



# Coast Guard Heritage Museum

at the U.S. Custom House in Barnstable Village, Cape Cod, Massachusetts

## Spring 2018 Newsletter

### Coast Guard Heritage Museum Audio Tour System

Starting with the opening of the 2017 season last May, the Museum has been offering visitors the option of using our new Self-Guided Audio Tour System while visiting the various exhibits.

The system was purchased from AudioConexus, Inc. of Kingston, Ontario, Canada late in the 2015 season, but not fully implemented until last season.

The system consists of ten handheld units, a charging station, headsets, hearing aid adaptors, and software. Unlike other systems on the market, the AudioConexus system includes a simple to operate software package that allows us to record and upload to the handheld units our own commentaries. The charging station doubles as an interface to upload the recordings from a desktop computer. Most other systems require that a written script be sent to the company for recording and uploading to the units.

Each handheld unit can be used by one person holding the single speaker in the handheld unit up to their ear or shared by two people using the included headsets that plug into the handheld units.



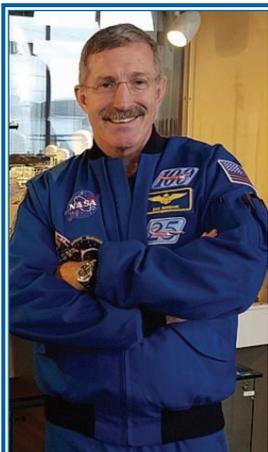
Up to 999 recordings in nine different languages can be uploaded to each unit. Small cards are positioned around the Museum near the subjects of their referenced commentaries. The cards contain the subject of the commentary, how long it is,

and the reference number to enter into the handheld unit to start the commentary. In this manner visitors can pick and choose the commentaries they want to listen to and tour the Museum at their own selected pace. Some commentaries are of a very general nature, while others go into greater detail on the subject.

Commentaries are divided into three broad categories: General History, Artifacts and Personal Stories. The first two are self-explanatory. The third are first person stories of Coast Guard related experiences narrated by the person directly involved – a sort of living history. Some are funny anecdotes, others are more serious in nature. One set includes the narration of the events of February 18, 1952, the rescue of the Merchant Vessel *Pendleton*, by none other than Bernie Webber himself. These were taken from a radio interview with Bernie that was recorded shortly after the rescue took place.

We opened the Museum in May with about 58 commentaries loaded. By the end of the season we had about 130. Additional ones are in progress, and many more are needed

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### Save the Date: May 19, 2018

Join us on Saturday, May 19th at 10:00 for the presentation of our new exhibit for the 2018 season, "The Coast Guard in Space". From 10:00 to 12:00, we have reserved the hall of the Unitarian Church of Barnstable, directly across Old King's Highway from the Museum, at 3330 Main St. There will be a brief oral presentation, followed by an informal Q&A featuring the only two Coast Guard NASA Astronauts, CDR Bruce Melnick, USCG (retired) and CAPT Dan Burbank, USCG (retired). From 12:00 to 15:00, we'll move across the street to the Museum for a tour of the exhibit as well as a meet-and-greet with the astronauts. The normal \$5 admission fee will cover admission to both events. We hope you can join us for this unique opportunity.

Left: Captain Dan Burbank

# President's Letter

2017 proved to be another wonderful year for the Coast Guard Heritage Museum here in Barnstable. We continued to grow and mature, adding new exhibits and display cases, expanding our many programs, and gaining new support. The addition of our self-guided audio tour was wildly successful. The Old Barnstable Custom House, which our museum occupies, was selected as the 2017 recipient of the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Preservation Award. The Museum continues to be on very solid ground financially allowing us to take on several important new initiatives.

We have recently joined other regional like-minded organizations including the New England Museum Association, Coast Guard Base Cape Cod Historical Working Group, and the American Association of State and Local History and we have expanded our productive relationship with the Cape Cod Museum Trail and its 70-plus museum members. We feel very fortunate to have attracted several new volunteers during the year including Steve DeCesare as our new Treasurer, Pat Garrity as our new Assistant Vice President, and Peter Eleftherakis as our new Clerk/Secretary. They have each brought a wealth of new ideas and energy to these volunteer positions.

We expect 2018 to be even better for us! When we reopen the Museum on May 1st, a greatly expanded Coast Guard Astronauts Special Exhibit will be introduced to the public. We expect that both Bruce Melnick and Dan Burbank (our two Coast Guard astronauts) will be participating in one or more special events with us this spring. Their continued support is extremely helpful to us and greatly appreciated.

