

## From The Bridge



## Mystery Photo



Cheers to everybody. Hope everyone is getting ready for autumn and winter. Getting your projects in line to be built and finished. Then brought to the meeting for show n tell.

I want to thank Bill Dangler for the fine picnic we had in September. The hamburgers and hot dogs were superb. Good job Bill.

At the meeting I would like to discuss some new ideas I have. One is a kit or model review. It could also be a new tool, wood or just about anything for modeling. I have a form that would need to be filled out to describe the object. The second is a list of company's we can contact for purchases. Basically a reference list. We'll discuss this at the meeting.

Please keep bringing in the models you are working on. Good or bad. We all started at some time building a real bad model, but we learned from this. Bring it in and let the pro's tell you how to improve your modeling skills. The more the better.. See everyone at the meeting.

Enjoy the LogBook.

Bob Moritz

El Capitan

### MEETING NOTICE

**Date:** Saturday October 8, 2016

**Place:** Mariners' Museum

**Time:** 1000 Hours

### Presenters Needed for 2017

Contact Tony Clayton

America likes winners! We just wrapped up the summer Olympics and the Para-Olympics in Brazil and the United States had its share of winners who earned a bit gold. Gold medals mean you come in first or are the best at an activity—kind of like our boys at IPMS. When you look at the medal winners you know that their focus and dedication was supreme. Being first earns reward, fame, and money—certainly some form of recognition. We need to do things that allow us, or at least provide the opportunity, to come in first. As you read this Mystery Photo essay you'll see that our subject vessel deservedly earned a first or two. This in not to say we have a famous ship to identify, but it does mean she can claim several firsts in her logbook.

This image is a winner; it's the winner America likes—something nautical, something photogenic—Tim might even add that the composition is first rate! Now I would like to say that this is the first image I've submitted, but truth be known, this is like my third out of about 230 entries. 3 of 230 means that I've only submitted just a smidge over one percent of the images which also means I usually face the same odds you do when identifying the vessel. What we can take as a certainty this month is that I know the identity of the vessel.

What are we working with?

The image is black and white and up-close. But not close so you can count the rivets—at least in The Logbook print with its reduced content file. My original scan tops out just north of 68 megabits in file size and that means I can enlarge it to where I can count a few rivets. Funny thing about this vessel, it's been modified such that the rivets sorta end at the rub rail. Everything above the rail appears to be of welded construction. It's the ole "old meets new" or "east meets west" scenario. A lot of that happened during the Second World War when existing tonnage was grabbed up for the war effort and some of it was turned into patrol vessels—like our Mystery Photo.

The vessel, as conversions go, is rather handsome, with clean lines and an uncluttered arrangement. From the bow: we have hidden behind the low bulwark the usual shippy items like anchor handling gear and I'm sure a companionway. After this we see a gun tub with an open mount, it looks to be a 3-inch rifle but it may be a five. Immediately aft o this is a raised platform for 20-MM anti air guns. You can see their shield and rifles pointing directly skyward. The bridge comes with its smallish pilot house and large wings. The stanchions for the ends support two carley floats. Atop the pilot house we see three canvas covered items; two may be searchlights but the center object appears to be a stereoscopic device. A single pole mast with the usual trimmings follows and then comes the short, fat stack. Next to the stack we see the gear for the ship's

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boat and another carley float. The arrangement after this is a bit odd and offers the clues to identifying the vessel. There is a house at a raised level that may be the weather shack A short main is fixed to its overhead. Aft of this is a platform sited one deck higher than the main deck and it extends to the deck edge. In addition to the other sailors sprinkled randomly throughout the vessel, you



Mystery Photo



SS Governor Cobb

can see sailors milling about its edges. As for the sailors, with the exception of a couple on the port bridge wing wearing khaki, and a few on the starboard wing wearing black or very dark blue uniforms, and a couple members of the black gang spotted under the bridge wing, and a few sprinkled throughout they all seems to be in dress whites. (The super scan shows more but it's not fair to mention it at this point.)

