



THE HELM

Summer 2002

Published for members of the USCGC Duane Association

Charleston Reunion 2002

by Paul (Harry) Turner, President

A hoy Duane Sailors, I'm happy to report that the Charleston, South Carolina reunion was a great success. The weather was a balmy 75-85 degrees with a continuous light breeze coming in off the ocean, just what this upstate New Yorker needed to thaw his frozen pipes. And although we only had 34 sailors and wives in attendance, these wonderful people more than made up for the low turnout.

The sailor from the earliest era (1944) was Eugene Hamm, pictorially famous for helping to



USCGC Ingham

carry (with Al Westergard) an oil-soaked survivor from the German sub U-175 that the *Spencer* and *Duane* had just sunk. The youngest was Mike Matthews who served in the mid-eighties, just before the decommissioning.



USS Yorktown "The Fighting Lady"

By Thursday afternoon (March 14th), most participants had arrived and were in the process of exploring the ships at Patriots Point Naval and Maritime Museum. The USCGC *Ingham* (WHEC 35) was the first stop and everyone spent time in the Secretary Class Museum (just forward of the mess deck) studying the many pictures of the *Duane* and her six sisters. Dick Booth of the *Ingham* Association stopped by to officially welcome us and happily told us of all the maintenance work that's been done recently.

Over the next three days, we thoroughly explored the Museum's Vietnam Support Base, destroyer *Laffey* (DD 724), submarine *Clamagore* (SS 343) and

finally the carrier *Yorktown* (CV 10). Most toured the "Fighting Lady" (and its 26 planes) from bilge to bridge and some even got into the F-16 flight simulator for an 8 minute "combat mission." We later regrouped in the hospitality suite at the Quality Inn, viewed pictures, slides and movies, admired the rare *Duane* memorabilia that everyone brought and reminisced 'til the wee small hours.

On Friday morning, we boarded the "Spirit of Charleston" for a cruise out to Fort Sumter and a three-hour tour of the harbor. After that, everyone scattered to explore the many wonderful sights that Charleston had to offer and, of course, to regroup

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in the hospitality suite.

On Saturday morning, we undertook a journey that started with a Civil War submarine followed by a tour of a two-year-old state-of-the-art Cutter, then dinner aboard a WWII aircraft carrier, and finally, presentations on the past, present and future missions of the Coast Guard's High Endurance fleet.

We departed the Quality Inn with an 8-car caravan and headed out to the old Navy Base and the Confederate States Submarine Hunley. After passing through a busy interpretive area, our cameras were stowed (the National Geographic Society has purchased the exclusive photographic rights) and we were ushered into a separate viewing area where the sub was displayed. In an elaborate, elevated, glass-sided, water-filled tank, the Hunley was tilted at a 45 degree angle, with a large section removed to allow the archeologists better access to the artifacts that were on the deck inside. On the day we were there, the curators were planning to release the recently retrieved "lucky" gold coin that was carried by the Hunley's skipper.

Leaving the Hunley, we drove to the Coast Guard Base via the scenic route. Winding our way through the narrow streets, the caravan slowed to a crawl as we gawked at the hundreds of palatial antebellum houses, church-



Viet Boys from left: Jimmy Jones, Bill Devlin, Phil Teeven, and Harry Oldford .

es, and historic government buildings.

Once we had all shown proper identification to the gate guard, we were escorted to the USCGC *Yellowfin* (WPB 87319). Built to replace the aging 82 footers, the 87 foot Predator class cutter can make 25 knots, remain at sea for 3 days at a time, makes its own water, and has comfortable

semi-private quarters for a crew of 11 (men and women). Among its many innovations, *Yellowfin* carries an aluminum hulled inboard diesel powered water-jet small-boat which it launches and recovers through a stern well. The oversized pilot house is equipped with an integrated bridge system including an electronic chart display system which interfaces with the CG's new surface search radar and Global Positioning System. The twin diesels in the engine room (air conditioned), generators, pumps, etc., can be fully controlled from the bridge. The ship is completely computerized and runs on a Windows platform, just like your PC. In fact, should a power failure knock out the system, a battery-powered laptop computer is the emergency backup. The system works so well that there isn't even a sextant aboard, or a grease pencil!

