

POTOMAC CURRENTS

Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Floating White House"



Oakland, California

2012

Summer Edition

THE POTOMAC WAS THERE

Past, Present and Future



Anyone lucky enough to be on Chesapeake Bay on a cold January 24, 1941 in a driving rain might have witnessed a unique event in American history. The President of the United States, Franklin D. Roosevelt, together with the Secretary of the Navy and other high government officials, had boarded the presidential yacht Potomac in order to

welcome at sea the British ambassador who was arriving on the newest of Great Britain's battleships, the HMS George V. Never before had a U.S. president so shattered diplomatic precedent – and the Potomac was there playing its role.

Perhaps as FDR's presidential yacht, it is not that unexpected for it to have participated in noteworthy affairs. But it may come as an extraordinary realization to recognize how often the restored Potomac has been present at unique moments.

Who, for example, could have possibly imagined that there would be a day when a restored Potomac would be photographed when it was together with two other historic ships of the World War II era? One was the USS Iowa, here in the Bay area being made ready to be seaworthy enough before being towed down to San Pedro where she will be berthed permanently. The Iowa was one of the last true battleships to be built and reminds us of the role she played in taking FDR to the Casablanca conference. The other was the SS Red Oak Victory, now also being restored. She was the last surviving cargo ship built at the Kaiser/Richmond shipyards.



A few weeks later the USS Iowa, now ready, left Richmond and headed for the Golden Gate. By the merest chance, the Potomac was on a regularly scheduled History Cruise on the Bay that day at just the right time to be able to see and salute the Iowa as she was being honored.



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After leaving the Iowa the Potomac headed for McCovey cove at the AT&T ballpark. Being there while a Giant's game is in progress is not only a treat for those on the cruise but also enables the thousands in the ballpark watching the game to become aware of the Potomac's presence.



In preparation for the America's Cup races to be held this year and next, the ORACLE racing boats have occasionally been practicing on San Francisco Bay - and on one such day the Potomac was there, serving as host ship for media observers. The races to be held here mark the first time the America's Cup has been hosted in the United States since 1995.



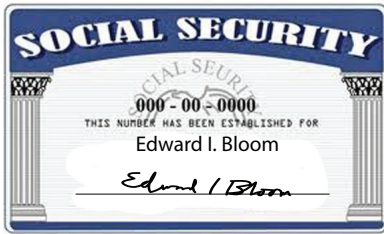
Whether the Potomac is on the Bay commemorating the 75th birthday of the Golden Gate bridge or on a July 4th cruise with fireworks arcing above, they become unique celebratory moments in our history.



Editor's Note: The foregoing was prepared by Les Dropkin, Rich Knowles, David McGraw and me in lieu of my usual Mooring Lines column. Virginia Rapp



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FDR AND SOCIAL SECURITY

Although the concept of a national program for old age pensions had been discussed in general terms for many years among progressive leaders, it was not until 1927 that a concrete proposal was put forth by the American Association for Old Age Security. Herbert Hoover was initially in favor of the idea, but at that time there was little support for it in Congress. In 1934 the FDR administration led by Frances Perkins, his Secretary of Labor, began earnest work on the plan, aided behind the scenes by Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis. Early concepts of the plan called for unemployment insurance administered by the states through block grants from the federal government as well as old age pensions funded by payroll contributions jointly by employers and employees.

The final plan, as submitted by the White House in January 1935, called for the build-up of a reserve fund over a five year period, with payments commencing to recipients in 1940. The contributions were to start at half of one percent for both employers and employees, gradually going up to two and a half percent by 1956, with no contribution from the federal treasury. In actuality, there would be some direct governmental tax money going into the reserve fund, in the form of interest on the treasury bonds which Social Security was required to purchase. The reserve fund, enrollment of all participating employees and employers and the distribution of benefits was to be administered by an independent agency, responsible directly to the President.

By August 14th FDR had received a bill from Congress which he could sign, although important compromises, such as the exclusion of agricultural workers and all businesses with fewer than ten employees had been necessary. The bill was attacked on the left for these exclusions and for not including health insurance, and on the right for being the opening wedge of socialism.



However, conservative opposition in the Congress slowly collapsed when most members realized that the country was in favor of the new plan. Within two years of its passage all 48 states had passed the necessary implementing legislation regarding its unemployment insurance provisions.

In 1937 the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the Social Security Act, specifically its unemployment insurance and old-age pension provisions. By 1943 many of the key New Deal programs introduced in response to the problems of the Great Depression such as the Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and the National Youth Administration, were no longer in existence. The Social Security system, a pillar of the New Deal, remains with us.

"We can never insure one hundred percent of the population against one hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life. But we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age. This law, too, represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built, but is by no means complete.... It is...a law that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide for the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness."

