

Bernard C. Webber (USCG Ret) 1928-2009

One of the Coast Guard's legendary heroes, Senior Chief Petty Officer Bernard C. Webber (USCG Ret) died at his home in Melbourne, Florida Saturday, January 24th. He is survived by his widow, Miriam (Pentinen) Webber, a daughter, Patricia Hamilton and her husband Bruce, two granddaughters, Leah and Hilary Hamilton of Shamong, NJ and North Eastham, a son, Bernard E. Webber and a grandson, Shane Webber of California.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Bernard C. Webber is one of the "*Chatham Legends*".

On February 18, 1952, he took the **CG36500** out of Chatham Station with three volunteers—Seaman Ervin Maske, Seaman Richard Livesey and Petty Officer 3rd Class Andrew Fitzgerald, an Engineman, responding to the tanker *Pendleton*, which had broken in two off Chatham in a storm. Seaman Maske was at Chatham Station awaiting transport to the Lightship *Stonehorse* but remained ashore because the Coast Guard deemed the seas too rough to transport him. He volunteered, along with the two Chatham Coast Guardsmen who volunteered to accompany Mr. Webber.

The Coast Guard crew faced 60 foot waves, hurricane force winds and blizzard conditions to rescue 33 sailors who survived the shipwreck. While the **CG36500** was leaving Chatham Harbor, her compass and windshield were smashed and the rescue boat began shipping water. They persevered, and by dead reckoning they finally sighted the stern section of the *Pendleton*, where the ship's crew was awaiting rescue. They only lost one man—the ship's cook, George D. "Tiny" Myers,

The four who manned the rescue boat all received coveted Coast Guard Gold Life-saving Medals for their heroism in what is considered by maritime historians to be "*The Greatest Small Boat Rescue in Coast Guard History*." Of the four, only Engineman Fitzgerald is still alive.

Senior Chief Webber was born in Milton, MA in 1928, the son of the late Rev. A. Bernard Webber and Annie Knight Webber. He was one of four sons --all of whom served in the U.S. Military during World War II-- Paul in the Army in Europe, Bob in the Coast Guard and Bill in the Army Transportation Corp.

When he was only 16, Bernie Webber joined the Merchant Marine Service and trained at Sheepshead Bay Maritime School in New York. When World War II ended, he enlisted in the U.S. Coast Guard and attended "boot camp" at Curtis Bay, MD. He was transferred to Cape Cod to serve Lighthouse duty at Highland Lighthouse in North Truro and later went to the Gay Head Lighthouse on Martha's

Vineyard. He first saw the **CG36500** when he returned to Chatham for a visit. He was transferred to Chatham Station in 1949. After the *Pendleton* rescue, he transferred to Woods Hole and didn't return to Chatham until 1954 and served there only until 1955.

His final tour of duty at Chatham ended in 1963 when he was transferred to *Cross Rip* Lightship until it was decommissioned. Mr. Webber was reassigned to the CG Cutter *Point Banks* out of Woods Hole. From there he and the ship were ordered to Vietnam. When he returned from 'Nam, he was assigned to the Buoy Tender *Hornbeam* in Woods Hole and finally retired from the Coast Guard as a Senior Chief Petty Officer, serving as a Warrant Bosun (WO1), on September 1, 1966. During his time in this region, he also served at Nauset Lifeboat Station, Race Point Lifeboat Station, aboard a Coast Guard tug out of Southwest Harbor, Maine and the *Nantucket* Lightship.

Senior Chief Webber met his wife Miriam_Pentinen, a native of Wellfleet, when he first served duty in North Truro. They were married July 16, 1950 in Milton in a ceremony performed by his father, Rev. A. Bernard Webber.

After he left the Coast Guard, Mr. Webber served as Wellfleet Harbor Master, reconditioned boats for Nauset Auto and Marine in Orleans, partnered on a charter boat out of Rock Harbor, Orleans. In "retirement" he worked for the National Audubon Society in Maine and later for Hurricane Island Outward Bound School in Maine. He also worked in the marine field for dredging, towboat and salvage companies and even served with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

In his book, "*Chatham: The Lifeboatmen*", he wrote: "After 42 years of work on the sea, it became time to come home."

His widow Miriam said that Mr. Webber will be cremated and his remains will be interred with military honors in a family plot in Wellfleet on May 9, 2009.