenue Cutter Miami covering troop landings at Ocean View Beach near Norfolk, Virginia, by Charles Mazoujian. (U.S. Coast Guard Collection)

his flag officers at Fortress Monroe, he reconnoitered possible troop landing beaches near Norfolk and ordered the shelling of Confederate fortifications at Sewell's Point, near the landing zone. He boarded a shallow-draft tugboat to sound water depth along the intended landing beach and he sent *Miami* to the landing zone in advance of troop transports to cover the landings.

Before dawn on Saturday, May 11th, Union troop transports bearing 6,000 men and 100 horses appeared at present-day Ocean View Beach, where *Miami* waited at anchor. The Union troops landed and marched on Norfolk with little opposition. Confederate troops had evacuated the area, but before they left the Navy Yard, they off-loaded *Virginia's* guns to arm shore batteries up the James River. *Virginia's* crew steamed the unarmed ironclad into the river where they destroyed her with fire and explosives. When Union forces arrived at the outskirts of Norfolk, the mayor and city council surrendered to them. Despite the hesitancy of his generals, Lincoln's campaign had worked, breaking the stalemate between Union and Confederate forces in

Southeastern Virginia.

Miami would not return to Washington with the commander-in-chief, nor enjoy fame and acclaim as Lincoln's command ship. After seeing the troops off to the landings at Ocean View, the cutter suffered boiler damage and returned to Washington after undergoing repairs. Before *Miami* departed Hampton Roads, a Norfolk admirer of President Lincoln located *CSS Virginia's* steam safety valve and gave it to the cutter crew, which was delivered to the President upon her return to the nation's capital.

The President's amphibious operation had opened a strategic location to Union forces and *CSS Virginia* no longer threatened Union ships in the Hampton Roads area. President Lincoln went on to greater glory as the Union won the war, and the president succeeded in his effort to re-unify the nation. However, Lincoln's command ship did not enjoy similar acclaim. *Miami* served out the war at homeports of New York and Newport, Rhode Island, and spent her final days at Wilmington, Delaware. In 1871, the Service decommissioned the cutter and sold her for \$2,149.

The Long Blue Line: SN1 Florence Finch

by William H. Thiesen, Ph.D., Atlantic Area Historian

Of the thousands of women who have served with honor in the United States Coast Guard, one stands out for her bravery and devotion to duty. Florence Smith Finch, the daughter of a U.S. Army veteran and Filipino mother, was born on the island of Luzon, north of Manila, in Santiago City. She married navy PT boat crewman Charles E. Smith while working for General Douglas MacArthur's army intelligence unit located in Manila. In 1942, after the Japanese invaded the Philippines, her young husband died trying to re-supply American and Filipino troops trapped by the enemy on Corregidor Island and the Bataan Peninsula.

After the Japanese occupied Manila, Finch avoided internment by claiming her Philippine citizenship. She received a note from her

imprisoned army intelligence boss regarding shortages of food and medicine in the POW camps. Finch began assisting with locating and providing smuggled supplies to American POWs and helping provide fuel to Filipino guerrillas. In October 1944, the Japanese arrested Finch, beating, torturing and interrogating her during her initial confinement. Through it all, she never revealed information regarding her underground operations or fellow resisters.

When American forces liberated her prison camp in February 1945, Finch weighed only eighty pounds. She boarded a Coast Guard-manned



(Left) Florence Smith Finch supplied food and medicine to American POWs in the Philippines then became a Coast Guard SPAR late in World War II. (U.S. Coast Guard photo)

Feature Articles

transport returning to the United States and moved to her late father's hometown of Buffalo, New York. In July 1945, she enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard, eager to continue the struggle against an enemy that had killed her husband. Finch served through the end of the war and was among the first Pacific-Island American women to don a Coast Guard uniform.

After the war, she met U.S. Army veteran Robert Finch. They married and moved to Ithaca, New York, where she lived the remainder of her life. Of the thousands of SPARs serving in World War II, she was the first to be honored with the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Ribbon. In November 1947, she received the U.S. Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian medal awarded to Americans who aided in the war effort. In 1995, the Coast Guard honored Finch's service by naming a facility for her at Coast Guard Base Honolulu.



(Above) Photograph of Japanese tanks entering Manila in early January 1942. Japanese troops would occupy the city until 1945. (Photo courtesy of U.S. Army)

With her distinguished service, Finch is just one of many members of the Coast Guard's long blue line.