Franklin D.
Roosevelt
August 14, 1935

MARTI'S MUSINGS...Hello, Goodbye and Thank You....

By Marti Burchell

The Potomac Association's Board of Governors is a diverse and dedicated group. Some of its members have been with the Association since the early days of the ship's restoration. Those individuals were a driving force in the successful revitalization of the Presidential Yacht Potomac and her continued success as a National Historic Landmark.

Since the beginning of this year, two of the earliest members of the Board have left and moved on to other endeavors. It is to those individuals, **Art Haskell** and **Dick Zampa** that we say goodbye and thank you. Your service has been vital to our success and very much appreciated by all of us.



Also, among those who have stepped down from the Board are **Judy Goff** and **Mary Bergen**. Judy has been an active, supportive Board member for several years and has brought an insightful Labor perspective to our decision process. Thank you to Judy for her service. Mary has made invaluable contributions to the Potomac Association's Educational program and union relationships.

As with any changes in an organization like the Potomac Association, when you say goodbye to excellent Board members, you often have the privilege of saying hello to new Board members as well. We are very fortunate to have recruited two very strong, long time volunteers to bring new perspective and energy to our Board of Governors.

A hearty Welcome Aboard to new Board members **Dale Hansen** and **Stuart Proffitt**. Dale is one of the Potomac's original docents and was on board to welcome our first guests to the ship when it opened in 1995; she has been active in our educational programs, cruise programs and is a consistent supporter as one of our Friends of the Potomac.

Stuart Proffitt has been an active docent for many years. He is a member of the Potomac Speakers Bureau, and is currently Chairman of our very active Marketing Committee. He has organized many event and marketing procedures and is looking forward to updating our website in the near future.

And so, we extend a very fond aloha to Art, Dick, Mary and Judy; and a very warm aloha to Dale and Stuart. Our small Association is very fortunate to know all of you. Thank you.



Click on the ship to see our website

AN INLAND, MOUNTAIN-TOP NAVAL FACILITY AND THE POTOMAC

By Les Dropkin

What does the Potomac have to do with a Naval Facility located inland on a mountain top? Does it help to know that the Naval Facility's official name was the USS Shangri-La?

Increasing U-Boat activity and concerns for President Roosevelt's security following our entry into World War II meant that he would no longer be able to use the Potomac as freely as he had done previously. Yet the need for a place where he and his guests could escape from the formalities of the White House and official Washington still existed. Moreover, Captain Ross McIntire USN, FDR's personal physician, said that he must have altitude and cooler weather to assist his sinuses in the summer.

Accordingly, a mountain retreat was created for President Roosevelt in 1942. In naming the retreat Shangri-La, FDR was recycling the word he had used when asked about the origin of the Doolittle air raid on Tokyo in April earlier in the year. Renamed Camp David by President Eisenhower and used by all presidents since, it still remains a US naval support facility.



The key to understanding the connection is Lieutenant Commander John H. Kevers, the Potomac's Commanding Officer from January 1943 until November 1945, when he became the first Commanding Officer of the Williamsburg under President Truman.

Kevers had been tasked by Captain John L. McCrae, President Roosevelt's Naval Aide, to find a suitable location for a presidential retreat and it was Kevers who proposed the location that became Shangri-La. That FDR would turn to his Naval Aide to find a suitable location is not at all surprising. As stated in an Oral History Interview by an Assistant Naval Aide in the White House: President Roosevelt was quite a Navy man and any chore that the Navy could do, he had them do.

Kevers was well known to FDR before being named the Potomac's Commanding Officer. When selected, he had been serving in the White House as an Assistant Naval Aide for several years. The duties of an Assistant Naval Aide were described in the Oral History Interview:

I was just the Naval Aide's mouthpiece, you might say. Most of the time he would give me the details and it would be my responsibility to get them to the Commanding Officer... Generally, the Naval Aide would give him the general plan and I would have to pick up from there and arrange the details...

But the connection goes beyond the fact that it was the Potomac's Commanding Officer who recommended the site for Shangri-La. Suitable structures had to be built on the site and the crew of the Potomac formed a significant part of the construction force that created the lodge at Shangri-La. Of course once built the lodge also had to be furnished. Here again the Potomac had a role to play. Although the Potomac was still FDR's presidential yacht, it was not really being used and its furnishings became available for use at Shangri-La. Thus it was that a goodly part of Shangri-La's original furnishings came from the Potomac - other pieces came from Warm Springs and Navy Surplus.



Visitors to the Potomac today can see the evidence that connects FDR, Kevers, the Potomac and Shangri-La in the exhibit vitrine that stands next to the guest cabin opposite the ladder from the fantail to the berth deck. It contains one of the bottles of champagne that Winston Churchill gave to FDR when he visited Shangri-La on 15 May, 1943 during a break in the Trident Conference. In turn, FDR gave it to Kevers as a token of his appreciation for all the services that Kevers had rendered over the years.





