

The Cutter

The Newsletter of the Foundation for Coast Guard History

391 Brookview Dr.

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Whale Rock Lighthouse/Keeper Eberle Memorial

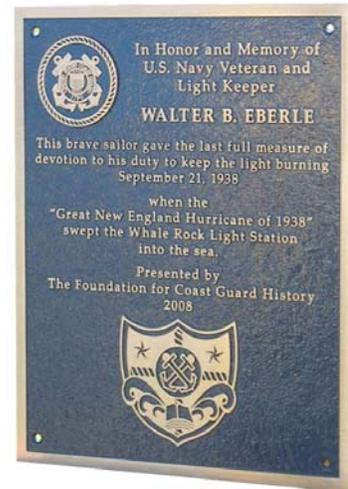
By: John Galluzzo

What does it say about a man that seventy years after his death, more than fifty of his descendants turn out on that anniversary to celebrate the life of someone most of them had never met?

The circumstances behind the death of Keeper Walter Eberle have always been disputed. A killer storm took down the lighthouse he was serving in, but was he in it when it fell? Due to the passage of time and the fact that no one witnessed his last moments, we will never know. But, from what we know of the man, we can certainly make a strong assumption.

Born in Webster City, Iowa, in 1898, Eberle joined the U.S. Navy as a young man, serving his country for twenty years aboard the submarines S-19, S-21, S-48, and the battleship *USS Utah*. When he left the service, he went to work briefly in a chewing gum factory. But he always knew that he would die on the ocean, or so his children say today. Perhaps that's why he signed on as an assistant lighthouse keeper at Whale Rock Light in Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay at forty years old. The old seafarer in him couldn't imagine a life landlocked, least of all in a chewing gum factory.

Sadly, his timing could not have been worse. He'd only been in the Lighthouse Service for a year when tragedy struck.



The FCGH plaque dedicated to

(Continued on page 2)

The Foundation for Coast Guard History



www.fcgh.org

A storm that had formed on September 10, 1938 out in the Atlantic, reached category five status as it crossed the Bahamas, then took a quick course up the Atlantic seaboard. Its speed, nearly seventy miles per hour, was what gave it strength when it hit the northeast. Moving too quickly to be greatly calmed by the colder waters of the north, the gale – simply to be known forever as the Hurricane of 1938 – struck Long Island as a category three storm at 3:30 p.m. on September 21. Twenty minutes later its storm surge hit the Rhode Island coast.

On September 21, 2008, at the ceremony at Jamestown, Rhode Island's Beavertail Lighthouse for the dedication of a plaque commemorating Keeper Eberle's loss, Richard Sullivan, Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association president, summed up the thoughts of all gathered. "I can't imagine what it must have been like here a couple of hours from now, seventy years ago today."

On that day in 1938, there had been a forecast of clouds in the Narragansett Bay area, and even some high winds. The storm coming up the coast, though, was expected to swerve out over the Atlantic. Even so, with the winds on the increase, Eberle wanted to give the lighthouse's head keeper, Dan Sullivan, a chance to get home before the worst of the predicted winds struck. The lighthouse, a caisson style "sparkplug," sat exposed in the west passage into the bay, surrounded entirely by water. Eberle left the mainland early, rowing to Sullivan's relief, leaving his wife and six children ashore.

On what would become "the saddest and most destructive day in Jamestown history," according to Town Councilor Robert W. Sutton, the storm surge pushed into Narragansett Bay. Driven by a combined equinoctial and lunar high tide, the water rose to nearly fifteen feet above normal, bashing the tower. As the power of the storm ripped homes from their foundations along the shore and drowned people in their cars as far away as Providence, causing one and all to cling to whatever they could to stay alive, no one seemed to notice that Whale Rock Light had collapsed, presumably taking Keeper Eberle with it to his grave. The next morning, Keeper Sullivan called Eberle's wife Agnes and came right to the point. "The light is gone," he said, not needing to explain the deeper meaning of the words.

Eberle's body was never found. Did he try and escape with his life by boat? Most likely not. As a man of the sea, he would have known his odds were poor at best against the rage of the storm in a small wooden craft. More to the point, as a twenty-year Navy man, there's very little chance he would ever have left his post in the first place. Still, we will never know.

For seventy years, Eberle was a footnote to history, one of approximately seven hundred people killed by the "Long Island Express," a storm that took 200,000 trees from New England forests, 26,000 automobiles, 20,000 utility poles and an untold number of first and second homes.

Seventy years later, thanks to the combined efforts of the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum Association, the Friends of Whale Rock Light and the Foundation for Coast Guard History, Eberle's place in history was firmly cemented, with the dedication of a bronze plaque for display inside the Beavertail Lighthouse Museum. The plaque stands next to a window that overlooks the remains of Whale Rock Light, marked today by a lighted buoy.

The story still resonates among local residents. “After you get done speaking about the Hurricane of 1938 and telling the Whale Rock story,” said George Warner, Vice President of the museum association and a volunteer interpreter at the museum, “you just get that lump.”

Retired Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officer Carl “Sandy” Schwaab, speaking on behalf of the Foundation for Coast Guard History, noted “Men like Keeper Eberle don’t make the front pages of the history books. Few know of the sacrifices and more often the drudgery of keeping a light.” Keeper Eberle, he said to a crowd that included three of Eberle’s four surviving children, “gave his last full measure of devotion to duty to the Lighthouse Service and the Coast Guard.”

Invoking the days of oil lamps and hand-struck fog signal bells, Lieutenant Commander Richard Wester, commanding officer of the *USCGC Juniper*, promised to “keep the light burning” in Eberle’s honor. The Whale Rock Lighthouse, built in 1882 and lost in 1938, was replaced shortly thereafter by an automated light, which is now gone, too. Among the 230 buoys that Wester and his crew oversee is the Whale Rock lighted green buoy #3, 270 yards east of Whale Rock. On July 11, 2008, the *Juniper* crew “worked” the buoy on a dependents’ cruise. An ensign read the history of the lighthouse’s demise for the crew of forty and the one hundred and twenty guests. Tasked with maintaining the buoy that replaced the lights, Wester proudly sees himself and his crew as the occupational descendants of Keeper Eberle.



