



# The Cutter

*The Newsletter of the Foundation for Coast Guard History*  
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## IN THIS ISSUE

New Book Available	1
The Snipe	2
CG Hangs a Man	2
Veterans Day 2004	4
Semper Forgotus	4

## WEBSITE:

Check out the website for the Foundation at: [ww.fcgh.org](http://ww.fcgh.org).

See all the recent newsletters with pictures in color and an abundance of information and links to other related sites.

Visit, log on and give us your ideas by addressing either Webmaster, Ken Laesser at [Ken@fcgh.org](mailto:Ken@fcgh.org) or the Executive Director/Editor, Fred Herzberg at [Fred@fcgh.org](mailto:Fred@fcgh.org). We welcome your comments in our continuing effort to make this organization a useful tool for all who are interested in or helped create Coast Guard history

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## THE COAST GUARD

AVAILABLE AT MOST BOOKSTORES NOW

The new book *The Coast Guard* is now available at exchanges, major book stores and discount book stores. It is receiving wide acclaim, much to the delight of the many authors and the editorial staff headed by Tom Beard. The publishers are very pleased that the book has "shelf appeal" meaning that you can spot it from far across the store.



Executive Director, Captain Fred Herzberg, presenting a first copy of *The Coast Guard* to Walter Cronkite, author of the foreword.

Most stores will stock it in their Military or History sections. The book has 365 pages and over 700 pictures, many of them quite dramatic. It contains detailed stories of heroic exploits, history of the U. S. Coast Guard and its predecessor services, stories of how the service acquired its many missions and articles on how it will handle its many new missions in the 21st century

This book will make a handsome addition to any library or coffee table, guaranteed to liven any conversation. A wonderful gift for the holiday season

## The SNIPE .....

Now each of us from time to time has gazed upon the sea and watched the mighty warships pulling out to keep this country free.

And most of us have read a book or heard a lusty tale, about these men who sail these ships through lightning, wind and hail.

But there's a place within each ship that legends fail to teach. It's down below the water-line and it takes a living toll - - a hot metal living hell, that sailors call the "Hole."

It houses engines run with steam that makes the shafts go round. A place of fire, noise, and heat that beats your spirits down.

Where boilers like a hellish heart, with blood of angry steam, are molded gods without remorse, are nightmares in a dream.

Whose threat from the fires roar, is like a living doubt, that at any moment with such scorn, might escape and crush you out.

Where turbines scream like tortured souls alone and lost in Hell, are ordered from above somewhere, they answer every bell.

The men who keep the fires lit and make the engines run, are strangers to the light and rarely see the sun.

They have no time for man or God, no tolerance for fear, their aspect pays no living thing a tribute of a tear.

For there's not much that men can do that these men haven't done, beneath the decks, deep in the

hole, to make the engines run.

And every hour of every day they keep the watch in Hell, for if the fires ever fail their ship's a useless shell.

When ships converge to have a war upon an angry sea, the men below just grimly smile at what their fate will be.

They're locked below like men fore-doomed, who hear no battle cry, it's well assumed that if they're hit men below will die.

For every day's a war down there when gauges all read red, twelve-hundred pounds of heated steam can kill you mighty dead.

So if you ever write their songs or try to tell their tale, the very words would make you hear a fired furnace's wail.

And people as a general rule don't hear of these men of steel, so little heard about this place that sailors call the "Hole." But I can sing about this place and try to make you see, the hardened life of the men down there, 'cause one of them is me.

I've seen these sweat-soaked heroes fight in superheated air, to keep their ship alive and right, though no one knows they're there.

And thus they'll fight for ages on till warships sail no more, amid the boiler's mighty heat and the turbine's hellish roar. So when you see a ship pull out to meet a war-like foe, remember faintly if you can, "The Men Who Sail Below."

-Anonymous. ( Provided by Captain Ray Copin)

## THE DAY THE COAST GUARD HANGED A MAN By Robert F. Barber

It was done. For the first and only time in its long history, the Coast Guard had hanged a man. The date was August 17, 1929 the place of execution a gallows especially built inside a Coast Guard seaplane hangar at Base 6, Fort Lauderdale, FL. The prisoner, James Horace Alderman, with a long list of federal crimes on his records, had flaunted the law one time too many, had shot and killed three federal lawmen in a frenzy of hot blood on the seas between Miami and Bimini, two years earlier

On August 7, 1927, a pleasant summer afternoon on the Gulf Stream, the 75-ft. Coast Guard patrol boat CG-249 was en route from Fort Lauderdale to Bimini, Bahamas, with a passenger on board, Special Agent Robert K. Webster, of the Treasury Department. Webster was to investigate reports that counterfeit American currency was circulating in the British colony, presumably introduced by American rumrunners in payment for illicit cargoes of whiskey. Skipper of the CG-249 was Boatswain Sydney C. Sanderlin, his Engineer, Motor Machinist's Mate Victor A. Lamby. Five other enlisted men filled out the crew. (continued on next page)