## Audio Tour System (cont'd from pg 1)

to adequately cover the numerous and varied displays and artifacts in the Museum. We also have a project in mind to redo some of the commentaries into a more "kid friendly" voice or "language." In addition, we are always looking for new and interesting personal stories to add to the collection.

If you are at all interested in helping with this project, either in researching and developing commentaries for existing displays and artifacts, converting some to the kid friendly language, or making your own first person personal story, we would love to hear from you. The process for all is very simple and we will gladly help you along the way.



We also plan to significantly upgrade the documentation and preservation of our extensive collection of historic Coast Guard artifacts. This includes incorporating new archival software, a comprehensive valuation of our collection, contracting with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to produce high resolution digital images of our most important documents, and generally sorting, cleaning, and restoring what we have. The effort will involve most of our staff but I particularly want to recognize the past and anticipated efforts of Dick Boonisar, Bill Collette, Buck Baley, Mike Maynard, Peter Eleftherakis, and Joan Dubis.

Other possible initiatives on our plate this coming year are the creation of a "selfie" studio, a new small theater, and a recording booth for collecting oral histories. We also expect to hold more on-site events, upgrade the gift shop, and expand our presence on social media and the internet in general. Granted this is an ambitious agenda but obtainable, particularly with your help.

As always, we welcome your support whether as an on-site volunteer, donor, or contributor of Coast Guard artifacts and/or written or oral history. Please consider joining us.

Thank you for your support,

Greg Ketchen

Captain, USCG (retired), President, CG Heritage Museum



Fall gathering at President Greg Ketchen's home in Osterville, MA.

## Boston Public Library Visitors

The Museum was fortunate to have Jake and Kimberly of the Boston Public Library Staff, Department of Document Preservation visit the museum Tuesday, March 6th. They toured the Museum and were able to see first-hand the items on display as well as the conditions in which items are stored. Using a tax funded initiative, they are part of an effort to save original public documents and pictures by scanning and digitizing such documents. Dick Boonisar and Bill Collette shared a collection of several irreplaceable photographs showing pictures of U.S. Coast Guard boat stations that are no longer in existence. It is our hope that photos such as these can be scanned and become part of a digital library to be used in future research and/or historical study. This initiative is underway at the Boston Public Library facility in Boston and will not incur a cost to the Museum.

## – EDITOR’S NOTES –

By way of introduction, I am Pat Garrity, newest editor of the CGHM Newsletter. I am a retired educator from the Town of Sandwich, MA and widow of CAPT Paul H. Garrity, USCG (retired). As the spouse of a career Coast Guard officer, I have more than a passing understanding of Coast Guard history. As an educator I also know the need to understand what has come before, to be able to preserve for future generations the rich history of this often under-appreciated branch of the U.S. military.

Nancy Shoemaker is lending her talents to take the articles gathered and turn them into the newsletter you receive. Together, we will do our best to provide a regular means of communication to let you know what the Museum is doing and encourage you to visit and become a more active participant in its operations.



Over the winter, generally on Tuesdays, there has been a great deal of hammering, painting, polishing and relocating to accommodate new exhibits at CGHM.

Steve DeCesare & Jim Sylvester (not pictured) painted the anchor under the supervision of Don Severy.

Behind the scenes, there are items to be received, archived and acknowledged along with bookkeeping and secretarial chores . . . 3353 Main Street is quite the center of activity. The volunteers have kept busy and



Dick Boonisar works to update a display.



Joan Dubis has helped out by recording incoming donations and artifacts, and writing thank you letters.

by Opening Day in May, there will be new things to pique the interest of visitors and members alike, including a special exhibit featuring the only two Coast Guard Astronauts.

In closing, we send a very special “thank you” to our past President and former Editor, Jack McGrath for the time and effort he put into many years of previous newsletters – only one of his many contributions to the Museum. He and Phyllis are relaxing and warm in Florida, enjoying a well-deserved retirement. We look forward to seeing Jack whenever he returns to the area.

