Traditions

200 years of history

By Mrs. Florence Kern
and PA1 Barbara Voulgaris

The U. S. Coast Guard, this nation's oldest continuous maritime service, is rich in traditions. The origins of many of these may be traced back many centuries well beyond the establishing of the Service in 1790. Such is the case with the ceremonies for the commissioning of ships and Dining In. Other traditions are more modern such as the Ancient Albatross and the Ancient Mariner awards.

The Coast Guard is one of this nation's sea services and as such shares with its sister services many traditions. But the Coast Guard is also unique and as such has evolved traditions of its own. Many of these are addressed in this brochure. The Historian's Office, Public Affairs Staff (G-CP/H) would be pleased to hear from anyone caring to contribute to future editions of this publication.

— Dr. Robert L. Scheina,
Coast Guard Historian
Washington, D.C.
July 1990
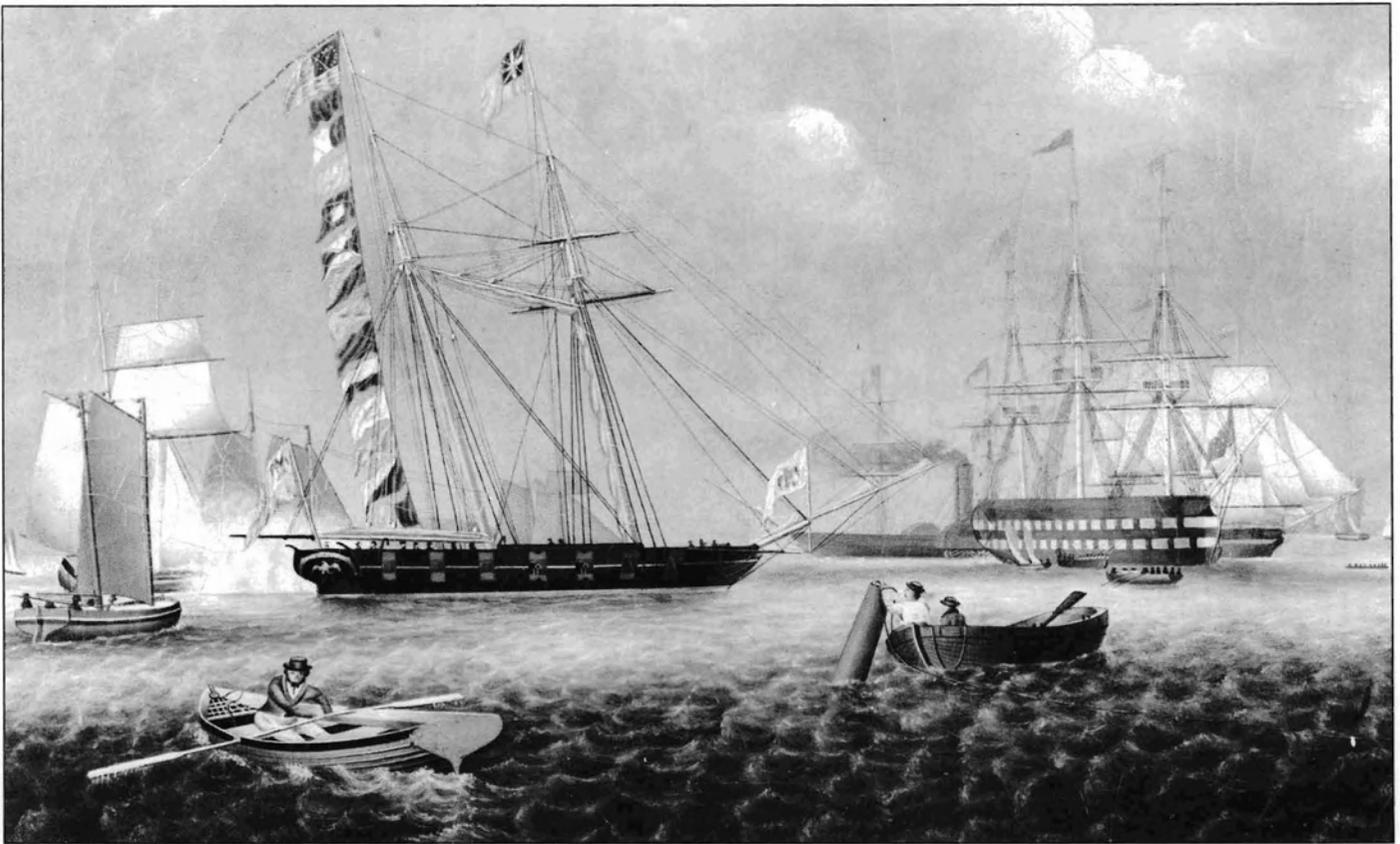
U.S. Revenue cutter *Alexander Hamilton* in 1840. The ship of the line *Ohio*, 1817-1883, is in the right background. Oil by R. Salmon, 1840. Photo courtesy of the Peabody Museum, Salem, Mass.

The standard

The origins of the Coast Guard standard are very obscure. It may have evolved from an early jack. At least one contemporary painting supports this theory. In this 1840 painting pictured above, the Revenue cutter *Alexander Hamilton* flies a flag very similar to today's Coast Guard standard as a jack. This flag, like the union jack, which is the upper corner of the United States flag, appears to be the canton or upper corner of the Revenue cutter ensign.

An illustration in 1917 shows the Coast Guard standard as a white flag with a blue eagle and 13 stars in a semi-circle surrounding it. At a later date, the words, "United States Coast Guard — Semper Paratus" were added.

After 1950, the semi-circle of stars was changed to the circle containing 13 stars, as shown in this 1960s photo to the right.

