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EDITORS NOTES

It has been far too long since the last issue of the Coast Guard Heritage Museum Newsletter. So, here it is.

First, I want to let you all know that our founding editor, George Washburn, passed away in 2016. George was a former Coast Guard member and had been associated with the museum for many years. He served on the CGC Duane and at Station Cape Cod Canal during his service.

I’m sure everyone enjoyed George’s many stories in the Newsletter over the years, including “The Duane and its little buoy” and the account of the Dynafuel and Fernview collision in the Cape Cod Canal area.

All of the previous newsletters are available on the museum web site at www.cgheritage.org. George also served as a guide at the museum for many years and would always be there when the children from Cape Cod Academy would make their annual visit. George had worked at the Academy, and was a favorite of the kids. We will all miss George at the CGHM.

As always, thanks to the CG Historian for much of the information in the newsletter.

On a personal note, I have relocated to Florida. I will still be involved as much as possible, but Capt. Greg Ketchen has taken over as President. I will miss being there all the time.

Jack McGrath
President’s Report 
May 2017

Although we continue to grow and mature as an organization, 2016 marked the end of an era for our Museum (CGHM) with the departure of Jack McGrath. We all wish him the best as he and Phyllis enjoy life at their new home in SW Florida. Although about 1500 miles away, Jack has agreed to continue helping us publish a periodic newsletter for our members and on our website. When he does occasionally venture back north, he intends to visit us here in Barnstable to perform duties as an on-site docent. His outstanding leadership over the past 5 years has moved this organization forward through the critical and challenging early years typically experienced by a new small non-profit with a very limited budget and a wholly volunteer workforce. He leaves the organization as a more mature and established entity than when he assumed the position of president in 2012. This is a major accomplishment considering the outstanding leadership, contributions and accomplishments of those who preceded him in this leadership position. He will be missed. In recognition of his efforts, Jack was awarded the Coast Guard Public Service Award in October 2016.

I feel honored to have been selected by our Board of Directors to serve as the next President of the Museum - a position I assumed in January 2017. Fortunately for me, our Board and many talented volunteers continue to offer a deep reserve of experience, enthusiasm and abilities that will undoubtedly carry our organization to the next level. This promises to be an exciting next few years as we add new programs, expand our already rich collection, and develop new ways to educate and entertain our visitors with stories about the Coast Guard, particularly those with connections to Cape Cod.

2016 was an extraordinary year for us, highlighted by the release in January of the Disney film “The Finest Hours”, about one of the Coast Guard’s most successful and dramatic rescues. Since this 1952 event occurred off Chatham on Cape Cod, we had the opportunity to participate in many local activities organized to celebrate the opening of the film. This included developing a transportable exhibit that was very well received by visitors at multiple locations. This exhibit was ultimately transferred to the Orleans Historical Society, who participated in its construction, for use at their museum. We added several new exhibits at the CGHM including an outstanding model of the Revenue Cutter FESSENDEN and a comprehensive temporary navigation exhibit created by Don Sever. Many of our permanent exhibits were significantly upgraded. An extensive restoration of our museum building, the 1856 U.S. Customs House in Barnstable, was completed including renovation of all the historic building’s windows and repointing and sealing of the exterior brick façade. We also joined the new Cape Cod Museum Trail, making it easier for us to work closely with over 60 other local museums.

We will be reopening our doors to the public on Tuesday, May 2nd when we begin our twelfth season as a popular attraction here on Cape Cod. This year we have made significant improvements to our first floor exhibit space and added an audio tour, a highly detailed model of CG Cutter CAYUGA, and “Coast Guardsman in Space” and ocean station exhibits. We continue to expand our relationship with cadets from the Massachusetts Maritime Academy as
they make contributions in many areas ranging from developing ideas for and creating new exhibits to completing cleanup and prep for our new season. We have also recently begun collecting an extensive inventory of recorded oral histories from Coast Guard men and women and others who have interesting first-hand experiences with the service. Many of these recordings will be available on our on-site audio tour and we expect to add some of these recordings to our website.