The Duane Newsletter is published by the USCGC Duane Association.

Jay Schmidt, Publisher
6 Goodwin Drive
Norton, MA 02766
jay.schmidt@worldnet.att.net

Stan Barnes, Editor
381 Stage Rd.
Sanbornton, NH03269
sbarnes@worldpath.net

Dave Bunch, Editor
432 Wyn Drive
Newport News, VA 23608
dcbunch@visi.net

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Captain Kevin Carpentier, USCG

A few days before we arrived, a Marine helicopter had ditched within a few miles of the *Yellowfin*. Although the chopper sank immediately, within 10 minutes, four of the five crew were rescued. The *Yellowfin's* skipper, Lieutenant Dean Milne, pushed a button on the console and returned to port to offload the injured airmen. The next day, completely on autopilot, the *Yellowfin* navigated through the harbor, through the channel, out to sea and to within 10 feet of the crash site. Navy divers went into the water and completed the recovery operation within an hour. And, it was all recorded on videotape by the ship's cook (it's her battle station). As Mr. Milne put it, "Just another day in the Coast Guard."

Somewhat overwhelmed, we headed back to the hospitality suite and began our business meeting. A working draft of the USCGC Duane Association By-Laws was introduced and each section discussed. Fortunately,

several attendees held dual membership in other Cutter associations and they shared what has worked and what hasn't. With almost all hands contributing, the By-Laws were amended and unanimously ratified. I believe we produced a strong, yet flexible document of governance that will serve the Association well into the future. Copies will be distributed to all hands in future mailings.

At 1800 hours, aboard the Carrier *Yorktown*, we enjoyed an open bar for an hour, and from a huge hanger bay door, witnessed a magnificent red sunset over the Charleston skyline across the bay. The She-Crab soup was delicious and the Filet Mignon fork-tender. After fresh Chocolate Pecan Pie, our own Captain Robert Dinsmore USCG (Ret.) spoke on the history of Ocean Stations and of the ships that manned them between 1940 and 1980. It was a perfect segue for

our next speaker, Captain Kevin Carpentier, CO of the USCGC *Dallas* (WHEC 716), a 378' out of Charleston. He briefed us on the pre September 11 missions of Fisheries Patrols, Immigration, and Search and Rescue as well as two very new missions - Homeland Security and Operation New Frontier. He spoke of the latest efforts to stop the Go-Fast drug-smuggling boats by using swift, over-the-horizon boats and armed helicopters. A recent addition is the use of helicopter-mounted, long-barreled, single-shot, 50 caliber target rifles used to pierce a fleeing smuggler's engine block. Very effective, we were told. Captain Carpentier also touched on the ensuing turf war over which agency should command the Coast Guard - the Department of Transportation or the Department of Defense. Either way, the CG should win.

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Jim Orrock testing the Ingham's slope chute



Portland Head Light.

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The day wasn't over yet. The famous raffle featured some truly unique items – a poster of the *Duane* cruising past Portland Head Light for the last time, a framed drawing of the *Duane* superimposed on a Chart of Newfoundland, a Florida license plate (CGC Duane) and much more. Mrs. Carpentier won a set of gifts but graciously asked that another ticket be drawn so that someone else could win.

Finally we headed back to the hospitality suite for one last round of sea stories. Chris Williams, a scuba diver and honorary member of the Association, played a videotape titled "Final Journey," which chronicled in detail the long and expensive process of decontaminating, de-gunning, and towing the *Duane* and *Bibb* to the Florida Keys, their ultimate resting place. Once anchored in

position, water was pumped below decks and large holes were cut into their sides to facilitate the flooding. In silence, we watched as the *Bibb* slowly rolled onto her side and sadly settled beneath the waves. The *Duane* went down at night and although no such video exists of her sinking, we do have footage showing her on the bottom, surrounded by colorful fish, upright and proud.

The next morning, we had a long breakfast and one by one, said our good byes and reluctantly hit the road for home.