Unveiling of the plaque by George Warner (l) and Sandy Schwaab

“His spirit of devotion to duty manifests itself in today’s Coast Guard,” LCDR Wester told the crowd gathered for the dedication. “We will keep the Whale Rock buoy lit and working properly.”

Dr. William Thiesen, the Coast Guard’s Atlantic Area Historian, discussed the wider scope of the service’s history, and the losses of light keepers at Minot’s Light off Massachusetts, in Galveston, Texas and at Scotch Cap Lighthouse in Alaska. Bravery like Eberle’s, he said, “reminds me of the reason why I got involved in this work.”

Jeremy D’Entremont, New England lighthouse historian, noted that while Eberle was the only Lighthouse Service employee killed during the storm, six others had died at lighthouses during the gale, at Prudence Island and Massachusetts’ Palmer Island Light.

Lighthouse keeping, according to David Robinson, Director of the Friends of Whale Rock Light, “is a metaphor for human greatness, the best humanity has to offer.” Keeper Eberle’s story, he said, “should be learned, shared and remembered.”

For the moment, with the plaque dedicated and mounted to the museum wall, the final words to Eberle belong to CWO Schwaab: “Fair winds and following seas.”

FCGH Book Reviews

This issue's reviews are presented by Sandy Schwaab, Doug Kroll, John Galluzzo, and Bob Desh. If you would care to submit a review or recommended reading, please send it to your editor at snschwaab@cox.net. Be sure to include your name and affiliation and all appropriate bibliographic information for proper reference.

From Sandy Schwaab:

THEY HAD TO GO OUT ... True Stories of America's Coastal Life-Savers from the pages of "Wreck & Rescue Journal," Foreword by Frederick Stonehouse. Gwinn, MI: Avery Color Studios, Inc. and the United States Life-Saving Service Heritage Assoc., 2007. ISBN: 13:978-1-892384-39-3, Photographs, Illustrations, 201pp. Prices vary.

The Regulations of the U. S. Life-Saving Service were perfectly clear: You have to go out – in the pursuit of saving lives and property at sea. This meant that when seas raged, winds howled, and every “prudent” sailor sought safe harbor, the life-savers prepared to embark on life and death rescues of those caught unaware or where hubris exceeded practicality. However, the Regulations **never** stated, You have to come back, which may, in fact, be the title of the sequel to this inspired collection of stories of heroic and, often, tragic exploits of one of the Coast Guard's most gallant predecessor organizations; the pay was ridiculously low, the risks phenomenal, and the glory slim, yet these men (and, today, women) risked their lives to serve a more glorious cause.

Excerpted from the pages of *Wreck and Rescue*, the journal of the U.S. Life-Saving Service

Heritage Association, these individual tales of bravery in the face of daunting seas and gales are reminiscent of the men of the U. S. Life-Saving Service and today's U. S. Coast Guard. The individual sagas and exploits cover both Atlantic and Pacific coasts, the Great Lakes, and Western Rivers, and document the contributions of male and female, black and white. Results mattered – lives were at stake – and the USLSS and Coast Guard responded automatically to these incidents. The book examines not only the exploits of the “famous:” Joshua James, Ida Lewis (not as a LH keeper), the Pea Island, NC Station crew, David Lyle for his Life-Saving guns, and the crew of CG36500 in the rescue of 70 souls from the *Fort Mercer* and *Pendleton* in 1952; but the “not-so-famous” station keepers and crews of Louisville, KY, San Francisco, CA, and Cape Disappointment, WA.

Contributors include numerous Coast Guard historians, including: Frederick Stonehouse, Ralph Shanks, John Galluzzo, and Dennis Noble – to name a few. For “Coasties,” their stories are riveting and reminiscent of days when young, invincible men made life threatening efforts to render humanitarian services. This book is a marvelous compendium of our predecessors and heritage and well worth the reading!

THE COAST GUARD IN FILM. By CDR Ralph Judd, USCG, Ret. Foreword by VADM Clyde T. Lusk, USCG, Ret. Trafford Publishing, Victoria, BC, Canada, 2006. ISBN: 1-4120-8414-8. Photographs, Illustrations, Original cinema posters, Index, Appendices, 324 pp. Prices vary.

What a treat for Coasties looking to find their heritage in the movies. From the ridiculous to the sublime, the Three Stooges to Shirley Temple and John Wayne, from comedy to drama, this compilation of Coast Guardsmen, Life-Savers, and Lighthouse Keepers is sure to keep you turning the pages to see what comes next.

Beginning in the days of silent film and running through 1985, CDR Judd chronicles the gamut of film genres relating to the Coast Guard; high adventures, serials, full-length features, shorts, musicals, and documentaries. We even see the Coast Guard through the eyes of Walt Disney's cartoons (Pluto) and movies ("The Boatniks" – not one of the more glamorous images of the Coast Guard). Included are visions of the Coast Guard and its predecessors (the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, U.S. Life-Saving Service, U.S. Lighthouse Service, and U.S. Steamboat Inspection Service) in various lights. An additional appendix lists and highlights the dozens of celebrities who served at some time with the Coast Guard – everyone from singers, dancers, actors, and musicians to professional boxers, football heroes, golfers, and world-renowned authors. Too numerous to mention here, a short synopsis of some of the more notables: actors Cesar Romero, Victor Mature, Buddy Ebsen, and Beau Bridges; comedian Sid Caesar; musician Rudy Vallee; boxer Jack Dempsey; football's Otto Graham, and golf's Arnold Palmer; and, probably most notable, the Coast Guard's first African-American Chief Journalist, author of *Roots*, Alex Haley. There's even a "rumor" that musician, Jimmy Buffett served – still to be determined.

To quote from VADM (Ret) Clyde T. Lusk's Foreword (who I just happened to work for at MIO New Orleans in the late '70s) - "This masterly contribution to popular culture...captures the Hollywood image of the Coast Guard as presented to the public throughout the Twentieth century."

This is a highly graphical and informative image of the Coast Guard throughout the early-mid 20th century as seen through the eyes of Hollywood executives. The photos alone are worth the price of admission. The only other place where these images are available is at the USCG Museum in New London, CT. Stop by the museum at the CG Academy and view the original posters from these amazing stories.

