



I Will Not Abandon You

THE FOG SIGNAL



Lightship not in correct position.

Volume 2 Issue 5 Newsletter of The U.S. Coast Guard Lightship Sailors Association Winter 2005

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President Removes LSA Historian OFFICIAL NOTICE TO MEMBERSHIP

As most of you know, Doug was appointed as LSA Historian by the late Jim Gill, then President. Doug has absolutely un-imaginable photo's and documents relating to Lighthouses, Light Ships and the Coast Guard. He was without any reservation qualified to be The Historian.

During the spring of this year, Doug aligned himself with a group of divers diving on several different sunken ships off the NE Coast. Among these ships was The Nantucket 117, which sank with a loss of lives, thus becoming a military Grave Site. Doug beat the drums for these folks to the point their efforts became noticed by Coast Guard Intelligence for two violations. The first diving on a grave ship. The second really serious offense was the removal of artifacts from inside the 117, which went on a two day display last spring.

At the time, Doug had presented himself as an "Officer" of The LSA, which then brought the Coast Guard Intelligence to our door step. The investigator requested that we not discuss any of the proceedings for fear of alerting the divers where they might either destroy or hide the existing artifacts.

In the strictest confidence, Doug was advised to cease and desist from involving by name, The LSA. That he was not to use his Historian's title to either gain recognition or entry into issues surrounding the divers. He was not advised of the investigation under way. During the reunion, Marty made a reference to the investigation, and we should be sure and distance ourselves and the LSA from any references or affiliations with the divers.

At the conclusion of the reunion, I sent out a request for comments from The BOD regarding how we could improve the reunion (I received some very helpful and appreciated replies), Doug sent back a rambling "piss and moan" letter bitching primarily at Marty. (Doug tried to pick a fight with Marty in Astoria, Marty walked away without a word).

Within days of returning home, Doug started on his E-mail about the divers, the investigation and several subtle references to Marty. I'm sure most of you saw these. I have copies if there is any doubt. Within days The LSA was contacted again by the Coast Guard investigator, this time not very polite. We were quizzed on our official position on diving and the desecration of a grave ship. That by inferences of Doug Bingham, we were affiliated with the divers. (Cont . Page 3)

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Reunion Memories

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By CWO3 Patrick Wills, USCG (retired)

With typical Astoria style, the morning of October 7th broke with weather that promised to be both mild and warm while threatening that cold Fall rains were not far off. Undaunted, the walk ways before the Red Lion Inn along the water front, in the shadow of the magnificent bridge over the deep blue waters of the Columbia River filled with men in red hats and coats from across the country and from decades past. With enough men gathering to crew 10 ships, the members of the USCG Lightship Sailors Association met for the first time ever on the west coast in the hotel overlooking the marina and the great bridge. A unique part of U. S. Coast Guard history, these men are some of the last of those that can say they sailed the red fleet. The history of the Lightship fleet stretches back to 1820 moving forward to 1983 when the last ship was retired. It encompasses a collection of 179 ships who served on stations around the entire lower 48 as well as in Alaska. Their mushroom anchors were dropped in treacherous waters that did not allow a lighthouse to offer navigational aid to mariners and were also normally very perilous waters. The crews stood their lonely watch through the roughest



Sailors inspect displays on WLV 604 before memorial service



*Back Row, LtoR) EN1 Orville Sullivan (CWO2) 1952-54, SN Paul Tribble 1967-68, FA Ray Weber 1967-68, BMC Willis Jack Blakeley (BMCS) 1976-78 last CO of 604, SN Fred Pelger (SK2) 1956-57, BM1 Melvin T. Hirahara (BMC) 1969-70
(Front Row, SN Patrick Wills (CWO3) 1969-70, MKC Don Young 1977-79,
(First rank is rank when on 604, rank after name is last rank held in service)*

storms without relief, and occasionally they died for their vigilance. Now with the fleet retired and their stations served by newer technologies, the crews that served on these ships are the last of their breed. The men that came to Astoria this week are indeed a rare collection in a small military service.

An opening Salmon BBQ allowed shipmates to become reacquainted as well as sailors to meet the other crews who had manned their ship through the years. For example, 8 men were present who had crewed between the periods 1952 to 1979 aboard WLV 604. That is one year short of the entire service life of the ship. Sailors from Massachusetts met men from Arizona to Hawaii who shared their pasts.

