



WAVE

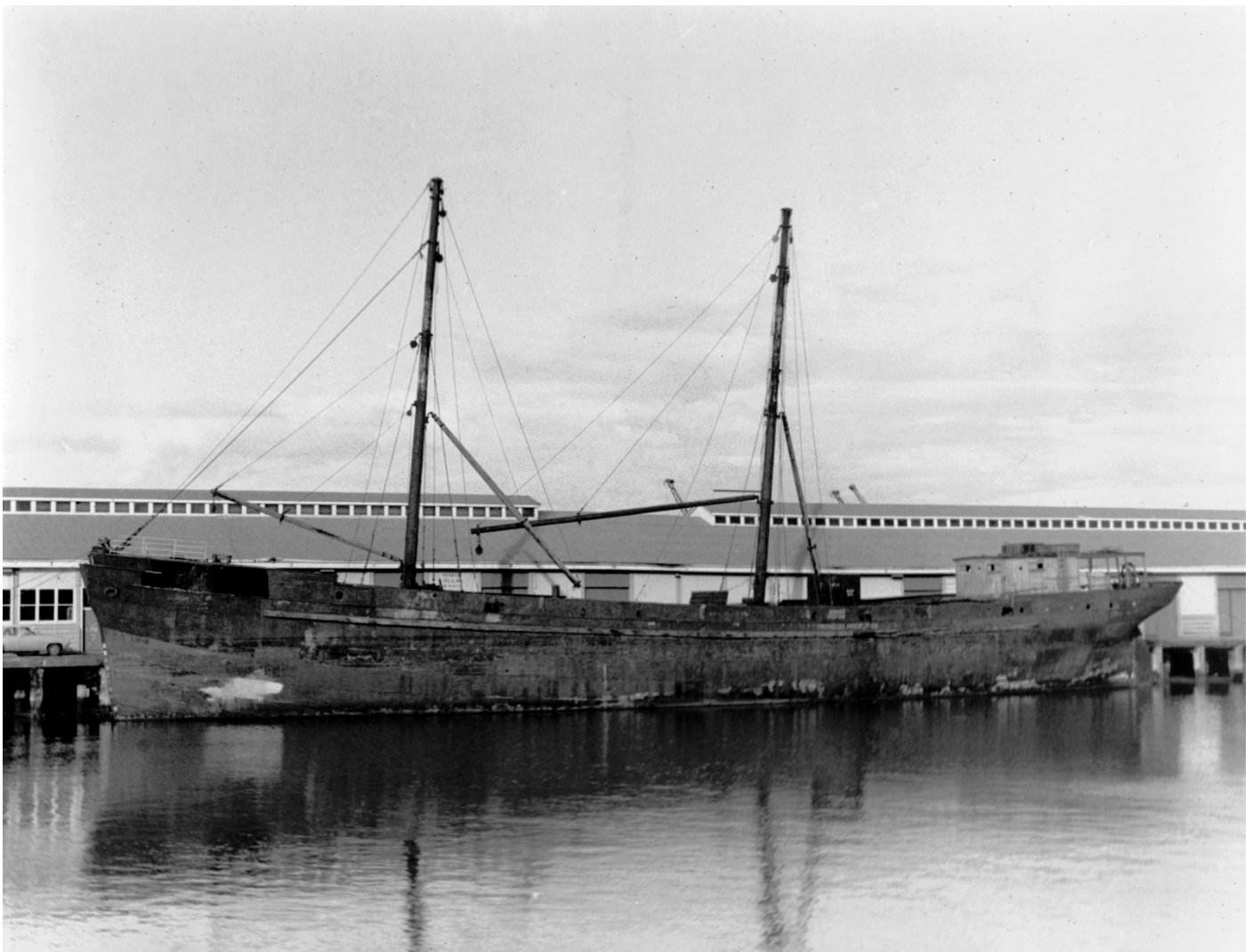


Number 175

“the ship comes first”

December 2021

The Newsletter of the Barque *Polly Woodside* Volunteers Association Inc.



Polly - this is how we first saw her

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Chairman's Chat:

Another year has nearly past, and I am sure we will not be sorry to see it depart.

