



# The Cutter

*The Newsletter of the Foundation for Coast Guard History*  
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## ANNUAL AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Each year, The Foundation For Coast Guard History recognizes notable contributions toward preserving and promoting knowledge of Coast Guard history. This year, as always, the competition in all categories was lively if not fierce.

**UNIT HISTORY AWARD:** These awards are given to Coast Guard Units engaged in specific undertakings that further public awareness of current activities or the rich heritage of the U.S. Coast Guard.

The 2005 Large Unit winner is the **USCGC ESCANABA (WMEC-907)**. Among the many contributions to preserving USCG history, the *Escanaba* assigned a new ship's historian who updated the ship's website to contain a special history section, conducted an extensive oral history of Ray O'Malley, the only living survivor of the 1943 wartime sinking of the first *Escanaba* (WPG-77) and in partnership with Boston University, produced a video on the history of all three *Escanabas*.

The 2005 Small Unit winner is **STATION CALUMET HARBOR**. This unit, in Michigan, created a comprehensive, historically-focused web site; collected daily log highlights for half a century of the station's history; designed and built a museum area in the front entranceway of the unit and collected oral history interviews from crewmembers and commanding officers as far back as the 1950's.

**HERITAGE AWARD:** This award is given to an individual who helped preserve the heritage of the U. S. Coast Guard prior to the establishment of the Foundation.

This year the Foundation is pleased to recognize the many accomplishments of **LCDR Jack A Eckert, USCG (Ret)**. A 27 year Coast Guard veteran, Jack created the web site "Jack's Joint". Jack collected nearly 1,000 sea stories and (see pg 2)

**Awards (continued)**

and oral histories of life in the Coast Guard. This experience led him to co-author "*Coast Guard Stories, Volumes 1 and 2*" in 2004. This material was used by the producers of the movie "*A Perfect Storm*" to gain a perspective on life at sea.

**BOOK AWARDS:** Each year The Foundation reviews the books published during the previous year that relate to Coast Guard history and heritage and those that relate to lighthouses and aids to navigation. A committee of scholars selects those of exceptional quality for our recognition.

**Best Book on General Coast Guard History:** P. J. Capelotti "*Rogue Wave: The U. S. Coast Guard on and after 9/11.*"

**Best Book on Regional Coast Guard History:** Margaret Buchholz "*Shipwrecks Along the Jersey Shore.*"

**Best Book on Aids to Navigation:** Voyageur Press for its series on regional lighthouses including "*Lighthouses of the Great Lakes*", "*Lighthouses of the Mid-Atlantic*", "*Lighthouses of the South*" and "*Lighthouses of the Pacific Coast*".

**NEW AWARDS COMMITTEE CHAIR.**

After several years chairing our awards committee, Dr. Pete Capelotti Ph.D has decided to step down to devote more time to writing and teaching. He has done a magnificent job and we thank him profusely.

John Galuzzo has volunteered to take over the task of coordinating the work of the committees responsible for separate awards. John has been Education Director of the Hull, MA Lifesaving Museum, Executive Director of the Scituate, MA Historical Society, is Editor of *Wreck & Rescue* and has authored several books. Thank you, John, for your efforts.

**Current Foundation Projects**

Your Foundation is currently engaged in many projects. Each newsletter describes a few of significant interest.

**THE COAST GUARD:** The book we sponsored and was published in November 2004 sold out almost immediately. We have received many inquiries about its availability. The publisher has ordered a second printing, now in progress. We are informed that the book should again be available at major book stores in September.

**MIKE HEALY BIOGRAPHY:** Your Foundation is contributing some research funds to the author of a major biography of one of the most colorful characters ever to wear a Revenue Cutter Uniform. We will inform you when the book is published. Your contributions make this possible.

**MERLIN O'NEILL ORAL HISTORY:** Several decades ago, The Naval Institute began work on the oral history of Commandant Merlin O'Neill. The manuscript was recently discovered in unfinished condition and your Foundation funded its completion. Now Admiral O'Neill's words and the politics of the early 1950's are preserved. Your contributions have made this possible.

**CWO PD AWARDS PROGRAM:** At the suggestion of the staff of the Chief Warrant Officer Professional Development School, your Foundation has established a perpetual award for the "Honor Graduate" of the program several times each year. The award consists of a one year membership in the Foundation, a copy of our book *THE COAST GUARD* and the recipients name engraved on a perpetual trophy. The first recipients are: CWO James A. Todd, USCG Group Philadelphia; CWO Thor Banks; USCG NavCen and A.J. St. Germain, Air Sta. Eliz. City, NC. Your contributions have made this possible.