The hull is revealing in its shape. It features the extreme flair commonly seen on East Coast bay and river steamers. The flair ends at a hard knuckle where the hull sides turn vertical. The hull from the rub rail to the top of what is now known as main deck appears be nothing more than plating designed to enclose the deck volume to provide usable space. The bulwark begins at the bow but ends about where the deck house begins.

The style of this modified vessel, except for the large clear deck aft, strongly resembles what was in vogue for the United States Coast Guard cutters of the late 1930's. I offer an image of *USCGC Comanche* circa 1943 as a comparison—some of you may be familiar with *Comanche*. I think we might have a second clue.

Two clues, who knew?

There was only one person who was not clueless this month, and that would be Mr. Dave Baker. And he managed to Cobb(le) together an excellent response. "This month's mystery ship is the USCG's COBB (ex-GOVERNOR COBB), WPG 181, famous (more or less) for being the very first ship equipped with a helicopter deck." (Dave you should play golf, this is a good opening Tee shot!) In fact, his round was so good it appears in its entirety below:

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# AMERICAN NAVAL HISTORY

1802

March 3: Commodore Thomas Truxtun, the leading American naval officer in the Quasi-War with France, is offered command of the 2nd squadron to be sent to the Mediterranean. Secretary of the Navy Smith refuses to authorize him to have a flag captain, he resigns his commission.

March 10: Commodore Dale sails home from Gibraltar on this date. He has not been able to accomplish a great deal during nine months in the Mediterranean. His squadron being too weak to enforce an effective blockade of Tripoli. Commodore Richard V. Morris is Dale's replacement. The ships in his squadron are the frigates Chesapeake, Constellation, New York, Adams, and the John Adams with the schooner Enterprise. The frigate Boston is assigned to this force but leaves for home.

July 22: The frigate Constellation with Captain Alexander Murray as commander, engages a Tripolitan galley and eight gun-boats, sinking two.

1802 Ends with no further actions.

Bob Moritz

"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore! Dream! Discover!"

Mark Twain

## Nautical Term

Lapstrake: The planking of a craft of which the lower edge of each strake overlaps that below it; a very old and a worldwide technique. The word comes from Old Saxon, lepel, overlap.

Tim Wood

## THE ANSWER

USCGC *Cobb* (WPG-181)

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“As GOVERNOR COBB, she was the first steam-turbine propelled merchant vessel built in this country, having been launched on 21 April 1906 by the Delaware River Co., at Chester, Pa. as a passenger vessel. During WWI, she came under U.S. Shipping Board and was used to train merchant sailors. Post-war she returned to passenger service and was leased to the British P&O (Peninsular and Oriental) Line, which operated her between Key West and Havana until she was sold to the Romance Line in 1937. She then failed an inspection and was laid up until taken over on 5 June 1942 by the