The Dixie Clipper



The Sacred Cow

FDR TAKES TO THE AIR

By Joe Winkel

When FDR took off from Miami, Florida on a commercial Boeing 314 "Flying Boat" - dubbed the "Dixie Clipper" - shortly before 6:00AM on the morning of January 11, 1943, he became the first President of the United States to fly in an airplane while in office. The last occasion in which he used an airplane on official business occurred in February 1945 when he used a Douglas VC-54C, personalized to meet his special needs. This plane was usually referred to as the "Sacred Cow" because of the care, special treatment and protection it was given. In both instances, his use of an airplane was in connection with a World War II conference.

FLYING TO CASABLANCA. The President's first flight was a harrowing journey to attend the Casablanca Conference, which took place January 14-24, 1943 in Casablanca, Morocco. A four-day trip each way, it totaled 17,000 miles. Why did the trip take so long? Well, from Miami, Florida The Sacred Cow flew south to Brazil before crossing the Atlantic then north to Casablanca. To return to the United States, FDR took the same flight path back, the "flying boat" stopping to be refueled four times each way.

The Casablanca Conference, code named SYMBOL, was the eighth wartime conference of the Allied powers, but only the third in which both Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt took part, and the first that included the French. In attendance at this conference were Roosevelt, Churchill, and the two leaders of the anti-Vichy French government: Charles de Gaulle and Henri Giraud. Josef Stalin had been invited, but was unable to make it due to a prior engagement known as the Battle of Stalingrad. FDR and Churchill agreed on an invasion of Italy in 1943, although Stalin had been urging an immediate cross channel invasion of Europe



and the US military and naval chiefs had already started planning for it. The invasion would have to wait until the summer of 1944.

It was here at a press conference that FDR announced that the objective of the war against Germany, Italy and Japan, the Axis Powers, was "unconditional surrender."

THE FORERUNNER TO AIR FORCE ONE. Concerned about relying upon commercial airlines to transport the president, especially across the Atlantic, the USAAF [US Army Air Force] leaders ordered the conversion of a military aircraft to accommodate the special needs of the Commander in Chief. After encountering difficulties with converting a C-87A transport, the USAAF arranged with Douglas Aircraft to construct a new transport aircraft specifically for presidential use - the VC-54C.

The first purpose-built aircraft to fly the president of the United States, the Sacred Cow is the only VC-54C ever constructed. It underwent extensive interior modifications. One special feature is a battery-powered elevator behind the passenger cabin to lift the president in his wheelchair in and out of the plane -- an otherwise difficult procedure. Also installed, was a removable set of rails so that the president could wheel himself about the plane. Other modifications allowed FDR access to the cockpit, where he could sit between the pilot and copilot and observe the flight firsthand. The passenger compartment includes a conference room with a large desk and a bulletproof picture window.

For the Yalta conference, the president was transported across the Atlantic to Malta on the heavy cruiser USS Quin-

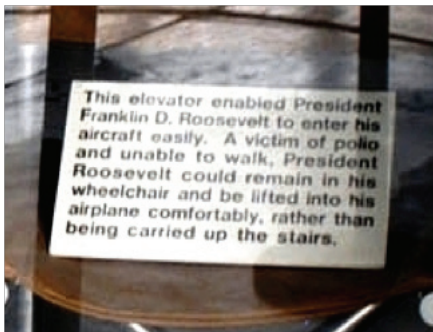
cy (CA-71). Here he had lunch with Winston Churchill and his daughter, Sarah. Later that evening, Churchill and FDR met for their first formal conference before beginning the next leg of their trip. Under cover of darkness, the president boarded the Sacred Cow and flew six hours and forty minutes to a snow-covered airfield in Saki, about eighty miles from the Crimean conference site of Yalta on the Black Sea. An eight-hour automobile trip completed the journey to Livadia Palace in Yalta where FDR, Churchill, and Stalin met for eight days.

On February 11, 1945, the president departed Yalta by car for Sevastopol. He reached Sevastopol near dusk and boarded the amphibious ship USS Catoctin (AGC-5). After an overnight stay, he was driven by car back to the airfield at Saki where he boarded the Sacred Cow. The plane flew him to the Great Bitter Lake in Egypt to rendezvous with the USS Quincy. This would be the last time the president used his new presidential airplane.

BIRTHPLACE OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE.

The Sacred Cow remained in presidential service during the first 27 months of the Truman Administration. On July 26, 1947, President Truman signed the National Security Act of 1947 while on board the Sacred Cow. This act established the Air Force as an independent service, making the Sacred Cow the “birthplace” of the USAF.