## REVENUE CUTTER RATIONS

Today we marvel at the variety and quality of food available, fast food franchises notwithstanding. This has not always been the case. In 1894 the ration for Cutter crews was specific in regulations. The reason was to ensure that adequate variety was available and that the budget would be kept under control. The following table is derived from Section 984 of the Revenue Cutter Service Regulations, 1894.

Day of the week	S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	Tot
<b>MEAT</b>								
Salt beef — lbs					1			1
Salt Port — lbs			1					2
Canned or fresh beef or mutton — ozs	12							12
Chicago corned beef — ozs				12				12
Ham, bacon or sausage — ozs		12						12
Dried, smoked or pickled fish — ozs						12		12
<b>VEGETABLE</b>								
Flour — ozs	8				8			16
Raisins — ozs	2				2			4
Rice — ozs				8				8
Beans — pint			1/2				1/2	1
Pickles — ozs			4				4	8
Pease — pint		1/2						1/2
Tomatoes, fresh or canned — ozs						6		6
BISCUIT — ozs			14				14	28
FLOUR — lbs	1	1		1		1		4
<i>Either</i>								
Cornmeal — lbs or					1			1
Oatmeal — lbs					1			1
SUGAR — ozs	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	28
COFFEE — ozs	2		2		2		2	8
<i>Either</i>								
Tea — ozs or		1/2		1/2		1/2		1.5
Cocoa — ozs		2		2		2		6
BUTTER — ozs	2			2		2		6
MOLASSES — pint					1/2			1/2
VINEGAR — pint		1/2						1/2

**CUTTER RATIONS (continued).**

Notes attached to preceding table:

“One and one-fourth pounds of fresh meat may be issued on Sundays, Mondays, Wednesdays or Fridays in lieu of the meat or fish portion of the ration for those days and when so issued, one pound of fresh vegetables, seventy-five percent of which shall be potatoes and twenty five percent shall be onions, cabbage, turnips or other small vegetables in proportion to make good soup, shall be issued in lieu of the vegetables portion of the ration for that day.”

Additional sections of the Regulations may be of current interest:

Section 966: Each revenue cutter will be allowed a fishing seine of suitable length, which may be used for the benefit of the officers' and mens' messes whenever the duties of the vessel will permit.

Section 967: Fishing lines and hooks will be allowed to each revenue vessel, which the commanding officer will see properly distributed among the men's messes.

Section 968: The officers and crews of revenue cutters are to be furnished a full and reasonable allowance of water for drinking and cooking purposes.

In another section it is determined that rations were computed on the basis of thirty cents (\$.30) per person per day.

Ignoring today's variety of foods, it might be interesting to create a menu for a week using the criteria included above. Can such a menu be both nutritious and tasty? Where is the fruit? Where is the Nutrition Pyramid? Would any of us return for seconds? Could the youth of today even survive on such a diet? Who wants to try it?

**EDITORIAL****Where Have They Gone?  
Where Are They Now?**

In the front page article on the Awards for 2005, we noted the significant contributions made by Jack Eckert. We were about to notify him when we learned of his passing. It was important to his family and friends that Jack was appreciated for his labor of love. It would have been even more important had we been able to notify Jack himself. We missed, by a mere matter of days.

This is not the first time we missed, again by a mere matter of days. Last year, John Stanford passed on just before we were able to notify him of his award. Even earlier, it was Sloan Wilson, author of *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*. Are we late? Obviously! Can we do better? YES! But we need your help.

The criteria for the Heritage Award states that the effort to preserve our heritage must predate the creation of the Foundation For Coast Guard History which occurred in 1999. The people who have manned the ramparts against the onslaught of indifference are passing. They must be recognized for their enduring contribution while they are still with us. We want them to know their work was and is appreciated.

This is where we need your help. Who are they? What have they done? Where are they now? Given enough information, we are more than willing to make several awards each year. We are trying to avoid what has become a pattern. Let us appreciate the work of our predecessors while they can still share our affection.

Fred Herzberg

**PSALM 107**

They that go down to the sea in ships,  
They that do business in great waters,  
These see the works of the Lord,  
And his wonders in the deep.