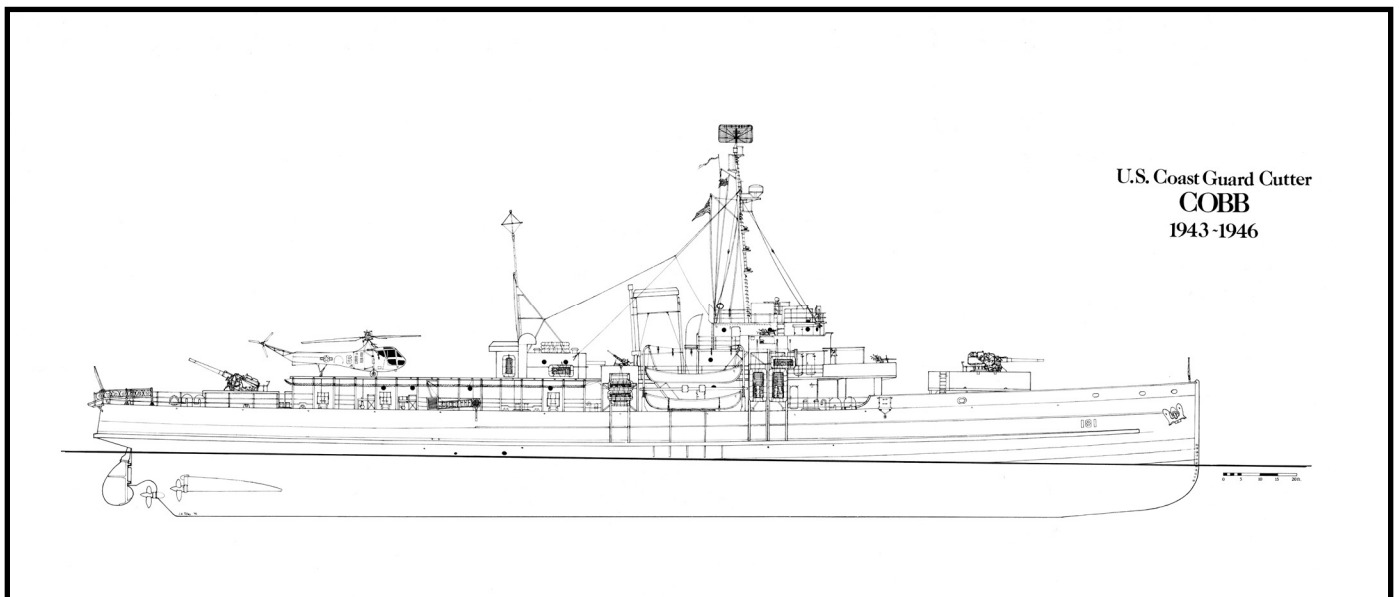
Mystery Photo

War Shipping Administration. The ship was then taken over by the U.S. Coast Guard specifically for use in using helicopters at sea and was drastically altered (at a cost of \$2,500,000.00, losing most of her superstructure and even most of her hull above the main deck. She was stationed at New York City and commissioned in the USCG under the shortened name COBB on 20 July 1943. The ship had numerous engineering problems, and it was not until 29 June 1944 that the first helicopter flights were conducted, in Long Island Sound with HNS-1 and HJOS-1 helicopters. This was not, however, the first helicopter operations aboard a U.S. ship, for that took place on 7 May 1943, when Col Frank Gregory, USAAF, landed an XR-4 helicopter about the merchant tanker BUNKER HILL. The ship was then stationed at New London, CT, and used mostly for training until she was decommissioned on 31 January 1946 and sold for scrap on 6 March 1947. The first helicopters used aboard the ship are HNS-1s.



As of 1945, the COBB displaced 3,500 tons full load and drew 19-ft. She was 300 ft. 8 in. overall by 55 ft. moulded