At 1PM, a 40-ft. open cockpit motorboat was sighted ahead. Rumrunners often used small speedboats for dashes into U.S. ports, sometimes in daylight. As the motorboat reversed course and increased speed, Sanderlin fired a blank round from his one-pounder. Another burst of machine gun fire, not to hit the rummy, but to warn him, did the trick. The 40-footer hove to. CG-249 came alongside. Alderman was in charge of the suspect vessel. His one crewmember, Robert E. Weech, appeared innocuous. There were no signs of any weapons on their vessel. Coast Guard crewman John Robinson jumped over onto the 40-footer and quickly located about 20 cases of liquor stacked in the engine room. He called: "It's a rummy!"

Sanderlin ordered both men to come aboard the CG-249 and be searched. No weapons were found on them. Sanderlin then went into the pilothouse to radio Fort Lauderdale and ask for new orders. A loaded service .45 lay on the chart table beside him. Out on the deck, Alderman asked the crewmen if he could return to his boat and get a coat he had left behind. Receiving assent, he soon returned to the CG-249 wearing a coat. Nobody knew that he now carried a pistol inside his coat. Just as Sanderlin was starting his call, Alderman stepped into the pilothouse, fired his pistol at Sanderlin's back, killing him instantly, and grabbed the .45. He whirled to face the others, a deadly weapon brandished in each hand. Victor Lamby heard the shot and ran for the small armory where he could get another .45. Alderman fired, hitting Lamby squarely in the spine, severing his spinal cord. Lamby collapsed over the engine room hatch and fell into the room in desperate pain, unable to move his legs. Robinson grabbed a wrench and hurled it as hard as he could at Alderman, but missed. As Alderman turned to shoot him, Robinson dove overboard, escaping the bullet. Weech just stood by, gawking.

Now in control, Alderman ordered the re-

maining five Coast Guardsmen and the Treasury Agent to board the rum boat, shouting he would kill them all and burn the CG-249. He ordered Weech to go into the engine room of the CG-249 and break gasoline lines to get ready to burn the cutter. Boatswain's Mate Frank Tuten spoke up: "Wait a minute. You'd better get this boat away from the 249 before you light that gasoline, or the explosion may blow us all sky high." Alderman said: "Shut up," but the idea sank in. The six captives were now huddled on the stern of the rum boat, with Alderman training his guns on them. Weech tried to start the rum boat's engine, but it coughed and backfired. Alderman turned to see the trouble.

It was now or never for the captives. Acting as one, they threw themselves at Alderman, with Agent Webster and Tuten in the lead. Alderman reacted in time to start shooting. The .45 barked first, catching Webster directly over the heart, killing him instantly. Tuten grabbed for Alderman's other arm and managed to hold that arm while Hollingsworth knocked the gun out of Alderman's hand. Firing wildly with the .45, Alderman hit tough little Jodie Hollingsworth, the bullet penetrating Jodie's left chest below the arm, continuing up through his throat and temple, and destroying his right eye. Jodie fell overboard. Luckily, the cool water revived him so that he could swim a little and save himself from drowning.

By this time, four men were on Alderman, beating him unmercifully. He fell to the deck unconscious. Tuten, Caudle and Robinson turned on Weech, who offered no resistance. Robinson threw him overboard and the wounded Jodie Hollingsworth tried to drown him by dragging him under. Robinson leaned over the side with a stout oar and swatted Weech's head. Weech went limp as a rag. He was hauled aboard the rum boat where he and Alderman were manacled, arms behind their backs.

A quiet August afternoon in the blue-green

waters off Florida had exploded into a living Hell. Fear, hatred, viciousness and murder had burst upon the small Coast Guard crew with terrifying speed. Webster and Sanderlin were dead. Lamby died four days later. Hollingsworth was badly wounded. The stage was set for a two-year drama. Would Alderman and Weech pay with their lives for their brutal rampage? Overriding all other factors were the questions in many Americans' minds as to whether the "Noble Experiment" of Prohibition was worth this bloodshed and waste of lives. After two years in jails in Miami and Jacksonville, Alderman and Weech were brought to trial in Federal Court. Weech was convicted only of violating Prohibition laws and given a year and a day. Alderman was convicted of murder and piracy and sentenced to be hanged at the Broward County Jail. Broward County officials were most reluctant to hang a murderer in its most tourism-conscious city, Fort Lauderdale. Ritter then ruled that the execution take place on the nearest Federal post-the Coast Guard Base Six in Fort Lauderdale! Reluctantly, the Coast Guard built a gallows inside the seaplane hangar. On August 17, 1929, in the greatest of secrecy and at 5 AM, Alderman arrived at the hangar in the custody of U.S. Marshals and quickly paid the supreme penalty for murder and piracy.