From John Galluzzo:

RECOLLECTIONS OF 32 YEARS IN THE U.S. COAST GUARD AND OTHER RAMBLINGS. By William F. Meininger, Authorhouse, Bloomington IN, 2008, Paperback, 383 pages.

William F. Meininger, one would surmise, had a somewhat average Coast Guard career, for a lifer, anyway. Sure, he was a mustang, an enlisted man who fought his way into the officer corps. And sure, he performed an entire "about face" in his career, transitioning from the water's surface into the sky above. Neither of those things happen every day, but they're certainly not unheard of. He made the most out of his time in the service, and followed his dreams from 40-footers to C-130s. But wait, this is not your average service memoir.

There's no doubt that Meininger made some friends in the Coast Guard, and many of them. And, with his wit and strong opinions, there's no doubt that he made some enemies, too. He pulls no punches, except where it counts most. If he has a story to tell that's embarrassing to somebody other than himself (or his wife, poor thing), he refrains from using real names. That tack is what makes the book so damn funny. He can tell any story he wants without getting sued (by the way, he hates lawyers. Read the book and you'll see for yourself). That freedom of expression coupled with the self-professed embellishment on the part of the author makes this book one funny read. Tall tales, sea stories or whatever you may call them are by no means a lost art. And we all know that they have basis in truth. Spend an hour with your favorite Coastie and start him or her talking, and out they'll flow. What we just have to keep in mind is that over the years waves will grow from ten feet in height to twelve, and winds will speed from thirty knots to forty. There's no fault here. It's human nature to gather attention this way – for men in competition with other storytellers, we fall prey to what's known as male hierarchical thinking - and in some cases, it might simply be that that's the way the stories are remembered. Meininger remembers his Coast Guard career fondly, and years later, at least, got a lot of laughs out of doing so.

If we are to believe William F. Meininger, he single-handedly saved the Coast Guard from itself. He also saved it from Coast Guard Academy graduates, a constant target of his witticisms. In fact, with the publication of this book, he may single-handedly keep the perceived ages-old war between academy grads and enlisteds alive for another generation.

As with most Coasties, his career path is a winding one, sending him to all corners of the continental United States, up to Alaska and out into the Pacific. It moves through the expected constellation of characters: good bosses, bad bosses, drinkers, pranksters, honorable compatriots and scoundrels. Some are still alive and either laughing or screaming after reading the manuscript, and others have long since passed on.

As with any good book, though, characters can only take a story so far. It's the "what" that picks up where the "who" started. The situations Meininger finds himself in over the years are hilarious, thanks mostly to his writing style. How does one properly open a bag of chips for a woman in a bar? Is it the tear across the top, the pull-open pop or the one-handed smash that explodes the bag and makes the potato-ey wonders fly all over the room? How should a flight technician defend himself if a live duck ends up in the back of a Coast Guard helicopter during a flight? How soon should he tell his pilot and co-pilot those famous words, "Tell my wife I love her!"? And how can one safely determine when it's time to burn old classified documents? Perhaps the most important question Meininger leaves us with is, "Do Canadians have thumbs?" That question, though, is generated more from his role as a father than that of a Coast Guardsman. According to him, his inquisitive daughter, wondering what the difference was between Americans and Canadians, drove him to the point of fabrication for the purpose of ending the discussion. To this day, she still checks hands if introduced to somebody from north of the border.

Through all of this tomfoolery and

jocularity, there are moments that every serviceman will recognize (service dentists will want to look away at this point). The chapter in which he wrestles with an aging dentist who has improperly administered Novocain in preparation for wisdom teeth extraction is classic comedic writing, complete with a punch line not fit for print in The Cutter.

All memoirs are important. This one fills a niche thus far somewhat barely touched. With the advent of publishing-on-demand, Coast Guardsmen of the latter half of the twentieth century have more access to publishing houses than any of their predecessors. Let's hope more of them take inspiration from William Meininger.

From Doug Kroll:

U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY: BIRTH TO THE NEW NORMALCY? 1939-2007. Nashville, TN, Turner Publishing Co., 2007. ISBN 978-1-59652-978-1. Photographs, Index, 120 pp. \$55.95 Hardback.

Turner Publishing Company, an independent publisher of specialty and trade titles, including organizational histories, recently published the newest history of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. In some respects, similar to the Foundation's The Coast Guard (2004), this is a coffee-table volume with many photographs. While there is no author, the publisher does acknowledge C. Kay Larson, Ph.D., the Coast Guard Auxiliary Historian, as the source for their information and advisor. Larson provided all of the photographs and much of the commentary for this fine volume that provides valuable, unreported information of this part of Team Coast Guard. The first chapter gives a good survey of the Auxiliary's history, from its birth as a volunteer

force to promote recreational boating safety in 1939, through 2001. However, the primary emphasis of this book is on changes that have occurred since 9/11. The first half of the book covers all of these changes, Hurricane Katrina, the missions and organization of the modern Auxiliary, and also includes a separate chapter on the roles that women have played in the organization, both on the water and as aviators. The text is not only richly illustrated with historic photographs, but also copies of citations, especially the one for The Secretary's Outstanding Unit Award to Coast Guard Activities New York for its service during and immediately following the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center, when Team Coast Guard forces, including Auxiliarists, evacuated nearly one million civilians from Manhattan Island within moments of the attacks. These citations and photos of other historic documents are invaluable in telling this little known story. The latter half of this history includes photos of each decade of the organization's history, that illustrate its many missions and its history.

The heart of this book is the true volunteerism for which the Auxiliary is known. It includes many stories of those who responded at a critical time in our history to ensure the mission success of their parent organization, the U. S. Coast Guard. This coffee-table book makes clear why "A Proud Tradition – A Worthy Mission" is both the motto and trademark of this amazing group.

From Bob Desh:

ICE PATROL, by LT Kensil Bell, USCG. Dodd, Mead & Company, New York NY, 1937. (Pre-dates ISBNs). Hard cover, 262 pages. Prices vary depending on condition. Fiction.

For this edition of The Cutter, I once again offer a review of an out of print book, this time aimed at our younger readers. A search of the many out of print book sites available on the Web can lead to the discovery of wonderful treasures of Coast Guard history. In addition to the typical history book aimed at the adult reader, one can find a great collection of children's books written for budding Coast Guard history buffs of all ages.

