

**John Harlee Oral History Interview – JFK#1, 06/06/1964**  
Administrative Information

**Creator:** John Harlee  
**Interviewer:** Charles T. Morrissey  
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**Biographical Note**

Harlee was a retired U.S. Navy Rear Admiral; worked as a senior instructor at the Motor Torpedo Boat Squadron Training Center at Melville, Rhode Island, while John F. Kennedy [JFK] was assigned there during World War II; served in the Navy's Congressional Liaison Unit on special assignment to Congressman JFK, 1947–1948; served as chairman for Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] in northern California during the 1960 presidential campaign; was a member of the Federal Maritime Commission from 1961 to 1963, and chairman of the Commission from 1963 to 1969. In this interview Harlee discusses his interactions with JFK during World War II; working with Congressman JFK on selection procedures for Annapolis and West Point, 1947–1948; his impressions of JFK in Congress; working as chairman of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson in northern California, 1960; anti-Catholic opposition to JFK in California during the 1960 presidential election; and becoming a member of the Federal Maritime Commission amid changes to the Commission's powers and functions, among other issues.

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Oral History Interview

With

JOHN HARLLEE

June 6, 1964  
Washington, D.C.

By Charles T. Morrissey

For the John F. Kennedy Library

HARLLEE: I first met John Fitzgerald Kennedy in July of 1942 in a room at Northwestern University in Illinois. Lieutenant John D. Bulkeley [John Duncan Bulkeley], U.S. Navy, and I interviewed him separately for assignment to PT boats. I recall him as a young man of very boyish appearance and great enthusiasm and desire to get into combat. He had had considerable sailing experience including the achievement of an intercollegiate sailing championship, and he had participated in athletics. He was a Harvard graduate and apparently had been quite an adequate student. For these reasons we selected him for assignment to Motor Torpedo Boat [MBT] Squadron Training Center at Melville, Rhode Island (near Newport).

MORRISSEY: I have read that many of the young men chosen for the MTB Training Center at Melville were familiar with boats and had handled boats in the water because they were the sons of wealthy Easterners who had grown up near the ocean and in many instances had attended Ivy League schools. Is this true?

HARLLEE: Yes, it's true. Many Ivy League graduates came from families which owned sailing craft or cabin cruisers or power boats, and they were familiar with small boats and therefore appeared to be good material for PT boats. Also they had good educations and mental qualifications as well as physical qualifications.

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I was Senior Instructor at the Motor Torpedo Boat Training Center then and observed young Kennedy in classes and on the boats as very promising material for the PT service. He was a sincere and hardworking student and showed particular aptitude in boat handling. As a matter of fact, he was such an outstanding student that I selected him for assignment to the training squadron at Melville. This was in the days—in the summer of 1942—before there were enough combat veterans to fill the ranks of the instructors required for the massive number of students undergoing naval training all over the country. At the MTB Training Center as well as elsewhere, a few of the best students were made instructors. Kennedy was extremely unhappy at being selected as a member of the training squadron—actually as an instructor—because he yearned with great zeal to get out to the war zone and do his share of the fighting. As a matter of fact, he and I had some very hard words about this assignment, and I thought I had made another enemy for life, but I insisted that he remain with us. It was not our intention to hold him as an instructor for the rest of the war but for six to twelve months. Due to his impatience to get into action, this seemed to him an eternity.

As soon as he was selected to remain in the training squadron as an instructor he saw me and insisted that he be sent overseas to one of the squadrons in combat. This was during the period of the war when PT boats were engaged very heavily in combat in the Solomons [Solomon Islands]. His desire was to get out there. He felt there was no reason why he should be kept in the United States. Other people wanted to remain at the Training Center because they had been recently married or because they felt they needed more training. But he believed that he was completely ready to play his part in the war—which had already been going on for almost a year—and he was most insistent. I told him that we needed people of his ability for instructors and that certain other instructors had remonstrated and also wanted to get into combat as soon as possible. I absolutely insisted that he remain, which made him extremely unhappy.

During those days my wife Jo-Beth [Jo-Beth Carden Harllee] and I had dinner a few times with Jack Kennedy, as I called him then, in the home of a mutual friend whom I had also assigned to the PT training squadron at Melville, Raymond C. Turnbull. These occasions were partly when he was undergoing training as a student and partly while he was an instructor in the training squadron. Jack Kennedy impressed me as an eager, widely read young man of broad interests and tremendous dedication to his country and enthusiasm for the part he hoped to play in its great conflict.

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MORRISSEY: Do you recall that he expressed any interest in a political career?

HARLLEE: No, I can't honestly say that I do recall any such expression of interest on his part, but he did seem more inclined to want to discuss the issues of the day than most young men.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall that he indicated what he wanted to do when the war was

over?

HARLLEE: No—not to me, at least.

MORRISSEY: When Kennedy was at Melville did you ever visit his family at Hyannis Port?

HARLLEE: No, I did not visit his family at that time. I did visit him and them at Hyannis Port in about May of 1948.

After a couple of months in the Training Center at Melville, Kennedy received orders to the war zone. I was somewhat surprised by the orders, and I suspected that some strings had been pulled. This suspicion was later confirmed when I had occasion to review his record in the Bureau of Naval Personnel in 1947. Tremendous effort had been brought to bear to get him into the combat zone, and I must say that was an admirable use of such influence.

MORRISSEY: Pressure by whom? And on whom?

HARLLEE: As I recall it, when reviewing his record in 1947, I saw a letter signed by Senator David I. Walsh of Massachusetts, chairman of the Senate Naval Affairs Committee at the time he signed the letter. This, of course, was before the time of the Armed Services Committee. Senator Walsh was easily the most powerful man in the United States Senate as far as the Navy was concerned. He was known to be a friend of Ambassador Joseph P. Kennedy [Joseph P. Kennedy, Sr.], and there was no question that Joseph P. Kennedy (or perhaps young Jack himself) had interceded with the Senator and the Navy Department had deferred to his wishes and sent Jack Kennedy out to the combat zone.

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MORRISSEY: Perhaps my recollection is not accurate, but it seems to me that Kennedy went from Melville to Panama and from Panama to the Solomons. Does this agree with your recollection?

HARLLEE: Yes, it does. But the squadron in Panama to which he was sent was scheduled to go out to the combat zone very shortly. It was unexpectedly delayed in Panama and my recollection is that he was ordered directly out to the combat zone because of the delay that would be sustained if he remained with the squadron in Panama. At that time Panama was a locale for final trading for PT boats before going to the combat zone.

Soon afterwards I also was ordered into the Pacific but to a different area, i.e., New Guinea. I did not see Kennedy again until he was in Washington as a congressman.

Early in 1947 I visited him in the House Office Building and we talked about the Navy and in particular about methods of selecting the best possible officer material for Annapolis and West Point. He became so interested in the subject that he asked the then

Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal [James V. Forrestal], to assign me to his office for research work along these lines.

MORRISSEY: Was this the beginning of his interest in the subject? Or did you happen to discuss the subject with him at a time when he already had been thinking about it?