Pat Garrity

## CROSSING THE BAR

*Melvin F. Gouthro*

The Museum notes with sadness the passing of CDR Melvin F. Gouthro, USCG (retired) of Wrentham, MA on Saturday, August 26, 2017, at home after a period of declining health. Born in Boston on June 6, 1931, Mel graduated from Boston Technical High School. Not long after graduation, he enlisted in the United States Coast Guard in 1948. He was a veteran of the Vietnam War and retired in 1976 at the rank of LCDR.

The beginning of Mel’s Coast Guard career was marked by his involvement in one of the most notable rescues in U.S. Coast Guard history off the coast of Chatham, MA in 1952. Over 60 years later, “The *Pendleton* Rescue” was the basis for a book and movie called “The Finest Hours”. Mel served as a “consultant” during the researching of the book and production of the film and he cherished his involvement and time spent with fellow Coast Guardsman, Andy “Fitzzy” Fitzgerald.

Mel is survived by his beloved wife Mary T. (King) Gouthro of Wrentham, their seven children and their spouses, seventeen grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

## GENEROUS GIFTS

Donations, large or small, from members and visitors alike, are the lifeblood of any non-profit organization like the CGHM. Last year, the Museum sent out over 1,500 solicitation letters. Generally, our donations range from \$25 to \$100. We are grateful for any amount.

Recently, we received an unexpected donation of \$10,000 from a first-time, August visitor to the Museum and the Board was beyond appreciative of such a generous gift. After discussion among the Board Members, it was decided that the Museum would use part of the donation to purchase a computer software program, Past Perfect, which will allow us to consolidate the multiple data bases we currently have into a single system and track all artifacts, sources, locations and history. This system is used by 20 other museums on Cape Cod and adheres to industry nomenclature standards with over 10,000 installations worldwide. We look forward to making this purchase, as well as the training for staff that is included in the cost. If anyone is willing to help us with this endeavor, we would love to hear from you!

With the help of donations from all supporters, the Coast Guard Heritage Museum will continue to pursue its mission to preserve Coast Guard memorabilia and promote understanding of the mission and history of the U.S. Coast Guard, especially as it relates to Cape Cod. Thank you all for your continued support and be sure to come visit the Museum in the new season, beginning May 1, 2018.

# Flight of the Lame Duck: The Curtiss Flying Boat NC-4

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *The United States Navy achieved the first transatlantic flight eight years before Charles Lindbergh became famous for crossing the Atlantic nonstop and alone. The following is the story of the flight of the Curtiss Flying Boat, NC-4 aptly nicknamed the "Lame Duck". The crew included Coast Guard pilot Lt. Elmer F. Stone (Coast Guard Aviator #1) and the route added an unscheduled stop at Air Station Chatham, MA due to mechanical difficulties. The completed trip from Rockaway, NY to Plymouth, England took 53 hours and 58 minutes in the air, covered 4,107 nautical miles. The entire trip took 24 days.*

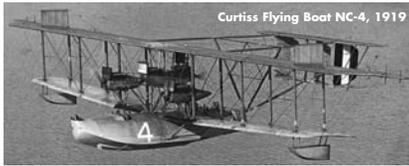
## The Flight Crew of the NC-4

The NC-4 was commanded by Lt. Cmdr. Albert Read (USN). The NC-4 crew left to right: Lt. Elmer F. Stone, USCG Pilot; Chief Machinist's Mate, Eugene S. Rhodes, USN Engineer; Lt. Walter Hinton, USN Copilot; Ensign Herbert C. Rodd, USN Radio Officer; Lt. James L. Breese, USN Engineer; and Lt. Cmdr. Albert C. Read, USN Commanding Officer and Navigator. Far right: Capt. Richard E. Jackson, Commander of US Naval Forces, Azores.



## The Curtiss Flying Boat NC-4

The NC flying boats were designed by Glenn Hammond Curtiss and his team, and manufactured by Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company of Buffalo, NY. It was built as an aircraft that could fly across the Atlantic to the coastlines of Europe and be ready to patrol for German U-boats upon arrival.