## FAST PROMOTION

Many have heard the story of how, in 1936 Commander Russell R. Waesche was promoted over all the captains to the rank of Rear Admiral and commandant of the Coast Guard. He went on to become full Admiral as he led the service through World War II. In spite of his fast rise, his was not the fastest promotion in our history.

Frederick Billard was promoted to Commander on 12 January 1923 and then was promoted to Rear Admiral and Commandant on 11 January 1924. He was a Commander just 364 days. Taking another perspective, on 11 January 1923 he was a Lieutenant Commander and exactly one year was a Rear Admiral. Waesche had been a Commander for 10 years before his accelerated promotion.

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## RELIABLE, DEPENDABLE, ALWAYS READY

It has occasionally been rumored that the Coast Guard is the cadre around whom the Navy forms in time of war. This situation is amply demonstrated by this excerpt from *Naval History Of the Civil War* by Admiral David D. Porter, USN. (c, 1870)

“On the 31st of March (1861) 250 seamen and landsmen were ordered to be transferred from the New York Navy Yard to Norfolk and fifty seamen were transferred to the revenues steamer *HARRIET LANE*, which vessel was ordered to proceed at once to Norfolk. It shows the miserable condition of the Navy when the department had nothing but a revenue cutter to depend on.”

Historical note for those not familiar with the term “landsmen”. Basically a landsman was a seaman recruit, someone who had not yet qualified to be a seaman. What is a lower rank than a seaman? A landsman.

## SWEET RATIONS

During World War II, many products were rationed to ensure their continued availability for the war effort. Not the least of the rationed articles was sugar. The following is taken from PERSONNEL BULLETIN NO. 62-43 dated 22 May 1943.

“Subj: Sale of candy and confections in abnormal amounts by Ships’ Service Stores.

“1. It has been brought to the attention of Headquarters that there has been some abuse of Ships’ Service Stores through the purchase of candy bars and confections in boxes of 24 and other quantity units.

“2. Inasmuch as the procedure in Finance and Supply Circular No. 50-43 provides for the replacement of sugar in all products containing sugar sold to an authorized Ships’ Service Store, all Ships’ Service Store officers should assure themselves that candy bars and confections sold are to be consumed by military personnel only.

“3. It should be strongly brought to the attention of Ships’ Service Store officers and Service personnel that the Coast Guard, in conjunction with the other services, has been granted special consideration in the ration system for the welfare and comfort of the military personnel. The Service is morally responsible to see that these privileges are not abused. Flagrant disregard of the normal requirements of the Service in these matters will cause criticism of the Service by the public, seriously injure Coast Guard relations with the rationing agencies, and cause difficulty in getting similar considerations on future ration agreements.

“4. Paragraph 3 is not only applicable to sugar rationing, but should be the guiding policy in the handling of all materials which are rationed to the general public.

By direction of the Commandant.  
Robert Donohue, Chief Personnel Officer”

## Recent Book of Great Interest

### So Others May Live

By Martha La Guardia-Kotite

*So Others May Live* is a representative collection of heroic U.S. Coast Guard helicopter rescue swimmer stories from 1985 to present. There are twelve stories which chronicle some of the greatest maritime rescues attempted. These feats told through the eyes of the hero, reveal an understanding of how and why the rescuer, with flight crew assistance, risks his or her life to reach out to save a stranger. The events unfold in diverse geographic areas and environments: oceans, hurricanes, oil rigs, caves, sinking vessels, floods and even Niagara Falls.

The rescue swimmer program was mandated by Congress after the significant loss of life from the incident involving the vessel Marine Electric. This book details the history of the program's development. The accounts are supported by interviews from the "first five" swimmers and officers, founding fathers and those who were key creators of this profession. Working from official documents, survivor and rescue swimmer interviews and photographs, their courageous stories are told. *So Others May Live* also describes the program's growth, lessons learned, training, skills and motivation required to become a rescue swimmer. The program is a model for military services worldwide.

The events are all true. Experienced rescue swimmers have rated these incidents as being illustrative of the best of the best. The collection includes the story of the first woman rescue swimmer, the first Distinguished Flying Cross awarded to a swimmer and cases that were catalysts for equipment and training changes. Briefly it also touches on how swimmers deal with their own emotional stress following difficult or tragic cases. Anyone in this profession is not just merely brave.

