



# Coast Guard Heritage Museum

at the U.S. Custom House in Barnstable Village, Cape Cod, Massachusetts

## Spring 2022 Newsletter

### The Long Blue Line: WHEO-701 and Oceanography, Coast Guard's lost mission

Dr. P. J. Capelotti, PACM, U.S. Coast Guard Reserve (Ret.)

In 1969, the crowning glory of nearly a century of Coast Guard oceanographic research was to arrive when Congress authorized construction of the largest and most advanced oceanographic vessel in the world.

The 399-foot high-endurance oceanographic vessel WHEO-701 was to have set sail in 1972. It would have replaced the Coast Guard Cutter *Evergreen*, a 180-foot buoy tender converted for oceanographic research. The new research cutter would have displaced 3,945 tons with a fully-automated propulsion system that could operate without an engineering crew. For the study of marine biology, geology, geophysics, chemistry, and meteorology, the design of WHEO-701 called for more science laboratories than any previous U.S. vessel. The research cutter was to be manned with a crew of 133 with up to 16 scientists.



One-time "black-hulled" Coast Guard buoy tender and, later, "white-hulled" oceanographic research vessel *Evergreen*. (U.S. Coast Guard)

It was not to be. Congress authorized the giant research cutter's construction, but provided no funds to build it. But the cancellation of the oceanographic cutter came about for more than budgetary reasons. Coast Guard efforts in under-sea research were curtailed when an expected boom in the use of ocean research submersibles never materialized. In 1970, the creation of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) likewise placed the Coast Guard in a difficult position with regard to ocean research.

For example, the National Data Buoy Center, once supported by the Coast Guard, became part of NOAA. NOAA also operated the National Weather Service among other weather and oceanographic offices.

Established in the early days of transoceanic flight, the Coast Guard's Ocean Station program was becoming obsolete. The necessity of transmitting weather reports to transoceanic aircraft disappeared as those aircraft began to fly above the weather. Coastal communities grew reliant on satellites for winter weather warnings.

In addition, grant-funded university scientists on board *Evergreen* and Ocean Station cutters grumbled that Coast Guard crews became impatient while occupying data-collecting stations and, as a result, imaginary search and rescue cases would suddenly materialize. Moreover, the Service's oceanography program failed to sell itself to Service leadership as one Coast Guard officer noted: *The program did a good job servicing the cause of the larger scientific world, but not to sell oceanography to management. You can't eat oceanography, and when another rainbow appeared, whether it was law enforcement or marine environmental protection or migrant interdiction, the Coast Guard always chased it.*

In the late 1970s, civilian oceanographers who left the Coast Guard were not replaced, and the unit was officially disestablished in 1982. That same year, budget cuts and shifting priorities cancelled the oceanographic research conducted by *Evergreen* for the International Ice Patrol since 1948.



The Coast Guard Cutter *Rockaway* steaming into southern waters on a Tropical Atlantic oceanographic mission in 1966. (U.S. Coast Guard)

cont'd on pg. 2

## Oceanography (cont'd from pg. 1)

That research had earned the cutter two Coast Guard Unit Commendations and four Meritorious Unit Commendations. For a time, *Evergreen*, the Coast Guard's last oceanographic vessel, was itself threatened with retirement until it was re-designated a medium-endurance cutter and redirected to anti-drug patrols and fisheries regulations enforcement. Instead of performing oceanographic research, the Coast Guard increasingly found itself ferrying external scientists or their instrument packages.

The Coast Guard continues to transport scientists on board its icebreakers, a spectacular example coming in 1994, when *Polar Sea* journeyed from Antarctica in February to the Geographic North Pole on August 22, becoming the first U.S. surface ship to reach the North Pole and the only ship to reach from so far south to the Pole in one year. The *Polar Sea* carried scientists who conducted ground-breaking research on global environmental change, on board perhaps the only platform that could support such far-reaching research at the time. But even this program in ice operations and marine science was dwindling. By 1996, the program had shrunk to one officer and one civilian, its lowest personnel level since the Coast Guard's Oceanographic Unit was established at Harvard University in the 1920s.

