

# CCCA Newsletter - Summer 2020



July 21, 2020

A lot has happened since our 55th Anniversary, and we wanted to bring you up to date. The CCCA gained momentum and enthusiasm, with several members stepping up into leadership positions in our national and regional structure. COVID-19 has caused many cancellations of CCCA events, but we are moving forward with new projects, and we need your help.

As you can see, the most apparent change is this caveman taking over the newsletter. No, Mike has not bought a mimeograph machine, yet. Ed Mann, who had been doing such an outstanding job with his assistant Jennifer Melton, was recently promoted into a paid position at his local VFW, significantly increasing their workload and free time to dedicate towards the CCCA Newsletter. We sincerely thank Ed and Jennifer for producing the first-rate newsletter and wish them well in their new assignments. We are looking for assistance with the newsletter, if you have experience with desktop publishing and editing, please contact Assistant Historian Phil Garn for more details. If you have exploits or subjects from your time in the Boat Units or Teams that you want to write about or some local "*Boat Guy*" news, please feel free to submit your draft to Phil Garn or Jim Gray. We will be happy to help you get it ready.

On the national level, Warren "*EW*" Johnson has taken over for Scot Whaley as Secretary. Scot did a great job and even extended his services until Warren was elected at the national meeting during the 55th Anniversary in San Diego. Scot accomplished much with CCCA President: Joe Zemlin, and CCCA Treasurer: Mike Sigsworth. The fantastic success of the 55th Anniversary celebration was thanks to their hard work and taking care of the details. Our two major projects of 2019 would not have been possible without the dedication and leadership they provided. Warren has hit the ground running, proving that you do not have to be based in San Diego to have a leadership position in CCCA. Thanks to a lot of hard work on Mike Sigsworth's part, we are getting the electronic platforms up and running. Chris Webber has started helping with some of our electronic platforms as well. We need more technical expertise to, and financial support upgrade our capabilities and service to you, the end-user.

Additionally, Jim Grant is taking over as our national Casualty Assistance Director, a.k.a. CACO, from Bill Redmond. Bill did an outstanding job getting the Casualty Assistance Program up and running while managing a wide variety of sensitive situations with great compassion and effectiveness. His work was extremely demanding, and he accomplished a great deal during his tenure. Bill and Joe established the Request for Service (RFS) program, which has allowed us to manage cases better and track our progress with actual useable metrics. However, due to Bill's current life's challenges and his move to Arizona, the burden of fulfilling his duties to his level of excellence has weighed heavily on him. Bill has given much of himself, and it was time to pass the torch of Casualty Assistance Directorship forward. We sincerely thank Bill and his family for everything they have provided over these past six years. Your compassion and dedication to helping our community through difficult times will never be forgotten. We are even more thankful that Bill has agreed to stay on as our National Chaplin and continue providing his insight and guidance on religious and spiritual matters. We wish him and his family a big "***BRAVO ZULU***" for a job well done! Jim Grant has stepped up to the challenge and brings a lot of experience in this area. David Bernardi has also volunteered to help locally, and Regionally, men like Hoop Adams have already volunteered to assist. We are looking to build on the robust foundation Bill

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laid with more participation with our Regional Managers and Det Commanders. Hoop has already done an RFS. You could be one of our designated "*Anchor Points*" providing regional support! We hope to have brothers in the area who can best assess and assist on the our CACO Director and Regional Managers. Thank you, Bill, Jim, Dave, and Hoop!

COVID-19 has had a chilling effect on many of our "*Spring events*", "*Meet in the Middle*," the "*Gulf Coast Get-together*," and "*May Ride*." The previous two events were canceled, and the "*May Ride*" was highly modified. Rather than a single ride with a vast gathering, there were several smaller rides throughout San Diego. However, there is a silver lining for the CCCA. Rather than receiving a few mentions on the radio and while staffing our booth on a single day, Radio personality Clint August, from KGB 5 (101.5 FM, San Diego's Classic Rock Station), has been continually promoting the CCCA throughout April and May and into the summer. We are thrilled that we are fostering a very successful partnership with Clint August!

It should be known that your membership and financial support have helped many families in 2019. Although, due to the sensitivity of particular circumstances, we are very selective on what information is shared with each Request for Service. Privacy and confidentiality of a family's issues are only shared with the public when the family wishes to share their story.

One of the most significant "Victories" was being able to help "Steve Chance" and his family by providing emergency living assistance to cover mortgage expenditure. He underwent surgery and a month's recovery. The additional donations of federal leave hours helped him heal properly and get back onto a wellness path! Truly a team effort! As you know, the CCCA does not pay money directly to a person. Instead, we must provide a clear path of expenditure to a third party for services or products provided to the IRS.

We continue to honor our fallen, provide PPE to our membership, assist our members with evaluations and referrals, provide mentorship, and a host of smaller actions to enhance health and wellness. Sometimes, our efforts take a more direct path of compassion and comradery. Whether it be fun, local get-togethers, hospital visitations, funerals, and or memorial services. We strive to honor you and your families with the love and respect you deserve!

We have been trying to do some fundraising for the second printing of "*WARBOATS*" to be available in the fall. Our thought was to gain corporate donors and sponsors pay for printing costs of approximately \$15K without depleting our general relief funds. So far, it has been an extraordinarily arduous journey. No major corporate donors have committed to our solicitations to date. Just as we thought we were getting some nibbles; political unrest has erupted and purse strings during the COVID-19 period has drastically affected our corporate fundraising efforts. One of the members' suggestions was approaching our circles of influence and asking boat guys who have businesses or family members who have businesses and seeking smaller donations but publishing them in the new edition and on the website with their URL links and business logos. The SEALs did this with one of their books, very much like your high school's yearbook going to Bill's Service Station and Patty's Flowers. If you have local contacts that you wish to pursue, please contact Phil Garn and Charlie Philpot. What we don't want to have happened is several uncoordinated efforts approaching or double tapping the same sponsor. We are also doing pre-sales of the book; if we get enough pre-orders paid upfront by September 1, 2020, we will do

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another run. If we do not get enough to fund the printing, then all monies will be returned. Mike will be setting up an order form on the Ship's Store. Historian's Jim Gray and Phil Garn have been working on an errata sheet and will update the next limited edition with our Editor Dan Withers, not merely attaching a couple of pages of notes but correcting text and adding a few bonuses.

On the historical side, we continue to collect **YOUR** stories, photos, and videos! Contact Jim and Phil, and we will help you through the process. Every one of you knows guys who did something fantastic! Please help us get those stories and images into print. It is much easier for a comrade who has that personal connection to get them to open up or introduce them to Jim and Phil. That trusted introduction is invaluable to our historians! Believe us, we have heard some extraordinary stories, and if they are not for publication, we have and will continue to keep them confidential. One thing that Jim and Phil want to memorialize is our Vietnam generation. There is a lot of MST-1, MST-2, and MST-3 history that needs to be preserved. A good deal of what we have is in the book, but we are getting some excellent new raw material. It's de-classified, so unless you did a body Snatch of Ho Chi Minh with ST-1 on the PTFs in 1968 and planted a substitute, you are good to go. Captain Phil Bucklew stated in black and white and published by the Naval Institute Press that we (SEALS and Boat Guys) went North, so it's no longer a secret. If you want further proof, check out MACV-SOG, those guys weren't supposed to take any pictures but look at Plaster's, Greccio's and Hardy's books, Oh! Hardy has volumes of photos from the RECON Teams, not just a single book. We need your inputs to keep our history alive and relevant to the next generations!

Finally, every one of you knows teammates who are not members; we need them to join. Even though they may be far away from you, they are likely close to other guys locally. However, you are our best hope for bringing them into the CCCA. If you know young SWCCs getting off active duty, tell them about us and the benefits of our organization. Whatever career you are likely to pursue after active duty, some guys have done it or doing it from artists, to law enforcement, health care to contractors, even airline pilots.