As an example, from the mid-1930s through the mid-1940s, Dodd, Mead & Company published a series of "Career Books" for "older boys and girls" (upper elementary and middle school) chronicling the lives and adventures of fictional characters in the early stages of their careers in various professions. While the books are fiction, they are all based on a compilation of actual experiences encountered by someone in a particular line of work. Professions covered run the gamut from nurse to realtor and from photographer to engineer. During the war years of WWII, the series took on a heavy military slant with titles such as *Lady Leatherneck*, authored by a woman marine, and *Rig for Depth Charges!* written by a Navy submariner. Thankfully, the Coast Guard was not excluded from the menu in this truly well written collection of children's books.

Written in 1937, and reprinted each year until 1946, this is a wonderful tale of Seaman Jim Steele aboard the cutter *Champlain* before, during, and after the vessel's deployment to the North Atlantic as part of the International Ice Patrol. I can do no better than the insights found in the front of the book's jacket in describing the story:

"Jim Steele, rookie seaman of the Coast Guard Cutter Champlain, stopped in at a beanery in Brooklyn before rejoining his ship. All he wanted was a change of diet. But he got far more than that when he chanced to overhear two men in the next booth. Their furtive, whispered remarks started him on the trail of a smuggling gang which was not to be run down until the long voyage on the ice patrol was over."

Much was encountered before this — adventure, hard work, study, fog, ice, and danger, and every now and then, in strange ports and strange places, a new clue to the smugglers. Ice Patrol, is not only a thrilling story, but also a picture of our Coast Guard today—seen through the eyes of a likable, ambitious lad who has just joined it. In this book, the reader constantly goes along with Jim and his shipmates as they spring to the call of the boatswain's pipe...listens to their good natured kidding, their hopes and ambitions...stands their lonely lookouts with them in the ice-ridden waters of the North Atlantic...feels, as they feel, the terror of a mighty berg that could crush a giant liner as though it were a frail berry box.

Here is the faithful account, written from direct observation, of the lives of the men and boys who wear the blue of the United States Coast Guard...men and boys who have rightfully been called 'the world's greatest peacetime heroes.'

This is a book that will be enjoyed by both adults and children. Written in the language of the time (1937), it reveals wonderful historic insights into the Coast Guard. As personally explained by the author in the book's forward, the story, while fiction, is based on his experiences in cutter *Champlain* and logs from the cutter *Marion's* expedition into Davis Strait and Baffin Bay in 1936. It is filled with actual events, real ships, and the experiences of cuttermen on Ice Patrol duty in the 30s and 40s. The book is illustrated with a collection of official Coast Guard photographs and line drawings by Frank Beaudouin. This is a book that would be true joy to share with your kids at bedtime, although you may need to explain some of the 1930s language to the "Harry Potter" generation, e.g. the use of the word "boy" to describe men into their twenties.

Enjoying the adventures of Seaman Jim Steele, chronicled in the pages of *Ice Patrol*, is a wonderful way to introduce your children and grandchildren to Coast Guard history. Add this book to your collection!

Battle of the Atlantic Epigrams

By: Michael G. Walling

The Beginning

Huddled in a lifeboat, oil-soaked and cold, they'd spent all night rowing, trying to keep close to the other boats, afraid of drifting into the darkness and away from rescue. Only hours before, a torpedo had shattered their ship, sparing them but killing 118 others as she sank. Only two days old, the new war claimed its first victims at sea, not warriors, but innocent passengers and crew from the ocean liner *Athenia*. It was a grim beginning to the Battle of the Atlantic.

The Convoy

Imagine driving down a crowded, rolling, rutted, six-lane highway on a foggy night when, suddenly, someone starts shooting at you. You don't know where the shots are coming from, you can't shoot back, fireworks start going off over head, and all the cars around you are trying to change direction. Add to this the possibility of freezing to death if you leave your car, being burned alive if your car is hit, or abandoned and left to starve to death by the other drivers. Compound this with aching fatigue, numbing cold, wet clothing and little food for the previous week. This is just an inkling of what life was like in a convoy.

The Sea

The North Atlantic breeds the worst weather in the world. With the prevailing westerly winds, the seas build to monstrous size. Fog is a constant threat south of the Canadian Maritime Provinces where the warm Gulf Stream meets the cold Labrador Current. In winter, the Greenland Low adds its force to this turbulent corner of the oceans. Finally, in the Spring, icebergs push south from the coasts of Greenland adding their silent, deadly beauty to the gray-green seascape. Into this, the antagonists sailed and fought for almost six years.

The Ships

Going to sea in normal times is hazardous. Storms, collisions, break downs, and crippling or fatal injuries are the penalties of a moment's inattention. Ice in winter builds up on the superstructure and can capsize a ship. Seas are so large and relentless they crush boats, bend stanchions, and stove in hatch covers. Wind and sleet tear at exposed flesh. Survival time in the winter waters of the North Atlantic is measured in minutes. All of this is multiplied exponentially when you take a large number of ships, place them in a few square miles of ocean, and send a highly trained and motivated force out to sink them.

When a ship is torpedoed, steam pipes burst, flaying men alive, the barnacle encrusted hull is exposed, tearing at you as you slide over the side, hatches jam, closing escape routes and trapping people below. Fuel bunkers rupture, spreading oil on the surface to be breathed and swallowed destroying lungs, burning eyes, and making it almost impossible to pull free of the sinking ship. And God help the tanker sailor whose cargo of fuel catches fire, engulfing everything in an inescapable sea of flames.

The U-boat

Life in a U-boat was no better with 50 men jammed into a cramped, moisture laden steel tube for weeks at a time. Hot racking, moldy food, clothing that was always wet, and standing 4-hour watches, constantly beaten by the freezing sea, torn at by the wind, and praying your safety harness holds. The monotony is interspersed with the nerve-wrenching stalking of the enemy through a darkened seascape, the violent explosions of your torpedoes smashing through the sides of ships, the savage beauty of star shells and tracers arcing through the night, searching for you as your boat weaves through the wounded convoy in a deadly ballet. And, finally, listening to the depth charges rain down, gasping for breath in the oxygen starved air, wondering which charge will crack the hull open plunging you to a crushing death a 1000 fathoms below.