## By The Seat of His Pants

*This is the story of one of many heroes on D-Day, 1944. This one had three ships shot out from under him on that day. This story was first published in Sea Power, November 1944.*

As a member of the crew of the LCI (L) 85, the twenty-year-old Cox'n Gene Oxley was already a seasoned veteran of invasions when the Allied forces struck at the vaunted Atlantic Wall. His Landing Craft, Infantry, was a unit of a flotilla of twenty four LCI's which left the United States in the spring of 1943 and participated in the North African, Sicilian and Salerno campaigns. Every one of the vessels came through intact, and all were ready and fit for the Assault on Nazi-held France.

"We approached the coast about 8:30 on the morning of D-Day," Oxley relates. "It was pretty quiet at first, but it didn't stay that way long. Before we got our ramp down the German guns were blasting away at us. The beach was bristling with steel stakes and other obstacles the Jerries had laid down, and we hit one that had a mine attached to it. It blew a hole in our bow. We were also ripped by six big 88 mm. Shells. That was six more than we'd taken in the entire actions at Sicily and Salerno."

The LCI (L) 85 lay some seventy yards off the beach, unable to get in closer. The ramps were therefore useless in getting the troops from ship to shore. The skipper of the vessel called for a volunteer to swim through the surf with a line and anchor so that the soldiers could use the guide rope in struggling ashore against a heavy tide. Young Oxley was a good swimmer and had done the trick once before at Salerno. He was chosen, and he went in off the port ramp.

Bullets smacked into the water all around him as he swam, fighting the tide. He made the

(Seat Of His Pants, continued.)

the beach and began hauling in the line. He saw an enemy shell tear the ramp off the LCI, and a moment later a shot blew the anchor off the line he was holding. There was nothing else to do but tie the rope around himself and make his body serve as an anchor.

He stood braced on the beach—a perfect target for the enemy machine guns stuttering nearby. How the hail of bullets missed him, he never knew. Along the line tied to him, thirty-six men started for the beach, but only six reached it alive.

By then the LCI was badly crippled and just barely afloat, and her skipper decided it was futile to try to land the rest of the soldiers in that spot. As the craft started to pull out, Oxley ran down to the waters edge in order to swim back and get aboard, but the Germans were pumping so much steel at him that he ducked back to shore. The LCI moved off, but did not go very far. She soon capsized in the Channel and sank.

“The Americans hung on by their eyelids”

The young coxswain hastily dug a foxhole on the beach. He was shoeless and had lost his helmet, so he was forced to dig with his hands. But as soon as he finished, the rising tide flooded him out of the hole, and he had to dig another. In the space of an hour he completed and was washed out of half a dozen holes.

“From what I could see, it looked like all our amphibious tanks had been knocked out. Only a few of our men had got ashore and dug in,” Oxley recalls.

This was the beachhead concerning which General Montgomery later remarked: “The Americans hung on by their eyelids.”

Finally an LCT came in about a hundred yards down the beach and Oxley made a run for it.

When the Germans cut loose with a burst of fire he fell flat and crawled. He reached the craft just as it was backing off, but he had no more than reached the conning tower when the LCT caught a direct hit from an 99 mm, shell. It, too went down.

A few minutes later, miraculously unhurt and once more on the beach, he saw another LCI heading in for shore. He ran, ducked, crawled and waded his way toward her. The ship was trying to evacuate wounded, and every time the litter bearers started off the ramp, the enemy blew them into the water. At length the LCI, with Oxley aboard—and apparently safe at last—pushed off, made one trip and returned with more troops. As the ship landed, a shell struck and exploded in a compartment, killing every man but Oxley.

So, for the third time that day, he found himself holed-in on that inferno-like beach of Normandy. This time he remained three hours, until late in the afternoon an American destroyer sent in some small boats to evacuate wounded. On their last trip they picked up the Coast Guardsman.

Cold, wet and weary, but happy to have his feet on a deck again, Gene Oxley bore only minor evidence of his full day’s exposure to the terrific fire of the enemy—the seat of his trousers had been shot away.

## Our Coast Guard

Have you ever wondered where the name COAST GUARD came from? The first appearance in print was the title of an article published in *Harpers Magazine* in 1887. The article was written by LT Worth G. Ross, U.S.R.M. and in 20 pages, he relates the history of the Revenue Marine. LT Ross became the First Captain Commandant of the U. S. Revenue Cutter Service and served from 1905 to 1911. Interestingly, the only place in the article where COAST GUARD appears is in the title, 28 years early.