Next Reunion

I'm happy to announce that the next reunion will be held in Portland, Maine on September 26-29, 2002. That's right, this coming September 26-29. Events will include a one-hour cruise of the islands of Portland Harbor aboard the MV Chipewa, exploration of Civil War Forts Scammell and Preble, a real Down East Lawbsta Bake

on House Island, visits to the historic Portland Waterfront, the Portland Harbor Museum, Spring Point Light, the famous Portland Head Light, and the USCG Base and Exchange at South Portland.

Depending on the security condition at the time, we plan to visit a new Coast Guard Cutter and receive a guided tour of the entire ship.

Depending upon the number of people that sign up for it, we plan to charter a motor coach for a quick trip up the Maine Turnpike to Freeport and the L.L. Bean store (and the many outlets surrounding it).

For those who just can't get enough sea time, there's Casco Bay Lines scenic three-hour mailboat cruise that winds in and around the big islands in the Harbor. Amato's Subs, a staple in every Portland sailor's import diet, is just up the street and sells perfect lunches to go.

The official hotel will be the Best Western Merry Manor in South Portland (www.bestwestern.com/merrymanorinn). It's a full service hotel located just off exit 2 of I-295 with plenty of free parking. We've reserved a block of non-smoking and smoking rooms with queen and king-sized beds. All rooms are just \$99 per night but you'll have to reserve yours before August 15th, so please call now while they are still available. The phone number is 207-774-6151 - ask for the

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USCGC Duane Association rates. The Governor's Restaurant is next door and is famous for its fine food, friendly service, scrumptious, homemade desserts, and reasonable prices.

The gala banquet will be held Saturday night at the hotel in our spacious hospitality suite (more on that in the next newsletter). Wives/Significant Others are strongly encouraged to attend. My wife, Christine (the First Lady of the Duane Association) and I promise every one a memorable reunion.

Loose Ends

Captain Dave Geistert wrote to say that the Striped Bass will be migrating south during our reunion and that he is in touch with some guides who specialize in 2-3 person half-day fishing trips. If interested, you should contact him directly at geistert@gwi.net.

Chester Gabriel has started an all-Duane page on the Internet. Thus far, about a dozen sailors have left messages and posted their favorite *Duane* era photos. To access this site for the first time, it's easiest if you contact Chester directly at cgabriel@maine.rr.com and he'll e-mail you the directions.

The USCGC Bibb (WHEC 31) Association will hold its tenth annual reunion on October 10th, 11th and 12th in Virginia Beach, VA. For more information, contact Neil Wasserman at (727) 376-2317.

The USCGC Campbell (WHEC 32) Association is holding its reunion in Charleston, SC as we go to print. The next issue will have information on its future plans.

The USCGC Ingham (WHEC 35) Association will hold its tenth biennial reunion at the Holiday Inn in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina, on October 2-5, 2002. For more information, call Dick Booth at (864) 268-2990.

The USCGC Spencer (WHEC 36) will hold its reunion on October 10th through the 14th, 2002, in Baltimore, MD. Contact Richard McCombs at cgc-spencer@aol.com for more information.

The USCGC Taney (WHEC 37) Association is holding its reunion in Alameda, California as we go to print. The next issue will have information on its future plans.

The Portland Cutterman's Association will hold its fifth quadrennial reunion on August 2-4 in Portland, Maine. All Coast Guard Cuttermen from any homeport are welcome. For more information contact Mike Monroe at (207) 767-4007.

USCGC Duane Association Chain of Command

President

Paul (Harry) Turner
HCR2 Box 15A
Summit, NY 12175
(518) 287-1900
paultrnr@midtel.net

Secretary

Tom Grabowski
354 Meadowbrook Rd
Trafford, PA 15085-9712
(412) 856-1151
coastie@stargate.net

Treasurer

Don MacEachern
P.O. Box 245
904 Main St.
Cotuit, MA 02365
dmaceach@capecod.net



USCG 87 footer similar to the Yellowfin

Harry:

I just wanted to take a minute and tell you, Don and Tom...and your wives...how much we enjoyed the Reunion .

First, let me say that you guys and gals did a super job in putting the reunion together, with all the problems that were brought on by 9-11. Again, thanks for all of your hard work and all that you folks do. I heard nothing but positive comments! As the old saying goes.."You can't please everyone"...again...I never heard one negative remark...everything was positive! You are to be congratulated! "You pleased everyone!"

