

MILITARY SEA SERVICES MUSEUM, INC.



SEA SERVICES SCUTTLEBUTT

February 2012

A message from the President



Tony La Morte

I want to take this opportunity to convey the Board of Director's sincere thank you to Bill Fincke and Bud Farmer. Bill and Bud are "Snow-Birds" who volunteer to stand duty at the Museum during the months they are in Sebring. Bill hails from Bethlehem, PA, and is in his second winter of volunteering at the Museum. Bud who hails from Bassett, VA, is in his first winter. These men provide a welcome relief to me, John Cecil, and Gene Kissner, permanent Sebring residents, who stand duty at the Museum year around. With so few permanent resident volunteers, the Board is always concerned about burn-out, so we thank God for men like Bill and Bud.

On another note, visitors to the Museum have increased during the past couple of months. Thanks in large part to Sebring's winter guests and the recent News-Sun newspaper article on the donation of detailed models of Patrol River Boats MK1 and MK2 to the Museum. We are thankful to the News-Sun for the publicity and to the Patrol Boat River Forces Veterans Association for the donation.

Tony La Morte

Military Sea Services Museum
1402 Roseland Avenue, Sebring, Florida 33870
Phone: (863) 385-0992
E-Mail: navmargrd@gmail.com

Hours of Operation
Open: Wednesday through Saturday
Noon to 4:00 p.m.
Web site: www.milseasvcmuseum.org

(We thank our local newspaper the News-Sun for the following coverage of the presentation of the PBR (Patrol Boat River) models.)

Published: Friday, January 27, 2012 News Sun Newspaper

Donation adds to the story at the Military Sea Services Museum

By CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY

christopher.tuffley@newssun.com

SEBRING -- Normand Doyon served as a river patrol boat captain during the Vietnam War. He joined River Division 544, which mostly worked in the Mekong Delta, on April Fool's Day in 1969.

On June 22, the boat came under attack, taking a direct hit to the engine that essentially blew the vessel apart. No one escaped unhurt. One gunner was killed outright -- "He never even knew what hit him," said Doyon -- another crewman and the patrol officer died of their wounds shortly after.

Doyon's experiences on PBRs remain vivid memories, and he has spent significant time and effort ever since helping to keep the history of their service alive.

He is, for example, the treasurer of the Patrol Boat River Forces Veterans Association.

He is also a winter resident of Frostproof, coming down every winter from Southington, Ohio.

Over the years, Doyon visited the Military Sea Services Museum in Sebring often. It bothered him that there was no information about the PBR contribution in Vietnam, and he resolved to do something about it.

On Tuesday, he presented two PBR models for permanent display. "There's a lot of history here," he said, referring to the museum's collection and displays. "I just wanted to add more."

There were two PBR designs, he told the small group gathered for the presentation. The Mark I, put on the line in 1966, and the Mark II, which came out in 1968.

The Mark II was 11 inches longer and 11 inches wider than the Mark I.

The boats were dangerous. Built for speed out of lightweight fiberglass, there was no protection for the crew. Shallow bottomed, the boats could operate in two feet of water running at 28 knots, in 12 inches of water at full speed, which was better than 30 knots. The problem, Doyon added, was at that speed in shallow water "you can't stop."

The boats were not stealthy, the engine creating its own danger.

"They were noisy S.O.B.s," Doyon said. "At idle speed they could be heard two or three miles away."

"You can't sneak up on anything," he said. "We'd go out in the day, find our area before dark, tie up and stop." Then the crew would wait to roar out at a target.

The models donated to the museum are in 1:24 scale, allowing for considerable detail. They were built in the Philippines expressly for the Sea Services Museum, financed by Doyon's veteran's association.

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Tony LaMorte and John Cecil, museum president and vice-president respectively, were at the ceremony.

Both men said they hope the new display is a sign of things to come.

"We have more displays to set up," Cecil said, "but we've run out of room."

The museum has plans for an expansion that have already been approved by the city. All that's missing is the funding. Donations are welcome.

The Military Sea Services Museum is at 1402 Roseland Ave., on the corner of Kenilworth Boulevard. The phone number is 385-0992. Museum hours are 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday.



News-Sun photograph by KATARA SIMMONS. In addition to a donation of two boat models, Normand Doyon donated his collection of River Division patches to the Military Sea Services Museum for a permanent display.



News-Sun photo by CHRISTOPHER TUFFLEY. Military Sea Services Museum president Tony LaMorte (right) thanks Normand Doyon for his donation of two models of the type of boats used to patrol the Mekong Delta during the Vietnam War. Doyon wears the regulation black beret PBR crews wore instead of the traditional white cap.

