

## NOBLE RETURN OF A SWIFT BOAT THE MALTA PROJECT



**Swift Boat Painting by John Steel-  
Presented by SBSA and Maritime  
Museum of San Diego to Maritime  
Squadron Armed Forces of Malta**

From left: LT. M. Scicluna, Adjutant, Maritime Squadron, XO, Maritime Sqd., Colonel David Mifsud, Procurement & Logistics, Virg Erwin, Lt. Col. Wallace Camilleri, LT. Marco Cauchi, Don Farrell, Dave Bradley.

As the U.S. war effort in Vietnam was winding down, in 1971 the U.S. Navy donated two Swift Boats to the Republic of Malta, a friend and ally of the U.S. since gaining its independence from Great Britain in 1964. Because Malta is a small archipelago located in the center of the Mediterranean, its navy uses small watercraft for a range of missions, including search and rescue services; fighting against illegal drug trafficking; conducting anti-illegal immigration and fishing operations; etc. Consequently, the donated Swift Boats were a great asset to their Maritime Squadron.

In 2008, a representative of Malta's Maritime Squadron contacted Virg Erwin and said that both of their aging Swift Boats were soon to be retired from service and proposed the idea of restoring and returning one of the boats to the U.S. for preservation by the SBSA as a lasting monument to the friendship and lasting bond between our two countries, its sailors and our workhorse Swift Boats. Thus began an extensive effort to bring this idea to fruition, i.e. **The Malta Project**.

## **The Malta Project**—continued

Following is a brief chronology of major steps taken to date to achieve this noble quest:

- Contacted Ray Ashley, CEO of the Maritime Museum of San Diego, who has long promoted the history of Swift Boats and the Vietnam Unit Memorial Monument on the Naval Amphibious Base in Coronado. He eagerly offered to support the restoration of a returned Swift Boat to operational capability to be based at the Museum. His vision includes using the Swift Boat in an active role carrying passengers on narrated tours from the Museum to naval facilities in San Diego commanded, to the degree possible, by former swift boat sailors and/or small combatant vessel captains holding U.S. Coast Guard licenses. These tours would serve to memorialize and educate visitors and other members of the public and congress on the history it represents, both in Vietnam and service to the Republic of Malta---in effect, to tell the story of Swift Boats.
- Conducted numerous interfaces with various agencies of the US and Maltese governments to determine the feasibility, support and requirements for the Malta Project.
- Developed an extensive project plan to present to Maltese authorities to obtain the award of the donated boat to the U.S. vs. many other intra-Malta and other countries/organizations vying for this donation.
- In 2010 Dave Wallace and Virg Erwin traveled to Malta, presented the project plan and Malta confirmed the award of the donation to the United States.
- Last month, the SBSA sent Dave Bradley, Don Farrell and Virg Erwin to Malta to, among other things, conduct a thorough physical survey of the boat in preparation for restoration and transportation back to the U.S., and, ultimately, San Diego's Maritime Museum.

## The Malta Project—continued



A special thanks and recognition to Vanessa Frazier, Maltese Minister of Defense (shown here receiving a SBSA 'challenge coin' from Virg Irwin) and Maltese Lieutenant Marco Cauchi, former and long-time Officer-in-Charge of the donated Swift Boat, who continue to go "above and beyond" in their efforts to help achieve this project for the mutual benefit of both countries.

Vanessa stated "I guess I'd better have this in my pocket when I'm in a bar with a bunch of Swift Boat Sailors."

Many details and actions remain to successfully return the boat to the U.S. Once these are worked out, an official dedication and turnover ceremony will occur in Malta and then be followed by a host of ceremonies in the U.S. following its arrival and restoration to an operational state, anticipated by mid-2012. Many dignitaries from Malta, the U.S. Navy and members of Congress will attend these events. These multiple public ceremonies and ongoing usage of the donated Swift Boat, with all the attendant news coverage, may, in some small way, help continue the healing of our nation, and especially those who served, from some of the painful memories and wounds of the Vietnam war and its aftermath.

Updates will be provided in future newsletters as the Malta Project nears fruition and the donated Swift Boat is open to, and used by, the public. Questions and/or requests for additional information may be obtained by contacting Dave Wallace at [elbowgolf65@comcast.net](mailto:elbowgolf65@comcast.net).

This article was written by Virg Irwin and edited by Richard "Rocket" Holleran.