The Coast Guard standard is used during parades and ceremonies and is adorned by our 30 battle streamers. We are unique to the other services for we have two official flags, the Coast Guard standard and the Coast Guard ensign.
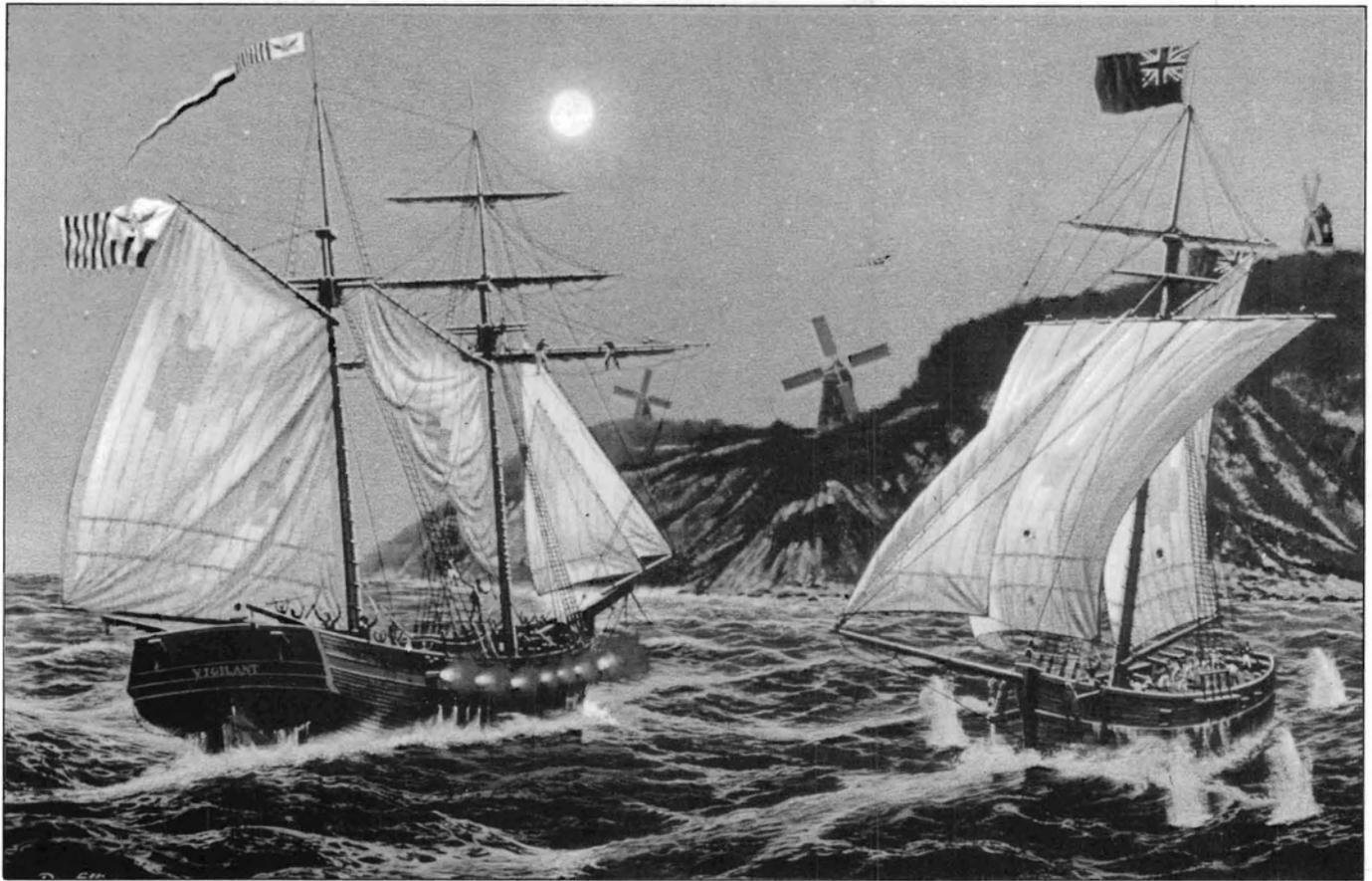
The ensign

The initial job of the first revenue cutters was to guarantee that the maritime public was not evading taxes. Import taxes were the life blood of the new nation. Smuggling had become a patriotic duty during the revolution. If the new nation under the Constitution were to survive, this activity needed to be stopped.

Working within a limited budget, cutters needed some symbol of authority. Neither officers nor men had uniforms. How could a revenue cutter come alongside a merchant ship during an age of pirates and privateers and order it to heave to?

The solution was to create an ensign unique to the revenue cutter to fly in place of the national flag while in American waters.

Nine years after the establishment of the Revenue Cutter Service, Congress, in the Act of March 2, 1799, provided that cutters and boats employed in the service of the revenue should be distinguished from other vessels by a unique ensign and pennant.

On August 1, 1799, Secretary of the Treasury, Oliver Wolcott, issued an order announcing that in pursuance of authority from the President, the distinguishing ensign and pennant would consist of, "*16 perpendicular stripes, alternate red and white, the union of the ensign to be the arms of the United States in a dark blue on a white field.*"

The ensign was poignant with historical detail, inasmuch as in the canton of the flag, there are 13 stars, 13 leaves to the olive branch, 13 arrows and 13 bars to the shield. All corresponded to the number of states constituting the union at the time the nation was established. The 16 vertical stripes in the body are symbolic of the number of States composing the Union when this ensign was officially adopted.
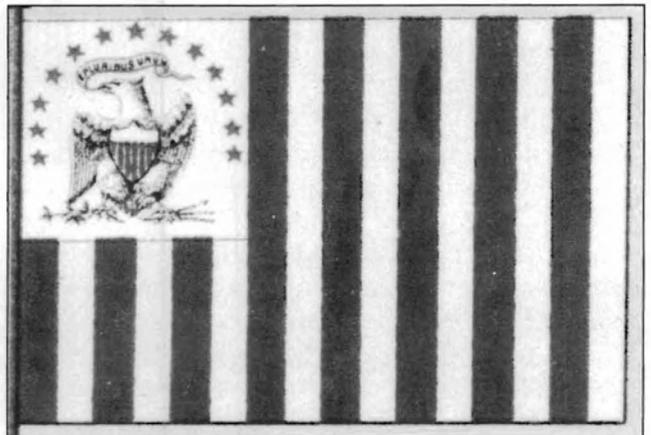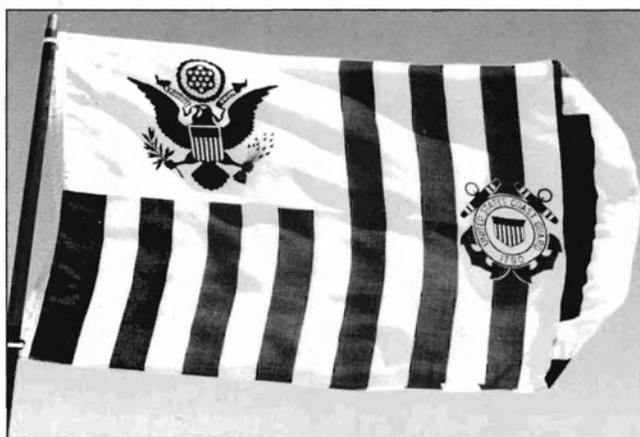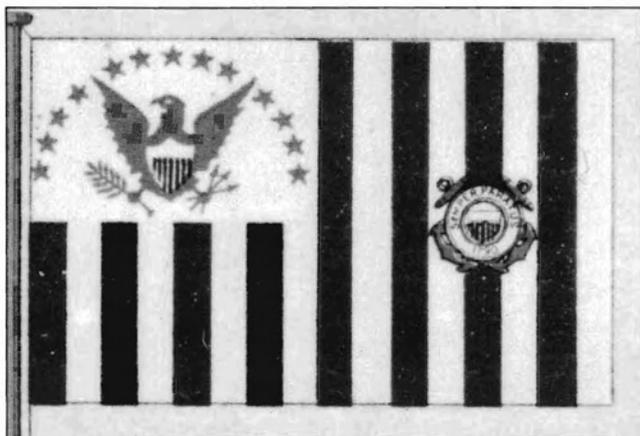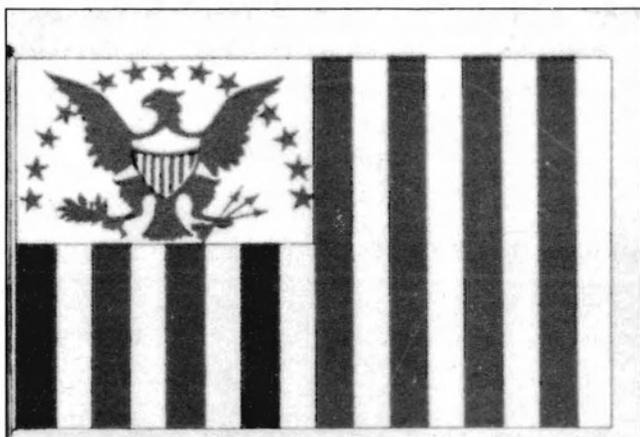
Upper far left: This was the original ensign designed in 1799. Note the American style eagle with the wreath of stars. Lower far left: Adopted prior to the Civil War, this ensign has the Roman style eagle with its down-turned wings. Left from top to bottom: The American eagle returned to the ensign in the latter part of the 19th century. • In the middle flag note the addition of the emblem. This ensign was adopted in 1910. • The current ensign, shown below, was adopted in 1953.