Monthly Dinners

We thought information regarding our monthly dinners would be convenient for our members.

Dinners occur on the fourth Sunday of the month with the exception of November and December.

The price of dinner is \$10.00 per person; this includes coffee or ice tea, the entree, vegetables, salad, bread or rolls and dessert. (Beer and soda are available). No one goes away hungry.

Serving time is 1400 hrs; but you can come early and view the museum at your leisure. Someone is in the building by 1100 hrs or even earlier.

Dinners for 2012:

Occasionally we do have a BBQ. (May thru September) The Holiday Buffet is free; but requires attendees to bring a pot luck dish.

JANUARY 22 (ITALIAN)

MAY 27

SEPTEMBER 23

FEBRUARY 26

JUNE 24

OCTOBER 28 (OCTOBERFEST)

MARCH 26 (IRISH)

JULY 22

NOVEMBER - (NO DINNER)

APRIL 22

AUGUST 26

DECEMBER 9 – (4TH ANNUAL HOLIDAY BUFFET)

If you have any questions about the dinners, please contact Mary Anne at (863) 382-2578.

USS Swerve (AM-121)

USS *Portent* an Auk Class minesweeper was on, 22 January 1944, mined and the first ship sunk at the Battle of Anzio.

My dictionary says: portent- an omen or sign of things to come.

USS *Swerve* an Auk Class minesweeper was, on 2 July 1944, mined and the last ship sunk at Anzio. *Swerve* knew *Portent* and her crew but clearly ignored the dictionary.

Allie

Test Your Memory! (Easy ones this time)

1. At what time and on what day did the Japanese bomb Pearl Harbor?
2. On what date and on what U.S. Navy ship did the Japanese sign the surrender documents that officially ended WWII in the Pacific?
3. What did President Roosevelt tell the reporters when they asked where the B-29s took off from when they bombed Japan?
4. How many personnel are still entombed in the USS ARIZONA (BB-39)?
5. What island did the U.S. have to take from the Japanese for the B-29s to land on after bombing Japan?

A little Coast Guard history

The USS TAMPA, formerly U.S. Revenue Service Cutter USRC MIAMI (1912-1915), U.S. Coast Guard Cutter USCGC MIAMI (1915-1916) and USCGC TAMPA (1916-1917), transferred to U.S. Navy control in 1917 as USS TAMPA.

The USS TAMPA was assigned ocean escort duty protecting convoys from German submarines between Gibraltar and the southern coast of England. During the period 27 Oct 1917 to 26 Sep 1918, she escorted 18 convoys comprising a total of 350 vessels through U-boat invested waters from Gibraltar to England with the loss of only two ships through enemy action.

On the evening of 26 Sep 1918, 46 days before the signing of the armistice, the USS TAMPA, was sunk by the German U-boat (U-91) in the Irish Sea off Wales. All 115 crew members (111 U.S. Coast Guardsmen and four U.S. Navy men as well as 16 passengers (a British Army Captain, 10 Royal Navy Seamen, and five British civilian dock workers) perished. As many as 28 men from the Tampa Bay area were on board, including three sets of brothers. The loss of the 131 men aboard the USS TAMPA was the highest U.S. combat casualty loss in World War I. In 1999, the crewmen of the USS TAMPA were posthumously awarded the Purple Heart.

There is a memorial at Arlington National Cemetery and in the Chapel at the Brookwood American Cemetery in Surrey, England, commemorating the loss of USS TAMPA.

Welcome Aboard New Members!

The following new members signed up in January 2012:

Daniel P. Meekins joined the Museum under the annual membership plan. Danny's parents Tom and Karen Meekins, now deceased, were long time Fleet Reserve Association and Military Sea Services Museum members. Danny is the owner of Mobility Express in Sebring, Florida. He resides in Sebring.

Timothy A. Perry joined the Museum under the annual membership plan. Tim is a U.S. Army veteran and is currently employed by Mobility Express. Tim resides in Sebring.

Fred S. Caruso joined the Museum for two years. Fred joined the Navy in January 1942 and served for 20 years. He served in WWII and the Korean War. Fred survived the sinking of the USS PORTENT (AM-106). The PORTENT was sailing with the Allied invasion force for the invasion of Anzio, Italy, and was sunk on 22 January 1944 after striking a mine near the Italian coast south east of Anzio. There were 93 survivors, 9 injured and 18 men killed or missing. Fred was in the boiler room. As the room was filling with water, the men were not able to open the hatch, but when the ship tipped to its side, the hatch opened and boiler room personnel were able to get out safely. Fred also served in the USS LEWIS HANCOCK (DD-675) and came to the Museum with friends from the HANCOCK to view the USS LEWIS HANCOCK model and the Museum. Fred resides in Fruitland Park, Florida.