## You Don't Know What's Going On

*In early WWII, the East Coast was nervous about the possibility of a German invasion, if not a full fledged invasion, then certainly raids and incursions by small groups of Germans. Actually there were only a few instances, the most widely publicized raid occurred on Long Island. This is how it started.*

On the night of the landing, June 13, 1942 Coast Guardsman John C. Cullen left his station at midnight for the six-mile East Patrol. The weather was thick, visibility poor. He had covered only three hundred yards when he saw three men. One of them was in civilian clothes and the other two were in bathing suits. The man who was dressed was on the shore. The other two were in water up to their knees.

Cullen called out, "What's the trouble?" Nobody answered. The man on shore started toward Cullen. Cullen called again, "Who are you?" There was no answer. The man kept advancing. Cullen reached to his hip pocket for a flashlight. The foremost man saw the motion and apparently thinking the Coast Guardsman was reaching for a gun, cried out, "Wait a minute. Are you Coast Guard?"

Cullen answered, "Yes. Who are you?" "A couple of fishermen from Southampton who have run aground." "Come up to the station and wait for day-break." Cullen recalled later that the weather seemed to get worse and the fog closed in.

The spokesman snapped, "Wait a minute—you don't know what's going on. How old are you? Have you a father and mother? I wouldn't want to have to kill you."

One of the men in a bathing suit came up through the fog, dragging a bag. He started to speak in German.

Cullen spoke up. "What's in the bag? Clams?" Cullen knew there were no clams for miles around. The man in civilian clothes said, "Yes, that's right." Cullen's pretended gullibility appeared to influence him. In a friendly voice he said, "Why don't you forget the whole thing? Here's some money. One hundred dollars."

Cullen said, "I don't want it." The man took some more bills out of his wallet. "Then take three hundred dollars."

Cullen thought fast. He answered, "O.K." The stranger gave him the money, saying "Now look me in the eyes." As Cullen explained to his superiors later, he said he was afraid he might be hypnotized. The stranger insisted. Cullen braced himself and looked directly at the man. Nothing happened, to Cullen's relief. As he looked at him, the stranger kept repeating, "Would you recognize me if you saw me again?" When Cullen finally said "No" the man appeared satisfied.

Cullen started away and as soon as he was enveloped in the fog he raced to the Coast Guard station and told Carl Ross Jenette, boatswains mate second class, who was Officer in Charge, what had happened. Jenette telephoned the alarm to his superiors, reaching Warrant Officer Oden and Warren Barnes, chief boatswains mate at the latter's home nearby.

Meanwhile, Jenette had gathered three other men and armed them all and Cullen with 30-caliber rifles. They hurried to the spot on the beach but they could find no trace of the landing.

Jenette posted Cullen and two other men on guard and with the fourth, started to explore the dunes.

**"Have you a father and mother? I wouldn't want to have to kill you."**



Within fifteen minutes after he had received the alarm, Barnes was on the scene to take charge. As he arrived at the spot, he saw, through a rift in the fog, a long thin object about seventy feet long, about 150 feet off shore. Cullen is reported to have heard the noise of powerful Diesel engines just off-shore. Barnes, fearing a landing, distributed his men behind sand dunes with orders to resist invasion. But fog swallowed up the ship and the noise died away.

At this point a seaman summoned Cullen back to the station, where he gave a more detailed report to Oden, who was in charge of the Amagansett station and several others. As soon as he could, Cullen started back to the landing spot. On the way he encountered Jenett's searching party. They saw a light on a distant dune, but when they got there they could find nothing in the dark.

Cullen and Barnes returned to the station where Cullen insisted on getting the bribe money out of his hands. Barnes made out a receipt for the money and it was at this time they discovered that it consisted of two fifty-dollar bills, five twenty-dollar bills and six ten-dollar bills—\$260.

They returned to the search of the dunes. At this time they heard the chugging of engines again. As Barnes said, "It started with a roar and then became a steady Diesel throb. The boat went in an easterly direction."

Throughout the night the Coast Guard men searched. The first alarm had been relayed to Army and Navy stations and before dawn soldiers joined the search.

As dawn broke, Cullen and Barnes found some cigarettes of German manufacture half buried in the sand. The cigarettes were in silver paper in a cardboard pull box. About the same time, seaman Brooks discovered a furrow in the sand caused by a dragging object.

The searchers followed it to a spot in the sand that seemed wetter than the others, as freshly disturbed sand looks. Cullen said afterwards that if they had arrived a few minutes later, the wet spot would have evaporated in the morning sun and they might never have found it. Some distance off, possibly arranged as a marker, a searcher discovered a pair of wet bathing trunks.