This ensign soon became very familiar in American waters and served as the sign of authority for the Revenue Cutter Service until the early 20th century.

The ensign was intended to be flown only on revenue cutters and boats connected with the Customs Service. But over the years it was found flying atop custom houses as well. However, President William Howard Taft issued an Executive Order June 7, 1910, adding an emblem to the ensign flown by the Revenue cutters

to distinguish it from the ensign flown from the custom houses, which read: *"By virtue of the authority vested in me under the provisions of Sec. 2764 of the revised Statutes, I hereby prescribe that the distinguishing flag now used by vessels of the Revenue Cutter Service be marked by the distinctive emblem of that service, in blue and white, placed on a line with the lower edge of the union, and over the center of the seventh vertical red stripe from the mast of said flag, the emblem to cover a horizontal space of three stripes. This change to be made as soon as practicable."*

At about this time, cutters began flying the U.S. flag as their naval ensign and the revenue ensign became the Service's distinctive flag.

When the service adopted the name Coast Guard, the Revenue Cutter Service's ensign became the distinctive flag on all Coast Guard cutters as it had been for the revenue cutters.

The colors used in the Coast Guard ensign today, as in the Revenue Cutter Service, are all symbolic. The color red stands for our youth and sacrifice of blood for liberty's sake. The color blue not only stands for justice, but also for our covenant against oppression. The white symbolizes our desire for light and purity.

As it was intended in 1799, the ensign is displayed as a mark of authority for boardings, examinations and seizures of vessels for the purpose of enforcing the laws of the United States. The ensign is never carried as a parade or ceremony standard.

The jack and commission pennant

During its early years, the Revenue Cutter Service flew the canton (the upper corner of the flag nearest the staff) of the Revenue Cutter ensign as its jack. This practice persisted at least into the 1830s. Prior to the U.S. Civil War, the Revenue Cutter Service adopted as its new jack the canton of the United States Flag (the Union Jack) and this continues to this day.

Now, the jack is flown from the jackstaff only while at anchor. During the early years of the Service it was frequently flown on special occasions either at the jackstaff or atop the main mast while underway as well as when at anchor.

PENNANT REVENUE MARINE

Pictured from top to bottom: This version of the commission pennant was adopted prior to the Civil War. • This commission pennant was adopted sometime after the Civil War and still flies today from the main mast of our cutters.

The first commission pennant, adopted in 1799, is shown on page 3 flying from the Revenue cutter *Vigilant's* mast. • The 1840 painting pictured on page 2 shows an early version of the jack flying from the jackstaff of the Revenue cutter *Alexander Hamilton.*

The Coast Guard commission pennant was created at the same time as the ensign in 1799. The original commission pennant bore the same style American eagle as the ensign, 16 vertical red and white stripes, and a white-over-red vertical tail.

Prior to the U.S. Civil War, the Revenue Cutter Service adopted a commission pennant which had thirteen blue stars on a white field, thirteen vertical red and white stripes, and a red swallowed tail.

Sometime after the war, the Service adopted the same commission pennant as the U.S. Navy. This pennant has thirteen white stars on a blue field, thirteen vertical red and white stripes, and a red swallowed tail. The pennant is flown from the top of the main mast.

Semper Paratus

No one seems to know exactly how Semper Paratus was chosen as the Coast Guard's motto. But there is no doubt as to who put the famous motto to words and music.

Captain Francis Saltus Van Boskerck, *pictured above as a First Lieutenant about 1907,* wrote the words in the cabin of the cutter *Yamacraw* in Savannah, Ga., in 1922. He wrote the music five years later on a beat-up old piano in Unalaska, Alaska. At that time it was probably the only piano in the whole long chain of Aleutian Islands.

Van Boskerck received his commission in the Revenue Cutter Service May 20, 1891. Between 1914 and 1915 he superintended the construction of the cutters *Tallapoosa* and *Ossipee* at Newport News, Va.

In 1917 he was Captain of the Port in Philadelphia and an aide for the fourth naval district at the American routing office in Philadelphia. He was also censor for the district, and was the first Coast Guard officer to report a German submarine on the Atlantic coast. After the war, Van Boskerck transferred to the Puget Sound Navy Yard to supervise repairs on the famous cutter *Bear*. He commanded *Bear* on the 1920 summer cruise to the Bering Sea and Arctic Ocean.

In 1922, as commander of *Yamacraw*, Van Boskerck was stationed at Savannah and chased rum-runners off the coast of the Carolinas and Florida. In 1923 he went to the Naval War College at Newport, R.I., and in 1924 became District Commander of the Great Lakes District. Van Boskerck was commissioned Captain in 1925.

"Captain Van," as he was known to his many friends, was next ordered to Seattle as Assistant Inspector of the Northwest District. In 1925 and 1926 he was Commander of the Bering Sea Forces, headquartered at the remote port of Unalaska. It was here that he found time to fit the words of his song to music with the help of two Public Health dentists, Alf E. Nannestad and Joseph O. Fournier. Mrs. Albert C. Clara Goss, the wife of a fur trader, let them use the beat-up piano on which the song was written.

For probably as long as Captain Van could remember, Semper Paratus had been a Revenue Cutter and Coast Guard watchword. The words themselves — always ready or ever ready — date back to ancient times.

No official recognition was given to the Coast Guard motto until it appeared in 1910 on the ensign. Captain Van hoped to give it as much recognition as "Semper Fideles" of the Marines and "Anchors Away" of the Navy.

Seals and emblems
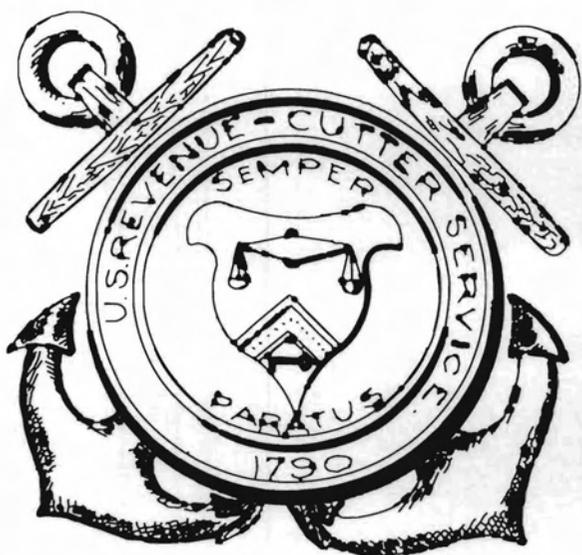
The creation of an official Coast Guard seal confirmed the existence of a symbol that had evolved over the decades. The Revenue Cutter Service, the Life-Saving Service and the Lighthouse Service all had their own unique distinguishing devices. The Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation used drawings of ships and marine equipment on licenses and stationery. But it wasn't until 1927, after Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon approved a design, that the Coast Guard had its first official seal/emblem. At that time, the seal and emblem were one in the same. This seal/emblem was designed by civilian Coast Guard draftsman Oscar H. Kee.