A rather poignant coda to the Coast Guard's oceanographic program came in 1983, about a year after decommissioning the Coast Guard Oceanographic Office. While enforcing fisheries laws and regulations and searching for illegal drug shipments on the fishing grounds of Georges Bank, a crewmember from the *Evergreen* spotted a small balloon floating in the ocean. When the balloon was retrieved it contained a postcard written by a fourth grader from a Massachusetts elementary school 200 miles away. LCDR Laird Hail, commanding officer of the cutter, sent a patch and other souvenirs of the vessel, along with a letter which read in part:

*As you can see, your balloon was carried aloft and travelled quite a distance to the east with the prevailing winds during its voyage. Upon the release of some of its helium it descended upon the ocean whereupon it was further acted upon by the unusual sea currents which are found on Georges Bank. In the Coast Guard, we perform similar experiments in the study of wind and sea currents to better enable us to locate missing or distressed persons, vessels, or aircraft at sea.*

The successful conclusion of a ten-year-old's science experiment was made possible by the last Coast Guard vessel dedicated to oceanographic research, two years after its scientific mission had ceased to exist.



Coast Guard Cutter *Pontchartrain* battles heavy seas in the North Atlantic while on duty on Ocean Station "Bravo" in 1949. Photo: U.S. Coast Guard

**Editor's note:** *Today, Coast Guard cutters, such as icebreakers Polar Star and Healy, continue to support scientific research. However, the research and scientists performing it come from other public and private institutions.*



Builder's model of the proposed oceanographic research vessel WMEO-701, also known as Coast Guard Cutter "Never Built." (U.S. Coast Guard)



The Coast Guard Heritage Museum's feature display this year is the oceanographic branch of the United States Coast Guard.

See the President's Report on page 4.

# The Coast Guard Heritage Museum

## Barnstable, Massachusetts

CAPT H.F. (Buck) Baley, USCG (Ret)  
Vice President, Coast Guard Heritage Museum

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is the birthplace of the United States Coast Guard. For the past 17 years, the Coast Guard Heritage Museum has been located in the old Custom House in the village of Barnstable on Cape



Cod Massachusetts. It is one of only two free-standing museums in the country dedicated to telling the Coast Guard story. It also celebrates and preserves much of the rich local Cape Cod maritime history.

The doors were opened to the public in May 2005. RADM David Pekoske, USCG, keynote speaker at the “Commissioning Ceremony”, was joined by past and present Coast Guard dignitaries. He was impressed with the mission and the choice to host the museum in a former U.S. Custom House. “It is most fitting,” he said, “since all Coast Guard officers and Petty Officers to this day are sworn Customs Officers.” Both services have late 18th century origins and have worked closely together since.

“Underway”, but hard pressed for both funding and exhibits, the Museum struggled to keep afloat the first three years. Later, primarily under the leadership of



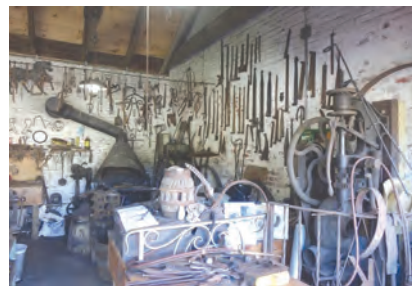
L to R: CAPT Greg Ketchen, USCG (ret);  
MKCS Bill Collette, USCG (ret);  
Astronaut Bruce Melnick, CDR, USCG (ret);  
CAPT Buck Baley, USCG (ret)

President MKCS Bill Collette, USCG (Ret), the Museum was revitalized with an active Board of Directors, expanded publicity, and increased contributions, setting the Museum back on course for future success.

Today the Museum houses an extensive collection of artifacts, photos, models and audiovisual displays on both floors, including the last deployed Beach Cart used in the 1962 rescue of the F/V *Margaret Rose*, extensive Revenue Marine, Lighthouse and Lifesaving Service memorabilia on loan from collector and ex-Army officer Richard Boonisar, a detailed five foot handmade model of the USCGC *Campbell* (WMEC 909), and additional exquisite models courtesy of Mike Maynard, another retired Coastie.