Jimmy Jones (QM2 1967-68)

Diving on the Duane

By Chris Williams

SHE IS STILL THERE!!! and was quite the lady with her treatment of me. My hand had a minor scratch from bumping into some coral.

My buddy and I managed an easy going 45 minute dive on *Duane* yesterday (14 Apr 02). Most divers spend less than 25 minutes on *Duane* as is required by recreational standards; however, we were equipped with double tanks and had to calculate for a decompression stop which allowed us to extend that time and obligated us to another 27 minutes in decompression. More than what we really needed. All things considered the dive was by far my easiest which I owe to the fact that the usually present Gulf Stream was further off shore that day - no current! We started our dive on the sand just off of the stern and worked our way along her port side to the bow. Depth here is on average 120 feet. Her props are hidden from sight by the sand the result of her scuttling in the sand. I remember three years ago seeing her props.... perhaps they will reappear.

Her rudder is still 50% visible and slightly, maybe 20% to port. Both anchors are also covered with the sand. The sand I am speaking of is actually a conglomerate of broken shell, crushed coral and actual sand and very sharp and gritty. I'll

make a point of bringing some to Portland. I saw a couple of hatches laying along side her that were lying on deck as she was sunk. Her hull is completely covered with a multitude of different sponges, coral, and an assortment of other encrusting organisms. Most of the coral is the size of baseball and are close to a fleshy peach in color. I would have collected one but there are strict laws that prevented me from doing so. Add the coral to your list of shipmates.

We ascended her bow, which has the highest density of coral growth due to her orientation to the Gulf Stream, to the main deck. She has the most impressive bow. Looking up at her she seemed larger than life. In strong currents the barracuda are seen to ride an actual bow wave created when she is met head on by the Gulf Stream.

On the main deck I worked my way around her capstans and anchor paraphernalia to her open turret. The hatch within the turret is still secure which prevents divers from penetrating to the crew quarters. This is not the case with the *Bibb* which accounted for the death of one diver years ago who became trapped within. The main deck is encrusted by hard coral, marine algae and sponges as well as the hull. However the

types of encrusting organisms are very different. Where on the hull the strategy of each organism is to filter the water for food, on the deck it is a different set of parameters and these organisms are arranged more for maximizing area for light. From there we ascended her superstructure and I paid a visit to the famous plaque. I counted thirteen baseball-sized coral on the plaque along with various other organisms. It can not be read. From that point we worked our way to her stern and back again over her superstructure.

Of the marine life, well that was the best part. A young sea turtle now frequents her and this sea turtle hung out with our safety diver for most of the dive at 70 feet which marks the depth of the highest point of *Duane's* funnel. There are about three Green Moray Eels that now call the Machinist Shop home. One of which was laying on deck watching life happen... this guy

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Jack's Joint

We try to post PDF files of this newsletter on Jack's Joint Web site. You can view and download copies anytime. Jack also has lots of other CG stories. Go to www.jacksjoint.com and check it out.



USCGC DUANE WPG/WHEC 33

Ship's Store Order Form

Tee Shirts (Tiger insignia)

Size: L XL XXL

\$16.00 each

Light Gray Quantity _____ Size _____ \$ _____

Sweatshirts (Tiger insignia)

Size: XL XXL

\$24.00 each

Navy Blue Quantity _____ Size _____ \$ _____

Patches

Tiger Insignia Quantity _____ \$ _____

Search and Rescue Quantity _____ \$ _____

\$8 each

Hats

Tiger Insignia (Tan or Black)

\$16 each Quantity _____ Color _____ \$ _____

Duane (Navy blue original)

\$16 each Quantity _____ \$ _____

Subtotal _____

Shipping \$5.00

Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Make checks payable to: **Stan Barnes/Storekeeper**

Name:

Street:

City: State: ZIP:

Phone number:

E-mail:

Rate/Rank while on board: Years on board 19__ to 19__

Send to: USCGC Duane Ship's Store, c/o Stan Barnes, 381 Stage Rd., Sanbornton, NH 03629

The Flag. My Original Sin

By Jim Orrock

I was a Young Coast Guardsman on my first overseas liberty. We had just delivered a Greek sailor to Georgetown, Bermuda for medical aid. The word was we got him just in time, another forty-five minutes he would have been dead. The executive officer gathers the liberty section on the fantail and warned us about the cops of Bermuda.