The author, retired USCG Captain Robert F. Barber, now lives in Melbourne, Florida

For more details on this same incident, see the new book *The Coast Guard*.

## VETERANS DAY 2004

On this Veterans Day, we pause to reflect, recall and remember our many friends and shipmates who are no longer with us. As long as we are alive their deeds live within us. After we are gone, who will remember their great sacrifices? Who will remember the humor they brought with them? Who will remember their creative solutions to dramatic challenges? Who? You each control the answer to that question.

## U.S. COAST GUARD: "Semper Forgotus"

by James L. Carney, Esq.

*Recently, while going through a number of emails, I came across a very interesting message in which a reader of my work stated that she didn't know that the Coast Guard was active during the many wars we have experienced. This was not the first time this question concerning the "CG's" activity during wartime came up. So, this writer will attempt to set the record straight, even if I am "Preaching to the Choir."*

August 4, 2004 marked the 114th anniversary of the United States Coast Guard as it is now known. This, the smallest branch of military service, operating under various titles and duties, has been going strong since its inception in 1790. In fact, the Coast Guard (USCG), which was initially the US Revenue Cutter Service later combined with the Lighthouse and Lifeboat Services, is older by seven years its then big sister -- the Navy. Moreover, this combined service which started out chasing contraband smugglers in its earliest years, later to fight in *all* her country's wars, has come full-circle, as it is again chasing smugglers and now even terrorists. The ships are different. The contraband has changed. And, yes, even the government department she serves has changed! The Coast Guard went from the Treasury Department to the Transportation Department, and is now working under the Department of Homeland Security. (A lot of moving around for such a small branch of the government). Yet little is known of the Coast Guard's role in *military* history, as little is known of the service itself. To wit: The Coast Guard is yet known as the "*forgotten*" military service.

Much is known *per se* of her daring sea rescues, both from the decks of her cutters to her helicopters above the waves: Her life-saving history stands unrivalled. And, like all the other service organizations through the years,

the Coast Guard has well served her country . Yet it wasn't until the Second World War that, like an old warrior again recalled-to-arms, this sea-service really scintillated. In late 1940-early '41, cutters originally stationed along the entire eastern and western seaboard were ordered to the North Atlantic, likewise the Pacific, to protect convoys to various ports. Convoys were sent to such allies as Britain and later Russia, and to also establish the Greenland Patrol; therein to protect Greenland from Nazi occupation. The Germans had attempted numerous times to establish "weather stations" both there and in Iceland which was under British control. Greenland was our baby. A small number of these ships never returned. One such victim of Nazi aggression was the 327 foot cutter USCGC *ALEXANDER HAMILTON* (WPG-34), torpedoed and sunk by a U-boat (U-132) on 30 January 1942, with the loss of six (6) killed instantly; six (6) succumbed later to injuries sustained in the torpedoing, and ten (10) more men were hospitalized. Another loss was the USCGC *ESCANABA I* (WPG-77), namesake to the cutter that this author served aboard in the early sixties. She sank on 13 June 1943, with the loss of 101 hands; two alone lived to tell the tale.

Further west, on December 7, 1941, the 327' cutter, USCGC *TANEY*, (WPG-37) saw action at Pearl Harbor firing early rounds at incoming Japanese planes, slipping her lines and safely fighting her way to sea, yet little is recorded of this conflict. This cutter, and a number of other Coast Guard ships, later saw action in *both* theatres, and after a starring role in Vietnam, was -- in the 1980's -- decommissioned and now sits in Baltimore, Maryland as a floating museum. The *Taney's* sister ship the CGC *INGHAM* (WPG-35) is also now a museum ship and sits dockside at Patriots Point, South Carolina. Many people do not even know that the Coast Guard was involved in the Vietnam Conflict, as during all wars the "CG" serves under the Navy. Oh, the cutters and crews are

still Coast Guard in time of war , yet take orders from the Navy hierarchy. Maybe, just maybe that is one of the reasons the Coast Guard is *persona non grata* during our various conflicts -- everyone thinks we are the Navy? God forbid

Another very good explanation is that the Coast Guard is so "multi-functional," that it boggles the mind of the average citizen. "*Are they military, search and rescue, sea police, or what?*," asks the casual observer. The answer. All of the above -- and more! The precise difference is that in peacetime she was for many years under the Department of Transportation (DOT); in war, under the Department of Defense (DOD); wherein the Navy always remains part of the Department of Defense (DOD). It finally appears that the "CG" has found a "home" in both peace and war: As stated above she is under the new Department of Homeland Security. Yet, when all is said and done, the Coast Guard is always a *military* organization.