The USAF later assigned it to other transport duties, and the airplane was retired in October 1961. In 1983, the Sacred Cow was shipped by truck to the National Museum of the United States Air Force at Wright-Patterson AFB near Dayton, OH. The monumental task of restoring the aircraft began in August 1985. It took 10 years and more than 34,000 hours of work to have it look the way it was during President Roosevelt’s trip to Yalta. [Click here to see the web site of The National Museum of the United States Air Force](#)



On board the Sacred Cow-the elevator and conference room

The Wisdom of the First Lady



I used to tell my husband that, if he could make me ‘understand’ something, it would be clear to all the other people in the country.

One’s philosophy is not best expressed in words; it is expressed in the choices one makes... and the choices we make are ultimately our responsibility.

Learn from the mistakes of others. You can’t live long enough to make them all yourself.

In the long run, we shape our lives, and we shape ourselves. The process never ends until we die. And the choices we make are ultimately our own responsibility.

The only advantage of not being too good a house-keeper is that your guests are so pleased to feel how very much better they are.

We gain strength, and courage, and confidence by each experience in which we really stop to look fear in the face...we must do that which we think we cannot.

CRUISES & EVENTS 2012

History Cruises

1st and 3rd Thursday

2nd and 4th Saturday

May thru October

10:30AM ~ 12:30PM

\$45.00 Adults, \$40.00 Seniors

\$25.00 Under 12

Groups of 20 or more: \$35.00 each

Special Event Cruises

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| • Angel Island Tours | July 21, Aug. 15 |
| | Sept. 15 Oct. 17 |
| • Fleet Week Practice | October 5 |
| • Fleet Week | October 6 & 7 |
| • Characters on the Bay | November 1 |
| • Veteran's Day (2 Cruises) | November 11 |

* Prices may vary, please call for information.

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Wednesday, Friday & Sunday

Year Round ~ 11:00AM to 3:00PM

\$10.00 Adults, \$8.00 Seniors

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The Potomac Currents is published by the Association for the Preservation of the Presidential Yacht, Potomac Inc.

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Electronic Distribution: Tom Howard

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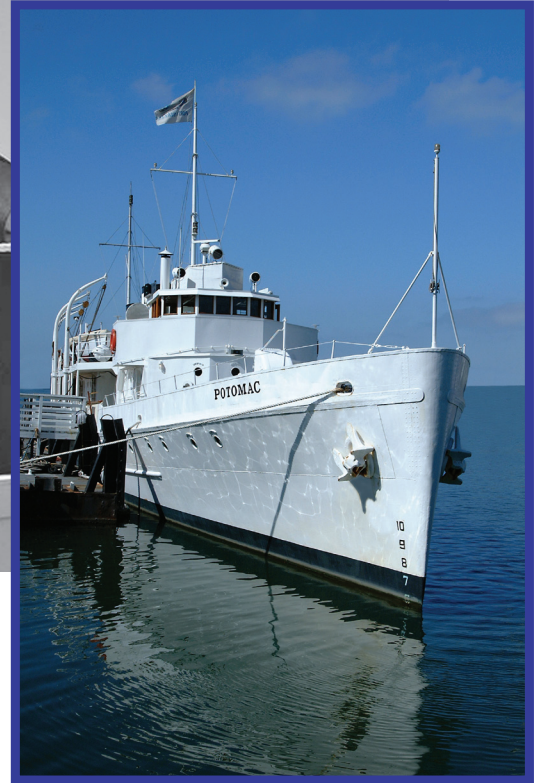
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POTOMAC PROFILES



HOMETOWN: Kankakee, Illinois

AGE: 75

PROFESSION: Retired university administrator and professor of history

HOBBIES: Fishing, sailing, swimming, reading, writing, docenting,

MOST NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENT: “I fathered a remarkable young woman who is a generous, kind and considerate person and happily married to a wonderful son-in-law. I received a PhD with honors, New York University, was Editor in Chief of the award winning New Direction in College Learning Assistance published by Jossey Bass, among other publications. I received the Management and Professional Achievement Award (1987) University of California, Berkeley.”

PROFILE: What does a professor of Russian and French History do when he retires? He becomes the personification of Franklin Delano Roosevelt...of course! Our “Mr. President”, Kurt Lauridsen, is indeed FDR while cruising on the Potomac.

Many is the time a senior has boarded our ship to be greeted by Kurt as FDR, and been taken aback by the uncanny resemblance and manner of the former President. Some have even burst into tears, so strong was the emotion evoked by the love they had for President Roosevelt.

Kurt has studied the life and times of FDR, the politics, the culture, the world diplomacy, and the nuance of his particular humor and speaking style. He is very much FDR while aboard “his” Potomac. We are truly fortunate to have such commitment and talent.

YACHT: The Presidential Yacht USS Potomac

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