Located on the King’s Highway (Rt 6A) near the top of Cobb’s Hill, which previously commanded views of Barnstable Harbor and most of Cape Cod Bay, the historic red brick building was built in 1855, served as a Custom House and Post Office until 1913, and then housed the post office and town offices until 1958. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975. Also on the property is an active blacksmith shop and the Country’s oldest wooden jail.



A 501(c)3 non-profit organization, the Museum is staffed and operated entirely by volunteers, most with a past experience with the Coast Guard. Although it has relationships with the U.S. Coast Guard and other related museums, it is solely funded by donations, memberships and admissions.



If you live near or visit Cape Cod, please come by and visit. A small admission fee includes use of an audio tour system; volunteer docents can provide tours and share their own experiences.

Children and active duty Coasties and their families are free. Open seasonally, check [www.CGHeritage.org](http://www.CGHeritage.org) for specifics, sign up for our emailed newsletters and/or membership, follow us on Facebook, or contact us for off-season admission.



## President's Report

We begin our 18th season very excited about the newest visitor experiences now being offered at the museum. Many existing exhibits have been upgraded, several interactive stations added, audio tours expanded and our Changing Exhibit Gallery redone. Our newest exhibit features Coast Guard oceanography and the Service's leadership



in the earliest years of this scientific discipline. This includes polar exploration after the 1867 purchase of Alaska and support for the International Ice Patrol after the 1912 sinking of the *Titanic*. It also includes displays about "Tools of the Trade" and "Our Historic and Enduring Partnership" with Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution.

Several groups of our CG family have already visited the museum this spring. The entire Chiefs' Mess from CG Air Station Cape Cod helped with spring cleanup of our grounds in April.



Several Coast Guard Academy '70 graduates (including three retired admirals) stopped by in May.

The CG36500 is planning a visit to Barnstable Harbor in August. Stay tuned.



Hope to see more of you this summer,

*Greg Ketchen*

### In celebration of one of our own . . .

Barnstable Village Blacksmith James Otis Ellis was the 2021 Recipient of the Barnstable Historical Commission's 2021 Preservation Service Award. The smithy is on the same property as the Coast Guard Heritage Museum and is housed in the old Carriage House. Jim maintains and works with the same equipment that has been in use since the late 1800s. He is dedicated to preserving the tools of blacksmithing and passing on the knowledge of this time-honored trade to the next generation. One of his interns has gone on to become the blacksmith at Brewster's Drummer Boy Park and the Eastham Historical Society. His youngest apprentice is a Barnstable 7th grader.



### Did you know . . .

- The Coast Guard Act of 1915 was passed by Congress and subsequently signed into law by President Woodrow Wilson on the January 28, 1915. The act created the United States Coast Guard as a new service, outwardly modeled on the structure of the U.S. Navy and under the command of the Department of Treasury.
- The Coast Guard was created from the merged United States Life-Saving Service and the United States Revenue Cutter Service, which had been established in 1790 to prevent smuggling.
- Although placed under the U.S. Treasury Department, the Coast Guard was temporarily transferred to the Navy Department during World War I and again during World War II. In 1939, the Coast Guard also integrated and incorporated the United States Lighthouse Service and, in 1942, the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation. In 1967, the Coast Guard was placed under the United States Department of Transportation. Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the Coast Guard was placed under the Department of Homeland Security.

# Crossing the Bar ...

## Maurice E. Gibbs

1934 - 2022

The Coast Guard Heritage Museum is saddened to learn of the death of Maurice Gibbs on March 2, 2022 at his home on Nantucket. Maurice was named for his surfman grandfather, who had served in the United States Life-Saving Service and U.S. Coast Guard from 1886 until his death resulting from a breeches-buoy accident in 1922. CDR Maurice Gibbs (USN Retired) was a founding member of the Coast Guard Heritage Museum as well as a founding member of the U.S. Life-Saving Heritage Association (USL-SHA) and President Emeritus of the Nantucket Life-Saving Museum. He was a 34-year Navy veteran, enlisting in 1952. He served from Seaman through Master Chief Petty Officer, and as a commissioned officer from Ensign through Commander. In 2019, he was awarded the first ever Maurice E. Gibbs Commendation Award from Egan Maritime Institute for his work training individuals through the Coast Guard Auxiliary Boating Safety Classes.