Over the years, the seal and emblem became two different devices. The emblem, a simplification of the seal, began to appear throughout the service. Consequently, in 1957, Assistant Treasury Secretary David W. Kendall, signed an order prescribing the distinctive emblem of the Coast Guard. This order specified that the emblem be used on the Coast Guard ensign, but did not indicate any additional use.

Apparently the emblem continued in wide use. In 1967, Commandant Instruction 5030.6 defined the use of the Coast Guard seal and the Coast Guard emblem.

The seal is used for official documents and records of the Coast Guard. It may also be used for jewelry, stationery, etc., at the discretion of the Commandant. The official seal is also used on invitations, programs, certificates, diplomas and greetings.

The Coast Guard emblem, a simplified version of the seal, was created as a visual identifier for the Coast Guard. Not only on the Coast Guard ensign, the emblem also appears inside the distinctive slash on the sides of our cutters, craft, aircraft and at our units. It is also used on medals and plaques where space is limited.

DIVISION OF REVENUE CUTTER SERVICE

Far left top to bottom: **An early seal of the Revenue Cutter Service, probably dating back to the 1860s. • The seal of the Life-saving Service. • This design was used on Lighthouse Service hats.**

Counter clockwise from left: **A later version of the Revenue Cutter seal. • The official Coast Guard seal. • This design was used on top of Steamboat Inspection Service documents. • The Coast Guard emblem.**

No.

STEAM BOAT PILOT'S CERTIFICATE.

In Accordance with an Act of Congress, Approved August 30th, 1852.

The undersigned, Inspectors for the District of New London

Certify that William Simpson

The slash

Our familiar and distinctive red slash or "racing stripe" did not appear on our cutters, boats and aircraft until relatively late in our history.

In the early '60s, America's visual image had been neglected both inside as well as outside the U.S. Since image-building played an important role in the recent election of President John F. Kennedy, the industrial design firm of Raymond Loewy/William Snaith, Inc. was hired to redesign the exterior and interior of the presidential plane. Kennedy was so pleased with the new design that he approved their proposal for improving the world-wide visual identification of the U.S. government.

In 1964, the firm recommended that the Coast Guard adopt a symbol or mark that would be easily distinguished from other government agencies and easily applied to ships, boats, aircraft, stations, vehicles, signs and printed forms.

Their design was a wide red bar to the right of a narrow blue bar, both canted at 64 degrees. Centered on the red bar was a new emblem.

Studies were done with experimental markings for their impact on the public, as well as their long-run compatibility with the Coast Guard's mission and traditions. The reaction was overwhelmingly favorable. Three years later, on April 6, 1967, the now famous slash appeared throughout the Coast Guard.

In the final design, only the emblem changed. The traditional Coast Guard emblem was selected for centering on the red stripe over the new design.

Clockwise from left: The Coast Guard cutter *Reliance* displays our distinctive slash or racing stripe. • The Coast Guard cutter *Androscoggin* with an experimental seal during the filming of the movie *Assault on a Queen.* • A model of the cutter *Reliance* with a proposed design for the slash.
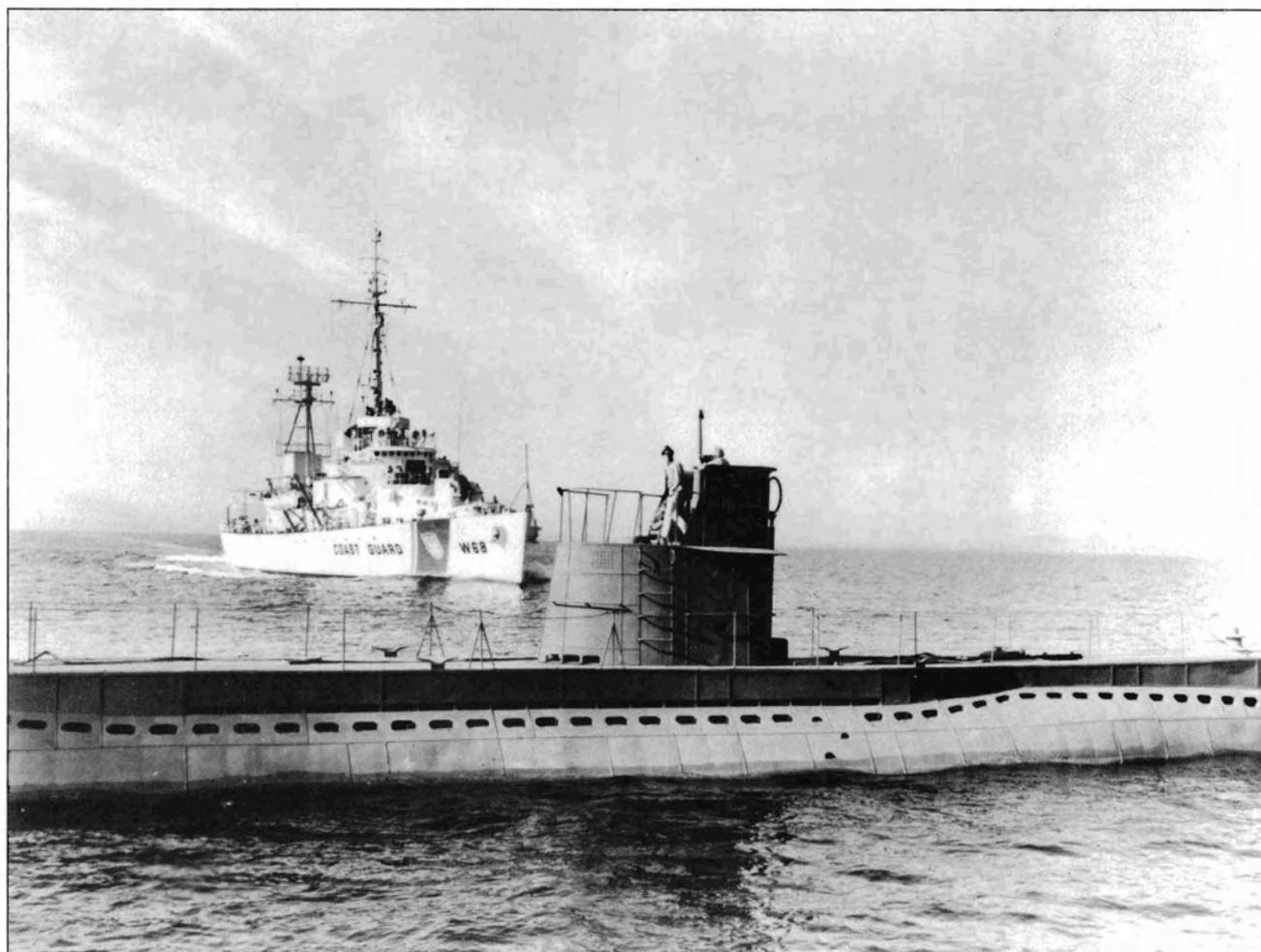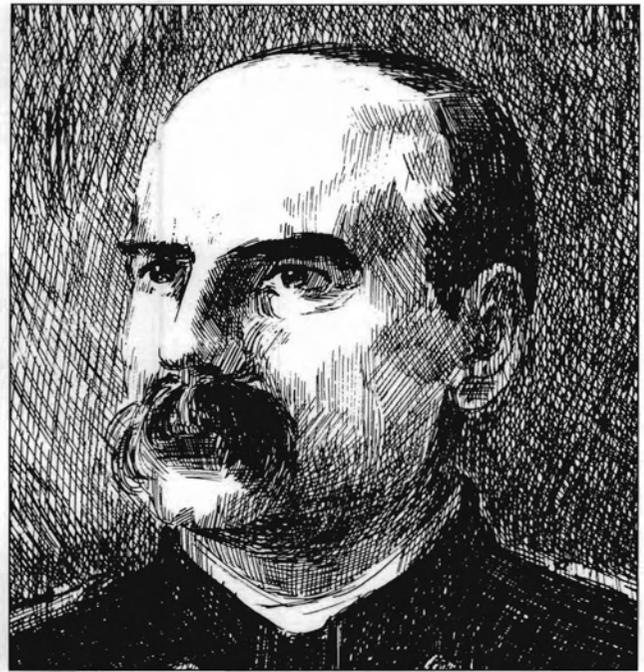
Commandants