The End

Six hundred ninety-six U-boats and 25,870 men of their crews were lost. More than 2,800 merchant ships, 175 warships, 1,777 aircraft and 33,000 Allied sailors and airmen died and an uncounted number of women and children were lost in the Atlantic from September 1939 to May 1945.

The Sea is not cruel, only indifferent. It was the men and what they brought with them that created the cruelty.

Michael G. Walling is a former Coast Guard senior petty officer and OCS graduate. He is the author of Bloodstained Sea: The U.S. Coast Guard in the Battle of the Atlantic 1941-1944, receiving critical acclaim by reviewers and veterans and earning him the 2005 Samuel Eliot Morison Award for Naval Literature. Mike can be reached through his web site: (www.mikewalling.com).

Did You Know ...?

First Boiler Inspections – 1838

There was little progress in Marine Safety or Inspection until 1838 when, by Act of Congress (after significant “loss of life and property at sea”), the owners and masters of steam vessels were required to employ “skilled engineers,” to provide lifeboats, fire pumps, hose, signal lights, and “other safety equipment,” and also to have hulls inspected each year and boilers inspected every six months. Inspectors of the Steamboat Inspection Service were appointed by Federal District judges. By the Steamboat Inspection Act of 1838, today’s USCG Marine Inspection and Marine Safety branches were born.

Total Revenue Marine Service 500 persons – 1843

In 1843, there were 20 each of Captains, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Lieutenants in the Revenue Marine Service; 45 petty officers, 7 pilots, 30 stewards, 15 cooks, and 323 seamen; a total of 500 personnel. The total estimated cost of running the entire service was \$205,854.55 in that year. (Not much has changed [including the protracted budget] since that time, as the USCG is STILL smaller than the New York City Police Dept.)

Coast Guard dedicates its “Pelican in Paradise”

By: Doug Kroll

Several years ago the “Pelicans in Paradise” program was started in Pensacola, Florida, run by the newspaper’s “In Education” department of the Pensacola News Journal. Five foot high, painted pelicans have become the symbol of Pensacola and are on display throughout the city. The U.S. Navy became the first military-sponsored pelican on display in downtown Pensacola--painted in a traditional Blue Angel Color scheme. Last year, the U.S. Marine Corps followed by placing the bright red pelican across the intersection from the Navy bird. In the summer of 2007, the City of Pensacola decided that the Palafox/Garden intersection should become their “military corner”---and perhaps could get the USCG, USAF, and the Army to each contribute a properly painted pelican.

On 7 May this year, the Coast Guard dedicated its pelican, officially named *Semper S. Paratican*, with the nickname/call sign of “Salty.” Designed by CAPT Jeffrey Pettitt, CGLO, NAS Pensacola, and former Coast Guardsman Steven Hawke, “Salty” will be placed on the south end of the island of Palafox Street, on the north side of the junction with Garden Street, facing south (towards the ocean) into Old Town Pensacola. The actual dedication ceremony took place at the southern end of Palafox Street pier. Delivered by the USCGC *Bonito*, the ceremony included a SAR demo, fly-bys by the newest CG aircraft – the C-144 Ocean Sentry – and speeches by CAPT Pettitt and RADM Joel Whitehead, Commander, Eighth Coast Guard District.

These painted pelicans are not cheap. Each requires a deposit of \$5500 to join the program, and then, the cost of the pelican. The entire cost was raised by donations and fund raising efforts by the Coast Guard flight students at Pensacola. The largest donor was Mr. Ted Ciano, the owner of several auto dealerships in Pensacola. He denoted the entire down payment of \$2500 on the initial deposit of \$5500. Other substantial donations came in from various CG Air Stations (particularly Sector Corpus Christi, CGAS Elizabeth City, and Air Stations New Orleans and Los Angeles). The USCG Naval Aviation Training students raised over \$2000 by providing “ghost tours” to the paying public of the Coast Guard’s Haunted Lighthouse around Halloween.



Semper S. Paratican, “Salty” (Photo by ENS Matthew Kroll,

Spying on the Delaware

By: LT Benjamin Robinson

History Lessons

A LOOK BACK AT LEADERSHIP IN COAST GUARD HISTORY



The War of 1812 provided a lasting place in history to a number of now well-known Revenue Cutters. The heroic stand of the officers and men of the *Eagle* is perhaps the most famous among them. The notoriety of such moments in history tends to eclipse the experiences of the Cutters that were not involved in this type of traditional naval warfare. The Revenue Cutter *General Greene*, stationed on the Delaware River and Bay, has been largely left out of the histories of Revenue Cutters in the War of 1812. The connection of several documents found in Customs Collector Allen McLane's papers illuminates a little-known Revenue Cutter mission during the War of 1812: intelligence gathering.

At the outbreak of the war, Allen McLane was the Customs Collector at Wilmington, Delaware, and had under his superintendence the Revenue Cutter *General Greene*. This *General Greene* was the fifth Cutter to hold that name on the waters of the Delaware River and Bay. Surviving documents tell that she was a schooner, likely 60 feet long on the keel with an 18 foot beam.¹

During the embargo leading up to the War of 1812, and even in the early months of the war, the *General Greene*'s crew spent much effort preventing illegal trade with the enemy; but when the British blockaded the mouth of the Delaware in March of 1813, trade—both honest and illicit—ceased. It was under these unprecedented circumstances of blockade that McLane issued the following orders to the commander of the *General Greene* and the smaller Revenue boats on the river:

1. [Enquire of] the number of the British blockading Squadron, and the force of the several vessels;
2. Their position every day and night;
3. Have any pilots or other citizens joined them;
4. Do they land on the shores of the Delaware by day, or by night, and where;
5. How are they off for provisions and water;
6. Do they destroy all the Coasters they fall in with, or are they partial;
7. Enquire of the Shallopmen that pass up the river, if they notice at or near the landings from whence they trade, any strangers who appear to be lurking about their neighborhoods;
8. Examine all Oyster boats passing down as well as Coasters, see that they have papers; If you find any provisions on board more than is necessary for the crew, detain them. If you find passengers, enquire, and detect if possible, alien enemies; and speculating citizens corresponding or having intercourse with the enemy.²

¹ Albert Gallatin to Allen McLane, 6 November 1810, Record Group 26, National Archives, Washington, D.C. ; "Collector's Office, Wilmington, Del.," *American Watchman* (Wilmington, DE), 30 September 1815, 4.