The CGHM has been operating in the black since its formation and has successfully built up a small reserve for use in upgrading our exhibits and, when appropriate, acquiring important artifacts that may periodically become available. Although our resources are very limited, we should be financially sound for the foreseeable future. That said, we can definitely use your support. The work that had been done and the successes realized by our organization are largely the result of the contributions of a dedicated group of hard-working volunteers. If you are not already a museum member, please consider joining and inviting your friends and neighbors to also support us. We welcome any contributions you feel comfortable making. This could include either your time or financial support. If you live nearby or visit Cape Cod regularly, we would welcome any spare time you can offer, either to serve as a volunteer docent or just help us maintain our facility and collections. Please also consider submitting articles that we might include in our newsletter or donating particularly interesting items to add to our collection.

Our goal is to tell the story of the Coast Guard in an engaging manner, educating both young and old about the rich history of our service and the surprising variety of people it has served and continues to serve. Please consider helping us with this work.

Thanks for your support!

Greg Ketchen, Captain, USCG (ret)
President, CGHM
L to R: Buck Baley (CGA 72), Greg Ketchen (CGA 70), Jim Sylvester (CGA 71) with items they may have used serving in the Life-Saving Service!

USCG Astronaut Captain Dan Burbank visits the museum in April 2017.
Captain Ernie Cummings (l) & RADM Rudy Peschel, both CGA 63, visited the museum in August 2016.

Rudy is displaying his new Coast Guard Heritage Museum coin.
An all-new exhibit for 2017 about life-saving on Cape Cod

The exhibit includes a complete set of Surfman’s Patrol Checks from Pamet River Station, as well as a model of a Monomoy surf boat.
Also new for 2017 is an exhibit on weather patrols, also known as “Ocean Stations” in the Atlantic ocean.
Museum President Greg Ketchen steps up to the job of hanging out the sign for the 2017 season under the watchful eye of several retired SCPOs.
New for 2017 is a model of the **CGC Cayuga**, a 250’ Lake class cutter commissioned in 1932. In 1941, it became the **HMS Totland**, on loan to the Royal Navy. In 1946, returned from the RN, she became the **CGC Macoma**. Decommissioned 1950.

**On loan from: Robert “Fuzzy” Karr.**
USCGC BLACKTHORN WLB-391
28 JANUARY 1980

SS1  SUBRINO I. AVILA  1 MAY 1948  PALIWAS, R. P.
SNMG  RANDOLPH B. BARNABY  27 JAN. 1958  DETROIT, MICH.
MK2  RICHARD D. BOONE  22 SEPT. 1956  PATTERTON, CAL.
SA  WARREN R. BREWER  21 JUNE 1961  MEMPHIS, TENN.
QM2  GARY W. CRUMLY  22 JUNE 1956  BIRMINGHAM, AL.
DC2  DANIEL M. ESTRADA  25 FEB. 1957  LOS ANGELES, CAL.
EM2  THOMAS R. FAULKNER  2 JULY 1957  BONNETTERE, MO.
SA  WILLIAM R. FLORES  6 NOV. 1961  CARLSBAD, N. M.
SS3  DONALD R. FRANK  22 JULY 1956  BEAUMONT, TEX.
DC3  LAWRENCE D. FRYE  20 JAN. 1959  CLARKSBURG, W. VA.
QM3  RICHARD W. GAULD  28 MAR. 1960  YOUNGSTOWN, OH.
SA  CHARLES D. HALL  11 APR. 1958  TEHRAN, IRAN
SA  GLEN E. HARRISON  1 APR. 1961  CORDOVA, AK.
MK1  BRUCE M. LAFOND  9 JUNE 1947  HOLYOEK, MA.
FA  MICHEAL K. LUKE  6 JUNE 1959  CHICAGO, ILL.
MK1  DANNY R. MAXY  22 SEPT. 1954  MOBILE, AL.
SA  JOHN E. PROSKO  25 JUNE 1960  STEUBENVILLE, OH.
ET1  JEROME F. RESSLER  7 SEPT. 1951  BISMARCK, N. D.
CWO2  JACK J. ROBERTS, JR.  8 FEB. 1941  LAFAYETTE, LA.
SA  GEORGE R. ROVOLIS, JR.  11 AUG. 1962  SAVANNAH, GA.
ENS  FRANK J. SARA  16 JUNE 1957  CHICAGO, ILL.
EM3  EDWARD F. SINDELAR, III  8 JAN. 1959  CHICAGO, ILL.
MKC  LUTHER D. STIDHEM  11 JAN. 1940  SEQUIN, TEX.

