



THE HELM

Summer 2012

Published for members of the USCGC Duane Association

2012 DUANE REUNION IS IN SAVANNAH

By Stan Barnes, President

Our 2012 reunion has taken on a very interesting schedule. As most of you properly know, Savannah is a fascinating city. With the work put in by Mike Smith, we should have a very nice time. All tours and dining will be pay-as-you-go as we have done in the past. At this time, we do not have the cost for the tours but, we will have the info when the September issue of the *Helm* comes out. All the information will be also posted on our web site so be sure to check it out regularly.

If you are planning to go to Tybee Island (Savannah), please let me know as soon as possible so that I can make up ID badges for everyone. I will need names, rate, rank and dates on board the *Duane* for the IDs. If you attended last year's reunion in Rockland and have your IDs from there, don't forget them. I will need a head count by October.

You can make your reservations at the Ocean Plaza by calling 912-786-7777 and tell them that you will be attending the USCGC *Duane* reunion November 7-11. Inside rooms are \$89.00 per night and ocean side rooms are \$129.00 per night. The cost for the banquet is not known at this time. If you have any questions, please contact me.



who knew her. Mike has made a promise to her to come to the reunion this year.

Until September, have a great summer.

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In other business, it is with deep regret that I have to tell you that Jeanne Smith, the wife of Mike, crossed the bar May 27th. A donation of \$25.00 will be sent in her name to the Coast Guard Heritage Museum in Sandwich, Mass. She will be missed by all of us

Visit the official Duane Association web site created and hosted by Rick Bogdan.

<http://home.comcast.net/~whec33>

You can download a membership application and PDF copies of this newsletter.

The Sinking of U-175...A Look Back and Forward

By George M. Chioran, MD



George Chioran, far left holding Dieter Wolf in life jacket, middle, after Wolf's rescue by the *Duane*.

Growing up in the 60's as the son of a WWII veteran, I would occasionally get my father, petty officer 2/c George Chioran, to tell some stories of his time serving as a member of the "Black Gang" in the engine room on *Duane*. He told me about the rough North Atlantic seas, and how he envied the sailors on the aircraft carriers who always seemed to have a smoother ride. He told me about the unforgettable noise of the big guns on the battleships, and the hot, dirty job he had in the engine room. But there was always a little extra pride in his voice when he talked about the events of April 17, 1943.

In April of 1943, during the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, Coast Guard Cutters *Spencer* and *Duane* were assigned as escort vessels for HX-233, a convoy of 52 ships headed for the United King-

dom. The convoy included an unusually large number of tankers, twenty-two in all. One of them, *G Harrison Smith*, was the largest tanker in the merchant fleet. The threat of a German U-boat attack was always present, and unbeknownst to the escort ships, there were a total of 8 U-boats in the area stalking the convoy.

One of the U-boats in the area was U-175 under the command of Heinrich Bruns. Bruns and his crew had been very successful in sinking several merchant vessels in their two previous cruises off the coasts of South America and Africa. On the morning of April 17, Bruns sighted the *G Harrison Smith* and positioned U-175 to torpedo her. *Spencer* detected U-175 by sonar and closed in to attack. Bruns could hear *Spencer's* engines getting closer, but ignored the danger. Finally, seconds before he was to give the order to fire the torpedoes, Bruns aborted the attack and took evasive action. It was too late. Depth charges from *Spencer* tore into U-175, and she was forced to surface and abandon ship.

The last two crewmembers off the U-boat were Dieter Wolf and Peter Wannemacher. They were two of the 22 survivors rescued by the *Duane*. Ship photographer Bob Gates captured photos of their rescue, including a photo of my father (on the left) helping Dieter Wolf across the deck. My father had shown me this photo once years ago, and it wasn't until last year that I found it again online. I wondered what had become of Dieter Wolf, and I decided to try to find out.

In 1998 Winthrop Haskell published *Shadows on the Horizon*, a book documenting HX-233 and the sinking of U-175. Haskell had been a merchant sailor on *G Harrison Smith* that day in 1943, and he interviewed and befriended several of the survivors. I contacted Mr. Haskell and he told me that Dieter Wolf, now 90, was alive and well. He and his wife Maria were living in their hometown of Solingen, Germany. When I saw that Solingen was only an hour from relatives I'd hoped to visit in the

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Dr. Chioran, left, looking at a dagger engraved by former POW Dieter Wolf.

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Netherlands, I contacted Herr Wolf and he agreed to meet with my wife and me. Our relatives from the Netherlands were also able to make the trip to Solingen.