² "To the Commanders of the Cutter, Barges, Inspectors, etc, in the District of Delaware," 20 March 1813, Allen McLane Papers, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

These orders seem to be the earliest explicit charge for a Revenue Cutter to collect military intelligence. While an exciting discovery, taken in context, they are not surprising. From the very inception of the service, the Cutters were a vital source for information for the Treasury Department, the Customs Collector, and the port; doing so was nearly unavoidable as they sailed the river and bay boarding vessels, checking papers, talking to the vessels' masters and inspecting their cargos. The Cutter's officers intimately knew the local waters and the mariners who worked on them. Their ubiquitous presence on the Delaware probably allowed much more subtle inquiry than naval officers could have achieved.

The *General Greene* was also more suitable for intelligence gathering than the naval vessels in the port because of the vessel's small, lightly armed, fast-sailing characteristics. The Navy's larger vessels would have been far too obvious to the British blockading fleet and were needed elsewhere. The Navy's gunboats on the Delaware, though small, were famously slow, heavily-armed vessels that would have surely been lost if one had ever come in sight of one of the British vessels blockading the mouth of the Delaware Bay.

It is quite clear that McLane's interest in intelligence was a military one and not only motivated by his position as Customs Collector. In addition to serving as Collector during the war, McLane was appointed as Commander of the Defenses of Wilmington. His correspondence discloses that he was very involved in the military situation in the area and that the *General Greene* was used in that capacity. For example, in April 1813, General William Duane, Commander of the 4th Military District, requested to meet with Allen McLane "on board your cutter at Fort Mifflin."³

Although extant records do not show how successful the *General Greene* was under these orders in 1813, they do show that the *General Greene* remained active into the fall of 1813 and was laid up during the following winter.

In April 1814, as a result of a request by McLane, the *General Greene* was authorized to be "fitted for service in the most economical manner" and manned to the previously allowed levels.³ In June, General William Duane and Commodore Rodgers requested the *General Greene* be sent to the Philadelphia Navy Yard to meet and possibly get underway. The importance of this unclear request is underscored by the instruction: "Let this movement be secret as possible."³ Ironically, a few weeks later, the Treasury Department sent formal authorization to McLane to support the War Department with his assets as long as it does not interfere with the Revenue Service.³

Despite being re-armed and manned, it does not seem that the cutter was away from the pier much. Consequently, when the Committee for the Defense of the Delaware was exploring "the most expeditious and secure mode of conveying intelligence of any movements of the enemy, in or towards the bay" in September of 1814, they naturally concluded that "the revenue cutter... appears to us particularly well adapted to this service" and proposed to use the *General Greene* to make daily trips down the bay to collect intelligence of "movements of the enemy, in or towards the bay."³ They resolved to make a formal request to the Secretary of the Treasury for control of the *General Greene*. The committee's minutes recorded the Treasury Department's

³"Twelfth Meeting, Philadelphia, 6 September, 1814," in *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 8. *Minutes of the Committee of Defence*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1867), 91

reply as approval, but in fact, the reply came short of the full transfer of control they sought.⁴ Instead, the Treasury Department instructed McLane to use the *General Greene* in the manner suggested by the Committee—for intelligence purposes. The letter said that McLane should “keep [the committee] regularly advised of the information which the Captain may obtain of the movements of the Enemy in the Delaware.”⁵ The letter discloses that the full extent of the Committee’s request could not be met because of legal limitations on the use of the Cutter. Likewise, a request was denied to bolster the *General Greene*’s crew size in conjunction with the intelligence gathering mission on the reasoning that the crew was sufficient for the mission for which it was funded by the government—protection of the revenue. A hint of dissatisfaction with the *General Greene*’s new mission shines through in the closing of the letter, in which Secretary Campbell stated unequivocally “it was not my intention that she should be equipped or employed as a Cruizer [sic].”⁶

Despite these misgivings, the intelligence gathering patrols into the bay by *General Greene* were fruitful. Less than two weeks after the authorization, McLane reported the movement of two frigates from the British blockading fleet to General Bloomfield, Commander of the 4th Military District. This letter, recorded in the Committee of Defense's minutes, provides the only evidence of the efficacy of the *General Greene* as a spy; it is likely, however, just the sole surviving indication of more extensive intelligence collection.

The resurfacing of the *General Greene*’s intelligence assignment, lost for almost two hundred years, not only draws attention to an easily forgotten Cutter, but it also expands the prevailing understanding of how Revenue Cutters supported military action even when they were not formally transferred to the Navy. Indeed, one can assert that the intelligence work which would continue both on the Delaware and on the waters worldwide had its origins in the infancy of the Revenue Cutter Service.

LT Benjamin Robinson graduated from the U.S. Merchant Marine Academy in 2004. Upon graduation, he entered the U.S. Coast Guard through the Direct Commission program and was assigned to Sector Delaware Bay. He is currently attending law school for the Coast Guard at Seattle University.

⁴“Eighteenth Meeting, Philadelphia, September 12th, 1814,” in *Memoirs of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania*, vol. 8. *Minutes of the Committee of Defence*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1867), 122.

⁵Edward Jones to Captain James Josiah, 10 September 1814, Allen McLane Papers, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

⁶George Campbell to Allen McLane, 19 September 1814, Allen McLane Papers, Delaware State Archives, Dover, DE.

The Greatest Generation...a reading assignment for EVERY Coast Guardsman

By: CAPT Bob Dosh, USCG (Ret.), Executive Director, Foundation for Coast Guard History.