The Tuesday volunteers are Roger Wilson, Richard Barber, Mike Ridley, Wayne Bette when he is free, and me. Mark Thomas we are missing very much. As we have only had a few days on Polly, there isn't anything to report, except that she is very lonely and looking extremely woebegone.

Ongoing there is the Port Poop-deck steps to be completed and replaced after having rebuilt and restored the Starboard-side steps.

Roger and Mike are working on the restoration of the scrim-work on the fo'c'sle step rails..

The workshop has been tidied up, thanks to Jeff, with some modifications due to the alterations for Showtime.

Last Day at Polly: Tuesday 21st December 2021//Return: Tuesday 11th January 2022.

That's about it – hopefully there will be much, much more in 2022.

May you have a very Merry Christmas and a NORMAL 2022.

Volunteers' Christmas Lunch.

Our Christmas Lunch was held on Saturday 11th December at Boatbuilders Yard

There were only seven of us who could make it – Don & Pat Knowles, (Jeff Melancon our Bosun), Derek Moore, Erik Poole, & Anne and I, with apologies from Richard Barber, Shara Canzano, Peter Frost, Tim Horton, Eve Park, Michael Porter, Fran & Roger Wilson, & Chris Wroe.

Everybody had a great time with conversation only broken for eating and drinking.

Memories of Members Past - From 'Polly and Me' by John Yunken – 'Wave' June 1991.

Dr. E. Graeme Robertson. Eminent Neurosurgeon and expert in cast-iron decoration. Behind the mild, almost diffident manner was a cast iron doggedness. It was he who first achieved the first and greatest triumph: persuading Rodney Davidson and Trust Council to undertake the immense task of restoring and preserving the ship. Knowing little himself about ships, he had an even more valuable talent: the ability to find the right person for the task.

Captain Gerard H. Heyen, M.B.E., Master Mariner. The last man to command an Australian-registered sailing ship before the breed disappeared forever in 1929. A man with an innate power of command, a deep love for and knowledge of ocean-going sail. Between his retirement from A.N.L. (Australia National Line) in 1965 and his death in December 1980 in his 81st year, he prepared a record unique in the world: the details of the construction and rigging of a 19th century 600/100-ton barque, drawn and described in terms comprehensible to a generation which had never seen one. Copies of all these drawings also were used for the 'James Craig's rebuild.

George Frew, businessman and entrepreneur. A man of energy, force and enthusiasm. Enlisted to raise \$100,000 from the public, he designed and single-handedly ran an appeal which brought in over \$150,000 in one year (1971 values, remember).

To be continued in March 2022 Wave.

This Letter was received from the National Trust, informing us of these two ladies who have been commissioned to prepare a project regarding the Volunteers and their achievements in the Restoration and Maintenance of the Barque 'Polly Woodside'.

Co-operation by all the volunteers would be greatly appreciated.



All Hands on Deck - Polly Woodside shares her stories

Dear volunteer,

We would like to speak to you about your work on the Polly Woodside as part of a project to add to the National Trust's resources about the restoration and maintenance of this historic Barque.

The plan is to interview you about how and why you got involved. We want to know about the skills that you brought to the work, or learned in the process, and any special stories about the challenges, surprises and teamwork. You may also have photographs, sketches and other records of the work that we would like to document.

The information will be used in a new exhibition and as a research resource. With the 50th anniversary of the restoration project coming next year this is an opportunity to showcase the Polly Woodside to historians, maritime enthusiasts, educators and school kids as well as the broader public.

Who are we?

Alison is a sailor from Lagoon Boat Club, who also has a museum background both as a volunteer and contractor. Her most recent project at Sovereign Hill Museums Association involved sourcing information about large obsolete pieces of machinery - who used them, how they were used and how they contributed to life in the late 1800s. She found valuable sources of information in the staff of steam operations, coach builders and maintenance teams, and in the backbone of volunteers.

Mandy was a research librarian in the Australiana section of the State Library of Victoria. She is a collector of ephemera and a volunteer at the Ephemera Society of Australia, Royal Historical Society where expertise is also found in other volunteers and enthusiasts.

