



WOODEN BOATS AND IRON MEN PATROL TORPEDO BOAT 658

There is only one fully restored, fully operational PT boat in the world and it is located in Portland, Oregon. It was John Paul Jones who said, "Give me a fast ship for I intend to go in harms way," and these beauties answered the call over 600 times in every WWII Theatre of Operations there was!

At oh dark thirty on a Thursday morning in October, nine of us motored from Seattle south to Portland to the Coast Guard Base on Basin Ave. to see for ourselves what a group of two dozen WWII PT boat veterans, most of them in their 70s, had accomplished. It was beyond amazing. This core group has been joined by other interested volunteers and members of the Columbia Willamette Chapter and now stands at about fifty strong.

Found derelict and half sunk in California in 1992 with only a small deckhouse remaining, the 658 was purchased and shipped "home" to Portland for restoration, culminating in her relaunch in June 2004. The details can be found on their website www.save-theptboatinc.com and are very worth reading and seeing.

This is an all wood-boat built by Higgins Boat Co. in Louisiana in 1945, too late to see wartime action; it was sold as war surplus. In her correct configuration, she has three, 1850 hp, turbo-charged Packard V-12s that run on 100 octane gas at speeds to 55 kts! Interestingly, her MK 14 torpedoes could only do 37 kts so skippers had to be careful not to over run their weapons when launched. These boats were, for their size, the most heavily armed ships the Navy had at the time.

Currently, a new foredeck is being installed and a new bottom is in the future. It was quite a thrill to sit behind a twin-mount, 50-caliber machine gun and try to imagine what it was like.

After marveling over the incredible restoration of PT 658, our hosts, Chuck Kellogg and Bob Alton, took us on a tour of three, wonderfully restored beauties housed at the Portland Yacht Club:

Phantom, *Merrimack*, and *Rebellion*. At 50 ft., 45 ft. and 42 ft. respectively, these boats were built in Astoria, Oregon, in the mid-30s. These boats have been lovingly restored to pristine condition and we were allowed free access. All of these boat including PT658 will be on display at the Portland Maritime Festival next June. A little bit of digging will get you all the details.

The final tour was of Dave Jerome's boat restoration shop housed in his 40 x 60 ft garage in suburban Portland. Dave is a one-man show with help from wife Susan and has numerous awards and "Boat of the Year" honors to his credit. His current project is a 1936 Gar Wood 26 ft. cruiser, one of only two known to exist. We were all given a beer, chocolate chip cookies and a quart of Dave's home made batbeque sauce and asked to stop in any time! You can't beat hospitality like that!

Bob Wheeler, Pacific Northwest Chapter

THE SMITH MOUNTAIN LAKE CHAPTER

held their Annual Christmas Dinner on December 9, 2011. Chapter President George Blosser presented this year's President's Cup to George and Marlyn Curnow. This is the first time a husband and wife have received this annual award. Pictured above from L-R, George Blosser, George Curnow, and Marlyn Curnow.

Photo by Art Cournoyer