HARLLEE: This was not the beginning of his interest in the subject. He had the feeling that many Annapolis and West Point graduates were not as good material as the country could have selected under the most ideal conditions. He felt, for example, that some of the senior officers with whom he had had contact in the Navy left something to be desired in their leadership qualities. This is not to say that he felt this was true of all of them. He felt that the chance to serve one's country in the Armed Services as an officer was such a great privilege that with the right kind of motivation and inducement a large number of young men could be persuaded to try for Annapolis or West Point. If a larger number of candidates requested to become midshipmen or cadets a better selection of material could be made than the Armed Forces had been able to make. He felt there were some considerable benefits to the country to be derived from selecting the best possible men to become ultimately

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the leaders of the nation's Armed Forces. When I talked with him about it I agreed with his viewpoint and suggested that a good deal of research could be done in this area because many selection processes had been experimented with during World War II by the Armed Forces and also by civilian organizations. I spent the last six months of 1947 doing this on a part-time basis and then for the first half of 1948 I was assigned to his office on a fulltime basis to complete the job.

Congressman Kennedy was especially inclined toward the more progressive and advanced methods of personnel selection, even if such methods had not gained general acceptance. However, we worked out a simple system which divorced him from personal participation in the selection of candidates, thus avoiding any possibility of political influence entering the picture. The final decision concerning who received the appointments was made by a board of three persons which he appointed—a clergyman, a reserve military or naval officer, and a school official or teacher. Raw material on all the candidates was processed and given this board. Their decision was final.

An interesting point to raise here is that General Maxwell Taylor [Maxwell D. Taylor] was Superintendent of West Point at that time, and I saw him on behalf of Congressman Kennedy. General Taylor was very pleased that Congressman Kennedy had an interest in this field. I believe, although I am not certain, that this was the occasion of General Taylor's first interest in Kennedy. Kennedy was interested in the methods developed at West Point for selecting those cadets not selected by congressmen. In some cases a senator or congressman would ask West Point to assist him in making selections or to make the selection for him.

MORRISSEY: Was Kennedy's thinking about selection procedures greeted with much opposition?

HARLLEE: Other congressmen and senators were not very enthusiastic about undertaking new methods of selection for Annapolis and West Point. They did have—and still do have—available to them a competitive Civil Service exam which they can have given candidates. At that time, I believe that slightly more than half of them did have the Civil Service competitive exam given. But there are two shortcomings in this system. In the first place this exam was susceptible to effective preparation by students who came from families with enough money to send them to certain prep

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schools. This introduced an artificial factor into their ability to win in competition. And this exam did not take into account many measures of potential leadership which we felt were available—for example, various types of situation and practical tests, interviews, and reports on individuals. The Civil Service method was simply a mental achievement and mental aptitude examination. In the second place, the Civil Service made known only to the individual congressman or senator concerned the results of the individual examination. A good many congressmen and senators would have the Civil Service give this examination and then, with the results known only to themselves, would decide who would get the appointment regardless of the results. Constituents might think the person who did the best in the exam was being selected when in fact the son of some old friend was being selected.

Most congressmen and senators were not as idealistic as Kennedy in this matter. They were not as intensely interested or concerned about the selection of candidates for the service academies. They didn't have the same belief in modern, progressive methods of personnel selection, and there was no widespread use of the techniques we developed. In short, there was a lot of opposition of a passive sort from people who just didn't want to change. Kennedy recognized it just wasn't feasible to make them all change. All he could do was inform them of what he had done and hope that some would change.

In Kennedy's district, which had been represented by James Michael Curley, practically none of the candidates appointed to the service academies had been able to graduate. They had been so poorly selected that they failed out of the academies. Almost all of Kennedy's candidates did well in their studies and in other activities and did graduate and were motivated to stay in the service.

MORRISSEY: While working in Kennedy's office did you observe any other differences between the Congressman and his predecessor—James Michael Curley?

HARLLEE: Yes, the matter of Curley's pardon when he was in the federal prison or correctional institution at Danbury. The New England delegation was solicited for a unanimous request to President Truman [Harry S. Truman] to pardon Curley from Danbury. Almost every member of the New England delegation signed this petition. Kennedy felt that the decision to pardon or not

to pardon Curley was a function of the executive branch of the government and to subject it to petitions from the legislative branch on a political basis would be a prostitution of justice and an improper utilization of congressional influence.

MORRISSEY: I guess the pressure on Kennedy to sign that petition was quite strong?

HARLLEE: Yes, it was. Curley had tremendous strength in Kennedy's district, of course, and retained enough strength to be elected mayor of Boston even after being incarcerated. It would have been easier for Kennedy to go along by signing that petition.

MORRISSEY: What were your impressions of the way the Congressman ran his office? Who did what—and was it done well? Did he maintain good relations with his constituents?

HARLLEE: My impressions were that he had a somewhat larger staff than most other congressmen and that he bent every possible effort to fulfill every legitimate request from his district. At that time Timothy J. Reardon [Timothy J. "Ted" Reardon, Jr.] was his principal secretary—I don't think he had the title of administrative assistant then but he did shortly thereafter. I think Kennedy's office did a very thorough job in maintaining good relations with people in his district.

During the period that I was in his office I was tremendously impressed with him and believed that he was so similar to Franklin Roosevelt [Franklin D. Roosevelt] in personal magnetism and political pragmatism that I became absolutely certain that he would someday be President of the United States and that he would be a great President. I thought that it was interesting to note that he also had many superficial resemblances to FDR, such as his connection with the Navy, health problems, wealth, prep school and Harvard background, and the Democratic Party faith. I admired his political courage, demonstrated by his advocacy of the St. Lawrence Seaway (which almost everybody else in New England opposed) and his opposition to James Michael Curley. On social occasions I noted the grace and sparkle of his personality.

Incidentally, President Kennedy, when he was a congressman and senator, never missed a chance to rib me about the Navy. One night in March or April of 1948, with just a few of us at the dinner table, he asked me: "Say, John, when are you going to be CNO (Chief of Naval Operation)?" My wife, Jo-Beth, sitting next to him, said, "He'll be CNO when you are President of the United States." She was very serious; and then all of us were, because he didn't smile as he continued to talk.

MORRISSEY: Why do you think he supported the proposal for a St. Lawrence Seaway?



HARLLEE: I believe it was because he felt it was in the interest of the country as a whole. Balancing the damage it might do to Boston and New England against the good it might do to the country as a whole, he probably thought the damage would be slight. As I recall it he also felt that the estimates of the damage it would do to the New England region were exaggerated.

MORRISSEY: A moment ago you referred to Kennedy's health problems. How serious were these problems?

HARLLEE: They seemed to me to be quite serious. While I was working in his office he still had recurrences of malaria, which was later taken care of, I believe, by advanced drugs and medicines. He had trouble with his back from time to time due to his well-known injury. In addition I recall that he had an ulcer at one time and I believe that he was taking bantnine as a medicine.

Those are the three main ailments that I recall. They were intermittently serious and although he was always cheerful I believe that he was in pain at times. Sometimes he was unable to operate on the job because of these ailments.

MORRISSEY: Did you continue to see Kennedy occasionally after you completed the assignment in his office in 1948?