Timing

We hope to commence interviews on a one-on-one basis as soon as public health restrictions allow in November, and will follow all public health guidelines. If you would be interested in being interviewed, or want to find out more please contact us via email or phone.

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Relaunch of 'Alma Doepel' by 'AAL Shanghai' on 16th October 2021.



'Alma Doepel' on the barge on way to 'AAL Shanghai'.

Barge alongside 'AAL Shanghai' preparing for lift.



Lifting the 'Alma Doepel' off the barge.



'Alma Doepel' afloat with no leaks.



Returned to her Fitting-out Dock by the two tugs.



Awaiting her return to what she does best.

That is the critical part completed - now the labour of love really starts.

The Story behind Pearl Harbor's Most Successful Rescue Mission

Eighty years ago, civilian Julio DeCastro and his colleagues at the Hawaii base's naval yard saved 32 sailors trapped inside the U.S.S. "Oklahoma"



The capsized hull of the U.S.S. Oklahoma (right) is visible next to the U.S.S. Maryland.

Photo by © CORBIS / Corbis via Getty Images

When Julio DeCastro, a civilian worker at Pearl Harbor's naval yard, reached the capsized U.S.S. *Oklahoma* on the infamous morning of December 7, 1941, he heard the sound of frenetic tapping of sailors trapped within the hull. Hours earlier, during a surprise assault on the Honolulu military base, Japanese forces had bombarded the American battleship with torpedoes, sending it rolling onto its side with more than 450 men still below deck.

Over the next two days, DeCastro, a caulker and chipper, labored almost nonstop in a valiant effort to reach the imperiled seamen. The Hawaii native and his fellow naval yard workers ultimately rescued 32 members of the vessel's crew—an act of bravery cited in "Infamy: Pearl Harbor Remembered," a new exhibition at the National WWII Museum in New Orleans marking the 80th anniversary of the attack .

"[As a civilian,] DeCastro acted on his own initiative, organized a group of individuals, got tools and equipment, and then kept going deeper into the ship," says Tom Czekanski, senior curator and restorations manager at the museum. "They were risking their own lives to rescue these men."

Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor began just before 8 a.m. on December 7. Over the next hour and 15 minutes, Japanese forces damaged or destroyed or 19 American ships, leaving the normally peaceful Hawaiian naval base awash in fire and fear. The United States' total death toll from the bombing was 2,403 soldiers and civilians.



Sailors attempt to extinguish fires on the U.S.S. West Virginia.

Photo by U.S. Navy / Interim Archives / Getty Images

In accounts and commemorations of Pearl Harbor, soldiers like Dorie Miller, an African American cook who earned the Navy Cross for shooting down two Japanese airplanes, and Aloysius Schmitt, a Navy chaplain who received the Silver Star for sacrificing his life to help 12 sailors escape the *Oklahoma*—are widely remembered for their bravery. But few today recall the contributions of DeCastro and his civilian colleagues.

As the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* recounted in March 1942, DeCastro and his crew came to the scene with blowtorches, pneumatic chipping guns, compressors and other tools needed to break through the ship's thickly armored hull.

"They first tried cutting torches, but the compartment below them caught fire," says Czekanski. "Cork was often used as an insulation in those compartments. The oil-based paint used on ships at the time was so thick it would burn. The paint on the steel would catch fire."

Next, the rescuers turned to chipping guns. Fitted with chisels, the tools use pneumatic pressure to rapidly hammer away and cut through steel—a slow, laborious process.

"Many battleships of the day had 16 inches of armor on the sides for protection," adds Czekanski. "On the bottom, though, it's closer to a quarter inch, but it's steel. Basically, they are cutting through steel plate with a hammer and chisel."

Adding to the danger was the fact that the workers didn't know what lay beneath them. For all they knew, their chippers could be breaking into fuel tanks, powder magazines, ammunition bunkers or other explosives.



A total of 429 Oklahoma crew members died as a result of the attack. Photo by Lucy Pemoni / Getty Images

Fortunately, Commander E.P. Kranzfelder had a solution. Assigned to the U.S.S. *Maryland*, which was moored next to the *Oklahoma*, he located a manual with schematics and details for the overturned battleship. *The Booklet for General Plans of the Oklahoma* would save time and lives as workers tried to break through the keel and rescue the sailors inside.

