

HOLLYWOOD

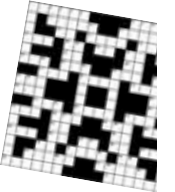
STAR NEWS

COMMUNITY-POWERED SINCE 1984

PUZZLE POWER

Grab a pencil and try the Star News' new monthly crossword.

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MARCHING ON Junior Parade returns to Hollywood with floats and fun — on a Saturday. [Page 10](#)



CUTTING EDGE

Steelport Knife Co. forges community and handcrafted cutlery along Sandy Blvd.

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New food hall and brewery opens in emerging film district. [Page 5](#)



SO GOOD IT'S A SIN No Saint on NE Killingsworth has all the ingredients for a tasty good time. [Page 13](#)

FLOAT THAT BOAT

Volunteers at Swan Island bring a relic of naval history back to life.

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FLOUR POWER Franz Bakery celebrates 120 years of doing business in Portland. [Page 16](#)

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THE HOLLYWOOD STAR NEWS
NORTH AND NORTHEAST METRO NEIGHBORHOODS
2000 N.E. 42ND AVENUE PMB 332
PORTLAND, OREGON 97213

REFLOATING A RELIC

Volunteers bring WWII-era Navy PT boat back to life

History lovers offer tours, operate museum on Swan Island



I have cycled along North Willamette Boulevard hundreds of times on a route that takes me by the gorgeous University of Portland campus. Each time I am on The Bluff I notice huge ships in the drydock for painting and repair. Freighters, cruise ships and, currently, the

MIKE on a BIKE



Michael Wright

USNS Mercy — one of the Navy's two massive floating hospitals — always attract my attention.

However, last week was the first time I ventured onto Swan Island to check out one of the most fascinating ships of all — PT-658.

On a tip from a colleague, I arranged

to meet Bob Day, one of the dozens of engineers, woodworkers and electricians who maintain, improve and operate what they say is the last World War II-era PT boat in existence. Day volunteers his time to guide tours of the boat, its boathouse and the small nearby museum.

Day is an entertaining man with enormous knowledge of the history of these ships, which played an outside role in the U.S. victory in the South Pacific. The day I visited, there was a buzz of activity with several carpenters replacing damaged planks below the waterline on the hull. The entire ship is built with mahogany wood, now a precious product in short supply.



Bob Day volunteers to restore a World War II-era PT boat docked at Swan Island. The craft is shrouded in plastic while undergoing repairs.

(Michael Wright)

Day summed up the mindset of many of the visitors who come to visit.

"PT boats have a special place in that history due to their small size, extreme

speed, agility and a lot of firepower," he said. "Service aboard these boats was thought by many to be 'glamorous,' despite being very risky in a sort of David vs. Goliath scenario."

The craft is powered by three 1,850-horsepower V12 Packard engines. The small size of the boats and these powerful engines made the PTs a force to be reckoned

ELIZABETH E. WELCH



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★ STAR COLUMN

Right: The torpedo boat's propellers. Far right: Steve Stanage replaces damaged mahogany planks on PT-658's hull, below the waterline. (Michael Wright)



with on the high seas. They were quick to position themselves to attack enemy ships. Their torpedoes were extremely effective. Enemy forces sometimes referred to them as "mosquitoes" due to their nimble ability in battles.

PT658 was one of the last boats manufactured during World War II. It was built by Higgins Industries in New Orleans — No. 658 of 750 made. A nonprofit organized to restore the boat took ownership in 1995.

During my visit, I also met Navy veteran Wally Boerger. Boerger has many stories to tell about his own experiences on the water and he masterfully describes the artifacts within the museum. I was reluctant to leave, but did so after they promised to have me back when the boat was again operating and hinted I may get a trip up the Willamette later in the summer.

"It's a passion all of us have to see the history of this boat protected," Boerger said. "As volunteers we want to present the boat in



PT-658 in 1992. The boat had fallen into disrepair in San Francisco Bay. A group of veterans moved it to Swan Island and began a restoration project. (Save the PT Boat Inc.)

a way that all the men who served on these vessels would want it to be remembered. That they would feel pride in the outsized contribution they made to winning WWII."

I can't wait to feel those engines roar to life.



Tour the boat

PT 658 will be back in the water mid-May. You can arrange a private tour for a small donation.

Learn more at: www.savetheptboatinc.com

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