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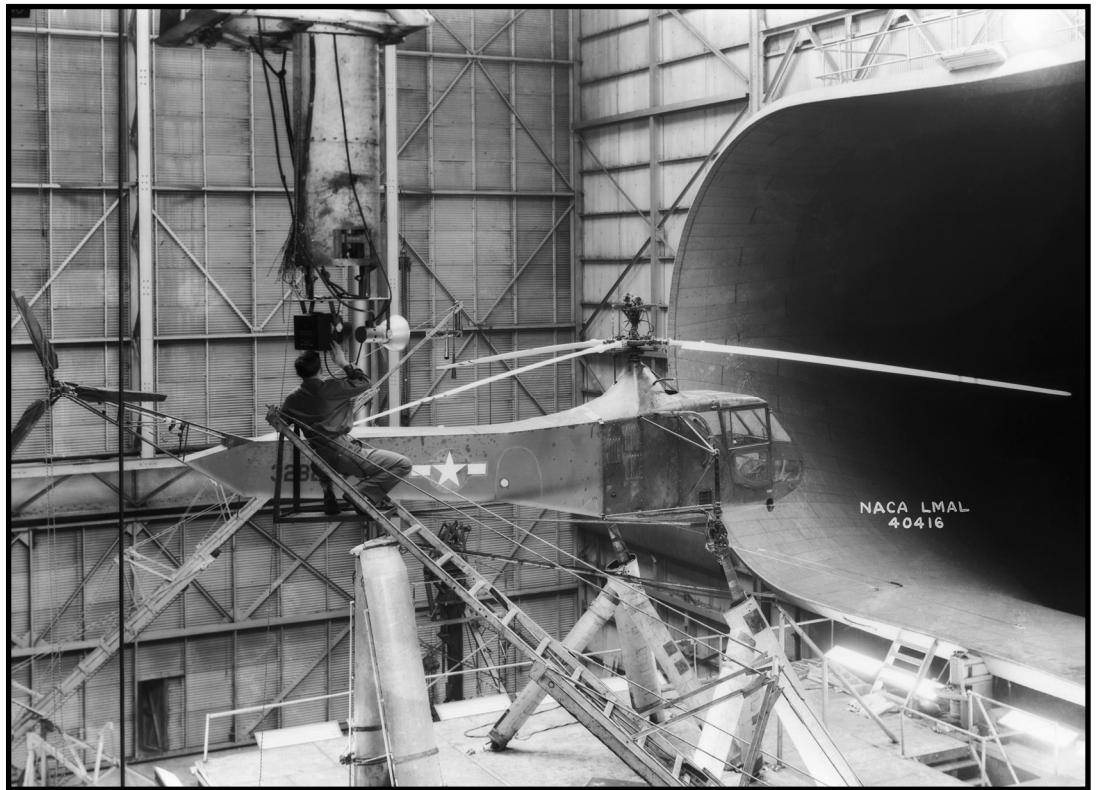
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breadth. Six 180 psi Scotch boilers provided steam to three Parsons steam turbines; the center turbine was high pressure, while the outboard pair were low pressure, and the plant provided 5,000 shp from the three screws. In 1945, her maximum speed was 15.7 knots, while radius at 14.7 its was 3,300 nautical miles and 4,370 nautical miles at 9.5 its. The crew in 1945 consisted of 9 officers and 114 enlisted. Despite being given a gunboat type designation (WPG), the ship never was used for escort duties, although she was equipped with two single 5-in 38-cal. open gun mounts, six single 20-mm AA guns, two depth charge racks, four Y-gun depth charge mortars, and 2 Mousetrap ASW rocket launchers on the bow.

Since the photo shows her in fresh paint and without either antenna for the S and SL radar sets later installed, I'd say this photo was taken in Baltimore Harbor shortly after completion of her conversion in Baltimore by General Ship Repair Co. in July of 1943.



Mystery Photo



Sikorsky YR-4B/HNS-1 in NACA's Full Scale Wind Tunnel, 1944

All information in the above comes from Robert L. Scheina, U.S. Coast Guard Cutters and Craft, Annapolis: U.S. Naval Institute Press, 1982. Bob worked for me in the 1970s, then got his PhD and became Chief Historian of the Coast Guard."

Dang, Dave you're spot on! This image is one of three scanned from Record Group No. 26 at the National Archives. Along with this port bow quarter shot, there are nice profile and bow images to study. And from them we learn that there is a stern gun tub that carries the second 5-inch open mount that Dave mentions. We also learn that the people in the dark uniforms on the starboard bridge wing are actually women, most likely SPARS and we can see a number of civilians about the ship. Me thinks these images capture the ship leaving on her acceptance trail. The other two images will accompany this essay.