Told of some things we should not do while in town. Number one; do not mess with the memorials and their flags. Hell, my mind was on the booze, maybe women, and damnit I had to stand a two hour watch over the Admiral's Barge; everyone else would get all the good stuff before I hit the beach.

The two hour watch seem to drag on forever. Finally, I was relieved. Hell, why waste another forty-five minutes to get in civilian clothes, let's hit the beach in my dress blues. We heard the enlisted man's club had cheap food and booze, so I figured I could do a little catching up there first. Well the galley was closed, what hell, a few drinks on an empty stomach, cheap drunk. Finally found someone to share a taxi to town, can not remember whom that was Hamilton here I come!

Did a little tourist shopping for the folks and my girl. Around nineteen hundred ran into most of the crew in this pub. I can not

remember eating anything, just drinking.

Around an hour or two later we headed to another club after being asked to leave the first place (Fox and Hound), off we go. We stroll in to another establishment the like this old country boy had never seen. The waiters wore tuxedos, I remember a lot of glass, and French doors leading to a terrace. I was setting there getting a little nervous, the management was getting a little upset at us and some of the crew (Officers and Enlisted) were talking about tearing the place apart. The next thing I knew Tom Bedell stood up, yelling and threw a chair through the French doors glass going every where. Some officers started throwing chairs and glasses. Man, I want out of here. Mr.. Goodie Two Shoes only thought this stuff happened in the movies. I believe the cops came, but we where long gone and they did not pursue us. I am thinking, if they do not do anything these guys are pretty soft.

I have always been a Naval History buff, even back then. Anyhow, I am stumbling down the street and see this World War Two memorial, with flags of the British Empire. One of the flag is the Saint George Cross or the Royal Naval Ensign. "Damn, I would like to have that", in my drunken stupor I think. So over

the little fence I go, take down the flag and off on my merry way I go. Beside those guys tore up that club and they did not do anything, Why should they care about a silly old flag.

WRONG...some damn taxi driver saw me take the flag and off to the police station he went. I had given the flag to fireman Midgett, since he had a bag big enough to put it in. Well here come a little police car siren whailing and lights a flashing. They start going through everyone's bags, and of course they get to fireman Midgett. They find the flag and start to haul off the wrong man; my Christian up bringing would not let that happen, so I "fessed up". Off to the gaol (British jail) we go.

They dragged me in front of the magistrate; he even wore a wig, which told me, "We do not take to kindly to folks who mess with our flags". I owed them eighty-five dollars for a new flag, (They claimed I tore the flag when I took it down, I was not about to contest them, seemed to me they where holding the high cards). He went on to say, I would probably be sent to Crown Point Prison for a couple of years, in fact he said he just sent a Canadian fellow there. Damn, things ain't looking too good.

I am put in a cell. Door with

bars open to the weather; a wooden bench to sleep on and a sink and toilet combination really interesting. As I lay there I was thinking, "Boy, you have screw up big time."

On the good cutter *Duane*, word had gotten back to Captain Roger Erdman, of my incarceration. He put out the word, "We leave none of the crew behind, get Orrock out of jail." Well the O.D. was Ensign



Stromsen; poor lad had grown a fine peach fuzz beard while on Ocean Station Echo. He shaved it off, borrowed the Engineering Officer Dress Blue jacket with all of his fruit salad (the E.O. was a mustang, so he had a few ribbons). I was told Mr. Stromsen had a good bit of money with him to pay any fine or bail money. Off to jail he goes.

I am awoken in my cell and brought back before the magistrate, and there stands in front of him Ensign Stromsen in this

Lt. Commander's jacket and no beard. The judge looks at me and says "This officer said you are the one sailor on that ship, that they can not sail without, so that makes you one lucky fellow, get the hell out of Bermuda and if you ever step back here I will have you arrested and sent to Crown Point Prison". (Which is in England, not Bermuda).