HARLLEE: Yes, I did. When he was a senator he faced different and larger problems in regard to the selection of candidates for the service academies due to so much larger a constituency, and I conferred with him about these problems. I attended his wedding in September, 1953, at Newport. On that beautiful occasion I remarked to my wife, as we were dancing on the platform put up at Hammersmith Farm for the reception, that "we are attending the wedding of a future great President of the United States."

Also when I was in Washington and dropped into his office for visits he always expressed an interest in various problems of the Armed Forces, especially in problems involved in unification under the Secretary of Defense. He was particularly interested in naval problems and we talked about those from time to time.

MORRISSEY: What was his viewpoint on unification of the Armed Forces?

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HARLLEE: He felt it was desirable and necessary and wondered about the resistance of the Navy toward it.

Occasionally his office had reason to contact me with regard to his constituents who were in the Navy or who had relatives in the Navy, but I usually handled these with Ted Reardon. The Senator was always interested in what I had been doing on my last duty in the Navy. In early 1959 I asked him to help me get a more challenging assignment in the Navy because the one I had in the Pentagon was too routine and easy. My job sounded very good—I was in charge of the Foreign Weapons Production Program in the

Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. Actually it didn't amount to anything at all. Senator Kennedy was on quite friendly terms with Admiral Arleigh Burke [Arleigh Albert Burke], Chief of Naval Operations. He asked me whether I would like him to phone or write Admiral Burke. I suggested the latter and he immediately wrote a letter to Admiral Burke, urging that I be given a more difficult and responsible assignment. It was extremely kind and thoughtful on his part to write this letter.

I retired voluntarily from the Navy in October, 1959, largely in hopes of playing some part, however minor, in what I was confident would be his campaign for the presidency. I knew he would run for the presidency in 1960 because I knew, after he lost the vice-presidential nomination in 1956, that he was determined to try for the presidency in 1960. I was certain he would win if he tried.

During the campaign of 1960, on the recommendation of Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy] and Ted [Edward M. Kennedy], his brothers, and of Paul B. Fay, Jr. [Paul B. "Red" Fay, Jr.], of San Francisco, Senator Kennedy appointed me as chairman of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] in northern California.

MORRISSEY: What were your duties as chairman of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson in northern California?

HARLLEE: The purpose of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson was to act as a vehicle for Independents, Republicans, and Democrats who wanted to work outside of the regular Democratic Party machinery in supporting the national ticket. There were a good many of these Independents, Republicans, and dissident Democrats who simply did not want to associate themselves with Governor Brown [Edmund G. "Pat" Brown] or with the Council of Democratic Clubs in California. They felt the clubs were too liberal—too far to the left—and there was some dissatisfaction with Governor Brown at that time due to the Chessman case and the

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Governor's alleged vacillation before and during the Convention in Los Angeles. I must say in all candor and honesty that a good many of these Independents, Republicans, and dissident Democrats were Catholics. I am not a Catholic myself. But there was a good deal of support from Catholics. Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson afforded an opportunity for these elements to render organized support to Senator Kennedy. This organization did not support other Democratic candidates except for the vice-presidential candidate, Lyndon Johnson. I think possibly part of the reason I was chosen as chairman was due to the fact that I was not a Catholic. There were a great many Catholics, as you know, who were in key positions in the Kennedy campaign. The fact that I was Presbyterian might have possibly had something to do with it. This was my good fortune.

MORRISSEY: Did you find much anti-Catholic opposition to Kennedy?

HARLLEE: Yes, very definitely. Not in San Francisco, of course, because San Francisco is a city with a large Catholic population and a city of great

tolerance—a cosmopolitan city. But in suburbs and exurbs like Sunnyvale, and in the valleys, such as the San Joaquin Valley, there were a good many southern Protestants, particularly Baptists who had come from Arkansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and other parts of the South, and their descendants. And many of these people were against Kennedy because of his religion. No question about it. When I was making surveys to find out what issues were counting against Kennedy so we would know what to stress in the final weeks of the campaign, the county chairmen found that the only predominant issue was the religious issue. I am confident that this was one of the factors which caused his defeat in California.

I recall that I was urged by the National Organization of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson to have the widest possible distribution and exhibition of the film which showed Kennedy's confrontation with the Houston ministers. This film was a very effective way of combating this religious prejudice during the campaign. I had considerable difficulty in the valley counties and also in many of the suburban counties trying to persuade the county chairmen even to show this film. They felt that any mention of the religious issue would be harmful—that it would be better not to mention it. I think they were wrong. I did persuade some of them to show this film but many of them wouldn't do it. They wouldn't make any effort to overcome the obvious prejudice. I think that Kennedy in West Virginia and with the Houston ministers, by meeting the issue face to face, did much better than if he had tried to ignore it.

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MORRISSEY: I have read that this film was shown in areas of heavy Catholic population as a means of getting the "Catholic vote" to the polls on election day.

HARLLEE: Yes, that was true. It did have that effect.

MORRISSEY: Were many of the dissident Democrats you referred to a moment ago people who had supported Adlai Stevenson [Adlai E. Stevenson] for the nomination?

HARLLEE: Yes, they were. There was a very strong feeling for Stevenson among some intellectuals, liberals, wealthy Democrats, Jewish people, and the like, and we were never quite able to overcome this. We never did get the complete, active support of all these people that they would have given to Stevenson. This again is one of the factors which caused Kennedy's defeat in California. They didn't really oppose Kennedy, because they intensely disliked Nixon [Richard M. Nixon]. But they didn't give the active support to him that these types of people are capable of giving in a political campaign.

MORRISSEY: Did you make special efforts to get their active support?

HARLLEE: Yes, we did. We had a special meeting of Stevensonians for Kennedy (it wasn't called that formally, of course, but that's a good way of referring to

these people). It was at the Fairmont Hotel in San Francisco and was staged by Governor "Pat" Brown and Mrs. Lucretia Grady [Lucretia Louise del Valle Grady], widow of the former Ambassador to Greece and Iran [Henry Francis Grady]. They spoke and I spoke and we made every effort to win them over. We had a little success but we never really got their complete support. Mrs. Grady felt strongly that she could have done more to bring the Stevensonians completely into the Kennedy camp, particularly in Los Angeles, but certain Democratic Party officials in California were not enthusiastic about her suggestions for additional effort in southern California and elsewhere.

MORRISSEY: Were the people running Kennedy's campaign nationally concerned about the strength and lukewarm attitude of the Stevensonians in California?

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HARLLEE: They never made that known to me personally if they were. I suppose they probably were. They must have been. But my contacts with people running the national campaign were pretty slight. I believe that Bobby Kennedy felt that things were going well in northern California. His brother actually carried the fifty counties in northern California by 93,000 votes. The problem lay in Orange County (in the suburbs of Los Angeles) and in San Diego County. Nixon carried Orange County and San Diego County by more than 60,000 votes each. Those two counties together gave him about 125,000 more votes than Kennedy received and there just wasn't enough strength elsewhere in the state to overcome this lead. Bobby Kennedy and Byron White [Byron R. "Whizzer" White], who was national chairman of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson, visited San Francisco in July of 1960, during the opening of the headquarters for Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson in northern California at 551 Market Street. We had a good opening; several thousand people were present. The later reports the national organization received from Paul B. ("Red") Fay and Ted Kennedy, who was the coordinator for the eleven western states, and from other persons, led them to realize that the big problem was in southern California. All subsequent trips which Bobby Kennedy made to California were to the southern part of the state. I had a great deal of contact with Ted Kennedy during those days, including a lot of campaigning. I must say that he certainly had his brother Jack's magnetism and vitality and drive and it was a great experience and privilege to have been able to work with him.