What Dave provides is the good part of Cobb's career. I think it's important to add this follow-up which might also be the work of Robert Scheina as it was taken from the Coast Guard web site and might be the reason the vessel is not so well known: "Due to the cutter's aging engines and weak framing, it was constantly in need of repair and its tanks leaked. In fact, all but nine of

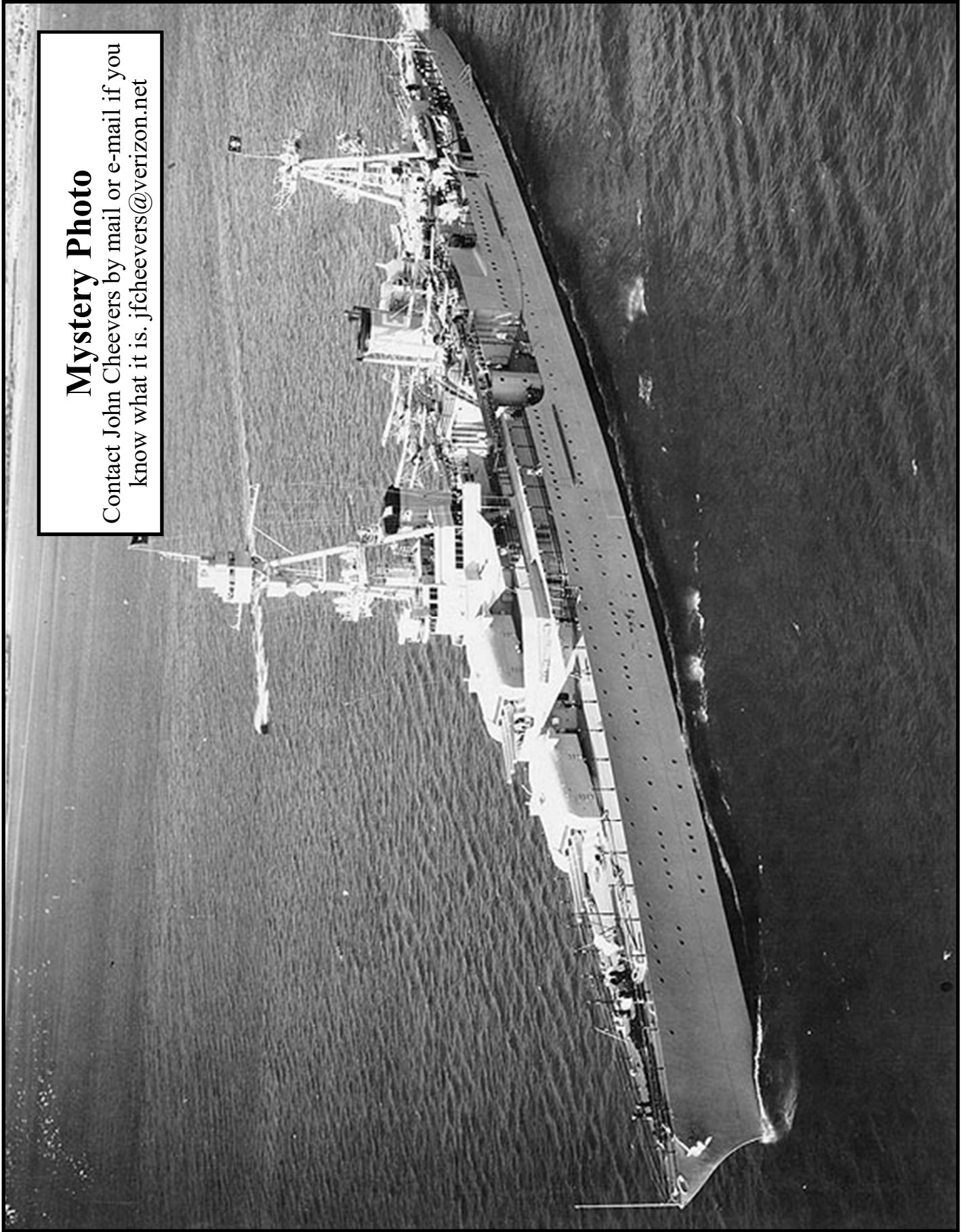


USCGC HNS-1 Hoverfly during trials on a rocking platform

(Continued on page 6)