*Treasurer & Ship Store, Mike Sigsworth*

## Treasurer's Bullets:

- The end of the Year Fiscal Reports has been issued to the Board of Directors, in accordance with our existing Bylaws.
- Our End of Year Taxes have been submitted to the IRS and state of California.
- If you have questions in regard to CCCA Financials, please contact me directly at [treasurer@combatantcraftcrewman.org](mailto:treasurer@combatantcraftcrewman.org)



## Welcome to our Store!

- Find the items that every DBG needs!
- All proceeds go to ***“Preserving the History and Honoring Brotherhood”***
- If you have questions, please contact me at [shipstore@combatantcraftcrewman.org](mailto:shipstore@combatantcraftcrewman.org)

Sincerely,  
Mike Sigsworth  
CCCA Treasurer | Ship Store



## A Boat Guy's Louisiana Trip and Restoration of PT-305

By  
Phil G. Garn





**Boat guys getting together, Edward and Tracey Wingard hosting Phil and Lisa Garn at Drago's Sea Food Restaurant in New Orleans**

During my travels in my law enforcement career, I always appreciated the local insights and unique perspectives of my fellow officers, agents, and prosecutors. I also was taken to many great restaurants, notably the “hole in the wall restaurants” before Guy Fiere turned them into nationally known stops with lines stretching around the block. Sadly, this happened to one of my favorite spots in San Diego, Hodads. I took many colleagues from across the country, particularly Easterners and Midwesterners, in the dead of their winters, where they could have a super burger and watch the SOCAL beach scene in an area that is still a throwback to the late 1960s and early 1970s. Later in my career, I would call ahead to my colleagues in the locality where my wife, Lisa, and I would be traveling and asking for recommendations. We enjoyed many more hidden gems thanks to their advice and confirmed that some star attractions on the local list of things were well worth doing. When BSU veteran, Jack Birge came to San Diego on a cruise with his wife in 2018, many local CCCA guys got together with him and had a blast. A lot of his interview in *WARBOATS* about his Vietnam Service with MST-1 in Da Nang came from that lunch and allowed me to contact local DGBs for our upcoming trip to Louisiana in 2020. Mike Sigsworth and Joe Zemlin suggested I post on our CCCA Facebook Page and ask anyone in the area to send me a personal message for suggestions and/or a possible meet-up. I received some great recommendations. Lisa enjoyed the Acme Oyster Company (there were

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many visits), and the veteran's discount was a money-saving tip. The World War II Museum was outstanding and a little more about that in a bit. Edward Wingard a veteran from SBU-20 "rogered up" for a meeting, which would involve great food and great stories particularly about the restoration of PT-305, a World War II Higgins PT Boat built in New Orleans that saw service with Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron (RON) 22 in the Mediterranean. With the other boats of RON 22, PT- 305 participated in the invasion of Elba Island, landed French Commandos during Operation Dragoon (the invasion of Southern France), and sunk an Italian MAS Boat (MTB) on April 24, 1945, just before returning to the USA.



**PT 305 aka *USS Sudden Jerk* at Leghorn during WWII.  
Photo courtesy of CCCA Member Ted Walther**



**Crew of the PT-305 at Livorno in the Mediterranean. Note the bright yellow painted on the deck of the bow for air recognition as well as 60mm mortar. You will see both on the restored boat. Photo courtesy of CCCA member Ted Walther.**

While researching World War II Maritime Special Operations for *WARBOATS* with Jim Gray, two PT Boat Squadrons or RONS got our attention. RON-15 was a conventional PT squadron that did a lot of pioneering work with the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the Mediterranean and RON 2(2), the dedicated OSS PT Boat Squadron led by the legendary Medal of Honor recipient John D. Bulkeley. These were forerunners of what our Special Boat Teams do today with Special Operations around the world. Both RON 15 and RON 2(2) operated the 78-foot Higgins PT boats built by Andrew Jackson Higgins' Higgins Industries in New Orleans. I was hoping to get some more information about the construction and history of these boats, particularly the OSS Boats PT 71, 72, and 199. I contacted the museum, and the curators referred me to their colleagues who they thought knew more about the PTs, Higgins, and Higgins Industries than they did. Finally, Curator Tom Czekanski told me the guy I ought to talk to was Jerry Strahan who wrote the book on Higgins, he's a local guy and lives in town. I asked is that "*Andrew Jackson Higgins and the Boats that Won World War II?*" This was one of our references for *WARBOATS*, check our bibliography.

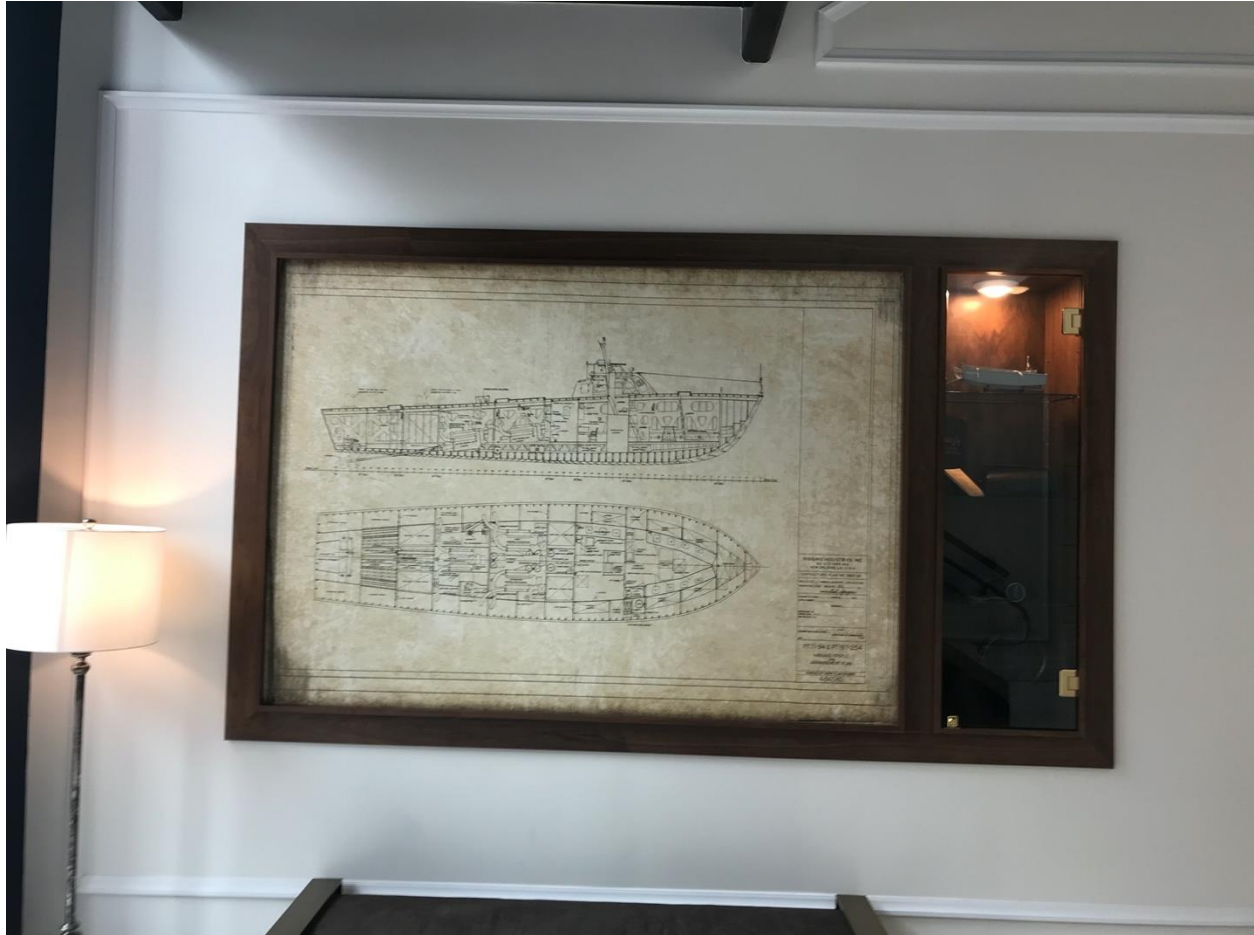
Tom said, "Yes," and gave me Jerry's number.

Jerry could not have been more helpful, and we agreed to meet up on our return to New Orleans after our stops in Saint Martinville and Baton Rouge. At the museum, they had a relatively small but informative display about Higgins and Higgins Industries. The real find was at the Higgins Hotel (also part of the museum complex), a life-size copy of the Higgins 78 Foot PT Boat plans for PT 71-94 series, and PT 197-254 series course includes the 71,72 and 199 boats that were hanging on a wall. Finally, as we left New Orleans, we went out to Lake





Ponchartrain to visit the PT-305 on a showery Saturday morning. The enclosure was all buttoned up, and there would be no tourist rides as it was raining cats and dogs, great for DGBs on missions but not for families. One thing that caught my eye was the fuel tanker full of 100 octane gasoline, which is why the rides are over \$300 per person.