Although the Coast Guard is more than 200 years old, the title "Commandant" comes relatively late in our history.

Lack of centralization under federal control plagued our service during its first 50 years. From 1790 until 1843 control of the cutters was largely in the hands of the individual customs collectors and their political friends.

In 1843, Captain Alexander V. Fraser was appointed Chief of the Revenue Marine Bureau. His job was to bring uniformity into the operation of the cutters and overhaul the service. As Bureau chief for five years, Fraser streamlined the service, supervised the construction of its first steam cutters, abolished shipboard slavery and flogging, raised salaries, established a merit system of promotion and advised joining the Revenue Marine Service with the Lighthouse Service and the Life-Saving Service. He had many of the same duties as the later commandants.

Fraser's successor as Chief of the Bureau, Captain Richard Evans, held the post for just one year. With Evan's departure the Revenue-Marine Bureau once again fell into the hands of the customs collectors.

Forty years later, Captain Leonard G. Shepard became Chief of the "Revenue Marine Division" and is considered to be our first Commandant.

In 1894 legislation directed, "that the Secretary of the Treasury shall detail a captain of the Revenue Cutter Service, who shall be chief of the division of Revenue Cutter Service."

This legislation was of major importance in our history because it was the first statutory definition of the revenue cutter system as an organized and distinct "service." In addition, there had never been a statutory requirement that the chief of the service be a uniformed officer from its own ranks.

After the appointment of Captain Shepard, national command then became part of the Coast Guard tradition as it exists today. Shepard heads the list of distinguished officers appointed by the President to head the Coast Guard.

Between 1894 and 1908, captains of the Revenue Cutter Service served as Chief, Division of Revenue Cutter Service in the Treasury Department.

The title of Commandant dates to a 1923 act which distributed the commissioned line and engineer officers of the Coast Guard in grades.

Before 1923, the rank and title of the head of the Coast Guard was "captain-commandant." The rank "captain-commandant" originated in the Revenue Cutter Service in 1908.

No vice commandants were appointed until 1929. Captain Benjamin N. Chiswell was the first vice commandant.

The Commandants

1889-1895	Captain Leonard G. Shepard, USRCS, Captain-Commandant, Chief Revenue Marine Division
1895-1905	Captain Charles F. Shoemaker, USRCS Captain-Commadant, Chief Revenue Marine Division
1905-1911	Captain Worth G. Ross, USRCS, Captain-Commandant
1911-1919	Commodore Ellsworth P. Bertholf, Captain-Commandant; Chief Division of Revenue Cutter Service until 1915 when it became known as U.S. Coast Guard.
1919-1924	Rear Admiral William F. Reynolds, first captain and later Rear Admiral Commandant. Reappointed Commandant on Jan. 12, 1923 with rank of RADM effective October 2, 1923. He was the first officer to attain this rank.
1924-1932	Rear Admiral Frederick C. Billard
1932-1936	Rear Admiral Harry G. Hamlet
1936-1946	Admiral Russell R. Waesche. Appointed Commandant as Rear Admiral, appointed Vice Admiral March 10, 1942. Appointed full Admiral April 4, 1945. He was the first Coast Guard officer to attain the ranks of vice and full Admiral.
1946-1949	Admiral Joseph F. Farley
1950-1954	Vice Admiral Merlin O'Neill
1954-1962	Admiral Alfred C. Richmond. Appointed Commandant as Vice Admiral; appointed full Admiral June 1, 1960 by Act of May 14, 1960, Public Law 86-474, under which all Coast Guard Commandants thereafter automatically became full Admirals.
1962-1966	Admiral Edwin J. Roland
1966-1970	Admiral Willard J. Smith
1970-1974	Admiral Chester R. Bender
1974-1978	Admiral Owen W. Siler
1978-1982	Admiral John B. Hayes
1982-1986	Admiral James S. Gracey
1986-1990	Admiral Paul A. Yost, Jr.
1990-	Admiral J. William Kime

The Vice Commandants

1929-1931	Captain Benjamin M. Chiswell
1931-1941	Rear Admiral Leon C. Covell
1941-1946	Rear Admiral Lloyd T. Chalker
1946-1949	Rear Admiral Merlin O'Neill
1950-1954	Rear Admiral Alfred C. Richmond
1954-1962	Vice Admiral James A. Hirshfield
1962	Vice Admiral Edwin J. Roland
1962-1964	Vice Admiral Donald M. Morrison
1964-1966	Vice Admiral William D. Shields
1966-1970	Vice Admiral Paul E. Trimble
1970-1974	Vice Admiral Thomas R. Sargent, III
1974-1978	Vice Admiral Ellis L. Perry
1978-1982	Vice Admiral Robert H. Scarborough
1982-1986	Vice Admiral Benedict L. Stabile
1986-1988	Vice Admiral James C. Irwin
1988-1990	Vice Admiral Clyde T. Lusk, Jr.
1990-	Vice Admiral Martin H. Daniell

Opposite page, left to right: **Our newest Commandant ADM J. William Kime became our 19th Commandant May 31, 1990.**
• Recognized as the first Commandant, Captain Leonard G. Shepard headed our service from 1889 until 1895.

Christenings and commissionings

The tradition of christening and commissioning a ship started well before the first ten revenue cutters entered the service. The practice dates back to ancient times when the Greeks, Romans, Egyptians and Vikings called upon the gods to protect their ships and crew from the perilous sea. Religion played an important role in these ceremonies. In fact, christenings originated as a way to appease the gods of the elements.

Christening gives a ship its identity. Over the years, different cultures and people changed and shaped the way ceremonies were performed and some of these traditions were carried over into modern times.

A ship is traditionally christened or given its name at the time it is launched into the water. When a ship is christened, it is tradition to break a bottle across the ship's bow. This practice began in Britain in the late seventeenth century. Previously, an official would sip wine from a "standing cup," a large loving cup made of precious metal, then pour out the remaining wine onto the deck or over the ship's bow. The cup was then tossed overboard. This practice soon became too costly and a net was used to catch the cup so it could be re-used at other launchings. Wine was the traditional liquid used to

christen a ship, although other liquids were used such as whiskey, brandy and water. At the close of the nineteenth century champagne became the popular liquid with which to christen a ship. However, during prohibition ships were christened with water.

Ship's sponsors were generally royalty or senior naval officers. In the nineteenth century, women became ship sponsors for the first time. Women sponsored ships more and more frequently, although it was not the rule.