I made the whistle-stop train campaign with Senator Kennedy down through California in September of 1960 and I was again impressed by his speaking ability and his charisma with the crowds. The train stopped in each county seat it passed through. Kennedy would speak in support of local candidates and then talk about his position on national issues. Leaders in each county would get on and off the train as moved from county to county. Each one would appear on the observation platform at the rear of the train with Kennedy in his own county.

In one of those counties an ex-PT officer named Roberts [Joseph K. Roberts] who had served with Kennedy in the Solomons (he was chairman of Citizens for Kennedy and Johnson in that county) had a very pleasant visit with Kennedy while the train was moving through his county. Also I recall a speech in the auditorium in Oakland. Kennedy attracted

the biggest crowd ever gathered in that auditorium for a political speech. It was a very enthusiastic crowd.

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I believe that trip was the only whistle-stop train campaign made during the 1960 campaign.

MORRISSEY: When did the President-elect ask you to become a member of the Federal Maritime Commission?

HARLLEE: About three or four days after the election Ted Kennedy came back to San Francisco to clean up our operations there and he told me at that time that the President-elect wanted me to come back to Washington to be part of the team there. At that time they hadn't decided what position I might fill. They toyed with the idea of my becoming Naval Aide to the President, although I was retired from the Navy. I told Ted Kennedy I didn't think I could serve a very useful purpose as Naval Aide, that the Aide should be an active duty naval officer and one of a different type than myself. I went to New York and started in an excellent new job there in private business. Ted Kennedy contacted me again early in January of 1961 and told me that the President-elect would like me to serve on the Federal Maritime Board. I visited Washington again in mid-February of 1961, and the President told me personally he would like me to be a member of the Federal Maritime Board and be chairman as soon as it was possible to arrange it. His father had been the first chairman of the predecessor agency, the United States Maritime Commission, back in 1936, and I considered it a great honor to receive such an invitation and received a release from my New York employer, my close friend Edward I. Farley.

The Antitrust Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, after an investigation which lasted three years, reported that the regulation of the ocean freight industry had been grossly neglected by the Federal Maritime Board. President Kennedy, as a result of this investigation and the report of a similar investigation by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee, decided to reorganize the Federal Maritime Commission and the Maritime Administration so that the regulatory and promotional aspects of shipping would be completely separate. The Federal Maritime Commission would have no promotional functions, only regulatory functions. The Maritime Administration would remain in the Department of Commerce and was assigned all the functions connected with promoting the American merchant marine. The purpose of this reorganization was to allow the government to promote adequately the merchant marine and at the same time to insure

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that the public interest was served by adequate regulation of the ocean-borne trade and commerce of the United States, ninety percent of which is carried by foreign flag ships. Most of the general cargo is carried by steamship lines which belong to conferences. These conferences are cartels or near-monopolies and it was determined that these conferences must be regulated to insure they were not operating detrimentally to the United States.

In February of 1961, when the President spoke to me about being chairman of the Federal Maritime Board, he believed that the incumbent chairman, Ralph E. Wilson, an Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] appointee, would probably resign, especially if he lost the chairmanship. Wilson did not resign, however, which meant that there was no vacancy on the three-man board to which I could be appointed. A vacancy did not occur until July the first. In the meantime it was necessary to designate another chairman—someone other than Wilson—a Democratic member of the Board. Since this person would have been chairman for several months by the first of July it would not seem appropriate to make me chairman at that time, although it was possible to appoint me to the Board, which he did.

After I had served a week on the old Federal Maritime Board the reorganization went into effect and I was appointed by President Kennedy as a commissioner on the new Federal Maritime Commission, which was responsible for the regulatory functions connected with our ocean-borne commerce.

By August 26, 1963, it had become apparent to the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress, headed by Senator Paul Douglas [Paul H. Douglas], that the new Federal Maritime Commission, under the leadership of a chairman who had served since 1956 as a member of the old Federal Maritime Board and for two years as chairman of the new Federal Maritime Commission, had continued to perform the regulatory functions inadequately and in a way which was detrimental to American exports. President Kennedy consequently designated me as chairman of the Commission in an effort to improve the situation. This action was unprecedented. Not before in the history of the Board or Commission had a chairman been relieved before his term was up.

The President remarked to me at one time that the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 was the most important piece of legislation passed during that session of Congress. He strongly believed that trade expansion would not only promote the welfare of the Free World but also would help in the solution of economic problems—mainly unemployment and the balance of payments.

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Perhaps the principal purpose of the Federal Maritime Commission is to insure that the operations of the steamship conferences and independent carriers do not in any way discriminate against American exporters as compared to exporters from other countries or in any other way inhibit our exporting. Of course freight rates and practices on imports should not be excessive either.

The Commission also must insure that the steamship lines which carry domestic offshore cargo (i.e. to Alaska, Hawaii, Guam, Puerto Rico) charge proper rates and that the freight forwarders and terminals do not act in a manner contrary to the public interest.

One of the other very important functions of the Federal Maritime Commission is to insure that discriminatory measures of other nations do not reduce cargo carried by American flag ships. This has been a particularly acute problem in Latin America.

MORRISSEY: Why in Latin America?

HARLLEE: Because many nations in Latin America have enacted discriminations

against our shipping. Sometimes, for example, they levy taxes on cargoes carried by our merchant marine into those countries but excuse their own merchant marine from these taxes, which can be extremely high. Custom duties advantages and monetary exchange privileges are sometimes given to their own merchant marine but not to ours. Sometimes we officially and formally threaten them with measures of an equal and opposite sort. We have authority to do this and are required to do it under Section 19 of the Merchant Marine Act of 1920. We have been successful in getting them to remove many of these discriminations although it is a long and continuous fight. Specifically, in 1963, two individual steamship lines believed that a total of eight million dollars worth of freight rates were saved for these two lines by actions of the Commission.

MORRISSEY: Did President Kennedy retain an interest in the uses of PT boats?

HARLLEE: Yes, a great interest. I shared that interest with him and advocated the retention by the Navy of small, fast combatant craft with a shallow draft, which are capable of delivering weapons of great destructive power. Such craft are important in coastal or interisland waters in many of the critical areas of the world today and President Kennedy's

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Administration add programs providing for such craft, including purchase of the Nasty PT boats from Norway. I have written an article for the Naval Institute Proceedings which might be of interest to you.\*

MORRISSEY: Did the President ever comment to you about using PT boats in Cuba or Vietnam?