**Photo of the framed 78 Foot Higgins PT Boat drawings at the Higgins Hotel in the World War II Museum Complex. This series included the OSS Boats PT 71, 72 and 199.**

Upon our return, Jerry met us at our hotel and took us over to one of his properties, where he has an extensive collection of Higgins plans and memorabilia. Jerry is not only the General Manager of Lucky Dogs, yes that New Orleans institution, but a classically trained historian and protégé of Steven Ambrose (the *Band of Brothers* Steven Ambrose). The latter did write the book on Andrew Jackson Higgins. He was also instrumental in getting the Higgins plans transferred to the University of New Orleans (hundreds of plans) and the restorations of the PT and the Higgins landing craft at the WWII museum. I learned from Jerry that Mr. Higgins was a fantastic patriot, often making improvements on the boats at his not the Government's expense. He established a school for landing craft and PT Boat crewmen and took many of the graduating classes to a first-class dinner in town (New Orleans), knowing a number of these brave small boatmen would not return. Higgins also surrounded himself with brilliant talent, including designers Ted Sprague (a boy wonder, but not from Harvard) and Graham Haddock, as well as



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Robert “Mac” McDerby chief of the Small Boat School, and financial genius Morris Gottesman. Hopefully, we will see more of these fascinating Americans in Jerry’s next book.

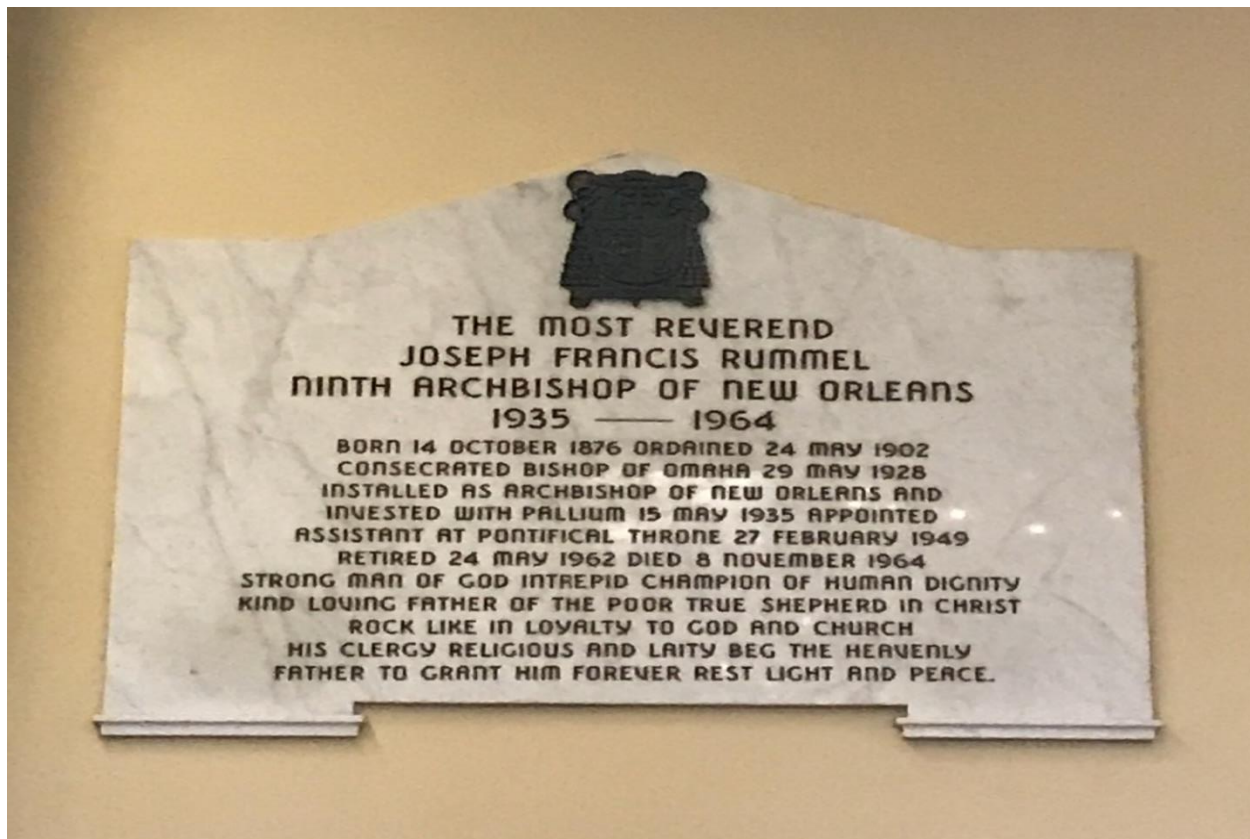


**Last chance to get your Lucky Dogs at Louis Armstrong Airport in New Orleans.**



**Above is a photo of Archbishop Rummel (front deck of the center boat) blessing a new Higgins Squadron from Jerry Strahan's collection. Jerry explained this was a tradition at Higgins Industries for the Archbishop to bless the new Squadrons as they headed into harm's way. (Photo courtesy of Jerry Strahan)**





**Monument to Archbishop Joseph Frances Rummel in the Cathedral of Saint Louis on Jackson Square in the French Quarter of New Orleans.**

The very next evening, Lisa and I got together with Edward and his charming wife, Tracey, who picked us up at our hotel in the French Quarter and took us to Drago's, the best-grilled oysters we have had anywhere. Naturally, Edward and I were soon caught in the Way-back machine pretty much-talking boats, boats, and more boats. We were both in the Special Boat Units at about the same time on different coasts and had both ridden Sea Foxes (36-foot Special Warfare Craft Light), PBs (65-foot Sea Specter MK IIIs) and Willards (24-foot rigid-hulled inflatables). He had also ridden PT-305, but even more fantastically, he and his high school students had helped restore her. I did not realize until Edward showed me some photos of how extensive the restoration project had been. I knew the PT had been chopped down by about 13 feet to become a fishing boat after the war. But I did not realize the boat was stripped down to the frames and stringers then completely rebuilt and slightly modified to meet current US Coast Guard (USCG) regulations for excursion use. Fortunately, Tracey and Lisa got along famously and enjoyed their outstanding dishes at the other end of the table. I told Edward, I would have to call him back to get more details on the restoration and his impressions of riding the WWII PT for an upcoming article in *"On Target"* when I got home and here is the story:

After Naval service, Edward went to South Central Louisiana Technical College, where he majored in drafting and design technology. AutoCAD was a significant part of his degree. Where he learned to create in 3D (solid modeling & watertight mesh) using AutoCAD, he used his new skills to draft plans for an extensive kitchen remodel. During his last two semesters, he



had the opportunity to do work-study at Trinity Yachts. When he showed up to interview for what he understood to be an unpaid intern position, Trinity Yachts asked Edward for an AutoCAD portfolio (which he hadn't compiled). When they asked if he had anything that he had done in AutoCAD, Edward remembered that he had a thumb drive with the 3D solid model that he had created to design the cabinets of his tiny nine by the nine-foot kitchen. There were also 2D working drawings and cut list drawings that were developed from the 3D model. After the interviewers reviewed this material, Edward was hired as a full-time 3D modeler instead of an unpaid intern. It turns out that he had used the same processes to create his kitchen cabinets as Trinity used to create the opulent interiors of the superyachts they built.

After Hurricane Katrina, Trinity Yachts moved their operations out of the area, and Edward began architectural work, which led him to establish his own business in the post Katrina recovery. When the housing bubble burst and the recession hit, his old professor recommended he apply for a teaching position at his old college; this led to an even more lucrative position at Destrehan High School, one of the premier public high schools in Louisiana. During his first year at Destrehan, Edward was also doing architectural and structural drafting on the side for local architects. One of his projects was providing drawings to the engineer who was tasked with the engineered shop drawings of the light gauge metal framing for the Kushner Restoration Pavilion at the National WWII Museum. When he noticed the boat's outline in one of the architect's rough sketches, he called the museum and asked what kind of boat they were going to be restoring. They said a WWII PT Boat, and Edward asked how he could get involved. He told the folks at the museum he was an accomplished woodworker. They replied they had plenty of woodworkers, but what they needed were technical draftsmen with AutoCAD experience. He was their man.