The actual physical process of launching a new ship from a building site to the water involves three principal methods. Oldest, most familiar and most widely used is the "end-on" launch in which the vessel slides, usually stern first, down an inclined shipway. The "side launch," whereby the ship enters the water broadside, came into nineteenth-century use on inland waters, rivers and lakes. It was given major impetus by the World War II building program. Another method involves ships built in basins or graving docks. When ready, ships constructed in this manner are floated by admitting water into the dock.

The commissioning ceremony completes the cycle from christening and launching to full status as a cutter in the United States Coast Guard.

Unlike the christening/launching ceremony, commissionings were attended by no ceremony in early American maritime history. They were not public affairs and no accounts of them are found in contemporary newspapers. In recent years however, commissionings have come to be public occasions.

Clockwise from far left:
Launching the second *Escanaba*, March 25, 1945. The launching of her namesake, the first *Escanaba*, is pictured on the cover.
• The cutters *Raritan* and *Naugatuck* are launched together in Bay City, Mich., March 23, 1939.
• The cutter *Haida* is christened in Oakland, Calif., in 1921.

The Lifesaving Medals

Heroic deeds and daring rescues at sea have always been a part of the Coast Guard tradition. But it was not until Congress passed the Life-Saving Act of June 20, 1874, that First and Second Class Medals were established and medals were awarded. The first medal was reserved for rescues of extreme and heroic daring, the second for those slightly less outstanding.

Congress changed these designations in 1882, renaming the First Class medal the Gold Lifesaving Medal, and the Second Class Medal the Silver Lifesaving Medal.

These medals are awarded to people who endanger their own lives while saving or attempting to save another from drowning, a shipwreck or other perils of the water.

The first gold medals were awarded to three brothers who rescued two people from a shipwreck on Lake Erie in 1875. In November of the same year, two men received silver medals after they rescued two people from a shipwreck off the Maine coast.

One of the most celebrated lifesavers in our history was Joshua James. James is credited with saving more than 600 lives and earned two gold medals, three silver and other awards during his long and distinguished career.

At the age of 15, James joined the Massachusetts Humane Society and later the U.S. Life-Saving Service.

His most famous rescue, and one in which he received one of the Gold Lifesaving medals, was in November of 1888. James and his crew saved 29 people from five different vessels during one of the worst storms to hit Hull, Mass.

Since 1874, more than 600 Gold Lifesaving Medals and more than 1,900 Silver Lifesaving Medals have been awarded.
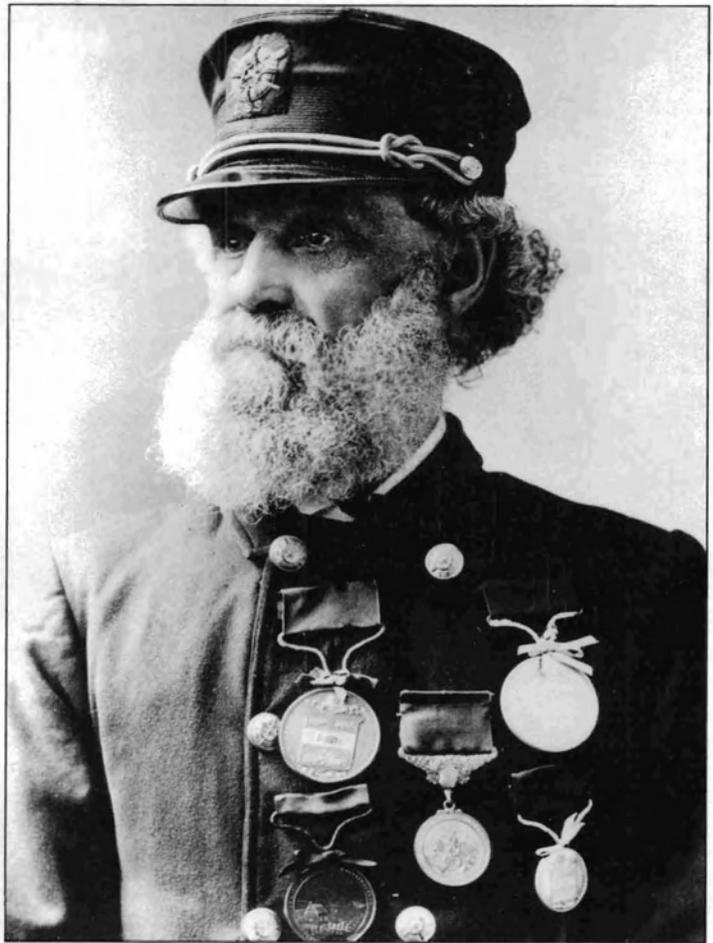
Lifesaver Joshua James wearing the five medals he received during his long career. The Gold Lifesaving Medal is in the center. This photograph illustrates that gold, silver and bronze medals were also awarded by states and humanitarian societies. James was awarded the U.S. Congressional Gold Medal as well as another gold, three silver and a bronze from the Massachusetts Humane Society.

The Secretary of Transportation has formal authority for the Lifesaving medals. The Coast Guard Commandant is responsible for the administrative details, including determination of eligibility.

Traditionally, these were the only lifesaving medals issued by the Coast Guard to civilians as well as military people. Today, military people may only receive these medals if they performed their act in an authorized leave or liberty status. Even then, a military award may be more appropriate.

The Gold and Silver Lifesaving Medals were designed by Anthony Paquet and were first struck at the Philadelphia Mint. The Gold Lifesaving Medal is 99.9 percent gold and the Silver Medal is 99 percent silver.

The Coast Guard Medal

The Coast Guard Medal, created Aug. 4, 1949, is awarded to any person who, while serving on active duty in the Coast Guard, distinguishes himself by heroism not involving actual conflict with an enemy.

For acts of lifesaving, or attempted lifesaving, the Coast Guard Medal requirements parallel those of the Gold Lifesaving Medal.

The battle streamers

There is no doubt that the Coast Guard cherishes its many peacetime activities. But it is also proud of its services in the wars of the United States. The "system of cutters" was only seven years old when several of its fleet fought in the Quasi-War with France. In this war and the War of 1812, these small, lightly armed cutters proved their worth against experienced European warships.

Embroidering the names of battles on flags may be traced to the early days of the republic. By the end of the 19th century, embroidery was discontinued in favor of inscribed silver bands around the color staffs. This too was changed in World War I in favor of small ribbons bearing battle names. The Coast Guard adopted battle streamers in 1968 following the practice established by the U.S. Marine Corps.

Streamers are attached to the Coast Guard standard, replacing cords and tassels. They are carried in all ceremonies representing heroic actions in all naval encounters from 1798 to the Vietnam War and beyond. Only major headquarters commands may display a complete set of battle streamers. Individual units may only display those they have earned. The Coast Guard has authorized a total of 30 battle streamers.