MOURN NOT FOR HIM
HE SAILS WITH ONE MORE DIVINE
Buoy tenders have traditionally had long careers, with many serving more than 45 years. Aside from routine maintenance, *Blackthorn* was modernized throughout her career. In 1968 she received air conditioning improvements in her heating and ventilation, and a new 100kw generator.

*Blackthorn* received an “Austere Renovation” in 1972. Crew berthing, heads, and the dispensary were renewed plus a new lounge and Pollution Abatement System were added. From 15 October 1979 through late January 1980 *Blackthorn* was overhauled in Tampa, Florida.

Having just completed her overhaul, *Blackthorn* was outward bound from Tampa Bay on the night of 28 January 1980. Meanwhile the tanker *Capricorn* was standing into the bay. The Blackthorn’s captain, LCDR George Sepel, was on the bridge, but ENS John Ryan had the conn. Having been overtaken by the Russian passenger ship *Kazakhstan*, *Blackthorn* continued almost in mid-channel. The brightly lit passenger vessel obscured the ability of the crews of *Blackthorn* and *Capricorn* to see each other. *Capricorn* began to turn left, but this would not allow the ships to pass port-to-port.

Unable to make radio contact with the *Blackthorn*, *Capricorn*’s pilot blew two short whistle blasts to have the ships pass starboard-to-starboard. With the officer of the deck confused in regard to the standard operating procedure, *Blackthorn*’s captain issued orders for evasive action. Though the ships collided, damage did not seem to be extensive.

The problem, however, was that *Capricorn*’s anchor was ready for letting go. It became imbedded in the *Blackthorn*’s hull and ripped open the port side. Just seconds after the slack in the anchor chain became taut, *Blackthorn* capsized. Six off-duty personnel who had mustered when they heard the collision alarm were trapped in the dark. Several crewmembers who had just reported aboard tried to escape and in the process trapped themselves in the engine room. Though 27 crewmen survived the collision, 23 perished.

In the end the primary responsibility for the collision was placed with LCDR Sepel as he had permitted an inexperienced junior officer to conn the ship in an unfamiliar waterway with heavy traffic.

The *Blackthorn* was salvaged for the investigation and was then taken out into the Gulf of Mexico and sunk as an artificial reef.
Seaman Apprentice William Ray “Billy” Flores gave his life to save his shipmates in the frenzied moments after the collision between Coast Guard Cutter Blackthorn and the 605-foot oil tanker Capricorn on January 28, 1980.

Flores, 19, was less than a year out of boot camp and was newly reported to Blackthorn when the 180-foot buoy tender capsized near the entrance to Tampa Bay, Fl.

As the boat became submerged, inexperience gave way to bravery as Flores and another crewmember stayed aboard to throw life jackets to some of his shipmates who had jumped into the water.

Flores remained behind and used his own belt to strap open the lifejacket locker door, which allowed additional lifejackets to float to the surface.

“I was on the bridge and when the ship rolled onto beams end I knew we were past the point of no return and would surely capsize,” said retired LCDR John Ryan, a member of Blackthorn’s crew. “I went into the water from the bridge wing and by the time I surfaced the ship had capsized over me. I was injured with a sprained back and injured shoulder. As I struggled, suddenly a life jacket from the locker that was on the main deck came floating up to me.”

Due in no small part to Flores’ fearless actions and sacrifice, 27 of Flores’ shipmates escaped the submerged Blackthorn, but tragically 22 other Coast Guardsmen perished aboard Blackthorn.

Flores was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal, the service’s highest award for heroism not involving combat, on September 16, 2000. Flores’ family accepted the award and selected the date because it is a day of honor for many Hispanics that celebrates Mexico’s fight for independence from Spain.

The Coast Guard’s recognition of Flores’ heroism came after many of his surviving shipmates reviewed the records of the collision and realized that Flores’ actions had not been formally honored. His shipmates poured through transcripts from the surviving crew, administrative records and newspaper clippings to ensure Flores would receive the honor he so profoundly deserved.