The Wolfs and their son, Chris who lives close by, were fantastic hosts. As a POW, Mr. Wolf was transferred to the U.S. and worked for \$0.80 per day harvesting crops in Arizona, Colorado, California and Idaho. In Germany after the war he worked as an engraver, etching and engraving decorative swords and daggers, some of which were sold to the US Marines as ceremonial pieces. He showed us examples of his beautiful work. Mr. Wolf fell in love with the shop owner's daughter, Maria, and they have been married for over 60 years. The family has also lived in the US and Canada, and have another son living in Vancouver.

Mr. Wolf recounted his memories of the rescue. His inflatable life vest had been hit by shrapnel

and was not well inflated. He remembered telling Wannemacher that he did not think he could make it. But it was Wannemacher's 19th birthday, and his shipmate urged him on, saying that he could not die on his birthday. He recalled the *Duane* crew cutting off his wet clothes with knives before supplying warm blankets, clothes and cigarettes. He was grateful for the good treatment he received.

I presented Mr. Wolf with framed patches from the *Duane*, as well as an arm patch from my father's uniform and pictures of the rescue and the *Duane* as she appeared that day. He in turn presented me with a copy of the picture of him with my father, and a signed certificate expressing his gratitude for the rescue. It is something I will treasure.

Mr. Wolf related many more interesting and sometimes humorous stories about his wartime experiences. It was truly a memorable day. I am thankful that after almost 70 years, a simple photograph led to such a wonderful experience.

**USCGC DUANE
2012 REUNION**

NOVEMBER 7 –11
OCEAN PLAZA RESORT
TYBEE ISLAND, GEORGIA
912-786-7777
PLAN OF THE DAY
(PAY AS YOU GO)

WEDNESDAY NOVEMBER 7

CHECK IN AFTER 1600
DINNER AS A GROUP 1830 DOLPHIN REEF(ON-SITE)
HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN TILL 2300

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 8

COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST BUFFET IN THE DOLPHIN REEF
1000 TOUR COAST GUARD STATION TYBEE ISLAND COCKSPUR ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE/
FORT POLASKI
DINNER ON YOUR OWN
HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN TILL 2300

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 9

COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST BUFFET IN THE DOLPHIN REEF
RIVERBOAT CRUISE AND TROLLY TOUR OF SAVANNAH WITH LUNCH IN SAVANNAH (YOUR
CHOICE), OR TOUR A PLANTATION
DINNER ON YOUR OWN
HOSPITALITY ROOM OPEN TILL 2300

SATURDAY NOVEMBER 10

COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST BUFFET IN THE DOLPHIN REEF
ALL DAY IS ON YOUR OWN TO DO AS YOU WISH
1800 GROUP PICTURE
1830 HAPPY HOUR/BANQUET IN THE HOSPITALITY ROOM
MEMORIAL SERVICE
GUEST SPEAKER (have not found one as of yet)

**USCGC DUANE
SHIP'S STORE
ORDER FORM**

ITEM	PRICE	SIZE
TEE SHIRTS	\$24.00	S M L XL 2X
POLO SHIRTS	\$28.00	S M L XL 2X
SWEATSHIRTS	\$32.00	S M L XL 2X
WINDBREAKERS	\$45.00	S M L XL 2X
HATS	\$20.00	
PATCHES	\$8.00	
SHIPPING:	\$8.00	
TOTAL:	\$ _____	

NAME:
ADDRESS:
PHONE NUMBER:
E MAIL ADDRESS:
RATE/RANK:
YEARS ONBOARD:

ALL ORDERS LARGER THAN 2X WILL HAVE AN ADDITIONAL CHAGE

SEND YOUR ORDER TO: USCGC DUANE ASSOCIATION C/O STAN BARNES 381 STAGE ROAD, SANBORNTON, NH 03269

Not a member? Join the USCGC Duane Association

2012 Membership and Renewal Application USCGC Duane Association

Membership runs from January to December. Dues are \$35 year.

Name

Spouse name

Your nickname (first name)

Street

City

State

Zip

Telephone

Email (required for download notification)

Years served on Duane: 19__ to 19__

Rank/rate while on board

Highest Rank/rate

USCG year retired

2012 Membership

Renewal

New Member

I wish to receive the newsletter: Via mail (black & white) Download (full color) from our site

Please send a check for \$35 made out to "USCGC Duane Association" to:

Tom Grabowski, 705 Meadowbrook Road, Trafford, PA 15085

Please cut along lines before mailing

[USCGC Duane Association](#)

[Chain of Command](#)

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