Of course the Ensign is mad as hell at me, because he shaved his beard off to rescue me. Now I am getting scared of what the Captain will do. We get back to Boston in a couple of weeks there is a captain mast held just for my benefit. I figure

he will take my crow away (bust me a pay rate, back to seaman). I am shaking in my boots as I stand before Captain Erdman. The executive officer starts things off, telling me I am charged with stealing the flag, did not I remember him telling the crew before we went ashore about "do **not** mess with the Flags". The Captain then starts reading the police report, I am thinking he going have me shot, he keeps on reading, it sounding worst all the time. He finishes reading the report looks over at the executive offi-

cer, and says "do we have anyone representing the Bermuda government, since we do not then this report is hearsay and can not be used against MST3 Orrock, all charges are dropped". Damn my knees almost gave way.

The Captain then said "Orrock, I know you will not let something like this happen again"?

"Captain, I will never stand before you again, under charges" I told him.

A couple of post scripts here; First a couple of months later I was on a plane going back to Boston, sitting next to me was Ensign Stromsen's mother, when she found out I was from the *Duane*, she started telling me how her son was so mad he had to shave off his beard to save that no good coastie from jail. I did not have the heart to tell her I was the no good coastie.

About eighteen months later the Canadian Coast Guard Icebreaker *John MacDonald* tied up outside of us in Boston. I went aboard to take a tour, traded my baseball cap for one of their berets. Anyhow, as we talked sailor talk, they happen to mention one of their shipmates was in Crown Point Prison for trying to steal a flag in Bermuda. A DAMN cold chill went down my back. I have not been back to Bermuda in the thirty years since this has happened, even though my wife begs me to take her there.....

Duane Association

Dues Structure

The dues structure is as follows:

Active Membership is \$25 for a full year and will include a specially designed USCGC Duane coffee mug, three newsletters per year, participation at the hospitality suite and all the benefits and discounts at the reunion. Active membership will be required in order to attend the reunions.

Reserve Membership is \$15 and will include the USCGC Duane coffee mug and three newsletters per year.

Inactive Reserve Membership will cost nothing and will include just one newsletter per year.

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had to be at least five foot in length. Two very large jewfish also now call *Duane* home.

These guys are enormous... we are talking about a fish that can swallow your arm up to your shoulder. I'd have to guess about six feet in length and well over 200 lbs. The jewfish normally retreat within the laundry room when divers are around. A large hole was cut in the hull at this point to facilitate the flow of water into *Duane* as she sank. The two Bull Sharks that have been on her for the past few months have not been seen and it is very likely that they moved on as they are known to do. I saw more scallops on her than usual do and something is making a meal out of them. I also saw the remains of large crabs and lobsters.

These are normally hidden far back inside the structure during the day. I have a description of what is occurring within as the Captain of the boat has made numerous penetrations. The greatest amount of rusting is occurring in the lower decks where encrusting organisms can not grow. As for what protection these organisms offer I do not know but they do one hell of a job hiding the rust.

The stack within her funnel is rusting out. Two years ago I had a photo of the platforms in the funnel but these have now collapsed and are not in sight. Rust has freed the majority of the stack from the funnel. This is an area where a diver can now drop down into her boiler room and presents a new hazard. For the most part any diver penetrating *Duane* is faced with two main concerns.

First there is the concern for knowing where one is at all times and how to exit if the need should arise. The second is the concern for obstacles that may prevent that access to the outside. Namely entanglement and zero visibility and *Duane* is known for her hanging wires, rusty overheads, and silted decks. Favorite areas for a wreck penetration are the boiler and engine rooms and these areas are made accessible by openings in the overhead. My thoughts on this activity are simply that it is something I have no desire on doing.

The one sight that I will take with me is one of a Midnight Blue Parrotfish making itself at home deep within the funnel.

I plan on visiting *Duane* again next month... she has changed quite a bit since the last visit back in August. I feel my shoulder is healed up nicely so many more visits are ahead for me. They say that it only takes twenty five years for organisms to reach equilibrium on a ship. This was shown to be true of those that sunk in the South Pacific during WWII. Basically what is on *Duane* will be there for many years to come but in ten more years there will be considerably more growth. One dive I am planning on in the future will be at night which brings an entirely new cast of creatures to see.