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I, as elected President, exercised my authority under our By-laws, and rescinded Doug's appointment as Historian. Under the By-laws, I was not required to either continue his appointment, or to justify in rescinding the previous appointment. I did however, choose to do this under Article XII GOOD OF THE ORDER, Section 1 CODE OF CONDUCT, items A ABUSIVE LANGUAGE and B PERSONAL CONDUCT.

On 4 November 2004, I notified Doug by E-mail that I had rescinded his position and by extension, his position on the Board.

Two weeks later on Sunday, I received a phone call from Erik Tarjakian, the skipper and lead diver of the divers. He attempted to quiz me regarding the official investigation, and to impress me with Doug's affiliations and knowledge, none of which have ever been in question. Erik called me on my home phone, all other LSA business has always been either on my cell phone or my business number, Doug is the only LSA member to use my home number. A coincidence?, I don't think so.

Ten days later I was contacted again by the Investigator. I provided information on Eric Tarjakian and his phone numbers, as provided to me. The question was "did I have any information or offers to view any of the artifacts from the 117". He also was very pointed in requesting a copy of the notice to Doug rescinding his position. The investigator was very relieved to know that we had taken these steps.

I have received several calls and E-mails from Doug's 'following' regarding the possibility of re-instating Doug as Historian. I have a standard reply on file that I automatically use.

On 28 November 2004, I sent a certified letter to Doug making our second request for the return of LSA property. He signed and accepted the letter on 6 December 2004.

On 8 December I received on my home telephone a call from a Paul Lawton, an attorney representing Doug Bingham. Through the attorney Doug made several errors of judgment where he claimed we had pulled his membership in The LSA, he had never known of or participated with the divers, or more specifically Eric Tarjakian. Doug further claimed he had never seen or was he aware of any artifacts retrieved from the LV 117. Lawton then made an offer, as follows: Doug would make copies of all of his files and provide us a copy in exchange for re-instating Doug as LSA Historian. I made a counter offer, Doug provide us a copy of all his files and we in turn would agree not to publicly discuss or repeat the transgressions that lead up to his removal. I contacted the CG Investigator, as requested, to report the conversation with Lawton.

The investigator had been contacted the same day by the attorney representing Eric Tarjakian.

The Investigator released us from our silence, they have located the majority of the artifacts and have offered a plea agreement where all artifacts are to be returned to the Coast Guard and the case will be closed. They are not interested in Doug.

NOTE: We will have a story in a future issue about the LEGAL and exciting dive taking place on the Brenton Reef LV.

Writings of the President

Our sixth annual reunion is behind us and work is well underway on our seventh, to be held in Portsmouth, VA in October, 2005. We will have a preliminary report to both the Board of Directors and our General Membership in March that will include most of the details that all of us want to hear for our personal planning.

Since our last meeting there has been several changes inside your LSA regarding the daily operation that I think you each will approve. We have also had a change on The Board of Directors that has been less than a pleasure, but essential in protecting the organization. I refer to the issue with our recent appointed Historian, Doug Bingham. Please see the explanation regarding his dismissal from the Board of Directors. This has been a most unpleasant issue, and I thank each and every one of you for your moral support. At this writing, we have not received any of the LSA property being held in his custody.

On a positive note: We have realigned some responsibilities on your Board of Directors.

For those of you that attended our General Membership meeting in Astoria, you may have noticed that most of the responsibility lay with only 2 or 3 people. Well, we are getting big enough now with our growing membership that we need to spread out some of the work. With that in mind I have appointed Jay McCarthy as Membership Chairman. Jay is now responsible for collecting membership dues, issuing membership cards and certificates. Please read and comply with his message in this edition. Your minimal membership dues is what funds this operation (we are still looking for a rich benefactor). (Cont: Page 5)

Friday's rainy morning was filled Sailors inspect displays on WLV 604 before memorial service with the business of the association, electing officers, passing motions, hearing reports. The wives got to

be tourists on a bus tour of the many historic sights in town. A more festive afternoon followed as the room full of red-jacketed men descended on the Oregon Maritime Museum for a tour and inspection of Astoria's centerpiece, Lightship Columbia River (WLV 604) (the last active duty lightship on the west coast). Not slowed by the heavy rain, the crews showed their families the interior living spaces and work areas where they had spent weeks and months of their youth. Next, the private meeting room of the museum filled to capacity as the sailors and families, gathered for a more solemn event.