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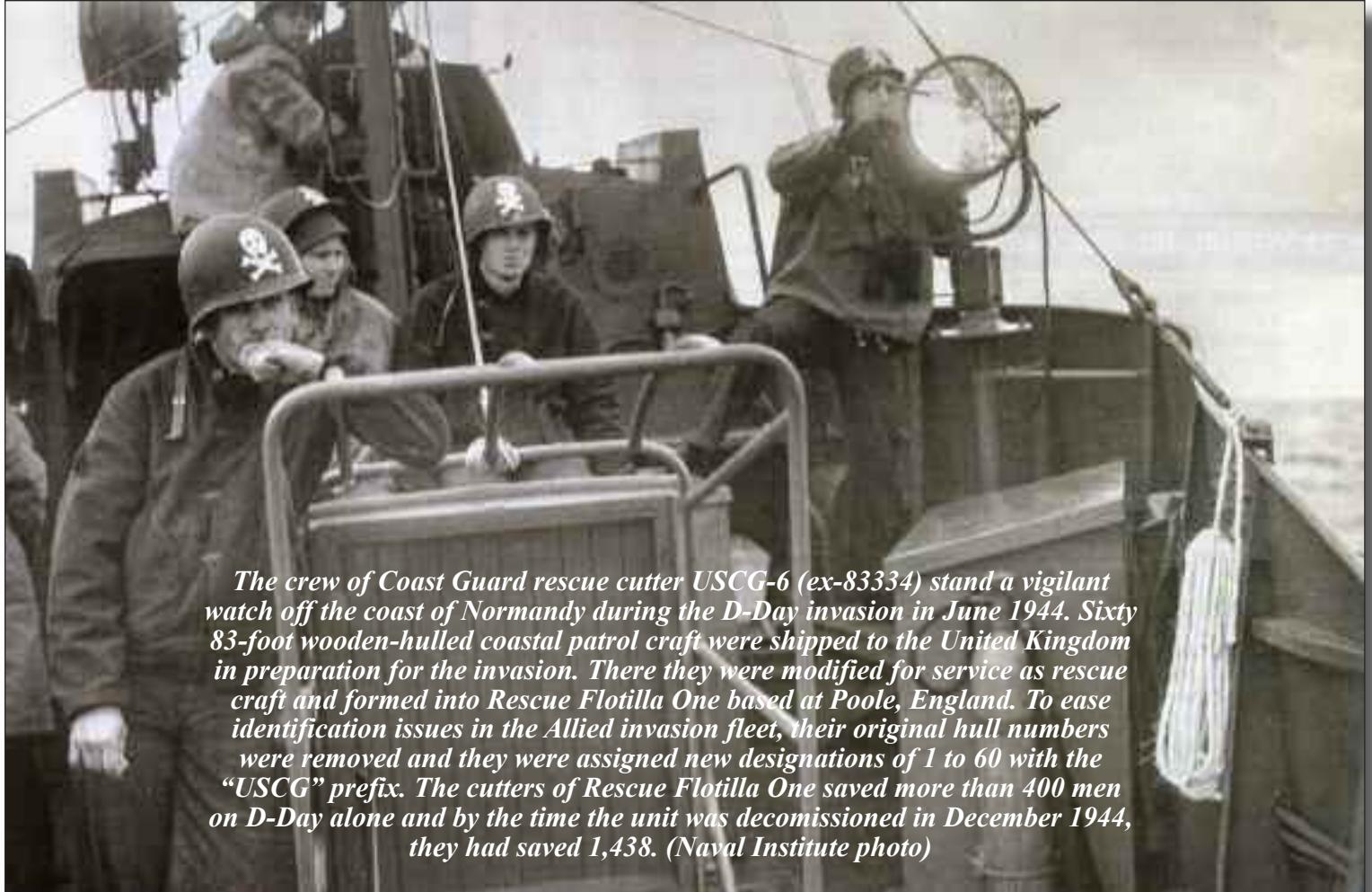
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The crew of Coast Guard rescue cutter USCG-6 (ex-83334) stand a vigilant watch off the coast of Normandy during the D-Day invasion in June 1944. Sixty 83-foot wooden-hulled coastal patrol craft were shipped to the United Kingdom in preparation for the invasion. There they were modified for service as rescue craft and formed into Rescue Flotilla One based at Poole, England. To ease identification issues in the Allied invasion fleet, their original hull numbers were removed and they were assigned new designations of 1 to 60 with the "USCG" prefix. The cutters of Rescue Flotilla One saved more than 400 men on D-Day alone and by the time the unit was decommissioned in December 1944, they had saved 1,438. (Naval Institute photo)