Conceived during the First World War, the NC class of flying boats, popularly known as "Nancy Boats", was

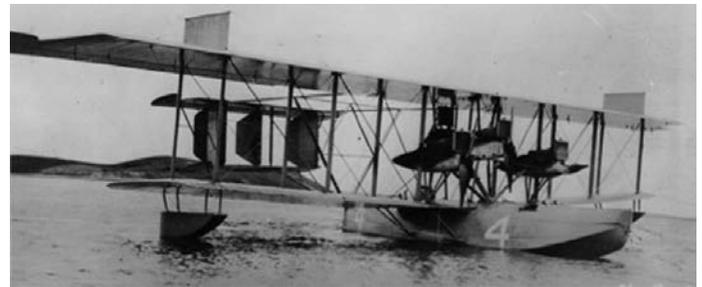
intended to meet a U.S. Navy requirement for extended range aircraft and anti-submarine patrol. An important design consideration of the NC class held that these aircraft be capable of flying under their own power from the continental United States to the European war zone because shipping space was in short supply during the period in 1917. The German U-boat offensive at the time was sinking close to one million tons of Allied shipping every month.

Because the NC flying boats were delivered too late for use during World War I, it appeared to be an aircraft without a mission. Yet a bold proposal, written by Commander John H. Tower, USN caught the imagination of the Department of the Navy. With the war over and peace returned, it called for the U.S. Navy to regain prestige in aviation by achieving a feat that all who flew aspired to – to fly across the Atlantic Ocean. The Navy wanted to prove the capability of the airplane as a trans-oceanic weapon and exploit its technology. The NCs took up the challenge of traversing the Atlantic by air and in May 1919, the NC-4 made the first successful transatlantic flight, a milestone in aviation history that brought much acclaim to United States Naval Aviation. It is important to note that each of the four aircraft was delivered at a cost of \$100,000 per plane.

## The Journey

On 3 May, 1919, crews of the NC-1, NC-3 and NC-4 gathered at Naval Air Station (NAS) Rockaway, Long Island, for the transatlantic attempt. Each aircraft had a crew of six. (The NC-2 had previously been cannibalized for spare parts to repair NC-1 before even leaving NYC). In the ensuing days a series of mishaps cast a pall over the endeavor, including a fire that damaged the NC-1 and one of the NC-4's crewmen accidentally sticking his hand into one of the aircraft's whirring propellers during an engine test.

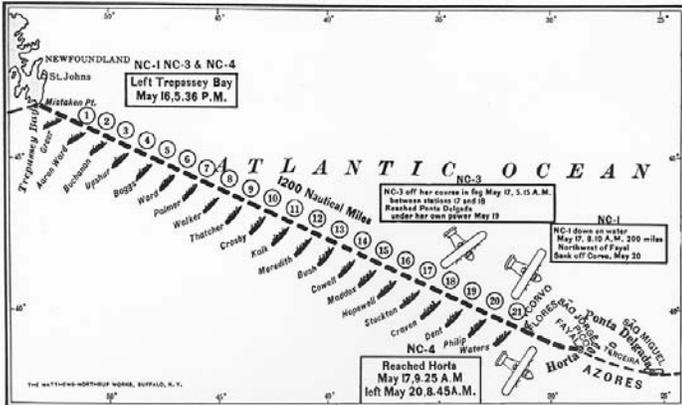
By 8 May, 1919, with a four-leaf clover presented to each crew member for luck, the three flying boats launched on the first leg of their flight from Rockaway to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Only two planes completed the nine-hour trip, the NC-4 being forced down off the coast of Massachusetts with engine trouble. Enroute, NC-4 had experienced an oil leak from the center tractor engine, so it was shut down. This slowed down the aircraft, but it was still able to fly. In mid-afternoon, however, the center engine suffered a failed connecting rod. With only two engines operational, NC-4 was forced down at sea approximately 80 miles (129 km) off Chatham, MA. The seas were calm and the flying boat taxied the remaining distance on the water, arriving at Chatham about 9:00 AM, on 9 May.



NC-4 "parked" at Pleasant Bay before flight to London. Photo by William Quinn

At the Air Station, the failed engine was replaced with a 300 horsepower Liberty L-12, the only engine available, and the other engine was repaired. Delayed several days by weather, NC-4 departed NAS Chatham at 9:15 AM on 14 May and flew to Halifax, Nova Scotia, arriving at 1:07 PM. Continuing to Newfoundland would have had them arriving after dark. NC-4 took off from the waters of Halifax the following morning at 11:47 AM and arrived at Trepassey Bay, Newfoundland at 5:41 PM, rendezvousing with the aircraft tender-ship *USS Aroostook* (CM-3). NC-1 and NC-3 had arrived two days earlier.