Even with the booklet, the rescue was long, hard work. The crew labored through the hot day into the cold night, trying to breach the hull. "The *Arizona* was still burning," DeCastro told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*. "[I]t threw a light on us as we worked. And for about an hour there was antiaircraft firing all over the place. But we kept on working. If the firing got too hot, we'd flatten out against the hull and hope nothing would hit us."

Stephen Bower Young was one of the sailors trapped in the *Oklahoma*. He and ten fellow seamen were below a gun turret near the bottom of the ship when it capsized. Now, they were stuck near the top of the vessel. With air supply falling and water rising in the pitch-black compartment, Young and the others took turns banging out "SOS" in Morse code with a wrench.

"We had no knowledge that any attempt at rescue was even being made until the first sounds of the air hammer were heard as dawn came over the islands," Young later wrote in *Trapped at Pearl Harbor*.

As the rescuers began to make headway with the hammering, another problem arose. Their cuts allowed air to escape from inside the ship, sending water rushing into the compartment below. The trapped sailors scrambled to plug up the openings, but they were soon knee-deep in water.

At long last, the work crew managed to break through the hull. Yard worker Joe Bulgo reached in and started pulling out sailors. One pointed to the adjacent compartment and said, "There are some guys trapped in there."

Called the "Lucky Bag," this neighboring hold was used to store peacoats and personal items. According to Young, who was stuck inside, DeCastro replied, "We'll get 'em out." It took Bulgo an hour to break through the bulkhead. He made three cuts in the steel, then yelled, "Look out for your hands, boys," as he used a sledgehammer to smash through the wall. Young and the ten sailors scrambled to safety.

All told, DeCastro and his co-workers rescued 32 men from the *Oklahoma*. Of a total crew of nearly 1,400 officers and sailors, 429 died as a result of the attack. Navy divers located the last of the sailors' remains in June 1944.

The sinking of the U.S.S. *Arizona* accounted for around half of the attack's total death toll, with 1,177 officers and crewmen killed and 335 survivors. The battleship's wrecked hull was left in place and now is the site of a national memorial.

Similar rescue efforts at Pearl Harbor failed to mirror DeCastro's success. Because the *Oklahoma* capsized, that team had better luck reaching survivors at the bottom of the ship, which was now above the surface. For ships that sank keel first, it was more difficult and dangerous to reach sailors trapped underwater.

On the U.S.S. *West Virginia*, tapping from deep within the ship continued for more than two weeks. Rescuers tried to reach the sound, but the damage was too severe. Months later, salvage workers recovered the remains of three sailors—Ronald Endicott, Clifford Olds and Louis Costin—in an airtight compartment. On the wall was a calendar with 16 dates crossed off in red pencil: December 7 through December 23.



Salvage workers recovered the bodies of three sailors from the wreck of the U.S.S. *West Virginia* (far left) months after the attack.
Photo by Photo12 / Universal Images Group via Getty Images

"A diver had nearly died trying to rescue men from the U.S.S. *Arizona*, which is one of the reasons they didn't go into the *West Virginia*," says naval historian Michael Lilly, a founding director of the U.S.S. *Missouri* Memorial Association and author of the book *Nimitz at Ease*. "The Navy decided it was too dangerous to try and extract them."

The former Navy officer pauses, adding, "It would haunt me if I was one of those sailors who heard those guys banging around down there for two weeks. It would never leave me. It's despairing to think we couldn't do anything to bring them up. It's a sad, sad tale."

DeCastro, for his part, was honored with a commendation by the commandant of the Fourteenth Naval District. He died in 1984. Asked about DeCastro years later, Young simply said, "He was a leader of men."

Reflecting on the rescue mission in 1942, DeCastro told the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* that he received an unexpected request upon returning to the naval yard the night of the Monday in December,

"Somebody came up to me while I was changing clothes," he said. "I was all in and hungry and wanted to get home. This guy asks me, 'Why didn't you fill out this overtime slip?' I look[ed] at him and [said], 'Christamighty!'"

"Then, because it was blackout and no transportation was available," the newspaper reported, "DeCastro walked five miles through the uncertain second night of the war to his home."