**Above is a photo of PT 305 after being converted into a fishing boat. Right is PT 305 at the Kushner Restoration Pavilion. Note she has been stripped all the way down to the frames and stringers to be nearly completely rebuilt. (Photos from NavSource Online and Mike's**



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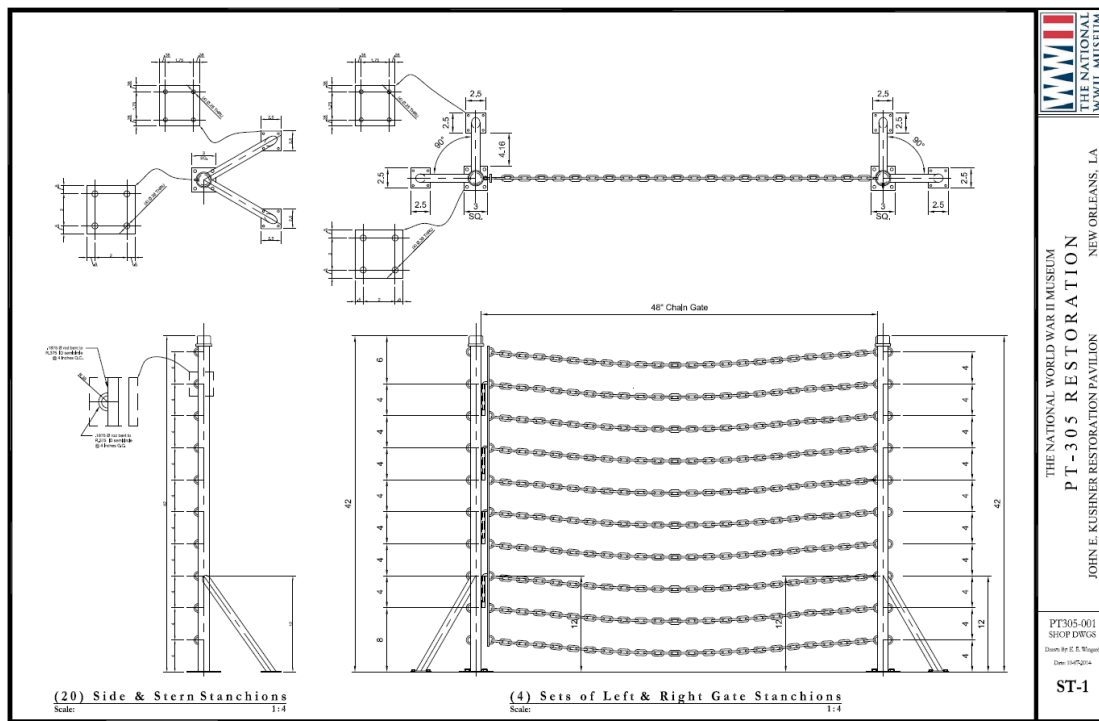
**Maritime Memorabilia via Ted Walther) Above is a photo of PT 305 after being converted into a fishing boat.**



**Left is PT 305 at the Kushner Restoration Pavilion. Note she has been stripped all the way down to the frames and stringers to be nearly completely rebuilt. (Photos from NavSource Online and Mike's Maritime Memorabilia via Ted Walther)**

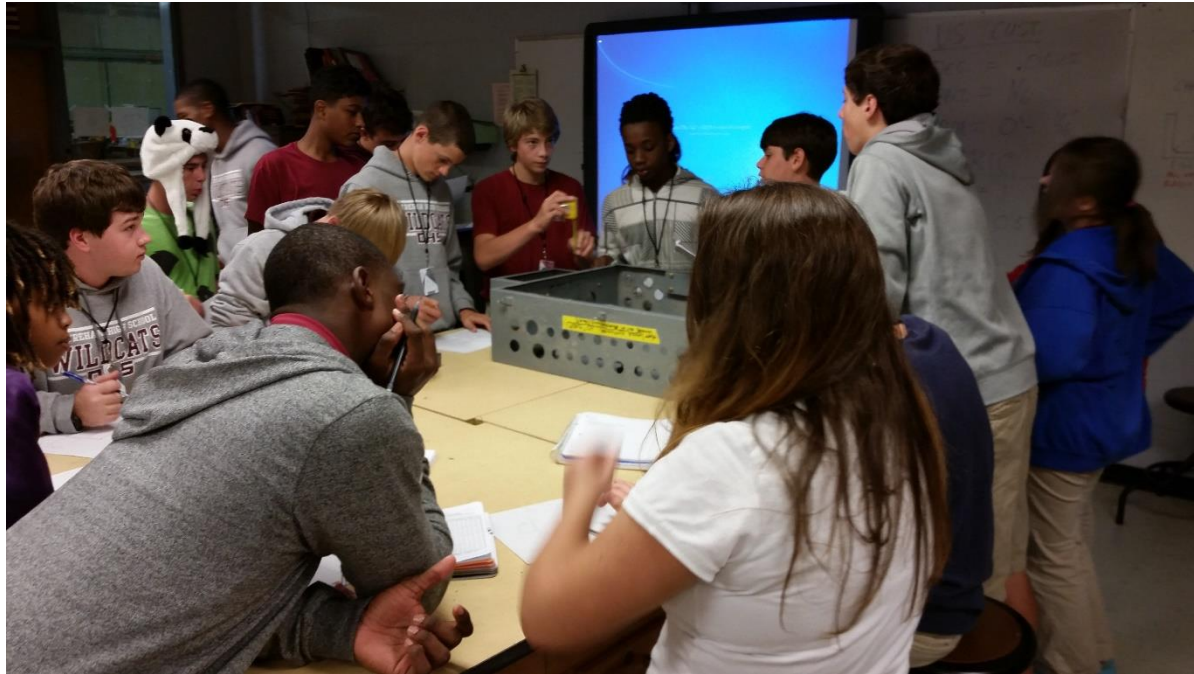
At the first meeting that Edward had with Bruce Harris (PT-305 Restoration Coordinator), he explained that he taught a drafting technology course at Destrehan High School and asked if there was any way that his students could be involved. Bruce told him that a condition of the funding to build the renovation pavilion was to include students; therefore, his students would certainly be welcome.

Edward and Bruce decided to get his students involved with the design work and the sourcing of parts to minimize the amount of fabrication needed. A former resident of Greater New Orleans who was then a welding teacher at a high school in Maryland also got his class involved. They were tasked with fabricating the lifeline stanchions that the DHS students designed.