# July 30, 2011 Gig Harbor Reunion@Bill Roger's House



Front Row: Gary Allason, Tom Winslow, Tom Brown, Bill Kelly, O. P. Lent (kneeling), Matt Hodges, Robert Withee, Gary Smith, John Pank

Second Row - Seated: Dave Hansen, Pat Sheedy, Ron Durham, Stephen Morrison, Terry Boone, Gary Liedorff, Bill Lannom, Mike Lohnes, Jay Gruenfeld

Front Row Standing: Joe LaVoie, Bill Rogers, Henry Inabett, Paul Johnson, Dave Stevenson, Jim Miller, Jerry Larkin, Greg Hodges, Vic St. Onge, Steve Anderson Ken Tryon

Back Row Standing: David Paul, Marc Janes, Bob Kreyer, Dan Bohnet, Gary DeHaven, Fred Barnes, Tony Taylor, John Hawkins, Bob Hunt

Not Shown

Monty Mantonia, Jr., Andrew Mantonia, George Nelson, Rick Engley



# 2011 Gig Harbor Reunion Women



Front Row: Mary Allason, Brigitta Taylor, Elaine Kreyer, Anne Lannom, Jan Rogers, Marianne Liedorff, Anne Withee, Marilyn Hunt, Lubasha Johnson

Second Row: Bonnie Brown, Martha LaVoie, Kathy Stevenson, Sue Sheedy, Cindy Kelly, Sandie St. Onge, Jane Barnes, Joan Anderson, Lynn Hawkins, Kathy Hodges

Not Shown

Georgia Hartness, Jennifer Engley



Ed Bergin and his wife Mary were having lunch in a small restaurant (Saveur Magazine's choice) in old San Juan, PR. "A gentlemen and his date sat next to us. I introduced myself to him. It was Karl Rove. He was a witty, brilliant and a charming lunch partner. We spoke of the Swift Vets and various military organizations. I gave him a Swift challenge coin. He said he had a large collection of challenge coins, but this was his first from the Swift's." The other couple are Ed's college roommate (F-4 pilot, recipient of a SAM in NVN) and his wife. Ed Bergin PCF-79, Chu Lai, 1967-68

### **New SBSA Members in 2011**

Woodrow Dalahite	Colmesneil, RX	An Thoi, Cat Lo	1969-1970
Daniel Ninedorf	Kewaunee, WI	USS Mark AKL-12	1970-1971
Patrick H. Stack	Dayton, MN	CTF 115	1968-1969
Michael Brophy	Sarasota, FL	NAVSUPACT SGN DET 90.2, NAVSUPACT Cam Ranh Bay	
Marshall T. Baldwin	Bullhead City, AZ	Naval Support Facility, Cam Ranh Bay	1967-1969
William G. Thomasson	Memphis, TN	Cat Lo	1966-1967
Don L. Jones	Marianna, FL	Danang	1965-1966
Robert R. Johnson	Tyler, TX	An Thoi, Saigon, Cam Ranh Bay	1965-1966
Ramiro S. Gonzales	Glendale, AZ	Qui Nhon	
Eugene Green	Philadelphia, PA	An Thoi, APL 21	1967-1968
Melvin J. Baker	Morgan Hill, CA	An Thoi, Cam Ranh Bay	1969-1970



# San Diego Labor Day 2011 on the waterfront

From left to right, Chuck Rabel, Dave Bradley, Gary Carpenter. Others manning the boat for four days were Bob Brown, Bob Bolger, Virg Erwin, Jim Davy (PBR Vet), Bob Shinn (Brown Water LST Skippeer) and Senyint Chim (Cambodian guy rescued by Swift Boats. They all collected \$653 for the Wounded Warrior Project.



## Deceased Swifties 2010 forward

Ronald M. "Porky" Rinehart	Dayton, Texas	2010
Ronald B. Gagnon	Cape Coral, FL	2010
Albert W. Porter	Port Hadlock, WA	2010
Virgil E. Tayler	Lynn, MA	2010
William P. Dodd	Springfield, MO	2010
Dan Field	Hinsdale, NH	2010
Joseph R. Clements	Tulsa, OK	2010
Gene L. Herrera		2010
Kenneth F. Tryner	Virginia Beach, VA	2011

## Change of Address? Need new membership card?

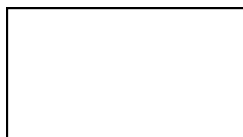
Stay in touch with your shipmates!

Membership card replacement fee \$5.00.

Contact Gene Hart, Treasurer  
Tel. (904) 234-4278 Email- [ghart@unf.edu](mailto:ghart@unf.edu)

## Reunion SAN DIEGO in 2013

Chuck Rabel has agreed to be the next reunion chairman. All who can assist please contact him at [rabelathome@cox.net](mailto:rabelathome@cox.net)



Swift Boat Sailors Association  
3941 Laurelwood Drive  
Jacksonville, FL 32257-8926

**Don't Even Think of Moving Without Telling Us!**

**Email - Letter - Telephone - Just DO IT!**

**Gene Hart - (904) 234-4278- ghart@unf.edu - 3941 Laurelwood Drive, Jacksonville, FL 32257**