HARLLEE: I believe he was interested in this although I didn't talk to him personally about it. I do know that orders were issued during his Administration to send the few PT boats we do have out to Vietnam and I feel confident that their purpose was to serve counterinsurgency or counter-guerilla missions. I didn't actually talk to him in any detail about PT boats when he was in the White House although he did invite me to see *PT 109*, the movie, in company with him and a few of the other PT boat people. We talked about PT boats in World War II.

MORRISSEY: Do you recall his response to that movie?

HARLLEE: Yes, I do. He thought it was a very good movie. He was very pleasantly impressed with it. I remember he kidded me about the regular officer portrayed in not too good a light in that movie. President Kennedy said jokingly that that officer was supposed to be me. But that was strictly kidding because I was actually in a different combat theater. I was in New Guinea and he was in the Solomons.

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\* "Patrol Guerrilla Motor Boats," reprinted from *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, Vol. 90, No. 4 (April, 1964). See Appendix II.

MORRISSEY: Do you have any final impressions or anecdotes which characterize John Kennedy as the person you remember?

HARLLEE: I remember that he always had a great sense of humor. At his wedding, when I was going through the receiving line, he kidded me about the ribbons on my uniform. He always liked to joke about how regular officers got too many medals and awards while reserve officers and enlisted men got too few.

I recall a dinner Jo-Beth and I gave in 1948, in January of that year, and he was one of the guests. We took a group of about twenty or twenty-four to Napoleon's Restaurant in Washington. For entertainment I had another Irish-American named Leo Leary, a sort of showman and song-and-dance man who could tell stories well. Leary was a friend of mine and an amateur, not a professional. Actually

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he was in the clothing business at that time. I remember I had him telling the group some of his stories and Kennedy, in high good humor, kept heckling him. I had a problem keeping Kennedy quiet at that time. He didn't like people to show off, as he thought Leo Leary was doing, and good-humoredly he heckled him.

MORRISSEY: Any final impressions?

HARLLEE: I was particularly impressed by President Kennedy's tremendous interest in many long-range measures designed to benefit our nation. I have reference to the Alliance for Progress, trade expansion, medical care for the aged, the effectuation of a nuclear détente with Russia, for example.

I think these long-range measures will best indicate his greatness. His idea about selecting the best possible people for Annapolis and West Point is another example. Here was a subject of very little interest to many people because it is so long-range that you don't have any results to show for it for about thirty years. It takes about that long from the time of appointment to one of the service academies to the time an appointee becomes a national leader. And yet John Kennedy had a great interest in this subject. He actually did something about it, and he sacrificed the political gains he could have made by using these appointments in another way.

The man in the street all over the world was charmed by President Kennedy's grace and style, but I don't think he yet realizes the extent to which Kennedy initiated and fought for long-range programs that will benefit this country and the whole world. I concede that the more sophisticated observers realize this fully. And, of course, some of the problems he confronted have not yet been completely resolved. Civil rights is one such problem and medical care for the aged is another. But he started efforts to do something about these things and he made effective starts. His martyrdom will add to the chances of success. President Johnson, I think, is making every effort to carry Kennedy's hopes and ideals out. This is a bit of an eulogy, I realize, but I do sincerely feel that these observations are sound and objective.



MORRISSEY: It's an interesting point. Anything else?

HARLLEE: No, I don't think so.

MORRISSEY: Thank you very much, Admiral Harlee.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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John Harllee Oral History Transcript – JFK #1  
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Senator John F. Kennedy and Rear Admiral John Harllee, U.S.N. (Ret.) on whistle stop campaign train, California, September, 1960



**UNITED STATES  
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# Proceedings

**Patrol Guerrilla  
Motor Boats**

by John Harlee,  
Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (Ret.)

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## Patrol Guerrilla Motor Boats

*With the end of World War II, and the dawn of the age of terror, the PT boat seemed doomed to become an anachronism. But, today, at least eight nations besides our own appreciate the merits of fast motor torpedo/gun boats, such as the Norwegian Nasty boat above. Such boats are not enough, says Admiral Harllee, who has ideas of his own about the kind of craft we will need to bottle up, and go in after, an enemy who chooses to make his fight on river deltas or in shallow coastal waters.*



by John Harllee, Rear Admiral, U. S. Navy (Retired)

Naval planners have long thought in terms of the air above the seas, the surface of the open seas, and the waters below the surface. There are still other regions of the sea at which the U. S. Navy needs to take a better look—the coastal, interisland, and river delta waters in and around foreign lands.

Today, the United States faces continental powers which control vast areas and resources. Yet the surface sea operations of our potential enemies can be confined to restricted waters, where the cover of land and night can be used—where seaborne guerrillas of one side or the other can patrol.

Large ships, aircraft, and submarines can control the open seas and can also exert limited control over restricted waters, but the draft of these ships keeps them out of shallow water. Aircraft cannot perform many types of operations useful in such waters. What is needed are smaller warships, craft with much less draft and which possess great speed and maneuverability.

Small warships are needed for the control of coastal and interisland waters and river mouths of Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Africa. In many parts of Asia, for example, our potential enemies are short of land transportation and would therefore use coastal and river waterways as much as possible to mount and support a war effort.

Too, the great numbers of potential enemy small craft presently concentrated opposite Taiwan pose an invasion threat. We should have small ships to assist or to relieve the U. S. Seventh Fleet there, especially in case of low visibility attacks. In quiet times, or in times of crises elsewhere, the Seventh Fleet should not be pinned down to Taiwan.

Proposals have been made that our allies handle small craft operations while this country's Navy assumes responsibility for the high seas. But most of our allies outside Europe do

not have such a capability. I am convinced that the United States should control certain situations directly with its own small warships.

A need for suitable minor war vessels was evidenced during the first few months of the Korean hostilities on the western coast of Korea. Our destroyers, YMSs, and PCs were unable to get into the very shallow waters to deal effectively with the enemy small craft which were laying mines, transporting troops, and carrying supplies, especially during night operations. Our ships often lacked enough speed and maneuverability to be able to reach the enemy's reported position in time to be effective.

According to the 1963 issue of *Jane's Fighting Ships*, the Soviet Union has developed a new-type guided-missile craft called Komar. Displacing 73 tons, this boat has a speed of 42 knots. Converted from the Soviet P8 motor torpedo boat, there are reportedly more than 50 in existence, and the Soviets have given some of them to Cuba. There is little comfort in contemplating the proximity of these craft to the Panama Canal. Russia's Military Assistance Program, according to the *U. S. News and World Report*, includes shipment of small frigates with guided missile capability to Indonesia, near the Strait of Malacca, and shipment of small naval vessels to Morocco, near the Strait of Gibraltar. In addition, Russia has shown an interest in military assistance to Syria, the United Arab Republic, and Yemen, all near the Suez Canal. It is obvious that the Russians understand the importance of gaining control of the narrow waters of the world.