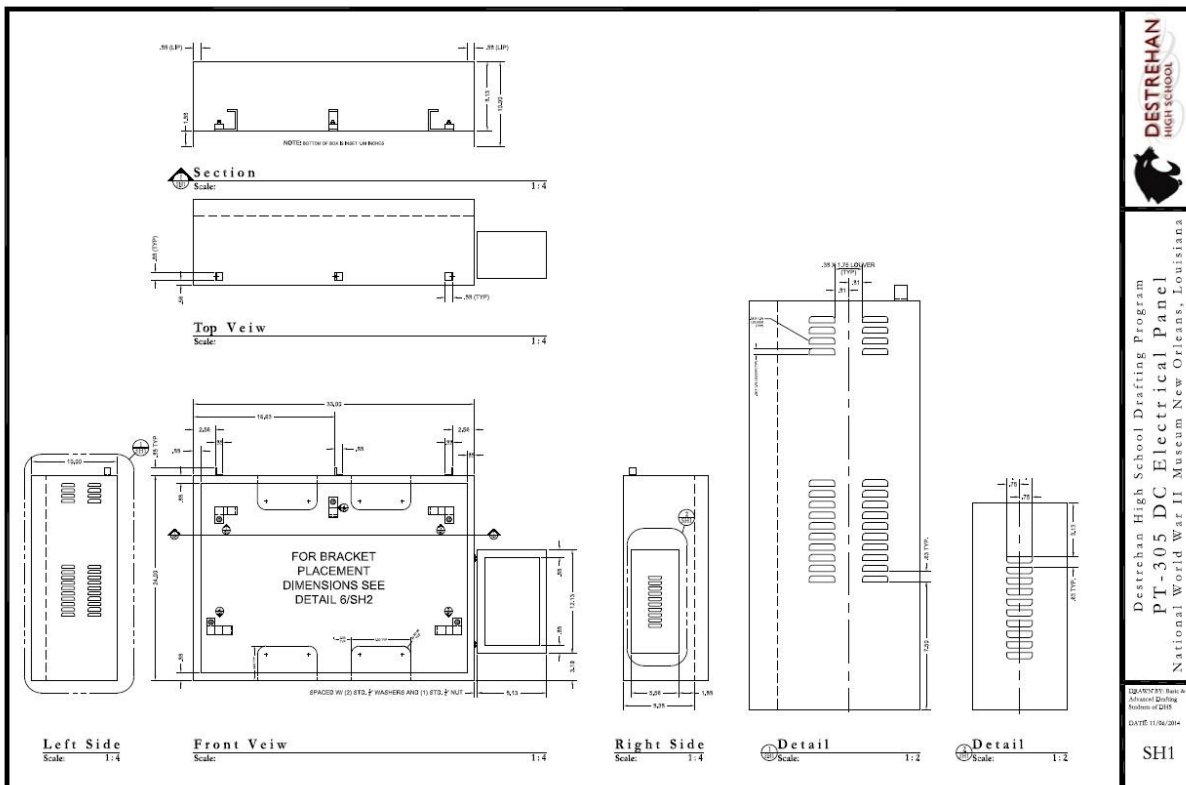


**Draft by Edward Wingard and Destrehan High School Students. Per Edward: Note that this design was changed between the time we submitted the final drawings and fabrication. The fabricators came up with a way that was easier for them to fabricate while still approved by the Naval Architect and the Coast Guard, so they went with that design with taking the time for “as-built” drawings to be drawn, reminiscent to how these PT boats were built during the war.**

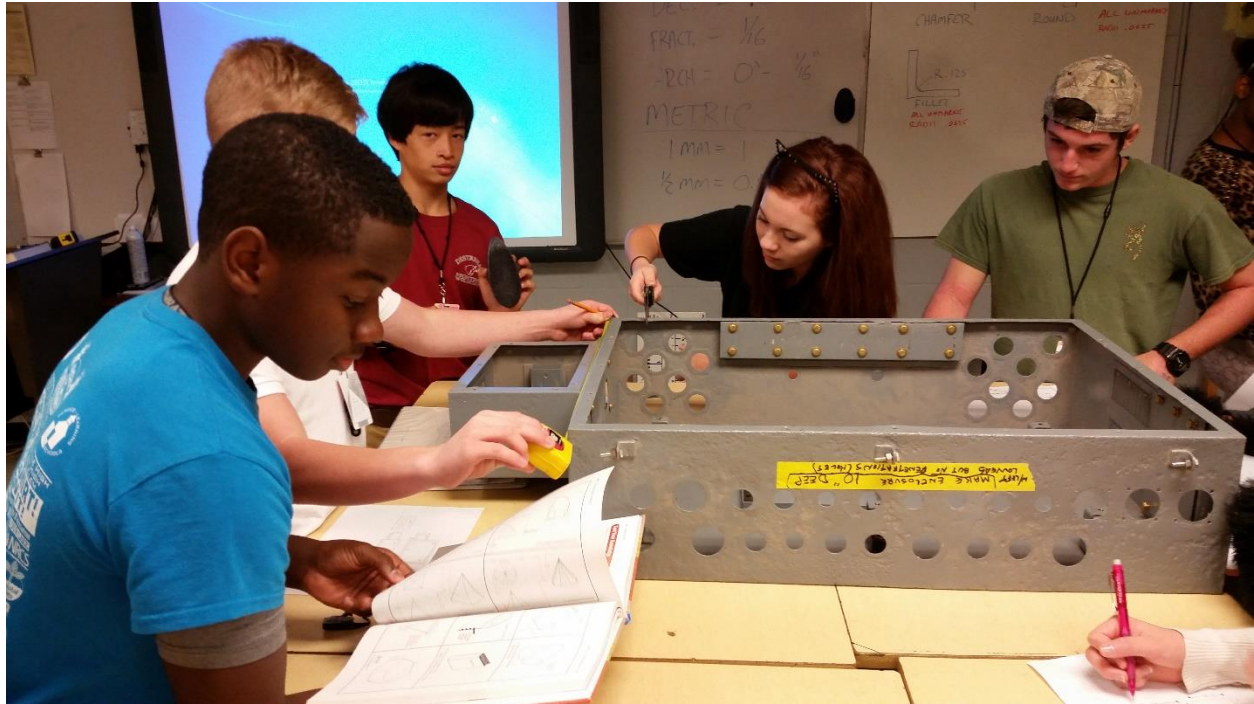
One of the first hurdles was getting permission from the school and the parents to participate. Once that was accomplished, the students took a field trip to see the actual boat and take measurements. By that point, even the students who were apathetic about the project before were now hooked. Their first project was to design plans for stanchions and lifelines as the boat was going to be used by the museum for passenger-carrying excursions and had to meet current USCG regulations. They began with original plans, the same ones Jerry had saved and grafted the stanchions onto the side view and the overhead plans. Once the lifeline design was reviewed by the naval Architect (also a volunteer) and approved by the Coast Guard, the stanchions were fabricated by the high school welding students in Maryland and installed by other volunteers.



**Destrehan Highschool Students working on the new DC panel for PT 305  
(Courtesy of Edward Wingard)**



**Draft drawing for the PT 305 DC Electrical Panel by Destrehan Highschool Students.  
(Courtesy of Edward Wingard)**



**Destrehan High School students working on the PT 305 DC Electrical Panel.  
(Courtesy of Edward Wingard)**

The students' next project was designing a DC electrical box to keep all of the historical artifacts in their proper places while providing mounting space hidden behind the old components for modern equipment to meet current USCG regulations. They drew it with the correct spacing and brackets and submitted it for approval and then fabrication. At this point, Edward and his students were getting a lot of positive local media attention for their work.



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Their final project was to design a way to add a dogging system and seals to the weather deck hatches. This particular task was again to satisfy the requirement of watertight hatches to meet current USCG regulations. In addition to drafting the design, they had to research modern designs for dogging, sealing, and source materials. There was an existing “knife-edge” that could be used to seal the hatches. All that was required was a groove be routed in the hatch cover to accept some neoprene. The students then found a company that manufactured single hatch dogs that could be used with some modification of the hatches. Time was becoming a factor, so they just gave the ideas that the students came up with to Bruce, and he and his team made it work.



**Hatch and dogging system that the students designed and helped construct installed. Note blow up of photo from original crew photo taped to the hatch.  
(Photo Courtesy of Edward Wingard)**

Just like Higgins did during wartime, they made changes on the line if something was better as the boat was being constructed, in this case virtually re-built. They also met with WWII vets and reviewed their photos which often showed significant differences from the plans. This was indeed a very good start for Edward's high school teaching career. At the end of the year at a faculty dinner, one of the history teachers told Edward that once the students got involved in the restoration project their interest in history increased tremendously.

Edward and a new group of students are currently working on a veteran's memorial for all veterans and gold star families to be built at the veterans' home in Reserve, Louisiana in conjunction with his American Legion Post. The design and permitting process gives the students real world experience on a meaningful, solid three-dimensional project not merely a virtual design or concept as well as develops problem solving.

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**Edward's son helping with the restoration at the Kushner Pavilion.**

**The restored PT305 outside the Kushner Restoration Pavilion ready to go back to Lake Pontchartrain. Note the bright yellow recognition panel painted on the bow deck. Edward helped design the Pavilion as well as restore PT305**



I asked Edward to compare riding the WWII Higgins PT Boat versus the more modern boats we served on. He said the PT did not seem to ride as hard as the PB or Sea Fox. When he rode the PT 305, they went out on a rough day, probably about as rough as they would allow for passengers. He said, "The wood had much more give than the aluminum of the PB or fiberglass of the Sea Fox or RHIB. The PT had no chines like the PB. The chines should make the PB more maneuverable." He recalled the PT was also not as loud as you would think because the exhaust was ducted underwater. This was true until the boat gets "on-step," at which point the exhaust is open to the air but still not as loud as one would think with the three big Packard marine engines. He said the exhaust ports were cast out of bronze, and it was a shame that they were painted gray as they were works of art. Bruce Harris, who was running the restoration project, was a logistical

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genius, and he had all the details in his head. Robert Stengl computerized it, and they would make changes on the line just like at Higgins as they went along with the restoration project. He recalled they used copies of actual Higgins drawings, which were beautiful as a starting point for their stanchion project. He said he had received a CD from the museum, which had 500 drawings. Edward used one of these drawings as a template for certificates he made for his students when they completed the project. He presented one to each student and a copy of a letter of appreciation from Bruce Harris written on the National WWII Museum letterhead at the yearend awards ceremony.



