

GHOST OF THE HARLEM RIVER

ENTHUSIASTIC VOLUNTEERS SAVE WHAT IS LEFT OF AN HISTORIC PT-BOAT
BY RONALD GABLE

Due to their construction and rather disposable nature, very few historic World War Two PT-Boats survive today. With the atomic bombings of Japan and the unconditional surrender, the US Navy had little need for their fleet of PT-Boats nor did they give any thought of placing examples in museums.

We have to go back to April 2020 when a very large crane was put in

place near a muddy location at Harlem River's North Cove inlet and began to lift the sad remains of what was once a proud and historic PT-Boat. At that time, New York City's Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) began to recover wreckage of *PT-59*, and this included a generator, rudder, and a hatch door frame.

This was all part of

an MTA \$610 million construction project and the MTA was building a large sea wall along the riverfront. This was to prevent the flooding disaster that took place during 2012's deadly Hurricane *Sandy*. First, let's take a look at the history of *PT-59*.

PT-59 (later

PTGB-1) was an S-class Patrol Torpedo Boat 77-foot Elco built by the Electric Boat Company of Bayonne, New Jersey. However, she was initially laid down as Motor Boat Submarine Chaser *PTC-27* but was reclassified as *BPT-11* when assigned to transfer to Great Britain under the Lend-Lease Program. This transaction was cancelled and she was reclassified as *PT-59* prior to launch on 8 October 1941, and was completed on 5 March 1942.

After serving in a Rhode Island training squadron, *PT-59* was assigned to the protection of the Panama Canal. Before that she had a strange accident in Rhode Island while assigned to Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Four.

On 9 April 1942, one of her torpedoes was accidentally fired! The missile hit the supply ship *USS Capella* and caused eight injuries but, fortunately, no death.

At the end of

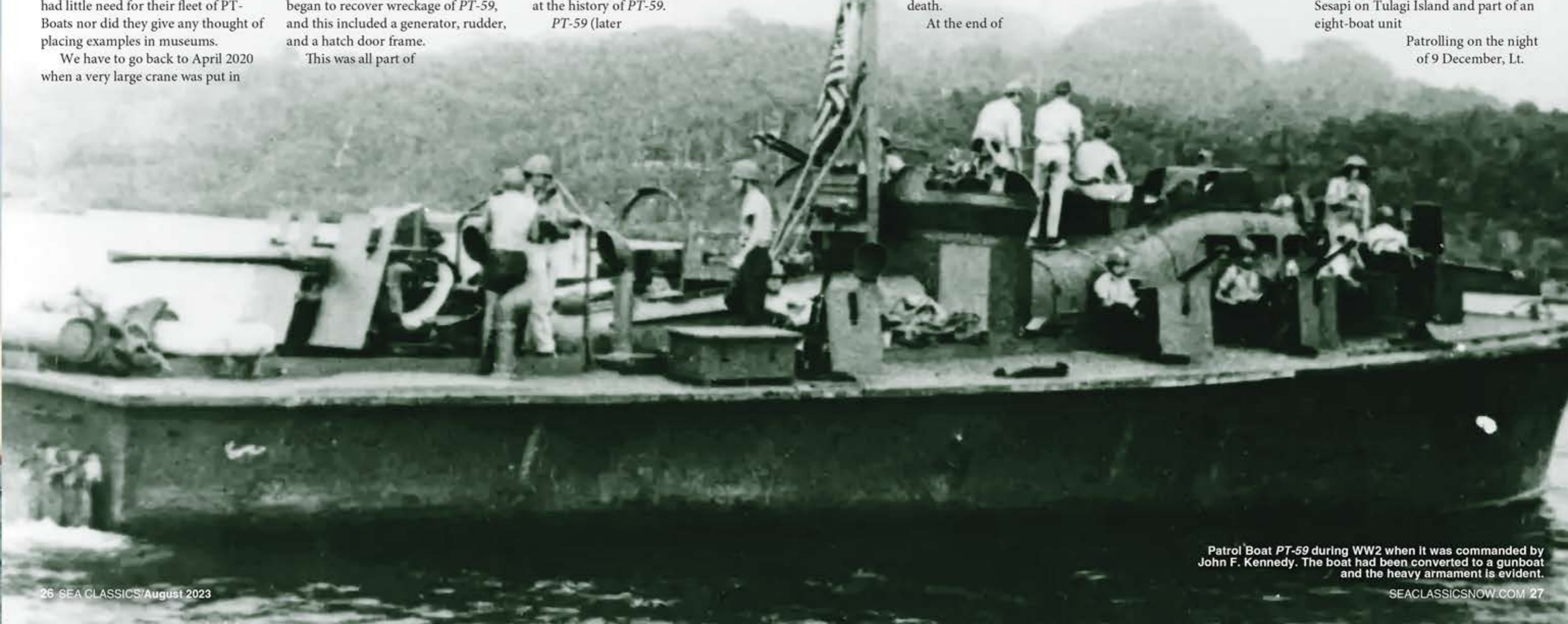


PT-59 under construction in the foreground at Bayonne, New Jersey, with *PT-58* and *PT-57* in the background.

May 1942, Ens. David M. Levy took command of *PT-59* as the squadron headed out to Panama for anti-submarine duties and to guard the vital Panama Canal along with the Central

and South American coasts. This duty only lasted until October 1942 at which point *PT-59* was placed aboard Liberty Ship *SS Roger Williams*. By November, she was with MTB Squadron 2 at Sesapi on Tulagi Island and part of an eight-boat unit

Patrolling on the night of 9 December, Lt.



Patrol Boat *PT-59* during WW2 when it was commanded by John F. Kennedy. The boat had been converted to a gunboat and the heavy armament is evident.