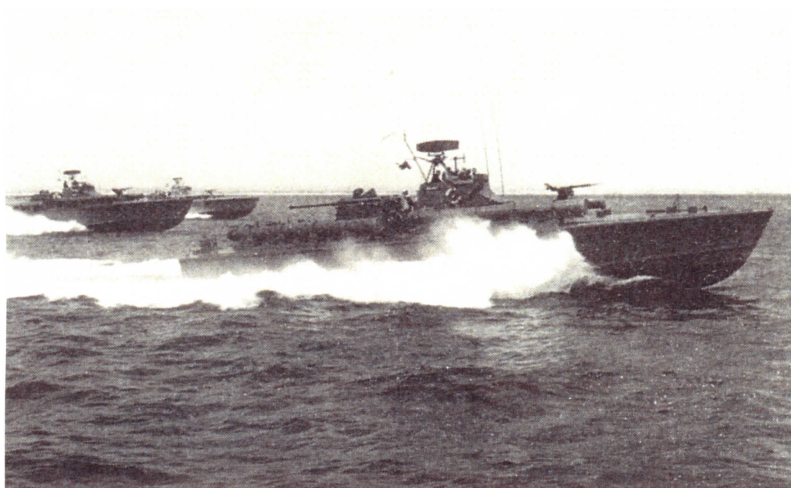
Recent statistics on the Russian Navy, as reported by Brigadier General James D. Hittle, U. S. Marine Corps (Retired) in the 21 December 1962 issue of *Life Magazine* indicate that they have 1,000 torpedo boats. It does not follow that we have to match them,

just as we do not have to match their submarines numerically. We should, however, have craft ready to cope with them in shallow waters. We should also be ready to help our allies in related efforts.

Even aside from protecting our amphibious operations, small, fast vessels could act as rocket, guided-missile, gun and torpedo boats,

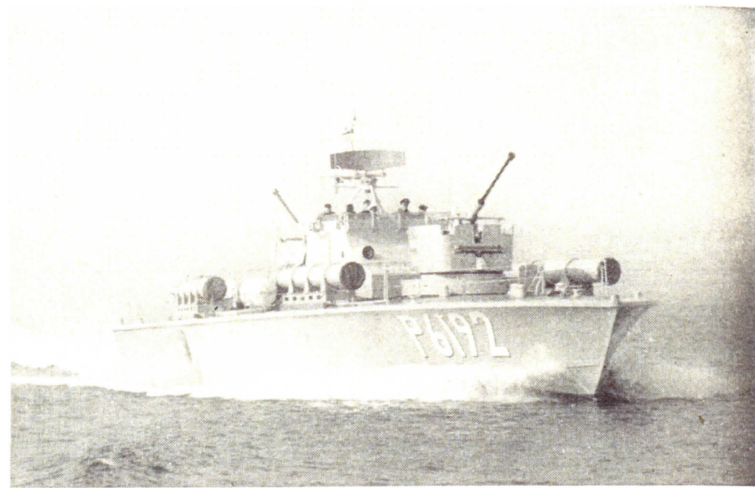
and could be used to accomplish a variety of other utility missions in restricted waters all over the world. Other possible areas of usefulness would be the Philippines, Indonesia, the eastern Mediterranean, the Scandinavian seas, and the Persian Gulf.

As a hypothetical illustration of our future use of such small warships, let us consider



*Norwegian Nasty*

*Boat Services, Ltd.*



*West German Pfeil*

### FAST PATROL MOTOR TORPEDO/GUN BOATS

COUNTRY	LENGTH	BEAM	DRAFT	DIS- PLACE- MENT	HORSE POWER	PROPULSION PLANT	SPEED	ARMA- MENT	NUMBER AND TYPE
<i>YUGOSLAVIA</i> (Torpedni)	69	21	7	60 tons	2,500	3 Packard gas engines	40 knots	1 40-mm.	65 MTB
<i>ITALY</i> (Ophir) (For Israeli)	70	17	5	40 tons	2,700	3 diesels	40 knots	1 20-mm. 1 40-mm.	6 PGM
<i>FINLAND</i> (Nuoli 1)	72	21	5	45 tons	2,700	3 diesels	40 knots	1 20-mm. 1 40-mm.	9 PTF
<i>NORWAY</i> (Nasty)	75	24	6½	64 tons	6,200	2 Napier diesels	45 knots	2 20-mm. 2 40-mm.	8 PTF
<i>SWEDEN</i> (MTB)	157	18	5	155 tons	7,800	3 Deimler Benz diesels	37 knots	2 40 mm.	12 MTB
<i>GERMANY</i> (Pfeil)	92	24	6½	75 tons	8,500	2 Bristol gas turbines	50 knots	2 40-mm. 2 torpedoes	1 MTB
<i>GERMANY</i> (Jaguar)	140	23	7	183 tons	12,000	4 Mercedes-Benz diesels	42 knots	2 40-mm. 2 torpedoes	40 MTB
<i>UNITED KINGDOM</i> (Brave Class)	90	25	6½	89 tons	10,500	3 Bristol gas turbines	50 knots	2 40-mm. 2 torpedoes	2 MTB/ MGB
<i>SOVIET UNION</i> (P-8, Komar)	83	20	5	73 tons	5,000	Gas turbines	42 knots	4 25-mm. 2 torpedoes	50 MTB*
<i>UNITED STATES</i> (PTFs 1&2)	95-105	25	6	82 tons	10,000	4 Packard gas engines	47 knots	2 20-mm. 2 40-mm.	2 PTF
<i>UNITED STATES</i> (Nasty) PTFs 3-8	80	24	6½	80 tons	6,200	2 Napier diesels	45 knots	2 20-mm. 2 40-mm.	6 PTF
<i>UNITED STATES</i> (Fast Gun Boat)	165	24	7	240 tons	15,000	Combination gas turbine and diesel	50 knots	1 3-in. 1 40-mm. 2 50-caliber	2 PGM
<i>UNITED STATES</i> (Proposed) Patrol Guerrilla Motor Boat	80	20	6	70 tons	10,000	Combination gas turbine and diesel	50-60 knots	2 20-mm. 2 40-mm. guided missiles,	Several squadrons of PGM



the PT boats which were given to Cuba by the Soviet Union. There is always the possibility that Cuba might use them to operate against a small Latin American nation friendly to the United States—e.g., Guatemala. It might be awkward diplomatically for the United States to intervene, and it would certainly be expensive for our aircraft or large ships to be

guns, such as the 40-mm., the 37-mm., and extra 20-mm., plus 50-caliber and 30-caliber machine guns. The additional weight was offset by the substitution of light torpedo racks for the heavy torpedo tubes, by the use of lighter torpedoes, and in many cases by the temporary removal of two or more of the four torpedoes. Spin-stabilized rockets and mortars



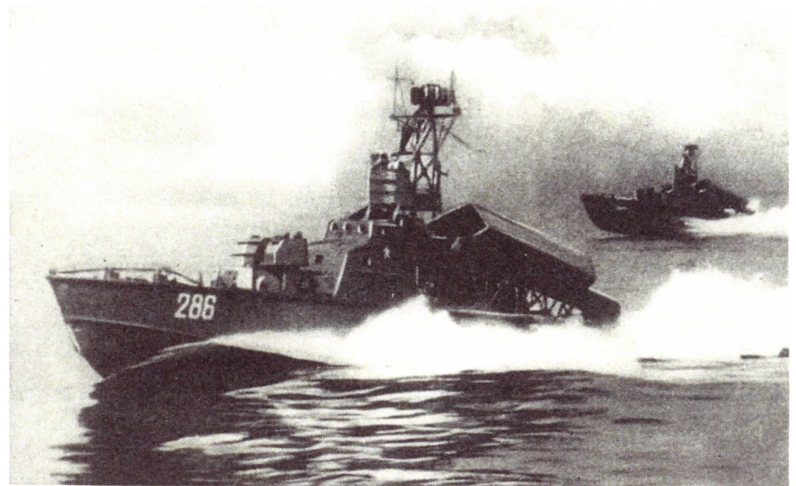
*West German Jaguar*

diverted to patrol against such activity. Latin American nations friendly to the United States, then, should have their own small ships to deal directly with such threats.