**PT 305 on her way to Lake Pontchartrain via barge up the Mississippi passing Jackson Square and the Saint Louis Cathedral. Note: RADOME and mast folded down for transit.**





## Aqua Dart

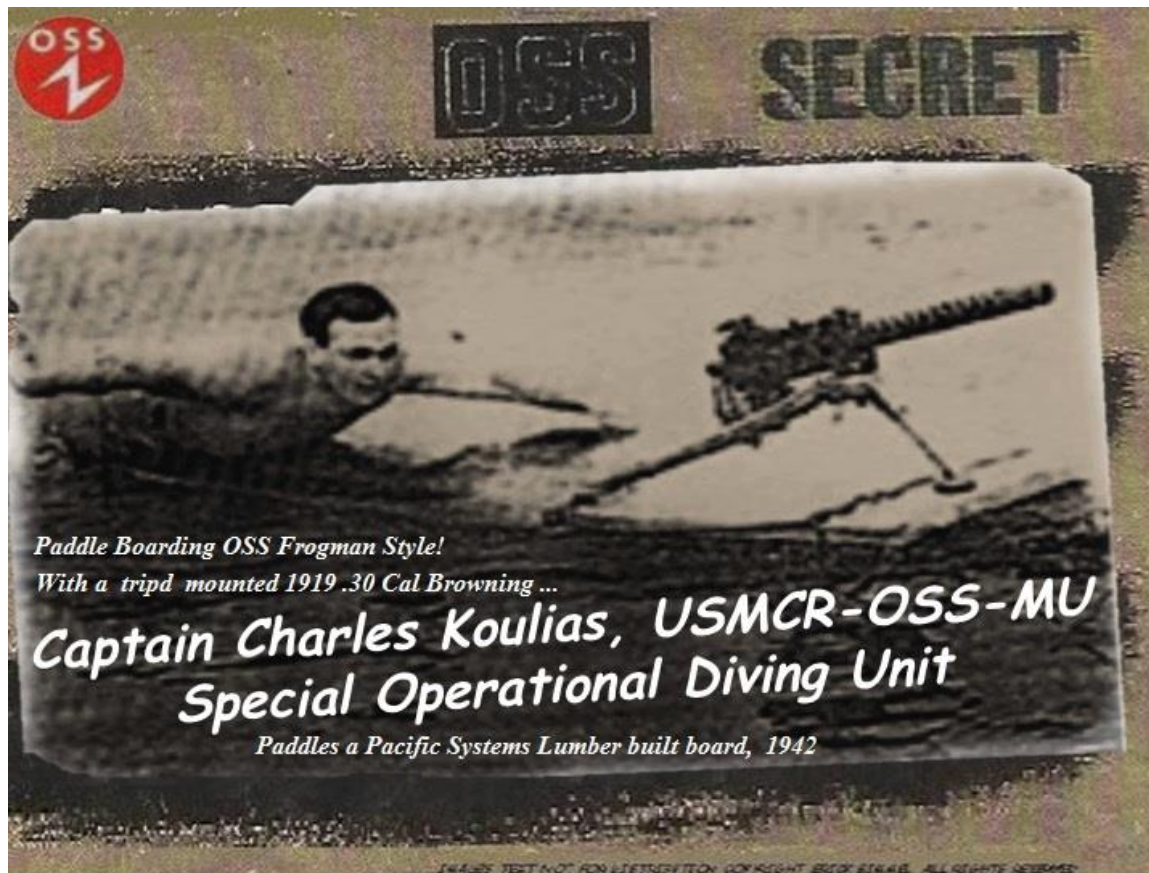
By Phil G. Garn and James D. Gray



**UDT man riding the “Dart” on a training mission in the 1960’s.**

The US has a long history of adapting civilian technology for military operations, including recreational watercraft. During the Second World War, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) would employ paddleboards and surf mats but motorize these recreational platforms to produce the “water lily” and arm the paddleboard with a .30 caliber machinegun. During the Italian Campaign, OSS teams would deploy swimmer scouts on the “water lilies” from Air Sea Rescue Crash Boats to make contact with partisans. One man would swim ashore from the motorized surf mat, link up with the partisans, give the signal to his swim buddy and the water lily driver would return to the crash boat and tow rubber boats filled with supplies to shore, then retrieve his comrade for the trip back to allied lines. During the Vietnam War, the Underwater Demolition Teams (UDT) would adapt one of the first personal watercraft, now commonly referred to as jet-skis, for clandestine reconnaissance and attack. UDT 22 would test the craft domestically, and UDT 12 would test these craft operationally in Vietnam. The Marines (USMC) would also test this new platform. This Aqua Dart was a forerunner of craft used by our Naval Special Warfare (NSW) Special Boat Teams of today.





1943 Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Maritime Unit (MU) Operational Swimmers, CBM Jim Eubank USCG(R) and Captain James J. Kamp AUS (L) Donned in trunks and LARU Mark I SCUBA rebreather systems pilot the unique to OSS Maritime Unit swimmers Mark-1, Mod-O 'Inflatable Surfboard' or "Water Lilly" or "Flying Mattress" as it was affectionately known, during training in Silver-Springs Florida. As the first motorized, self contained operative useable compact-combative-commando-craft of the modern era in USA inventory, it was self inflating. Made of heavy rubber, it was propelled with a DC battery powered drill like motor with a L-shaped long shaft through in the center of the craft connected with a throttle / handle and to a all in one motor/rudder power and steering unit. Chief Eubank would recall how "... every minute or so underway, the electrical system would give the pilot holding the rudder-throttle system a 3 or 4 second electrical zapping 'jolt'! This made for an interesting ride." Cruising Range 30 miles in calm seas, at 4 to 6 knots. Occupants 2 + gear. Useful total weight 450-500 pounds. Collapsible into a bag. Folded weight approx. 100 Pounds. This craft was deployed for training and operations in the UK for European theater and SEAC Theaters of Operations. It's mission capability was proven during the first full scale successful USN sponsored mock frogman attack against USN shipping, by OSS MU Operational swimmers including Chief Eubank, 75 years ago against targets at Guantanamo Bay Cuba, in October, 1944, during part of OSS MU Swimmer led "Operation Cincinnati". Caption & photo (c) and Courtsy Erick Simmel Archives - [www.maritimeunit.org](http://www.maritimeunit.org)

During the 1950s, the Vincent motorcycle company in Britain would develop the Amanda personal watercraft. The Amanda had a sit on the top configuration with motorcycle-type handlebars, a fiberglass hull powered by a two-stroke gasoline engine similar to modern personal watercraft, only this craft was propelled by a propeller, not a water jet. A number were sold before the Vincent company went out of business in the mid-1950s. In 1965, American motorcycle racer and former Marine reservist, Clayton Jacobson II, developed the stand-up Jet Ski using a West Bend 2 stroke engine and Berkeley jet pump in 1965. He modified the basic design to a sit-down style in 1966. The sit-down design was sold to the Canadian snowmobile

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company, Bombardier, and marketed as the "Sea-Doo." After his non-compete clause with Bombardier expired in 1971, Jacobsen began working on the stand-up style with Kawasaki producing the "Jet Ski" in 1973. The term jet ski has become synonymous with personal watercraft. Whether referring to a Kawasaki product or another manufacturer's craft or the craft has a jet drive or not like the Vincent Amanda.

Basic Hull . . . . .	79"
With Control Board Extended . . .	95"
Beam . . . . .	31"
Draft . . . . .	12"
Weight . . . . .	190 lbs. fully equipped & fueled
Hull . . . . .	Fiberglass
Power . . . . .	20 HP Water cooled, two cycle OMC motor mounted inboard and equipped with 12 volt battery, electric starter and electric choke
Automatic Fire Extinguisher	
Fire retardant Urethane Flotation	
Fuel Capacity . . . . .	3 gal. with fuel indicator
Price . . . . .	\$995 fully equipped
Accessory Equipment:	
AquaDart lightweight trailer (single & double)	

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**AquaDart TM — \$995**

1007

It's here. "You boating." Half-you and half-boat. A whole new water sport. Easy to handle. Safe to operate. Hit the starter. And you're off and "Aqua-Darting." You plunge into the surf. You bust the waves. Or you skim across open waters. Up to 25 miles an hour with tremendous maneuverability. You're involved in a whole new sport. The AquaDart is a top quality "fun" craft, designed and engineered for high performance and safety. Its many unique features insure functional "you boating" for all sports loving ages in any body of water under all conditions. Excellent for "fun and games"; exploring, skin & scuba diving, water rescue, surfing, beach patrolling. Turns boating into a new sport.