Coast Guardsmen poked a stick into the wet spot and felt something hard. They dug and in a few minutes came upon four cases. They ripped off some of the wood off one case and found an inner case of tin.

Barnes meanwhile had found another wet spot and had dug up some German clothing including two German dungaree outfits, a reversible civilian overcoat, overshoes and an overseas cap with a swastika.

At the station a seaman opened one of the tins with a can opener and found a large number of pen and pencil sets. A larger box was filled with loose powder and glass tubes which they concluded were material for incendiary bombs.

The material was taken to the Barge Office in New York City. Three crates were opened in the office of Captain John S. Baylis, but when they started to open the fourth a hissing sound was heard.

"It was suggested," says a report in the Coast Guard files, "that they open it at the end of the pier."

Lieut. Commander J.A. Glynn and Lieut. (j.g.) Sydney K. Franken opened the box there. They discovered the sound had been caused by the contact of salt water with TNT.

The F.B.I. took up the chase from there and rounded up the men who had landed on Amagansett beach, and another group in Florida.

## Another New Book

### The United States Coast Guard 1790 to the Present.

By Thomas P. Ostrom  
Elderberry Press  
Oakland, OR

Tom Ostrom's book covers the USCG from the founding of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service in 1790 to the post 9/11 missions of the Coast Guard at home and overseas. The book is complete with photographs, appendices, documents, bibliography, glossary and an historical chronology.

The book features complimentary comments by U.S. Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force officers about their Coast Guard colleagues in WW I, WWII and Vietnam. Ostrom brings the USCG up to date in Iraq, including casualties and the awarding of commendations and medals to USCG Personnel who performed valiantly in the war on terror.

The evolution of Coast Guard vessels and aircraft is considered, including the role played by the Life Saving Service in the Wright Brothers flights, the Alaska missions, the pre-Lindbergh transatlantic flight of USCG LT Elmer Stone in 1919, Prohibition enforcement, icebreaking on the Great Lakes, and the contemporary upgrading of Coast Guard assets in the Deep Water program.

The author does not overlook mission controversies, such as the 1989 grounding of the *USCGC Mesquite* in Lake Superior, the disposition of a refugee who escaped to a cutter only to be returned to the Soviets, and documents regarding the Russian vessel *Kapitan Man* in the Pacific.

The volume is an ambitious undertaking, providing a broad overview in a concise, quickly read manner.

## The Coast Guard Cutter

When she steams into the harbor  
People don't flock round like bees,  
For she ain't no grim destroyer  
No dark terror of the seas.  
And there ain't a load of romance  
To the guy that doesn't know  
In a ship that just saves vessels  
When the icy northers blow.

When the old storm signal' flyin'  
Every vessel seeks a lee,  
"Cept the Cutter, which ups anchor  
And goes ploughing out to sea,  
When the hurricane's a blowin'  
From the banks to old Cape Cod  
Oh, the Cutter with her searchlight  
Seems the messenger of God.  
Anon.

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### Historical Tidbit—Mount Vernon

Admiral George Vernon of the Royal Navy is responsible for the term grog. He was in the habit of walking the deck of his flagship in a rough boat-cloak called a *Grogan*. This suggested a nickname for the popular flag officer and Admiral Vernon came to be known affectionately as "Old Grog". In 1740 the Admiral introduced West Indian rum aboard ship and had a mixture of rum and water served to the crews. It was intended as a preventative against fevers which so often decimated expeditions to the west Indies. This innovation was received with enthusiasm by the men on the flagship *Burford* who named the beverage after this illustrious leader.

George Washington's brother was an officer in the British Navy, served with Admiral Vernon and admired him greatly. In visits with his brother, he often spoke of Admiral George Vernon. In an early effort to remain friendly with the British Crown, they, always the politicians, renamed the Virginia plantation, Mount Vernon.

## How the Coast Guard Impacted the “Bridge On The River Kwai”

*The movie “Bridge On The River Kwai” is a fictional account of events during the Japanese occupation of Burma. However the central figure, the British Colonel played by Alec Guinness, is based on a real person. That person is Lieutenant Colonel Alfred E. Knights, D.S.O., M.C., M.M., T.D. This is his story. It could not have been told without help from several branches of what is now the U.S. Coast Guard.*

The *Matterhorn* was an iron four-masted barque of 1,754 tons built in 1882 in Port Glasgow, Scotland. The *Matterhorn* loaded barley in bags at Portland, Oregon bound for Ipswich, England in November 1909. Loading was carried out in the usual way, The bags were stowed across the ship in tiers and shifting boards were lashed fore and aft along the mid-ship line of stanchions. Some of the bags were punctured to allow the barley to run out to fill up any gaps in the stowage.