Prove it, you say? Let me employ the statistics recorded during/after our many wars. (These "stats" were compiled by the CG Historian's Office).

Quasi-French War utilized her 13 small two-masted cutters against much larger European Naval ships (casualties-unknown).

War of 1812: 100 served, 0 killed-in-action (KIA)-wounded unknown.

Mexican War: 71 served, 0 KIA, wounded-unknown.

Civil War::219 served, 1 KIA, wounded-unknown.

Spanish-American War: 660 served 1 KIA, wounded-unknown.

World War I: 8,835 served, 111 KIA, 0 wounded.

World War II: 241,093 served, 574 died in battle, 1,917 wounded.

Korean War: 44,143 served, 0 killed, 0 wounded, during the Korean Conflict the CG was employed to rescue downed pilots, and a few ships were used as forward observers.

Vietnam War: (8,000 served, 7 KIA, 60 wounded). Recently, the body of Lt. Jack Ritichier (USCGR) missing-in-action in Laos, since 1966, when his helicopter was shot down attempting to rescue others, was returned home to be buried with full *military* honors. Oh yes, the “CG” was there. . . .

Gulf War: (400 served, 0 KIA, 0 wounded). Until the near end of the conflict, the CG had a group of Coast Guard Reserve Port Security Units patrolling the Persian Gulf in go-fast boats, and patrolling docks, looking for any terrorist activity.

Iraqi War: We are again assigned to Port Security headquartered in Kuwait. Also, the Coast Guard is maintaining port security here at home as well. I do not have any information regarding any killed or wounded at this time. I do know that there are still four (4) 110 foot cutters patrolling in the Gulf.

Question: If our Coast Guardsmen are not in a military service (as some reporters speculate), how did these people get *killed*, or *wounded in action*? Moreover, what was the Coast Guard doing there (including the recent jaunt to Kuwait) -- *if it were not a military service*?

However, as I have found while searching for Coast Guard memorabilia in various military magazines (VFW; American Legion, included), there are seldom any items relating to the USCG available. There are watches, rings, insignia, etc., dedicated to the Army, Navy . . . well you get the idea! . . . Still, in only one case have I found an item (a ring), memorializing the Coast Guard. It would seem that *militarily* the Coast Guard is regarded as a non-entity. Awhile back, I espied a beautifully constructed quilt exhibited in a store window right here in my town of Park Rapids, honoring us veterans. (It is being raffled for capital needed to build a Minnesota Veteran’s Memorial). Yet, again, the *four* branches are exalted; the USCG exempted.

That was the last straw! I contacted the Coast Guard Public Relations Office in Washington D.C and spoke with Captain Karonis. I asked if

anything, is being done about the lack of publicity regarding the “CG’s” military history. The reply surprised me. He opined and “acknowledged” the “parity” when it came to the 4 services. “*It seems like a statement that cannot be fixed,*” said he. “*We’ve made some progress.*” “*Last year, [former] SECDEF Cohen said he wanted to recognize the CG in a major event in Boston.*” Adding: “*He did a great job and a major point we [CG] asked, for inclusion in his remarks, was to note that the CG is the **fifth** armed service!*” [Italics, mine]. He did very well. “*Yet the [public] awareness curve isn’t where it should be yet.*”

The Captain went on to tell of the national news coverage (CG, inspired) that now includes Coast Guard action in nationally-broadcasted news spots on NBC, ABC, CBS, and Fox News, telling of our value to the country and our budget deficit situation. “*We were featured in Parade Magazine [cover story] in July (read by 85 million people) and have been in West Wing and major movies. Just last week we were on 6 different network shows: Dateline, ABC and NBC news, TLC on SAR (search & rescue), Inside Edition, [and Sept 6th, Fox News] on a drug-laden “go-fast” boat’s capture.*” The Captain added: “*Our office [PR] pressed for those . . . we’re very proud of our accomplishments.*”

**“..the Coast Guard is the fifth armed service...the public awareness curve isn’t where it should be yet”**

Yes, we are getting recognized -- *finally!* But what about educating the public to the fact that there are *five* services that fought in our wars. What about recognition for a job well done for the guys who lost their lives under the Flag and motto: “*Semper Paratus*,” (Always Ready). It still seems our military status is “*Semper Forgotus*,” (always forgotten). . . . Hope to see that changed soon!

Jim Carney is a free lance writer and an avid supporter of the U. S. Coast Guard