Another hypothetical case might be a blockade, by the United States, of a small, politically antagonistic nation. Here our small warships would have many advantages over our larger warships. In some blockade situations, a warship with a draft less than that of destroyers might be useful, and the use of small craft might permit better positioning of more important ships.

Our future needs for small warships will differ from those of World War II, but let us look at the record of that war for such benefit as we can derive from the lessons of the past. Then we can consider the ideal characteristics of our small warships of the future.

Motor torpedo boats, which were called PT (Patrol Torpedo) boats and which were also known as MTBs, were the closest approach the U. S. Navy had to the type of small warships now called for. Until very recently and for a few years during and after World War II, the U. S. Navy has not been active in the MTB field. In the middle of that war, many U. S. Navy PT boats were in effect changed to motor gunboats by the addition of several



*Soviet Komar*

*Sovfoto*

were also used, especially for shore bombardment. In addition to the modified PT boats, the need for small gunboats was demonstrated by the fact that a number of 110-foot and 173-foot PCs were converted to gunboats.

PT boats were most useful as torpedo boats during campaigns when our surface forces faced naval superiority, such as in the early days of the Solomons campaign. In the war in the Pacific, the final Japanese records indicate that U. S. PTs sank two Japanese destroyers, assisted in the sinking of three others, and damaged two cruisers with torpedoes. In the Mediterranean, German records indicate that the Axis lost six small ships of destroyer types (600 to 900 tons) as a result of U. S. PT boat attacks. A very considerable tonnage of other shipping was also sunk by U. S. PTs in the Mediterranean. Our PTs performed the following additional missions in World War II:

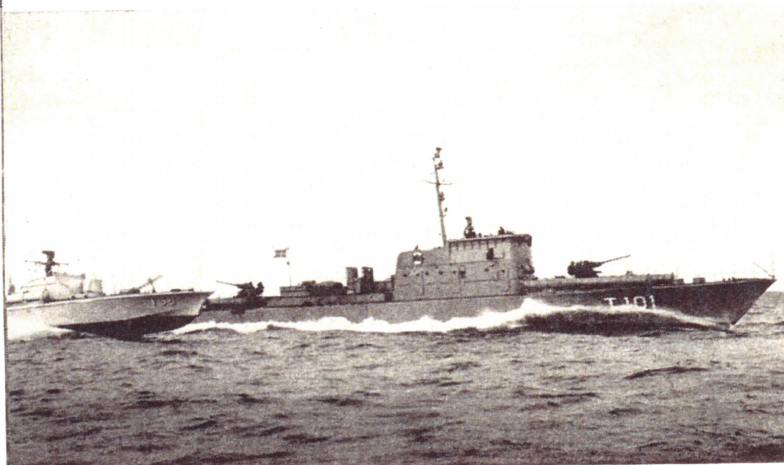
(1) They interdicted the movement of enemy coastal and interisland traffic of small ships and craft. This was particularly important in the Southwest Pacific where, during the nights, they prevented the reorientation of the Japanese forces after General MacArthur's leapfrog landings. The terrain of New Guinea and many of the other islands



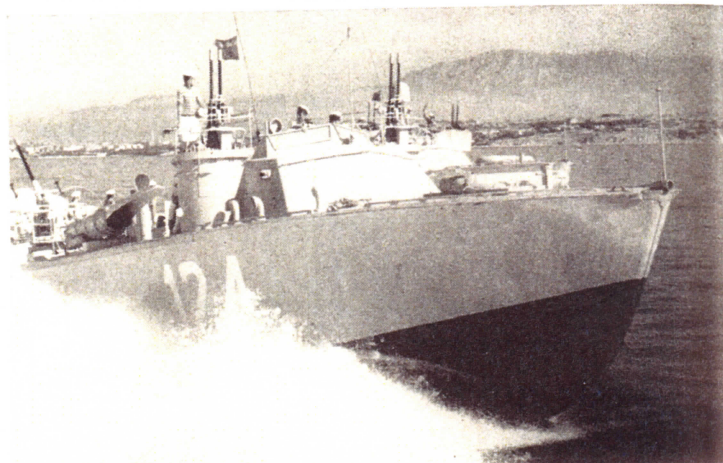
was so difficult for transport that coastal trails and barges were used by the Japanese for evacuation operations, supply, and the shifting of forces. The Japanese often protected the coastal trails and barges with shore batteries. U. S. PTs made a significant contribution to the immobilization and "dying on the vine" of many thousands of Japanese.

Seventh Fleet for this type of operation. The boats were disposed in groups of three, extended over 52 miles of track, for their primary mission of contact scouting. This spread prevented a massed attack by all 39 boats against the enemy task force, but it did enable them to accomplish their primary mission.

These, then, are the missions which the PTs



Swedish 40-ton and 155-ton MTBs



Yugoslavian *Torpedni*

(2) They conducted "flycatcher" operations against smaller craft, particularly in the Philippines when the Japanese abortively tried to use some suicide craft toward the end of the war.

(3) They landed and supported coast watchers, guerrillas, and commandos.

(4) They provided rapid transport for small numbers of personnel and small amounts of material.

(5) They assisted in amphibious warfare by conducting diversionary operations, carrying out pilot and escort duty, spotting coastal batteries, and laying smoke screens.

(6) They conducted air-sea rescue and courier operations. In 1942, they rescued General MacArthur from Corregidor, and later in the war they rescued numerous downed aviators.

(7) They conducted shore bombardment of lightly defended enemy areas ashore. They did much of this in the Southwest Pacific.

(8) They swept moored mines with "skim sweeps" in Coron Bay, Palawan, in the southwestern Philippines, in 1945.

(9) They conducted reconnaissance for heavier naval forces. At the Battle of Surigao Strait in October 1944, the PTs were given a "Well Done" by the Commander of the

carried out in World War II. Some, though very minor, are listed to give an idea of the potentially great versatility of a small combatant craft.

On the other hand, PT boats had many limitations. They were shore-based. Their tenders could not hoist them on board or otherwise completely support them. They required considerable logistic support, especially of high octane gas, and ammunition, as well as engine and underwater hull repair facilities.

PT range was relatively short—only 300 to 400 miles at top speed. The boats were limited in this respect primarily by fuel. In addition, their low level of habitability limited the combat effectiveness of the crew if they were underway more than a day or two in anything except the calmest waters.