Most of the crew who came out from England with the ship deserted in Portland. Those remaining on board with Captain Eric Salter were Mr. W. Wilberforce the Mate, a Russian Finn carpenter, the bosun’ a Scot, the Cockney cook and ten apprentices. Captain Salter and the mate had “come up through the hawse-pipe” that is, served their qualifying time for their second-mate’s certificate in the fo’c’sle. They were both hard cases although somewhat different in character. The Captain seldom lost his temper and gave orders in a cool, calculated way which brooked no slackness; but the Mate was liable to outbursts of rage, which, with his torpedo beard thrust well forward, produced the same prompt carrying out of orders.

The new fo’c’sle crew were brought on board after the *Matterhorn* was anchored in the river.

They were a fairly good crowd which could not be said of the new second mate. On the following day, the anchor was hove up and the barque was towed down the Willamette and Columbia Rivers by a stern paddle-wheel tug which was made fast alongside amidships. By the time Astoria, at the mouth of the river was reached, a strong westerly gale was blowing, and after the sea-going tug had taken the *Matterhorn*’s tow-rope, Captain Salter decided to anchor and wait for the head wind to ease.

Both anchors were let go and their cables paid well out to hold the barque. But the anchors dragged and the barque began to get in towards the land. The position became dangerous and Captain Salter decided to beat offshore. While lying at anchor and swinging round to the tides, one anchor cable had become twisted round the other; so one cable had to be unshackled and the turns taken out. This proved to be a long and dangerous job and eventually the cable was slipped. Then the other cable was hove up and the barque got under way on the port tack with the upper and lower topsails set. She had taken a list to starboard and carried on that way all through the night.

At daylight it was seen that the list had increased and there could be no doubt that the cargo had shifted. The heavy list and the seas breaking on board prevented the crew from taking the hatches off to see the position of the cargo in the holds. Then the steering was affected and the *Matterhorn* came flying up into the wind lifting the sails which cracked and banged in the heavy gale and eventually blew to ribbons. This put the barque entirely at the mercy of the gale. Heavy seas crashed on board making the maindeck, fo’c’sle and half-deck untenable. Tarpaulins on the main hatch were torn off and several hatch boards were stove in, allowing the seas to pour down into the hold. This increased the list. The pumps on the main deck were manned but the

By this time the fo'c'sle had been completely gutted out and the half-deck teak house was smashed to pieces. Only a twisted iron framework remained. The two forward boats and the starboard lifeboat on the after skids above the main deck were washed overboard. The safest place on the ship's deck was the poop aft and all hands were ordered there.

The *Matterhorn* had by now heeled right over to starboard and was almost on her beam ends. In an attempt to reduce the list, an effort was made to jettison the cargo from the low side by getting into the after hold. A human chain was formed and bags of barley were passed up and pushed overboard.

At about 4 A.M. on 29 November, 1909, Captain Salter mustered all hands and told us that he expected the ship to founder in about an hour's time. He then gave us orders to put on our lifebelts and prepare to abandon ship. The port lifeboat, the only lifeboat left, could not be launched over the port or high side of the ship and the Captain detailed certain members of the crew to stand by with axes and knives to cut the boat's lashings, when he gave the order, in the hope it would slide down across the skids into the water on the starboard side.

The rest of the crew were mustered aft on the poop ready to jump overboard and then get into the lifeboat, if and when, she floated off. Everyone now waited the Captain's orders.

Meanwhile he said to me that he had done all that a human being could do, and now, as things got beyond him, he was handing the situation over to the Almighty who would sort it out as he deemed best. What struck me is that he did not ask the Almighty to preserve his own life, nor the members of the crew; it was just the handling of the situation of which he was incapable of dealing, and leaving it at that.

There was no panic among the crew. They had

lived with the sea and appeared to have no qualms about dying with it should this be their fate. It was at this juncture that the mate, casting his usual critical and experienced eye around the deck, saw that the fore and aft bridge between the poop and the mizzen mast could be an obstacle to the lifeboat and with an axe started to cut the bridge away. He couldn't swim and that was the last I saw of him because minutes afterwards the barque heeled right over and the Captain gave the order to cut away the boat's lashings. The crew then jumped into the sea which was very rough for the wind was still blowing at gale force.