LSA Members with VFW and USCG Color Guards gather before wreath ceremony

Rear Admirals E. Nelson and A. Manning oversaw a wreath laying ceremony in annual remembrance of Lightship sailors who lost their lives in the line of duty over the 189-year history of the lightships. Adm. Nelson formerly was commander of the 17th CG District and is a resident of Astoria.

Adm. Manning is the chairman of the USCG Retiree Council Northwest and lives in the Seattle area. With the colors born by the local VFW post and a color guard from the USCG units of Astoria, taps were sounded as a wreath was cast onto the waters of the Columbia and the local fire department fireboat paid tribute to the men fallen. In addition to remarks from Adm. Nelson, the collected families heard from Oregon Senator Joan Dykes, MCPO Birchard Kelly of Air Station Astoria, and Chaplain John Hughes. After sounding the bell for each crew, a 21-gun salute was also rendered.

That evening a wine and cheese social by the Lightship Ladies was further enhanced with the presentation of a video treat. Don McCune, a writer and commentator of a TV station in Seattle for 50 years broadcasting reports under the title "Exploration Northwest," made four of his half-hour broadcasts on USCG stories. His widow Linda joined our lightship crews for a presentation of his superb piece on the Columbia River Lightship from 1978. (Cont: Next Page)



Admiral E. Nelson with USCG Lightship association officers Marty Krzywicki, Larry Ryan and Rick Bennett.

Ninety percent of the time things turn out worse than you thought they would.
The other ten percent of the time you had no right to expect that much.

--Augustine



LS Sailors board the bus for a tour in Astoria



Saturday found our hearty red-coats boarding buses for a delightful tour of USCG Air Station Astoria. There the flight crews showed the sailors a video made by a shipmate on their mission, answered questions in the control room, exhibited aircraft and demonstrated some rescue techniques and gear. The day ended with a banquet of delicious victuals and an address by Adm. Al Manning. Closing activities finished with a lively auction for memorabilia ranging from pictures, patches, bric-a-brac and knickknacks.

Sadly, the crews had to bid farewell to one another Saturday night and thus end the first ever west coast reunion of the USCG Lightship Sailors Association. Next year the LSA will return to the east coast when they get together in Portsmouth. But the association found the west coast crews will not go quietly into the dark. The assembled members voted for the 2006 Reunion to be in Seattle, Washington. It is now time to get ready for their return! It takes nearly two years to do all the front work for these reunions and the CGD13 sailors of Seattle will just barely have time to get geared up. This will be a wonderful opportunity for the retirees and active fleet of the Puget Sound area to meet a special breed of their shipmates. The red-jacketed men will be looking to see what the 13th District has done to preserve Lightship 83 in Seattle as they bring their stories back to the west and give us a closer glimpse of the U. S. Coast Guard's red fleet's past duties. Lightship 83 is berthed at Northwest Seaport Maritime Museum in Seattle awaiting TLC to bring her back to her prime.

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Writings of the President

As you know, a resolution (one of many) was passed in Astoria regarding the need to pay tribute to Shipmates and Associates in their Crossing The Bar with something more than a few flowers that are soon forgotten. Our Arts and Graphics Chairman and Past President, Dennis Cosmos created a beautiful piece of work and our first occasion was to an associate from ALF, Mr. Melville. Dennis presented the framed tribute to the family in January. I would hope this would hang along side their most cherished memories. The fewer of these we send out all the better.

Fellow Shipmates and Historians, a brief story for all of us to consider: My first duty station was on an obsolete steam driven bouy tender. I had some interest in the principals of steam power but very little knowledge. I was having a little problem grasping some of the finer details of steam propulsion. The Chief Engineer was pretty crusty, but really had an intimate feeling about this particular ship and all of the machinery. I asked him one day where I could get some books on steam propulsion as the Coast Guard Institute did not offer any courses covering this vintage. He gave me an answer that I think we all should consider, " **When an old man dies, the library closes** ".

I think this applies to The LSA today. We need to diligently search out and preserve our history, when this generation is gone, our history will be gone unless The LSA preserves it. There are a few books, but not many.

A Message About Membership

Jay McCarthy Chairman

To All Hands,

As we all know the Mission Statement for the Lightship Sailors Association, Inc. is to preserve Lightship History and Lightships.