Memorial Day weekend, 2008, my duties as Executive Director of the Foundation for Coast Guard History (www.fcgh.org) afforded the opportunity to participate in eight very moving and memorable ceremonies honoring those who gave the final measure of devotion to their country. The brief receptions that followed these events offered a rare opportunity to mingle with a significant number of the aging warriors who fought so bravely in World War II. The most memorable of these occurred in a small restaurant/tavern in rural Luxemburg, WI, where I had the privilege to sit across the breakfast table from a former Coast Guard landing-craft coxswain who'd fought his way across the Pacific. Although his service started 30 years before mine, was less than four years in duration, and ended with cessation of combat operations, the bond between "Guardians" clearly spanned the generation gap. The gleam in his eye when he learned I was a fellow Coast Guardsman was unmistakable. I marveled at the many sea stories he shared that day. I was shocked and saddened to learn that he passed away just a few days after our wonderful breakfast together.

By conservative estimate, we lose about one thousand WWII veterans per day. Each takes with them their irreplaceable memories. Equally important, with each passing, we lose a living memorial to those fallen comrades who gave the last full measure of devotion to their duty. Many of these aging warriors are the last

to see a buddy alive—forever young in their minds eye. These fallen comrades die, yet again, as those images are laid to rest these many years later.

The events of that weekend caused and required me to spend some quiet time in my tiny den reviewing and re-reading my small collection of books on WWII Coast Guard history. It was during this personal reflection that I realized that while most elements of our Service's past are relegated to coverage in a passage or two in a single book, one can actually complete a reasonably extensive study of one of the Coast Guard's most significant operations in WWII, the Greenland Patrol. Through the miracle of the written word, the devoted reader can come to appreciate the loneliness, danger, boredom, and bravery that shaped this amazing story.

I was further inspired by Dr. Bill Thiesen's "Featured Alumnus" piece on Lieutenant John A. Prichard, CGA class of '38, in the April edition of The Bulletin, published by the Coast Guard Academy Alumni Association. As the men and women who fought this dynamic struggle against tyranny disappear quietly into service history, I challenge each and every Coast Guardsman, present and former, to take on the following reading assignment.

Begin your journey by following this link http://www.uscg.mil/history/articles/h_greenld.html to a wonderful article found on the Coast Guard Historian's website. Complete with countless fascinating period photos, this article by John A. Tilley offers a concise, easy to read primer on the epic struggle in the high north latitudes that would come to be known as The Greenland Patrol.

Next, venture to your favorite search engine or out-of-print book site on the web (or perhaps the CGA Library) and locate a copy of *ICE IS WHERE YOU FIND IT*, by CAPT Charles W. Thomas, USCG (The Bobbs-Merrill Company Inc., 1951). Read the first 254 pages chronicling Captain Thomas' memoir as CO of cutter *Northland* during Greenland Patrol operations. Through his remembrances, you will come to know many who served, including the legendary Captain C. C. Von Paulsen (CGA class of 1913). You'll want to set the book aside for a later read of the last few chapters covering Captain Thomas' polar exploits after the war. As CO of cutter *Northwind*, he helped shape the beginnings of Coast Guard polar ice operations as we know it today.

Continue your quest by securing a copy of *Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol, 1942* by Thaddeus D. Novak, edited by P.J. Capelotti (University Press of Florida, 2005; ISBN 0-8130-2912-0). This stirring book is an enhanced reprint of Novak's "illegal" diary kept during the cutter *Nanok*'s patrol to Greenland in 1942. It provides wonderful glimpses into the thoughts and feelings of a young Coast Guardsman at war.

Next, venture back to the out-of-print book site and purchase a copy of *Ice Brothers* by Sloan Wilson (Arbor House Publishing,

1979). This book is a work of fiction. However, after reading the three previous chronicles, it will be clear to you that it is based on historical fact. Like many good works of fiction, the characters are bit larger than life and the situations and scenarios sometimes a tad far-fetched—and it does not always paint a flattering image of the Service. Never the less, it is a GREAT read. I've always regretted that some talented writer did not complete the screen play—it would make an extraordinary movie!

Mr. Wilson writes from the perspective of one who lived the experiences. He served as an Ensign on cutter *Tampa* on Greenland Patrol in 1942 as well as XO, and, for a short time, CO of the cutter *Nogak*. This sturdy little converted trawler was the sister ship of the cutter *Natsek*, lost off the coast of Labrador during Greenland Patrol ops. You will come to know that deadly night well in the reading of *Life and Death on the Greenland Patrol*. Quoting the Author's Note that opens the book, "The drama in this novel is pure fiction, but I presented Greenland exactly as I remembered it. It is apparently true that memories of Greenland, like the bodies of people who are buried there, last forever. This book was written in 1979, thirty-six years after I left Greenland, but I did not have to do much research in the libraries." The following dedication from this

Contributions are the lifeblood of the Foundation. Please put The Foundation for Coast Guard History on your list for a tax deductible contribution. Our list of accomplishments is large but could be larger and have greater impact with your help. Be generous. Join your comrades in preserving our heritage. Thank you.

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Student, Junior Enlisted (E-1 to E-6) _____ \$10
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Web Site: www.fcgh.org

powerful book also graces the Greenland Patrol Memorial on the campus of CGA: *“TO THE MEN OF THE GREENLAND PATROL, 1942—1945. Forgotten now and little honored then, but still they’ll never have to wonder if they’re men.”*

Together, these short, easy reads will take you on a fascinating journey into one of the most intriguing periods of our Service’s past. It will help us all truly understand the lifesaver, guardian and warrior legacy that all who have ever worn Coast Guard blue must honor, cherish, and remember. We owe nothing less to the rapidly disappearing Coast Guardsmen of “The Greatest Generation.”

Welcome the newest Regent.

RMC Robert Craig, USCG, Retired. Bob began his Coast Guard career in June, 1970. After Boot Camp and short tours aboard the USCGC *Firebush* and Airsta Brooklyn, Bob was assigned to RM’A’ School. Choosing graduation orders to the USCGC *Jarvis* Pre-Commissioning Detail, Bob became a Plank Owner in the *Jarvis*.

Throughout his career, Bob completed two tours in the *Jarvis* and three tours at Group Detroit, as well as serving at CG Commsta Honolulu, CG Base Gloucester City, (Radioman-in-Charge), and Advanced Computer Electronics Training (ACET) program. Bob concluded his career as Radioman-in-Charge at CG Group Detroit in November, 1992.