This act of Mr. Wilberforce was one among many acts of heroism carried out by the Cape Horners. Mr. Wilberforce was not a religious man, his only references to the Almighty were included in his frequent blasphemous tirades and yet, at the final stage of his life, he achieved "the love which passes all understanding," he gave his life for his shipmates.

When I hit the sea, my first impression was the extreme coldness of it. I was drawn down under water through the action of the ship sinking. I felt I was being throttled, for I was still wearing my sou'wester tied tightly under my chin and the upward pressure of the water, tightened the tape and partially choked me. Automatically my hand went to my sheath knife and I managed to cut the tape. My lungs seemed on the point of bursting, I had reached the stage when I could no longer hold my breath. I surfaced.

It was dark but the moon was shining through a gap in the clouds. I seemed to be alone in a wide expanse of sea; then I heard a hail from a shipmate which was followed by others. I replied to it and although it could not have been long, it seemed ages before the lifeboat came to me and strong arms pulled me on board. She then carried on her mission of

mercy, picking up my shipmates until twenty-seven were counted. Further searching found no more and with the advent of daylight it was found that the three missing were the mate, the steward and an ordinary seaman.

The official capacity for that boat was thirty, but with twenty-seven it seemed overcrowded. Those sitting on the thwarts rowing had their feet on those lying on the bottom boards of the boat. Captain Salter was in a very bad way. He had been hit on the head by some wreckage. The second mate seemed unable or unwilling to take charge, so Johanson, the Swedish A.B. took over. He had had a great deal of experience in handling small boats, and soon had the lug sail reefed and hoisted; then he took over the tiller and the sheet and ran the boat before the wind toward the coast. The next twenty-seven hours were a nightmare. It was bitterly cold, the boat leaked and continuous bailing was necessary. In some ways it was a good thing because the exercise gave a certain amount of warmth.

At about 8 A.M. on 30 November we sighted what we took for a steamship, but which turned out to be the *Umatilla Reef* Lightship. We got alongside but were unable to climb up the pilot ladder to get on board. The crew of the lightship hoisted us on board. We were taken to the warmest place in the ship and provided with breakfast and hot coffee. No one could have been more kind and considerate to us. Twenty-seven hungry sailors gave them a problem to solve because their food supplies were overdue owing to the bad weather. An attempt was made to stop a passing steamer but she interpreted the signal as a warning against getting too close to the reef and hauled out to sea.

It was then decided to send the *Matterhorn's* lifeboat, manned by some of her crew, to Tatoosh Island (*the northwesternmost island, the upper left corner in the "lower 48".-ed*), where there was a wireless station. Johnson went in

charge of the boat and the venture was successful. A wireless was sent out and was received at Neah Bay (Strait of Juan De Fuca) Life Saving Station and at the Coast Guard (sic) (*still Revenue Cutter Service*) Station in Seattle. The USRC *Tahoma* was sent from the latter place and a lifeboat from Neah Bay. The lifeboat arrived first and the crew of the *Matterhorn* there were taken off. The gale was still blowing and a rough passage was experienced, the lifeboat being nearly driven on the rocks near Tatoosh Island through the engine breaking down. We survivors were given a great reception when we arrived at Neah Bay and were fitted out with clothing.

On the following morning, the *Tahoma* arrived at Neah Bay, having called at Tatoosh Island to pick up the survivors who had sailed there to get help. The *Tahoma* then took the twenty seven survivors to Seattle where they found a press reception.

*Knights started his working life as an indentured apprentice, his first ship was the Matterhorn, his first trip was around the Horn to Portland, Oregon. Surviving that, apprentice seaman Knights went on to command the 4th Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment at the fall of Singapore in 1942. He was later senior British Officer at several of the prisoner-of-war camps on the notorious Burma railway. One of these was the camp built to house the prisoners involved in building the bridge across the River Kwai. Pierre Boulle's book, genesis of the movie, is a work of fiction, but some of the best characteristics are reflected from the considerable character of Alfred Knights.*

Thus, working together, the Lighthouse Service, the Lifesaving Service and the Revenue Cutter Service, saved 27 mariners and helped make the movie and the legend.

Our thanks to the Knights family for providing this story.