“I am convinced that William Flores saved my life by his selfless act that night,” said Ryan. “That quiet young man that I was impressed with from the first time I met him will forever be a hero in my eyes. I have never forgotten him and never will. It is a fitting tribute to his heroism that a cutter will bear his name.”

Coast Guard Heroes: William Ray Flores

CGC William R. Flores WPC-1103
Gander was chosen for the construction of an airport in 1935 because of its location close to the northeast tip of the North American continent. Construction of the airport began in 1936 and it was opened in 1938, with its first landing on January 11 of that year, by Captain Douglas Fraser flying a Fox Moth of Imperial Airways. Within a few years it had four runways and was the largest airport in the world. Its official name until 1941 was Newfoundland Airport.

During the Second World War, as many as 10,000 Canadian, British and American military personnel resided in Gander. The area became a strategic post for the Royal Air Force Air Ferry Command, renaming the airport to RCAF Station Gander in 1941, with over 20,000 American and Canadian-built fighters and bombers stopping at Gander enroute to Europe.

After the Second World War, the RCAF handed operation of the airfield back to the dominion government in March 1946, and the town of Gander grew as the airport was used as a refueling stop for civilian transatlantic flights, earning its name "Cross-roads of the world" as nearly all overseas flights had to stop there before crossing the Atlantic.

Swords to Plowshares...

On the afternoon of July 9th, 1946, a Boeing B-17G “Flying Fortress” bomber, tail number 43-39136, that had been converted for passenger transit, departed from Gander – bound for Mitchell Field on New York’s Mitchell Field, making a stopover at Westover Field near Springfield, Massachusetts. The pilot of the plane was Flight Officer Herman J. Valdrini Jr, a native of Prescott, Arizona. He was a week short of being discharged from the Army. Also members aboard the bomber that were of the US Army Air Corps were Captain Henry A. Lebrecht, 1Lt Wayne L. Austin, Flight Officer Samuel A. Turrentine, Sergeant Daniel R. Roe, PFC Howard E. Carson, PFC Eulogio Sanchez, PFC Rex A. Tansey. Carried as passengers aboard Lieutenant Frank G. Meriam, Lieutenant Wilfred U. Johnson, Lieutenant (junior grade) George E. Orford, YNC Hugh J. Worth, RM2c Lee Winnard, BM2c Russell S. Scott, RM3c Alfred L. Warm, RM3c Arnold J. Simons, RM3c Ernest R. Gillis, ETM3c George R. Benfield, ETM3c George E. Fleming, S1c Arthur C. Miller, S1c Stanley P. Warshaw, S1c Gregory S. Davenport, and S2c David F. Archilles, all of the U.S. Coast Guard. Also aboard were two civilians - Lieutenant Pasquale P. Coviello, an assistant surgeon with the United States Public Health Service (USPHS) that was assigned to the Coast Guard, as well as Mr. Arthur Bailey of the American Red Cross.

Slated originally to land at 8:27 in the evening, the bomber circled the town of Holyoke for nearly two hours – steadily losing altitude while circling. Cleared to land at Westover Field, the bomber descended to down to 800 feet, on approach to the field, and in the direction of Mount Tom – a steep, rugged mountain peak on the west bank of the Connecticut River. According to Massachusetts highway patrolman Frank O’Connell, a beacon was lit up on the hill, but the flight crew of the bomber must not have seen it, or they did, but too late.
A Frightful Sound...

At about 10:20 at night, the plane impacted at the southern face of Mount Tom. It first brushed the treetops, tearing off an engine and gasoline containers which ignited, and then struck a bare, rocky space further up the elevation - exploding on impact, and starting several fires. The first men to respond to crash stated the heat was so intense that they were only able to get within 100 yards of the crash.

The broken bodies of the occupants were scattered among the plane's wreckage along a 400-foot swath torn by the bomber through dense woods 200 yards from the hill top. Also littering the path were a gold wrist watch, that somehow withstood the shattering crash, glittered among the ashes - its hands stopped at 10:20, the time of the crash. Vinyl musical records, charred & torn parachutes, unopened, lay in piles strewn among the wreckage, amongst naval pea jackets, burned shoes, wallets, blankets, and several letters.