With that in mind, the Board of Directors has proposed to start off the 2005 New Year with a strong concerted effort to support that Mission Statement.

While reviewing our current status, a number of items were addressed. Among them was the question of our ability to help support the Preservation of Lightships. With Lightship Preservation in mind, we had to first take a long hard look at our revenue resources. Are we financially stable enough on an ongoing basis to support these objectives? Currently, the answer sadly is NO.

We realized we had to make some changes; an area identified for improvement was our Dues revenue. No set format was presently in place to notify, receive and track DUES payments.

Our main dues receipts have been collected at the reunions, with occasional other receipts trickling in from time to time.

The dues funds collected; barely provide us with enough money to pay overhead expenses, with NOTHING left over for Lightship Preservation.

As a result, starting this year for the first time, we will be mailing out DUES Renewal Notices to all members.

At the Astoria, OR. Reunion, the Board of Directors voted to increase the dues from \$15.00 to \$25.00. Out of that \$25.00, \$5.00 will be placed into a special fund for Lightship Preservation.

Unfortunately, the vote came after the members attending the Astoria Reunion had already paid their \$15.00 dues. We are requesting those members that already paid, to please mail in the additional \$10.00 when they receive the notice, thank you.

A Renewal Notice Form, along with a Self Addressed Return Envelope will be included in the mailing.

Payment may be made to the "Lightship Sailors Association, Inc.", by either Check or Money Order.

Upon receipt of your DUES payment, we will mail out to you, a Membership card signifying that your 2005 dues are paid.

This card can be used for your 2005 Income Tax return, as the \$25.00 is Tax Deductible.

The Lightship Sailors Association, Inc., is a "not for profit" organization.

These DUES Renewal Notices will be mailed out shortly.

Fair Winds and Calm Seas,

Jay McCarthy



VETERANS AFFAIRS

Bernie Byrnes Chairman

Make sure that your survivors know where to find a copy of your discharge (DD-214), without it you cannot be buried in a National Cemetery or most State Veterans Cemeteries also it is a good idea to have a will made up or updated.

INSURANCE:

Call the VA at 1-800-827-1000 and ask them to send you a form to update your G.I. Insurance. Reason, I have seen many a widow come into the VA to find out that the beneficiaries were the parents of the deceased veteran and had died many years previous. In this case it has to go to a probate court and they decided who collects the insurance, or also in the case of divorce who will be the beneficiary.

CLAIMS:

Besides Hearing Loss/Tinnitus (ringing in the ears) and Asbestosis which unfortunately go along with Lightship duty, you may of had other medical problems which can be attributed to your active duty. If this is the case it is never too late to file a claim, in fact most of the claims that I have filed for veterans are from W.W.II, Korea and Vietnam which places them at over thirty years. In filing a claim I would suggest that you use one of the service agencies such as American Legion, DAV, AMVETS, VFW, et. Reason being they will look through your records and may come up with other claims that you may of over looked, besides that they are working for you not the government. As I have mentioned before if you do have any questions feel free to ask, VFW bernardb@vba.va.gov or home fridel1@galaxy.net. I have heard from and fortunately been able to help a lot of you and I do have one favor to ask of those that have received a service connected disability is to make a contribution to our Lightship Sailors Assoc. This is strictly my suggestion but I know as well as you that we have to keep things going and it does cost. To those who have received a disability I will mention again most states have additional benefits such as tax abatements, annuities, etc. examples: The state of Mass. you get an abatement on the 1st \$2,000.00 assessment on your home and if you are awarded a 100% and a higher amount, also a \$1,500.00 yearly annuity which transfers to your widow.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD VETERANS OUTREACH PROGRAM: The USCG is collecting oral histories of those who served during W.W.II including SPARS and Merchant Mariners see www.loc.gov/folklife/vets. Those needing assistance with the recording can receive help from their local Coast Guard Auxiliary public affairs contact:

HOAX:

The National Personnel Records Center is not going to destroy any paper records, the Center has been undated with requests from thousands of veterans taking the staff away from the important job of servicing legitimate requests. If you need any records such as replacement discharge, medical or personnel call 1-800-827-1000 and request a form SF180 and after completing mail it to St. Louis or easier go on line to <http://vetrecs.archives.gov/>.