## Albert L. (John) Manning

1938-2022

Albert L. (John) Manning, Jr. passed away on Monday, March 21, 2022 in Englewood, FL. John was born and grew up on Nantucket Island. He graduated from Tabor Academy. In the fall of 1956 he joined the U.S. Coast Guard. He served as quartermaster on the buoy tender *Hornbeam* and the icebreaker *Eastwind*, traveling to both ends of the earth.



After discharge, he settled in Waquoit and piloted ferry boats to the local islands, and started a successful charter fishing business in Falmouth. In 1969, he moved his family to Nantucket where he managed the Madaket Marine for 35 years. On Nantucket, he was an active member of several organizations including the First Congregational Church and the Nantucket Life Saving Museum.

In 2003, he moved to Marstons Mills where he served as the first active president of the Coast Guard Heritage Museum as well as being a member of the U.S. Life-Saving Service Heritage Association and the Eastwind Association. The Coast Guard Heritage Museum owes a great deal to John and the early members, from securing the location for the museum in the former Custom House, and gathering mementos from area retirees to literally keeping the lights on for the first few years.

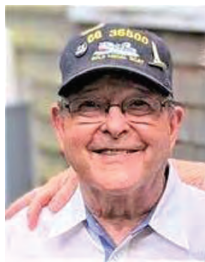
John is survived by his wife Mary M. Manning and his five children and their spouses. He was predeceased by his parents, his first wife of 46 years Edna E. Studley Manning, and his grandson James R. McIntosh.



## Reverend Daniel H. Davidson, Jr.

1935-2022

The CGHM has been notified of the death of Daniel H. Davidson of West Yarmouth MA on January 12, 2022 after a brief illness. An 11th generation native Cape Codder, Dan is survived by his wife of 57 years, June Harvey Davidson and two daughters. On January 16, 1962, as a member of the crew at Chatham Light Lifeboat Station, ENC Daniel H. Davidson was involved in the icy rescue of seven men from the Gloucester fishing vessel *Margaret Rose* near Wood End Light off the coast of Provincetown. The boat, carrying five tons of halibut, lost its electrical navigation gear in a 60 MPH gale and had to be rescued using a breeches-buoy. This is a zipline-like device that would be attached to the foundering ship in order to hoist and remove the crew one by one. This was the very last time the breeches-buoy device was employed in a rescue. As a member of the rescue crew, Dan received a Silver Life Saving Medal from the Massachusetts Humane Society. Following his service in the Coast Guard, Dan went on to be ordained as a Reverend by the National Association of Congregational Churches in September 1999, and served as an active member of the First Congregational Church of Yarmouth for many years.





# Coast Guard Heritage Museum

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Visit us at [www.capecodmuseumtrail.com](http://www.capecodmuseumtrail.com)

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Would you like to publish an article in our newsletter? Contact us at 508-362-8521.

Newsletter graphic design by West Barnstable Press

## CGHM Members Only Night: August 4, 2022

### USCG Vice Commandant Linda Fagan nominated to become USCG Commandant



ADM Linda Fagan, at Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation, April 28, 2022



Pending confirmation, ADM Fagan is expected to relieve the current Commandant, ADM Karl L. Schultz, during a change of command ceremony planned for June 1, 2022 in Washington, D.C. ADM Schultz will retire following the change of command this summer.



Thirty years before this mission, Fagan was fresh from graduating from the USCG Academy in New London, CT. She served aboard the USCGC *Polar Star* as Deck Watch Officer from 1985 to 1987.

Today, ADM Fagan stands in nomination to become the first female United States Coast Guard Commandant and the first woman in history to lead a United States Military Service.



#### An interesting note:

Ellsworth Price Bertholf was named the first Commandant of the modern Coast Guard and first flag officer in Service history.

## COAST GUARD HERITAGE MUSEUM IS OPEN FOR THE SEASON

Tuesday - Saturday, 10 am to 3 pm

We are a 501(c)(3) organization. Our mission is to preserve and share the story of the U.S. Coast Guard in the former U.S. Custom House, Barnstable, MA.