An advertisement for the Aqua Dart the \$995 price tag would be about \$7,300 in 2020 dollars. Note the control board extending aft underneath the water in the inset photo.

Meanwhile, in the 1960s, Leisuredyne Inc. of Morristown, New Jersey, developed a slightly different personal watercraft, the Aqua Dart. Like the British Vincent, the Aqua Dart had a fiberglass hull, a two-cycle engine, and a propeller (though with a shroud surrounding the blades beneath the hull); however, the operator lay prone and was partially in the water more like a powered water sled than a slight dryer water motorcycle. With a speed of 25 knots, a range of 60 to 90 miles, a six-man towing capacity, and a 7-inch silhouette, this caught the Navy's attention. The design might provide a faster, safer, and more accurate platform for hydrographic reconnaissance than the traditional line of swimmers with lead lines and slates deploying from an IBS (Inflatable Boat Small), the technique in use for hydrographic reconnaissance since the Second World War.



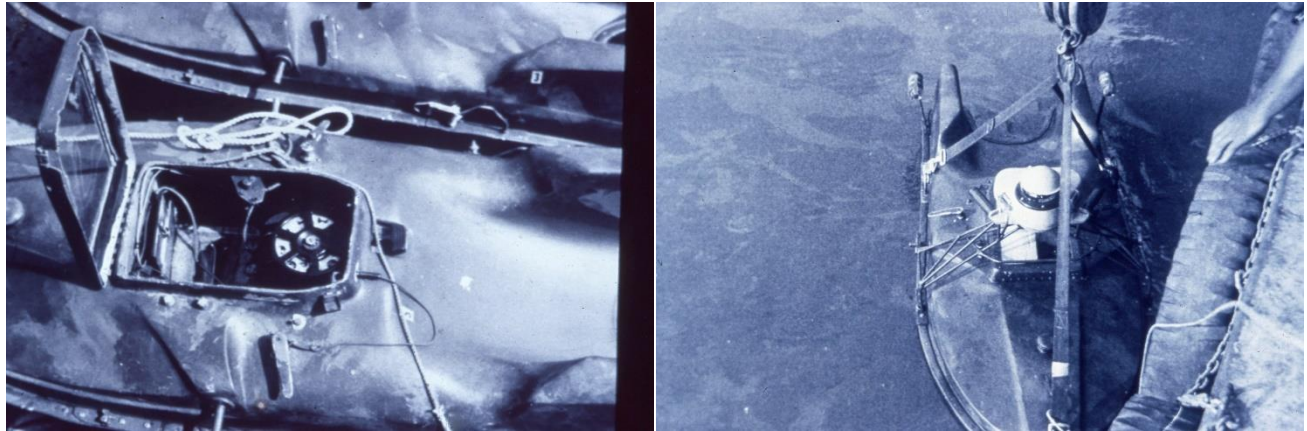


**Photo of a vintage civilian Aqua Dart, note the shrouded propeller beneath the hull, so she was not a true “jet ski” driven by a water jet. Side rails and a rearview mirror have been added.**

On August 28, 1967, UDT 22 sent two enlisted combat swimmers to the Oceanographic Research Laboratory in the Washington DC area to further examine and modify the Aqua Dart for military service. Their thought was: “To free the operators from as many duties as possible to make movement and information gathering mechanical and free of human error.” One modification was adding a “dead man’s” or “kill” switch to stop the craft if the operator fell off. This feature would ensure the Aqua Dart would not get away [a common feature in modern jet-skis.] On the more technical side, was the addition of a Raytheon Fathometer with a range of 1 to 260 feet in depth, which was accurate to about 12 inches. The Fathometer was synchronized to a 180-degree panoramic camera and a tape recorder to provide precise plotting data. These devices took some time to mount and work out bugs of noise, waterproofing, and vibration. Another improvement was superimposing an image of the compass on top of the film. This improvement would show the magnetic direction at the time of the photograph. The survey route was to be further matched with an overhead aerial photo of the route taken minutes before the survey with the modified Aqua Dart. Once the physical survey was completed, the film developed, the tape reviewed, and the course plotted, the chart would be made. The men



also experimented with a tracking system linked to a parent ship, which provided the added benefit of improved tracking and location of the Aqua Dart and required a nearby mother ship. The craft was found to be reliable in calm waters of rivers and offshore but not heavy surf.



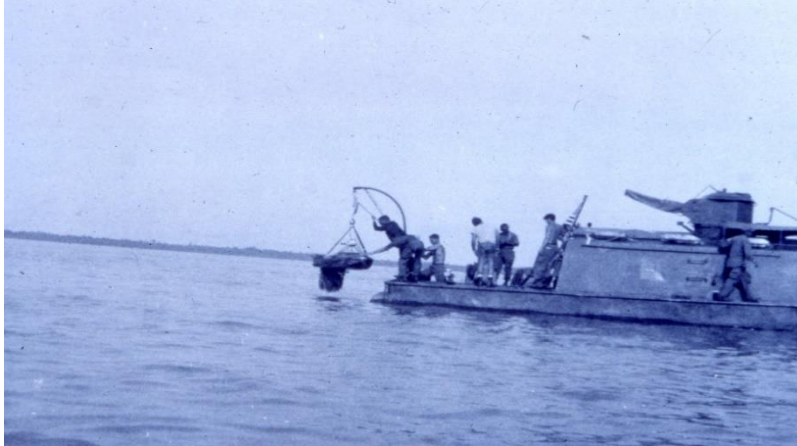
**Militarizing the Aqua Darts: A Raytheon Fathometer and a tape recorder were added inside the hull of the craft while a panoramic camera was mounted just above the hull. Much refinement took place during testing to combat water intrusion and vibration. In country, smoke grenades were attached as a field modification just in case stealth did not work.**