A very hearty welcome aboard to our newest members. A sincere thank you to all our members for their continued support. Without member support, The Museum would not be able to pay its bills and would have to close the doors.

All those many years ago I was never aware that many of my shipmates were busy creating lengthy diaries of their wartime experiences. In the last several years many of these diaries have been submitted to me for whatever use I might desire. Case in point is the entry from the logs kept by Chief Ed Wolfe.

At the time of the entry which follows, Wolfe was well on his way to his first hash mark although at the time, 1943, he had no sea duty. The entire extent of his nautical experience consisted of rowing young ladies around the Duck Pond at DC. Now on this date Wolfe has been assigned to his first ship a 136 ft. minesweeper the YMS 288. The ship is at San Diego preparing to sally forth and do great harm to the treacherous Japanese.

July 3, 1943 San Diego



Chief Ed Wolfe

At San Diego now but not for long. While tied to the dock at San Diego with some slack time I called four men up to the wheelhouse to give them some safety instructions on handling the. 45 automatic hand gun, our on watch side arm. At the time most of my small arm experience was on the small arms range and I was a Gunner's Mate second class. 'Now, men' I said, 'when you have this gun in your hand, remember whether it is loaded or unloaded. Never pass it in front of anything you don't want to shoot'. I began to pass the pointed barrel between the guys, down to the floor and all around without pointing it at anyone. I had a loaded clip in the gun but didn't realize I had a round in the chamber. For general safety, I pointed the gun up towards the ceiling and pulled the trigger. The gun then discharged and put a hole right through the ceiling of the wheelhouse. We were standing in the tight group when that 45 went off with a loud bang. The four guys turned white as a sheet and froze in their tracks. That

instruction session ended with a fright and a bit of embarrassment on my part.

Allie Ryan

Binnacle List

The Binnacle List contains reports of our members who are under the weather and could use the prayers of those of us that pray. They might also like a bit of cheering up.

No members reported.

If you are aware of any of our members who should be included in the Binnacle List, please send us an email at navmargrd@gmail.com or mail the information to the Museum at 1402 Roseland Ave., Sebring, FL 33870.

Loss of USS Portent (AM-106) at Anzio

Portent was a steel hull minesweeper of the Auk Class Builder

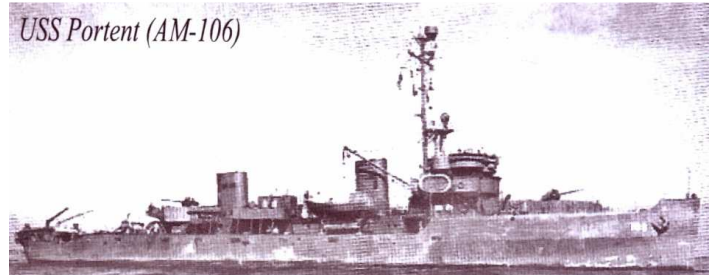
Pennsylvania Shipyard, Beaumont, Texas

Laid Down 15 November 1941

Launched 16 August 1942

Commissioned 13 April 1943

The ship commenced her Naval duties 14 May, 1943. From that date to 22 November the weeks and months were devoted to escorting convoys on the New York to Casablanca run, coupled with training, training and still more training. This way of life changed dramatically when on 19 December the ship arrived at Naples, Italy.



USS Portent (AM-106)

The summer months of 1944 were intended to be busy in the European theater of war. On tap was the proposed invasion of Normandy as well as a thrust into France. Also on tap was an invasion on the Italian boot to open a pathway to Rome - this would be at the beach resort of Anzio. This was intended to be a relatively minor operation but actually resulted in a terribly expensive and bloody adventure.

The invasion force assembled for Anzio consisted of approximately 250 ships of all shapes and sizes and 50,000 Army combat troops. This operation was dubbed operation SHINGLE and would be executed by two elements. A British force, Task Force Peter, would attack north of Anzio while an American Task Force XRay would operate from Anzio down the coast to Nettuno. The day of the invasion was set for 22 January 1944 while pre-invasion mine sweeping would take place 21 January.