Battle Streamers

French Naval War	Light blue with two groupings of red, white and blue stripes
War of 1812	Scarlet with two white stripes
Indian War	Scarlet with two black stripes
Mexican War	Green with one white stripe
Civil War	Blue and gray, equally divided
Spanish campaign	Yellow with two blue stripes
World War I Victory	Double rainbow
China Service	Yellow with two red stripes
Yangtze Service	Blue with two groupings of yellow and red stripes
American Defense Service	Yellow with two groupings of red, white and blue stripes
American Campaign	Blue with two groupings of white, black, red and white stripes; with red, white and blue stripes in center
European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign	Green and brown with two-stripe groupings; one of green, white and red and the other of white, black and white stripes; white and red stripes in the center.
Croix De Guerre, French, World War II	Red with four green stripes
Asiatic-Pacific Campaign	Orange with two white, red and white stripe groupings; with blue, white and red stripes in center.
Philippine Defense	Red with two white stripes
Philippine Liberation	Red with one blue and one white stripe
Presidential Unit Citation	Blue, gold, red
Philippine Independence	Blue with yellow border stripes and red, white, red center grouping.
Philippine Presidential Unit Citation	Red, white and blue
World War II Victory	Red with rainbow border groupings and two white stripes
Navy Occupation Service	Red and black, equally divided on white
Korean Service	Light blue bordered on each side with white; white center stripe.
Navy Unit Commendation	Green with two groupings of blue, yellow and red stripes.
National Defense Service	Red with yellow center and two groupings of white, blue, white stripes.
Armed Forces Expeditionary	Light blue with border groupings of green, yellow, brown and black; red, white and blue center groupings.
Vietnam Service	Yellow, with green borders, three red stripes
Meritorious Unit Commendation (Army, Saigon)	Scarlet
Navy Meritorious Unit Commendation	Green with two groupings of yellow, blue and yellow and red center
RVN Armed Forces Meritorious Unit Citation, Gallantry Cross with Palm	Red with gold center and eight double red stripes with palm
RVN Meritorious Unit Citation, Civil Actions Medal First Class Color, with Palm	Green with red edges and two red stripes in center and palm

The Ancient Albatross

The Ancient Albatross award honors the Coast Guard aviator on active duty who has held that designation for the longest time. The award is in the form of a large bronze and wooded plaque on which the names of the recipients are inscribed.

VADM Howard B. Thorsen became the 13th Ancient Albatross in 1990 when VADM Clyde E. Robbins passed on the title.

ADCM James T. Woltz became the first enlisted Ancient Albatross after accepting the title in a ceremony at the Aviation Technical Training Center in Elizabeth City, N.C., June 8, 1990. The enlisted Ancient Albatross is a newly created award.

Former Ancient Albatross, VADM Deese Thompson, passed the title to RADM Nelson in a 1988 ceremony at the Aviation Training Center in Mobile, Ala. After landing their respective H-3 helicopters, they were taxied to the podium in a 1929 Model A. The traditional leather flight jacket, goggles, leather helmet and long white scarf were passed onto the new Albatross. In this ceremony, VADM Thompson reflected back on his many years of flying:

"To all the men and women in Coast Guard Aviation who serve this nation so well, I salute you and wish you the same great times and experiences I have shared with the finest outfits in the world.

What's it like when you close the throttle and the engine sighs for the last time? It's delicious pain. Happily you have survived. Unhappily, those joyous airborne moments are no more. You won't miss the rain-swept approaches on dark and worrisome nights. But you will miss the subdued exhilaration of breaking into clear blue from a cloud-shrouded climbout. You won't miss the endless nights at sea or duty nights away from home. But there will be a substitute for those marvelous moments when the familiar cutter or runaway profile comes into view and you key the mike to report, "in sight?"

"Life is a compromise. And for every beginning there is an ending. But the knowledge of having been part of Coast Guard aviation soothes. The memories must now be shelved in the archives of the mind. Hopefully they will be retrieved to an appreciative listener now and then. There are no regrets for that delicious pain. You have been there on the wing of the high and mighty, and you would not have had it any other way."

Far left: VADM D.C. Thompson in the traditional Albatross gear. *Left:* VADM Clyde E. Robbins at Air Station San Francisco. *Below:* VADM D.C. Thompson outfits RADM Ed Nelson in the Albatross gear.

The Ancient Albatrosses

Officer

1965	VADM W.D. Shields
1966	RADM C. Tighe
1970	ADM C.R. Bender
1974	CDR W.R. Goldhammer
1975	RADM C.A. Richmond, Jr.
1977	ADCMAP J.P. Greathouse
1979	CAPT W.D. Harvey
1979	RADM C.E. Larkin
1984	RADM F.P. Shubert
1985	VADM D.C. Thompson
1988	RADM E. Nelson, Jr.
1989	VADM C.E. Robbins
1990	VADM H.B. Thorsen

Enlisted

1990	ADCM J. T. Woltz

The Ancient Mariner

Former enlisted Ancient Mariner HSCM Clarence Sheffield pins the epaulets onto former officer Ancient Mariner ADM Paul Yost in 1989.

HSCM Clarence Sheffield, *left*, relieves QMCM Clarence Dowden as enlisted Ancient Mariner in 1988.

The Ancient Mariner is a ceremonial title given to the officer and enlisted person with the earliest date of qualification as a cutterman. The cutterman designation comes after five years of sea-service but the person must have a minimum of 10 years sea-duty to qualify for the award.

The Ancient Mariners

Officers
1980	CAPT Axel J. Hagstrom
1984	CAPT Delmar F. Smith
1984	RADM William H. Stewart
1985	CAPT John R. Hearn
1987	CAPT James D. Webb
1987	CAPT Eugene E. E. O'Donnell
1988	RADM Richard P. Cueroni
1989	ADM Paul Yost, Jr.
1990	LCDR Melville B. Guttormsen

Enlisted
1980	QMCM Clarence E. Dowden
1988	HSCM Clarence Sheffield
1989	QMC Frank Albright, Jr.

The Ancient Mariner is charged with keeping a close watch to ensure the sea-service tradition is continued and that the time-honored reputation of the Coast Guard is maintained.

During the ceremony, the new Ancient Mariner dons the traditional Ancient Mariner garb consisting of a "fore and aft" style hat, gold braided shoulder epaulets, a Revenue Cutter log book and a nautical long glass.

LCDR Melville B. Guttormsen became the ninth officer Ancient Mariner. He relieved Coast Guard Commandant ADM Paul Yost who retired after 39 years of service in 1990.

QMC Frank Albright, Jr., became the third enlisted Ancient Mariner in 1989. Albright is a 34-year veteran with almost a decade and a half of sea time spent aboard seven cutters. The new enlisted Ancient Mariner took over from retiring HSCM Clarence Sheffield who retired after 40 years. The Ancient Mariner award is a plaque etched with a design of the first cutter *Massachusetts* bearing the names of both enlisted and officers who have held the award.

The Ancient Mariner and the Ancient Albatross are both honors that exemplify the Coast Guard tradition of longevity in the service. When the recipients retire, the awards are passed down to the next in line.

From top to bottom: The Ancient Mariner plaque. • ADM Paul Yost passes the Ancient Albatross hat and title to LCDR Melville B. Guttormsen. • HSCM Clarence Sheffield, *left,* and QMC Frank Albright, admire their ceremonial cakes.

Dining In and Mess Night

The tradition of Dining In, or Mess Night, can be traced to the days when the Roman Legions held great banquets to celebrate their victories or paraded the prizes of their conquests. The Vikings had a tradition of celebrating great battles and feats by formal ceremony. It is from these customs of celebrating special events that we have formal dinners today.

The Dining In is a formal dinner function for the officers of a military organization or unit. Originally, such functions provided an excellent setting to recognize both individual and unit achievements, as well as to bid farewell to departing officers and welcome new ones. Today, they are primarily an occasion to gather socially at a formal function. But the protocol and traditional amenities remain intact.