## **Mystery Photo**

Contact John Cheevers by mail or e-mail if you know what it is. [jfcheevers@verizon.net](mailto:jfcheevers@verizon.net)



## NOTABLE EVENTS

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### OCTOBER

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation, Marty Gromovsky, Figure Painting

### NOVEMBER

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation, Ryland Craze, TBA

### DECEMBER

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation: George Livingston, TBA

### JANUARY

- 13-15 Cabin Fever Expo, Lebanon, Pa  
14 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation, Tony Clayton, TBA  
Nomination of officers,

### FEBRUARY

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Election of officers

### MARCH

- 11 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

### APRIL

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

### MAY

- 13 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

### JUNE

- 10 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum  
Presentation:

### JULY

- 8 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

### AUGUST

- 12 HRSMS Monthly Meeting: Mariners' Museum

### SEPTEMBER

- 9 HRSMS Monthly Meeting

- 19 Talk Like a Pirate Day

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**WATCH, QUARTER  
AND  
STATION BILL**



Skipper: Bob Moritz (804) 779-3365  
Mate: Gene Berger  
Purser: Ryland Craze (804) 739-8804  
Clerk: Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Historian: Bill Dangler (757) 245-4142  
Editors: John Cheevers (757) 591-8955  
Bill Clarke (757) 868-6809  
Tom Saunders (757) 850-0580  
Webmaster: Greg Harrington (757) 930-4615  
Chaplain: Alan Frazer (757) 867-7666  
Photographer: Marty Gromovsky

## MINUTES



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Hampton Roads Ship Model Society  
Monthly Meeting  
September 8, 2016  
Newport News Park

The meeting was called to order by Skipper, Bob Moritz at 1100 hours. A motion was promptly made to defer all business until the October meeting. The meeting was adjourned so all could enjoy the picnic

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Mystery Photo

the first 115 days of service were spent at a Navy yard receiving repairs. The *Cobb* also began to be used by the Coast Guard for training. In January 1944, the cutter was ordered to Groton, Connecticut, for sound and radar training. The machinery and hull were in such disrepair that it could only be considered for limited duty. In April, headquarters weighed assigning the cutter to New York to work with the helicopter landings aboard ships.

The cutter was equipped with a special landing deck with a net around it. The first flight off the cutter occurred on June 29, 1944. For the rest of the war, the cutter was involved in limited operations, not more than one week out of each month."

If you're interested in making a model, you can probably get plans from the Coast Guard. Provided here is a nice pen and ink profile of USCGC *Cobb* done by none other than former HRSMS member Dr. John Tilley.

What else can I add?

Maybe I can expand a little on the helicopter. Wikipedia says that "The Sikorsky R-4 was a two-seat helicopter designed by Igor Sikorsky with a single, three-bladed main rotor and powered by a radial engine. The R-4 was the world's first large-scale mass-produced helicopter and the first helicopter used by the United States Army Air Forces, the United States Navy, the United States Coast Guard and the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force and Royal Navy. In U.S. Navy and U.S. Coast Guard service, the helicopter was known as the Sikorsky HNS-1. In British service, it was known as the Hoverfly.

The VS-316 was developed from the famous experimental VS-300 helicopter, invented by Igor Sikorsky and publicly demonstrated in 1940. The VS-316 was designated the XR-4, under the United States Army Air Forces series for "Rotorcraft". The XR-4 first flew on 14 January 1942, and was accepted by the Army on 30 May 1942. The XR-4 exceeded all the previous helicopter endurance, altitude and airspeed records that had been set before it. The XR-4 completed a 761-mile (1,225 km) cross-country flight from Connecticut to Wright Field, Ohio, set a service ceiling record of 12,000 feet (3,700 m), while achieving 100 flight hours without a major incident and an airspeed approaching 90 mph (140 km/h)."

Lotta firsts, lotta winners!

John Cheevers