The minesweeping group with Task force XRay consisted of 8 AM's (180'-220' steel hull), 13 YMS's (136' wood hull minesweepers) and one SC (sub chaser). The units assigned to Sweep Unit One were, *Dexterous, Pilot, Pioneer, Portent, Sway* and *Symbol*. These were followed by Sweep Unit Two *Strive* and YMS's 3, 29, 30, 34, 36, 43 and 226 along with SC-770. Sweep Unit Three was in company and consisted of *Prevail* and YMS's 58, 62, 69, 82, 207, 208. These units arrived on station 21 January 1944 and commenced mine clearance of invasion routes and Fire Support Areas.

As the mine clearance got underway all sorts of difficulties began presenting themselves. Dan buoys, planted to define the swept areas, slowly drifted away on the tides. The anchors provided were much too light to do the job. As the day of 21 January turned into night, sweeping operations continued under very difficult circumstances. Sweepers bumped into each other, got their sweep lines tangled and operations generally were impeded by the hordes of assault craft traveling through and over the sweep patterns. Although these and terrible communication problems persisted, sweeping continued throughout the night. With the dawn some of the results of the night's efforts presented themselves; mines with mooring cables cut and the mine itself not destroyed, floaters were everywhere. Despite all the difficulties the assault lanes were cleared and the invasion was underway.

Directly in the path of the invasion, waters off Point Tore Astura were home to an untouched mine field. Here *Portent* was assigned to clear the area of vessels and shepherd them to safe waters. All went well until 1000 when a terrific explosion underneath the stem of *Portent* tore a gaping hole in her hull. The ship sank stern first, rolled over and came to rest in some 80 feet of water. The minesweeper herself had been finished by a mine.

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Of the ship's crew, 93 men survived, 9 men were injured while 18 of her crew were killed or listed as missing. Of the 20 ships lost at Anzio, *Portent* was the first.

(New Museum member Fred Caruso was among those 93 survivors)

Contributed by Allie Ryan

Mail Recipients of Scuttlebutt

If you are receiving the Scuttlebutt by mail and have an email address, please provide us your email address. You will not only save the Museum postage, but you will be able to see any color photos in color. Unfortunately, the Museum cannot afford the printer ink required to print 40 some copies of the Scuttlebutt for mailing. We copy them on our copy machine which only reproduces in black and white. You can send your email address to any of the following: navmargrd@gmail.com , marieryan@cox.net , Lamorte@vistanet.net , or genekissner@yahoo.com . Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

**The current issue of Scuttlebutt will be posted on line at: www.navseasvcmuseum.org
1scuttlebutt@att.net**

Answers to Test Your Memory Quiz!

1. 0755 (7:55 AM), Hawaii-Aleutian time 1320 (1:20 PM) in Washington, DC), Sunday, 7 Dec 1941. This Japanese sneak attack killed 2,335 servicemen and 68 civilians and wounded 1,178.
2. September 2, 1945 onboard the USS MISSOURI (BB-63). The instrument of surrender was signed by representatives from:
 - Japan (Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu for the Emperor and the Japanese Government, and General Yoshijiro Umezu for the Imperial General Headquarters)
 - United States (Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz for the U.S., and General Douglas MacArthur for the Allied Powers)
 - China (General Hsu Yung-Ch'ang for the Republic of China)
 - United Kingdom (Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser for the U.K.)
 - Soviet Union (Lieutenant General Kuzma Derevyanko for the Soviet Union)
 - Australia (General Sir Thomas Blamey for Australia)
 - Canada (Colonel Lawrence Moore Cosgrave for Canada)
 - France (General d'Armee Philippe Leclerc de Hautecloque for France)
 - Netherlands (Lieutenant Admiral C.E.L. Helfrich for the Netherlands)
 - New Zealand (Air Vice-Marshal Leonard M. Isitt for New Zealand)
3. They came from Shangri-la. The 16 U.S. Army Air Force B25Bs that bombed targets around Tokyo took off on 18 April 1942 from the deck of the USS HORNET (CV-8).
4. 1,102. Of the 1,177 Navy and Marine Corps men killed in the Japanese attack on the USS ARIZONA, 1,102 are still entombed in the USS ARIZONA. God bless their souls.
5. Iwo Jima (Sulfur Island). The distance between Japan and U.S. bases in the Mariana Islands made it necessary to capture Iwo Jima to provide an emergency landing strip for crippled B29s returning from bombing runs. The capture of Iwo Jima also provided the U.S. an important air base for fighter escorts supporting long-range bombing missions against Japan.