The Chief Petty Officer Academy continues the tradition calling it "Chiefs' Mess Night." Chiefs' Mess Night is a formal military function, like the Dining In, but the Mess Members are Chiefs and guests. It provides an occasion for Chiefs to meet socially and give recognition to a dignitary, individual or unit. It also may simply be a pleasant way for individuals to become better acquainted.

In early eighteenth century Europe, various regiments of the established monarchies would gather for an evening of good food, drinking and fellowship to honor individuals and organizations. More recently this custom can be traced to the "messes" of the Royal Navy and Regimental "Messes" of the British Army. Our early leaders gained background and training from either British regulars or colonial militia in the French and Indian Wars. It is most likely that they became indoctrinated in the formal aspects of military life as practiced by the men of that period.

Prior to World War II, Mess Night had reached its greatest prominence. While the occasion became less of a celebration for individual achievements, the protocol became more formalized. The uniforms prescribed were evening dress with medals. Down through the ages, people have enjoyed each other's company at dinner making them more elaborate and formal.

Dining In and Mess In are strictly for military people, while Mess Out and Dining Out are for military as well as invited guests.

Far left: Coast Guard personnel and their guests make a toast during a Dining Out at Petaluma, Calif. There are usually about 10 formal toasts following the lighting of the smoking lamp.

Left: The traditional lighting of the smoking lamp is carried out. People are not permitted to smoke until the lamp has been lighted.

Below: The wardroom of the lighthouse tender *Greenbriar* illustrates the elegance of this grand old ship. This tender was built in 1924 and serviced aids on the Mississippi River.
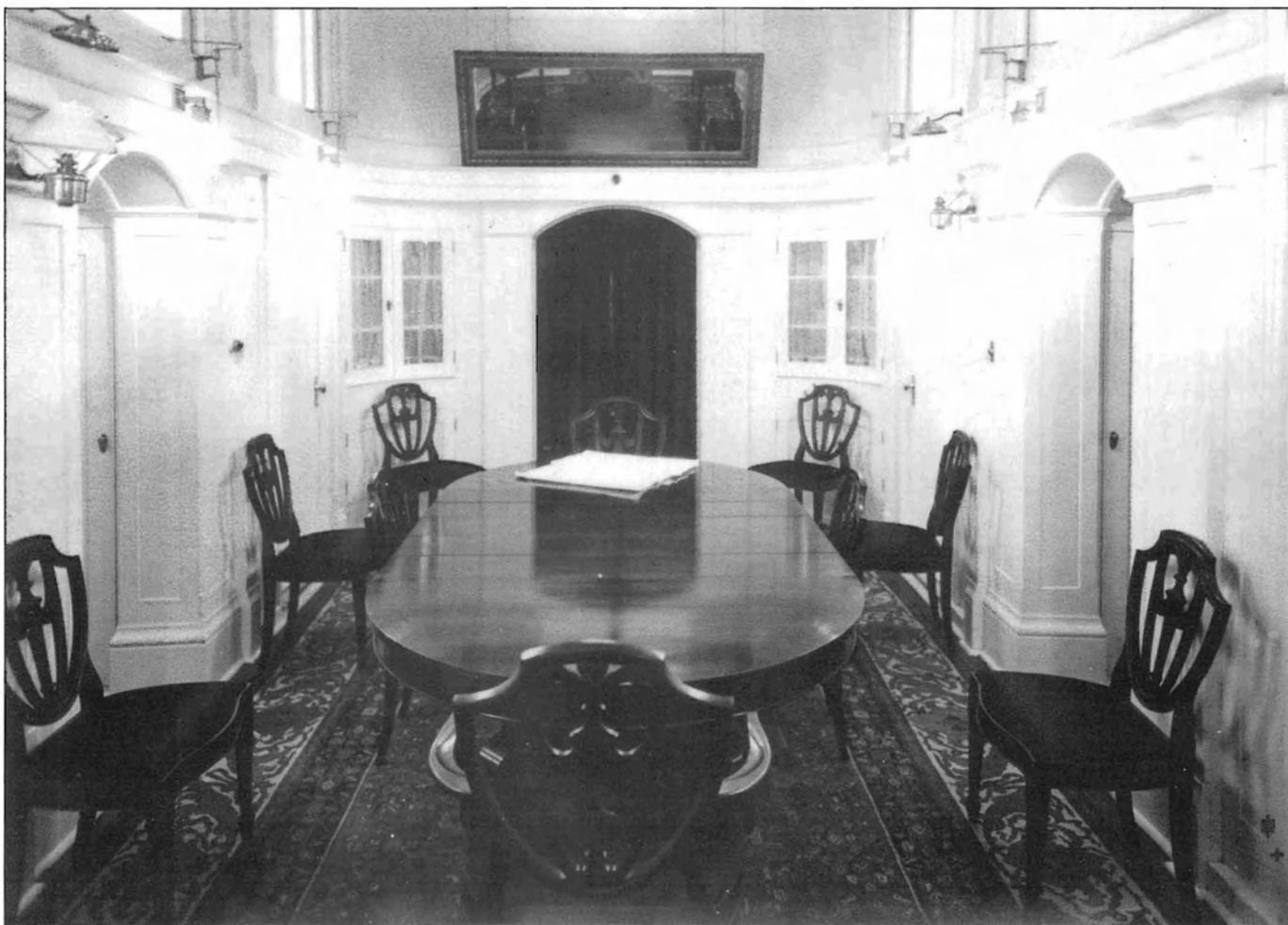
Mascots of the sea

Animals and birds have served as mascots on board Coast Guard vessels since the early days of the Revenue Cutter Service. The practice of keeping pets may have started when cats were brought on board to combat the rat population. But for years, pets have helped keep the crew's morale high during their many lonely days at sea.

During the first half of this century, nearly every ship had at least one mascot and some had menageries that were the envy of a small zoo. Capt Mike Healy, commanding officer of the Revenue Cutter *Bear*, kept his parrot on board for company. Dogs have been the most common of mascots, though, and one of the most famous was Sinbad.

Sinbad served on board the cutter *Campbell* during World War II. He came on board the ship in 1937 when *Campbell* made a port call in Portugal. Sinbad remained on the ship throughout the war.

A "salty sea dog" all the way, Sinbad stood watches, ate his meals and slept with the crew. Everytime the *Campbell* would make a port call and liberty was granted, Sinbad would be the first off and along with his shipmates, hit the bars. A typical liberty would see him march right into a bar, spot an empty bar stool, jump on it and bark once. The bartenders would automatically pour a shot of whiskey with a beer chaser. Sinbad would lap them up, jump down and leave, heading for the next bar. His tab was always picked up, no questions asked. Sinbad was as much a part of the *Campbell* as his two-legged shipmates. His contributions to that ship were incalculable in terms of the morale boost he provided. To his shipmates, he was their talisman, their good luck charm, that brought them through battles with submarines, storms and the terrible North Atlantic ice.

Clockwise from upper far left: Sinbad, mascot of the cutter *Campbell.* • Piped over the side for the last time is retiring mascot of the cutter *Klamath*, Maxmillian Talisman, Bos'n Mate Chief. Max served on board the *Klamath* for all of his seven years. • Captain Mike Healy with his parrot on board the cutter *Bear.* • Popular *Northwind* mascot, Oliver.