**Photos courtesy of Roger Hayden via Jim Gray Archives.**

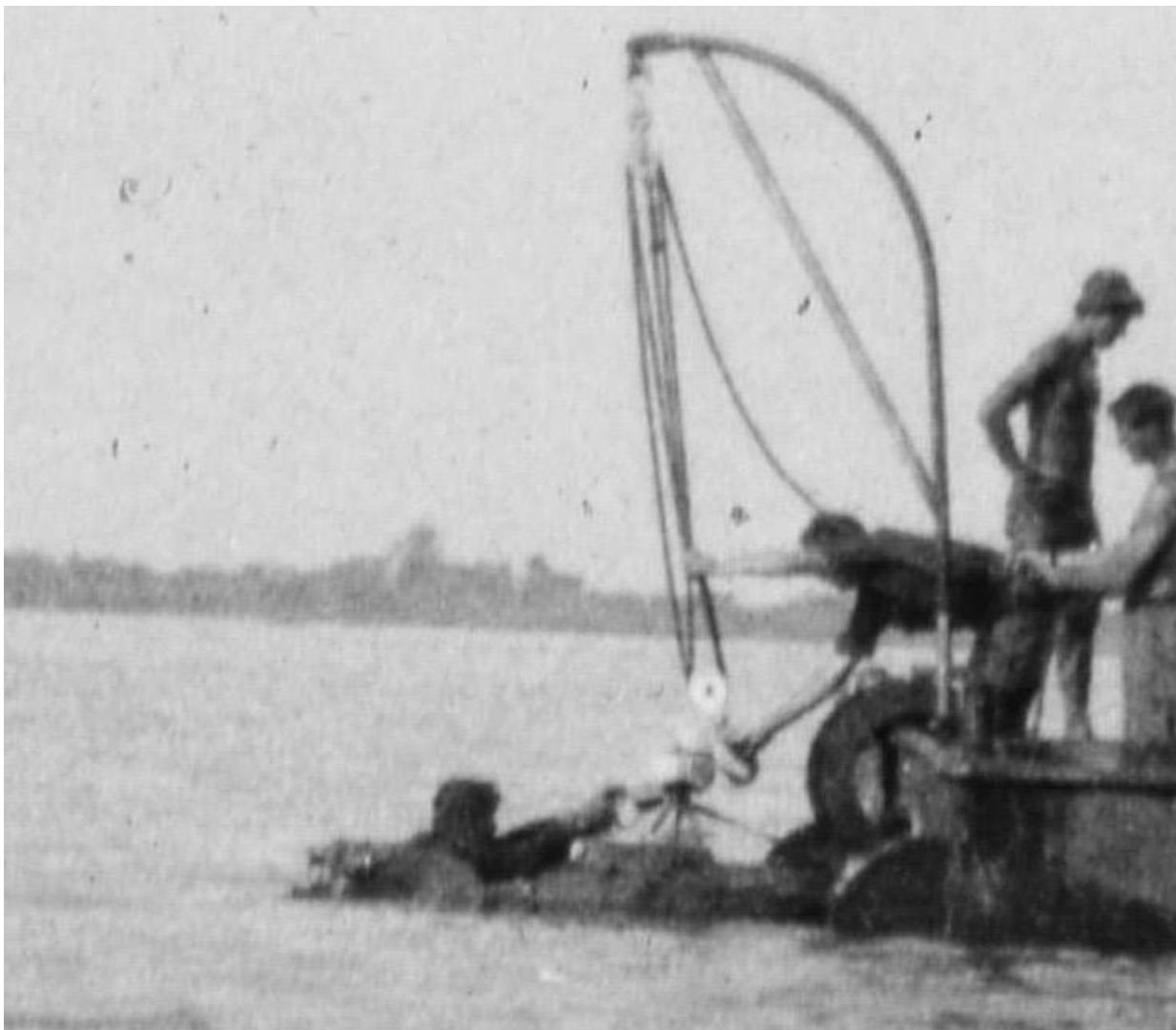
The UDT 22 men also tested the Aqua Dart at night armed with a rocket launcher and determined it would be quite effective against small craft the size of a PBR or LCM, especially if the adversary did not have radar capability, typical of sampans and small craft encountered in South East Asia.

Modified Aqua Darts were sent to the West Coast for testing by UDT 12. In January 1968 a group of three officers, two civilian technicians and eight enlisted men were sent to the Republic of Vietnam. The group arrived on January 12, 1968 in Dong Tam with four Aqua Darts. Three additional Aqua Darts were airlifted to Vietnam later. The group began working with Task Force (TF) 117 Assault Support Patrol Boats (ASPBs) as mother ships/support platforms. At some point, a 360-degree panoramic camera was added to the Aqua Darts, which is reflected in UDT-12 reports noting issues with the 360-degree panoramic camera. Mr. Gray recalls being told the camera also had some night or low light capability. Additionally, the craft were reported to be painted green and brown.





Using an ASPB as a mother ship with a jury-rigged crane in Vietnam. You can see the panoramic camera. With the Aqua Darts, control board dropped it is hard to make out the propeller assembly beneath the hull. Photo courtesy of Roger Hayden via Jim Gray Archives.



In this photo you can see how the UDT pilot rode the Aqua Dart and its low profile even with the panoramic camera. Also note the crane for lifting the Aqua Dart's on the stern of the ASPB. Photo courtesy of Roger Hayden via Jim Gray Archives.

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UDT 12 Commanding Officer (CO) LCDR Robert Condon flew out to Vietnam to observe the Aqua Dart testing. During Operation Coronado X (January 18-19, 1968), a joint TF 117 sweep with ARVN (Army of the Republic of Vietnam) forces of Mekong Delta against the Viet Cong, Armored Troop Carrier (ATC) T0112-1 was hit by two B-40 (RPG-2) rocket-propelled grenades near the confluence of the Ben Tre and Ong Buong six miles southeast of Ben Tre. The attack killed LCDR Condon.



**LCDR Robert Condon, Commanding Officer of UDT-12, who was killed in Vietnam on a mission to observe the Aqua Darts his men were testing. Note he is wearing jump wings as the UDT trident would not be adopted for a few more years.**

On January 26, 1968, a test reconnaissance was planned on the Giao Hoa Canal near the intersection of the Ba Lai River that was supposed to be a quiet area; however, a sizeable Viet Cong (VC) force was encountered firing from both sides of the river banks, and the operators decided to go elsewhere. This was followed by a test run with a helicopter insertion. They were using an ANPRT-4 transmitter and ANPRT-9 receiver. The men also experimented with a jury-rigged davit from an ASPB (see photos) for launch and recovery. It is also clear from the photos more than one Aqua Dart was carried by the support ASPB at one time.

Retired UDT/SEAL Roger Hayden recalled conducting the recons during the daytime with TF-117 based on the *USS Benewah* (APD-35), and the Aqua Dart pilots would wear flak jackets and helmets. They were armed only with a .45 pistol. Mr. Hayden said “The Aqua Dart pilots had to keep a consistent speed for accurate charting. They were simply called t “Darts” by the UDT men. Though Official Navy documents refer to them as “Aqua Darts.”



**In the above photo you can see the control board dropped on the rear of the Aqua Dart being hoisted aboard the ASPB. Additionally, you can see the Panoramic camera of a second Aqua Dart just to the right in the well deck of the ASPB.  
Photo courtesy of Roger Hayden via Jim Gray Archives.**

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On February 1, 1968, civilian techs, Chester Bright and Joe Gattono, left with LCDR Alvarez after establishing maintenance schedules for the Aqua Darts. On February 2, 1968, problems were identified with high-tension leads and the magneto. The need for emergency communication was noted as well. One related field modification was the addition of smoke grenades taped to improvised side mounts (see photograph), and the other was experimentation with a helmet-mounted receiver for communication.

In February, a photographer trained in the operation of the photo strip enlarger arrived in the country (Vietnam) after a course of instruction in the Philippines. Recall the pilot narrating his journey on a tape recorder, while taking panoramic photos, linked to soundings, which then had to be transcribed and plotted against overhead photographs to produce an accurate chart.

On February 27, 1968, ASPB-112-4 was sunk by a Communist B-40 (Rocket Propelled Grenade) attack on the Can Tho River. The Aqua Darts were called in the following day, and 28, 1968, for salvage. UDT-12 and EOD men used the craft to locate the sunken ASPB on the afternoon of February



**A “Dart” with UDT pilot. Note the very low profile. The pilot is wearing a metal helmet as Mr. Hayden described.**

**Photo courtesy of Roger Hayden via Jim Gray Archives.**

H. I. Sutton reported the Marines also tested the Aqua Dart as an insertion platform for their Recon teams in the late 1960s. Known as the “Swimmer Assist Vehicle,” there were four specially configured crafts for the Marines, which were also fitted with a kill switch on the left handle. The 22hp engine could be either started electrically or with a rope type starter (like lawnmowers of the era). The Marines tested it as an insertion platform for four-man reconnaissance teams (one as a driver and three towed operators), launching them from mother ships, helicopters, and fixed-wing aircraft as a replacement for hand paddled IBS (rubber rafts.) The Marines also said the craft could be fitted with a camera for reconnaissance and depth sounding gear for locating objects and mapping as well as weapons. One Marine said the Aqua Dart could accomplish the same charting as a twenty-man team using traditional methods, lead lines, and slates in an hour.





**Photo of one of the USMC Aqua Darts courtesy of H. I. Sutton and *Covert Shores***

The Aqua Dart would quickly fade into history, the military project abandoned by the Navy and USMC while the civilian version would be quickly supplanted by the more sophisticated and popular water jet driven “Sea Doos” and “Jet Skis.”



**NSW operators on the modified Yamaha FX Cruiser SHO watercraft.**

**US Navy released photo.**

NSW and other countries’ Special Forces would use these more modern platforms, particularly the sit on top style, in the future for swimmer support, attack craft, and insertion/extraction. The Iranians

would also adopt these craft for an attack using a passenger armed with an RPG or automatic weapon and a specially configured suicide attack version. US Special Boat Teams use a modified Yamaha FX Cruiser SHO. Special Thanks to CCCA members Chuck Chaldekas and Ted Walther as well as Roger Hayden, H. I. Sutton from *Covert Shores*, Erick Simmel from [ossmartime.org](http://ossmartime.org) and Candice Hooper at the Coronado Library who helped with scanning and restoring the slides of the “Dart.”

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