Bob currently works as a payroll accountant. His wife Dawn is a Paralegal. They live in Clinton Township, Michigan and have been married for 27 years.

Bob will serve as our new Membership Chairman, “beating the bushes” to increase the visibility and membership of the FCGH. Welcome aboard, Bob.

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Coast Guard Historian's Summer Intern – 2008

by: Sandy Schwaab

We are pleased and fortunate to recognize Ms. Elizabeth K. Stacey as the recipient of the Foundation for Coast Guard History's 2008 award as Summer Intern with the USCG Historian's Office, Washington, DC. As the Foundation has done for the last several years, we are proud to sponsor the summer intern position, granting a generous stipend to a deserving student – a “win-win” situation – providing professional experience to the students and much needed assistance to the Historian.

Elizabeth is a second-year Baccalaureate Student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, majoring in Art History and Criticism with a French double major. While employed, primarily, at the Coast Guard Exhibit Center, her Art History program lended itself well to critical analysis of the history of maritime and Coast Guard art. A keen interest in anthropology connected her to the people, lives, and circumstances of the “sailor-at-sea,” his life, personal issues, expectations, and, in some cases, ultimate sacrifice to his service.

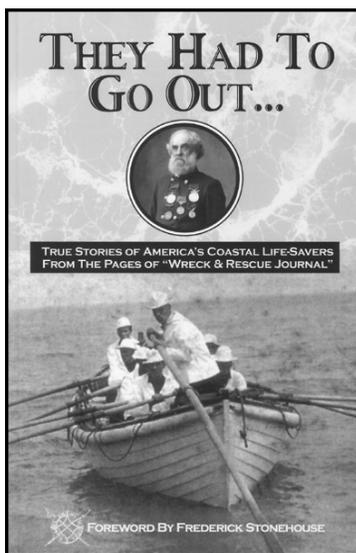
Among Elizabeth's accomplishments this summer,

She focused on the accession of World War II Coast Guard art. This entailed examining and filing condition reports of various pieces and entering those evaluations into curatorial software, while updating accession numbering to move into the 21st century;

She alternated her time between the Art history and assisting the Exhibit Center Curator in archiving new artifacts into the collection.

The Foundation and Historian greatly appreciate Elizabeth's contributions to preserving and promoting Coast Guard history and wish her the best of fortune in the completion of her studies and future.

When wind and wave conspired to threaten the lives of nineteenth century mariners, the U.S. Life-Saving Service went to work...



The United States Life-Saving Service Heritage Association exists to preserve the story of those amazing days, through an annual conference, held in a Coast Guard history-rich area every fall, and the publication of a quarterly magazine dedicated to the history of SAR, *Wreck & Rescue Journal*, and books like *They Had to Go Out*.

**U. S. Life-Saving Service
Heritage Association
PO Box 213 * Hull MA 02045
www.uslife-savingservice.org**



2008 FCGH Awards

The following is a summary of the 2008 FCGH Book and Unit Awards as determined by Awards Chairman, John Galluzzo (and staff), with comments. To all the award winners, we express a hearty Bravo Zulu! The support and promotion of Coast Guard History is our primary concern, and is well expressed by these award winners. [Edited]

BOOK AWARDS

Lighthouse History Book Award

Hurley, Neil E. *Florida's Lighthouses in the Civil War*. Middle River Press. Oakland Park, FL: 2007.

This excellent book, *Florida Lighthouses in the Civil War*, was described as “a refreshing look at a specific moment in lighthouse history typically overlooked on a national stage.”

Coast Guard Heritage Book Award

Wiley, Ken. *Lucky Thirteen: D-Days in the Pacific With the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II*. Casemate. Drexel Hill, PA: 2007.

Lucky Thirteen: D-Days in the Pacific with the U.S. Coast Guard in World War II, was described by our judges as “a well-written and equally well-illustrated memoir of life aboard an LST during World War II, a role the Coast Guard played which is often overlooked by history texts today.”

UNIT AWARDS

Large Unit Award

USCGC *Campbell*
Portsmouth NH 03804

The Coast Guard cutter *Campbell* (WMEC-909) recently completed and dedicated the *Campbell* Heritage Project. Through diligent research, conversations with Coast Guard and World War II historians and artifact searching, the unit gathered 44 *Campbell*-specific artifacts for an onboard museum, including one Navy Cross, one Purple Heart, six silver Stars, two Bronze Stars, one Navy and Marine Corps Medal, and two Legions of Merit. *Campbell* also now displays four period models, five uniforms ranging from World War II to Vietnam, photographs, paintings, crew lists, etc., all of which now adorn the mess deck, passageways and wardroom. On September 11, 2007, the *Campbell* welcomed the members of the *Campbell* Association to help dedicate the museum. The most lasting effects of the museum's installation have been “a renewed interest in Coast Guard history, a significant rise in esprit de corps, and a sense of unmitigated valor.”

Small Unit Award

USCG Auxiliary Flotilla 3-5
South Pasadena CA 91031

Members of Flotilla 3-5, District 11 Southern Region (Southern California) United States Coast Guard Auxiliary have renovated the Point Vicente Lighthouse and opened it to the public, an ongoing commitment they have kept since 1992. That project included the creation of an interpretive museum on Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary activities, including the displaying of historical artifacts. Since 1992, team members working in conjunction with Aids to Navigation Team Los Angeles/Long Beach, have welcomed more than 350,000 visitors to the lighthouse. In 2002, the team tackled the Point Hueneme lighthouse, creating exhibits and displays telling the stories of the Coast Guard, Coast Guard Reserve and Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Membership Drive 2008

Your Foundation for Coast Guard History needs your help to promote membership and correct our membership records.

We ask that our members pass on this edition of The Cutter to like-minded Coasties and anyone who might be interested in the promotion and recognition of the history of the U.S. Coast Guard and its forerunner organizations: the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, U.S. Life-Saving Service, U.S. Lighthouse Service, and the Steamboat Inspection Service.

We would also appreciate an update of any members' addresses that may have been overlooked. If you or any member you know has changed locations, we would appreciate an update of their locality.

Please help us to continue our efforts on your behalf. Below is a membership application for new members. It may also be used to re-establish your own membership information and dues to the Foundation.

Semper Paratus – Memoria Semper

X

----- X

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