All three aircraft were serviced from the tender-ship. The temporary 300 HP Liberty engine was replaced with a correct 400 HP engine. The three Curtiss Flying Boats all took off from Trepassy Bay at 6:00 PM on the evening of 16 May and headed across the Atlantic to the Azores. A scheduled stop for fuel in the Azores required more than 17 hours to reach – elapsed flying time for the entire crossing would add up to more than 26 hours. The Nancys followed a trail of U.S. Destroyers strung across the Atlantic. Radio contact was made with each of the destroyers as they came into range. After dark, the destroyers fired star shells from their aircraft guns in order to keep the NCs on track.



The North Atlantic Flight Path of the Curtiss NC-4 , May 1919

Due to further engine trouble and inclement weather, NC-1 and NC-3 landed short of the Azores, but with high seas and waves cresting over 20 feet, they were unable to take off again. NC-1 was abandoned to the sea and the crew was rescued by a Greek freighter. The battered NC-3 sailed and was taxied backwards some 205 miles to the Azores.

Again, NC-4 was forced to remain in harbor, waiting for more favorable weather conditions. Finally, on 27 May, 1919 the weather was good enough to resume the journey and the crew once again took off for Lisbon, Portugal. Thus, NC-4, nicknamed the “Lame Duck”, became the sole survivor of Seaplane Division One, and at 8:01 PM,



on 27 May, 1919, the keel of the NC-4 flying boat cut through the waters of the Tagus Estuary in Lisbon, Portugal to become the very first airplane to complete a flight across the Atlantic Ocean. The aircraft's commander, Lieutenant Commander Albert C. Read, USN later wrote to his wife that the successful flight represented a “...continuous run of unadulterated luck”, but indeed the skill and bravery of the crew, combined with a fortuity in making the NC-4 and her crew the first to fly the Atlantic.

Humans had only taken wing in airplanes less than 20 years before and Lindbergh's Paris flight was still eight years away. The accomplishment of the American Naval Aviators of the NC-4 was undeniable but somewhat eclipsed in the minds of the public by the first nonstop transatlantic flight which took 15 hours, 57 minutes and was made by Royal Air Force pilots John Alcock and Arthur Whitten Brown, two weeks later. Sadly, it took Congress more than ten years to appropriate the meager budget needed to award special medals which were authorized for the NC crews. Four presidential elections passed before the men stood at their White House ceremony.



## Exhibit of the Curtiss NC-4 in Pensacola, Florida

The NC-4 has been restored by the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum and the U.S. Navy, for its 50th anniversary.

It was another six years before being placed on permanent display at the National Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, FL.



NC-4 finally has a place of honor. The flight of the NC-4, its lessons and its blazing of the Atlantic airways, are largely unknown today. Many Americans think Lindbergh made that first crossing; the British applaud Alcock and Brown. At the time some did not think it ‘sporting’ that the Navy placed ships along the route to aid navigation, and that the first flight took so long to accomplish. Still the NC-4 was, and ever shall remain, First Across the Atlantic.

## Curtiss NC-4 Specifications

NC-4 was the fourth of ten flying boats built by the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company. It was 68' 3" long, with a wingspan of 126' and a height of 24' 6". The empty weight was 15,874 pounds it had a maximum takeoff weight of 21,500 pounds. Originally built with three engines, flight testing resulted in a fourth being added. They were water cooled, normally aspirated 1649.336 cubic inches displacement (27.028 liter) Liberty L-12 single overhead cam (SOHC) 45 degrees V-12 engines with a compression ratio of 5.4:1. The Liberty produced 408 horsepower at 1,800 rpm. Two engines were mounted in a center nacelle with one in tractor and the other in pusher configuration. Two more engines were in individual nacelles in tractor configuration. NC-4 had a maximum speed of 90 mph, a service ceiling of 4,500 and a range of 1,470 miles.

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# Coast Guard Heritage Museum

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Visit us at [www.capecodmuseumtrail.com](http://www.capecodmuseumtrail.com)

## BECOME A MEMBER!

**Individual** - \$25 Single membership: 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: \_\_\_\_\_ USCG Connection (if any) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Level:**  Individual \$25  Family \$40  Supporting \$100  Sustaining \$250

Guardian:  Captain's Circle \$500+  Admiral's Circle \$1,000+  Commandant's Circle \$2,500+

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 \_\_\_\_\_

We are a 501 (C) (3) organization and our mission is to preserve and share the story of the U.S. Coast Guard in the former U.S. Custom House in Barnstable, Massachusetts.