It was quickly clear that the 25 people aboard the plane were all killed on impact – deeming the accident at New England's worst air disaster at that time. Luckily, a heavy rain downpour and misty weather prevented a serious forest fire from starting.

Parkside Witnesses...

The impact was witnessed by many of the thousands of people attending events at the Mountain Park Amusement Area on the mountain's eastern side. Holyoke police stated that it was quite fortunate that the bomber had not struck the park, as an estimated 4,000 were in attendance there.

Robert Hodash, a correspondent for the Associated Press, was at Mountain Park, and was one of the first to reach the scene - following the bed of an abandoned cable railway up to the crash site. He described it as "a gruesome spectacle" with some of the bodies "horribly mangled," trees knocked down across a wide strip, others singed by fire, and wreckage scattered over hundreds of yards.

The following morning, hours after the crash, the forests still were smoking, with occasional bursts of flame keeping the Army guards busy with portable extinguishers. The molten engine nacelles and mangled parts of the fuselage still gave off an intense heat from still-unburned fuel. Charred wreckage was spread in small pieces over the quarter mile square area.

The crash site went unmarked until 1994 when someone piled rocks there as a memorial. Holyoke resident Norman Cote noticed the rock memorial and persuaded local officials to establish a permanent monument on the old tramway. Fifty years after the tragedy, a monument was constructed at the crash site – dedicated on July 6, 1996, the Saturday before the 50th anniversary of the mishap.

Lieutenant Wilfred Johnson, a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy class of 1944, was enshrined in the Academy's Chase Hall's “Hall of Heroes” on its “Wall of Remembrance”.
The memorial on Mount Tom was dedicated on July 6, 1996, the Saturday before the 50th anniversary of the crash. Among those speaking was Captain Greg Ketchen, USCG. Greg is now the President of the Coast Guard Heritage Museum.
The Coast Guardsmen aboard were:

Johnson, Wilfred, LT
Meriam, Frank G., LT
Archilles, David Franklin, S2c
Benfield, George Ralph, RM2c
Davenport, Gregory Paul, S1c
Fleming, George, ETM3c
Gillis, Ernest Ralph, RDM3c
Miller, Arthur Calvin, S1c (ETM)
Scott, Russell Samuel, BM2c
Simons, Arnold Joseph, RM3c
Warm, Alfred Leonard, RM3c
Warshaw, Stanley Paul, S2c (ETM)
Winnard, Lee, RM3c
Worth, Hugh James, Y1c

The other victims included LT Pasquale P. Coviello, USPHS, an Assistant Surgeon who was assigned to the Coast Guard.

Thanks to Christopher Freeze for permission to use this article.

www.check-six.com has a comprehensive history of U. S. Coast Guard aircraft accidents.

It is well worth a visit.
MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES & DUES

**Individual** – $25  Single membership in the CGHM with all member privileges, including attending annual meeting with no voting privilege, individual admission to the museum, and a 10% gift shop discount.

**Family** - $40 Same as individual, but with additional admissions to the museum for immediate family. One person may attend annual meeting with no voting privilege.

**Supporting Member**- $100  Unlimited Museum admission & 10% discount. This is for those who want to support museum but not actively participate.

**Sustaining Member** - $250 – For those who want to show a greater level of support for the museum. Unlimited admission and 10% discount apply.

**Guardian**: 3 donor levels – Guardians receive all benefits of membership. The Guardian category includes individual recognition at the museum. The 3 categories are:

- **Captain’s circle**: $500+
- **Admiral’s circle**: $1,000+
- **Commandant’s circle**: $2,500+
# COAST GUARD HERITAGE MUSEUM

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

**Name:** ______________________________________________

**Address:** ___________________________________________

.............................................................................

**City:** ____________________________________ **State:**________  **ZIP:**________

**Phone:** ________________________ **EMAIL:** ________________________

**USCG Connection (if any)**

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**Please make checks payable to:** COAST GUARD HERITAGE MUSEUM

**MAIL TO:** COAST GUARD HERITAGE MUSEUM  P O Box 161, BARNSTABLE, MA 02630

**Credit Card:**  ☐ Visa  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Discover  ☐ AMEX

**Card Number:** ________________________________

**Expiration Date:**  Month_____  Year_______
**Coast Guard Heritage Museum**

**“Challenge Coin”**

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