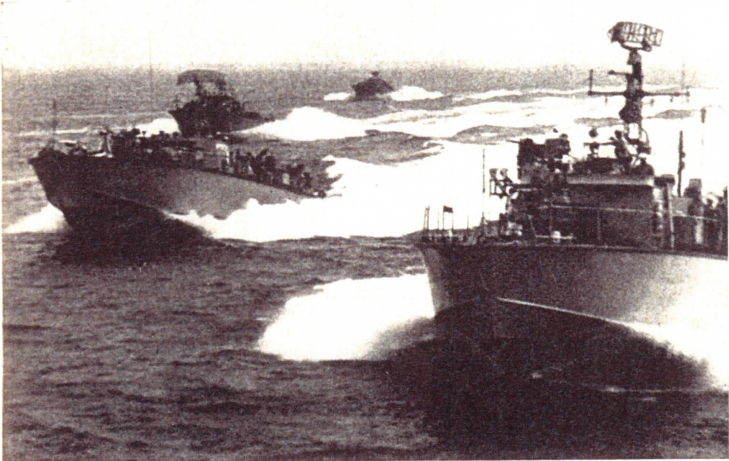
PT boats could not operate effectively as combat units in seas rougher than State 3. They remained afloat in rough water and got from one place to another, but their speed was drastically reduced, choice of course narrowed, gun platforms rendered unstable, visibility through spray decreased, and their personnel had to devote excessive attention to "hanging on." Cold weather severely aggravated these problems. Some boats were better



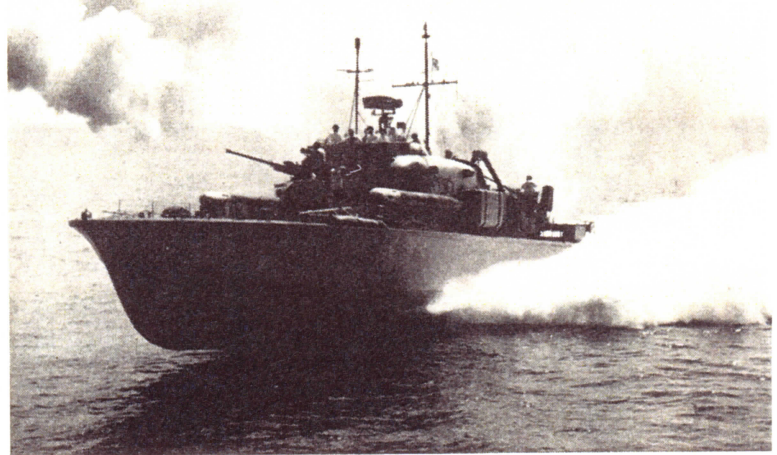
than others, as were some personnel, but PTs were essentially calm water craft.

Also, PT boats could not be relied upon to operate in daylight in areas where they were subject to air attack. The development of enemy radar in the later stages of the War rendered an undetected attack by PT boats very difficult, if not practically impossible.

diesels because of economy, increased range, greater safety, easier overhaul and repair, and fewer logistic problems with respect to fuel transportation and storage. The engines should be as quiet as possible. However, gas turbines could and should be included to be employed as auxiliaries for the bursts of speed needed in combat. The capabilities of enemy



**American PTFs**



**British *Brave***

*British Office of Information*

In view of these limitations, it would appear that for the future the PT-type craft as it existed in World War II would not be the ideal, shallow-water, all-around combat craft.

The ship we need for versatile restricted water operations in the future should be large enough to be sufficiently seaworthy for effectiveness in moderate seas, carry armament of sufficient size to outrange likely enemy patrol craft, and have a cruising radius which will not unduly limit its operations (perhaps about 500 to 700 miles).

The ship should be small enough to operate in shallow water, present a small target, and be highly maneuverable in confined waters.

A craft with a length of approximately 80 feet and a beam of approximately 20 feet would provide adequate deck area. Its draft should probably be about six feet. It should have good maneuverability at low speeds, as well as at high speeds—and this should be possible for a boat of this size. Such a boat would probably displace about 70 tons. (Fast craft, displacing, let us say, eight or ten tons, are needed for work in the upper reaches of rivers, perhaps with a draft of only two to four feet, but such craft are highly specialized and can be fabricated more quickly.)

The main engines of our boat should be

patrol craft indicate that well above 40 knots should be the burst speed, even though slow speed and stealth (i.e., lack of wake and noise) would be used on patrols and in most attacks.

The armament could and should be flexible. Rockets, 20-mm. and 40-mm. guns (larger if possible), homing torpedoes in lightweight racks, or small guided missiles could be carried depending on the missions. For example, the Navy's medium-range visual guided missile requiring only one operator to "drive" it to the target, the "French SS12," providing both surface-to-surface and surface-to-air capability, and the Sea-Mauler, a self-contained short-range anti-aircraft missile, are types of weapons offering the desired flexibility. Depth charges could be useful against hard-to-sink targets, such as junks, and they could also be used to discourage pursuit by larger ships.

The Bureau of Naval Weapons, under the guidance of the Chief of Naval Operations, should plan a weapons installation especially for these craft. Some type of permanent fire control equipment should be provided. At the same time, the vessel should be able to vary the mix of weapons depending on the mission. For example, torpedoes could easily be loaded



or unloaded into or from racks. Small surface-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles could be carried or not, as could depth charges. Even guns could be removed or replaced with a little more effort if the installation were to be so designed.

The ship and its electronic and other equipment should be kept simple and rugged in order to exploit the big advantages of: the minimum of training which is required for the crews, and the ease of use by foreign allies. The craft should be sufficiently habitable for a patrol of several days, without crew fatigue significantly decreasing its effectiveness.

At this point, let us take a look at recent developments in hydrofoils and the apparent advantages over a conventional hull: speed, seaworthiness, and a more stable weapons platform. When foilborne, the hydrofoil can ride over choppy seas, and by means of automatically controlled, completely submerged foils, can ride over larger seas, with her up and down motion dampened by the foils. For example, the PCH-1—Patrol Craft Hydrofoil—designed for antisubmarine warfare, is the first operational military hydrofoil built for the U. S. Navy. Named the *High Point*, after the city of that name in North Carolina, she is 115 feet long, 31 feet in beam, and displaces 110 tons. The draft is 17 feet with foils extended and six feet when retracted. Power for hullborne operation of the *High Point* is provided by a 600-h.p. diesel engine which produces a speed of 12 knots. Two 3,000-h.p. Bristol Proteus gas turbines provide power for foilborne speeds between 40 and 50 knots. Driven by four contrarotating propellers located at either end of the submerged nacelles, the *High Point* with its payload and crew of 13 officers and men has a range of 2,000 miles if borne on the surface and 700 miles if planing as a hydrofoil. The *High Point* has an aluminum hull for lightness in weight, as do most of the hydrofoils.

The payload of a hydrofoil is somewhat less than for a conventional hull at speeds up to approximately 50 knots. Above that speed, the conventional-hull advantage disappears, and the hydrofoil becomes superior. Under most circumstances, however, the payload disadvantage is not sufficient to prevent a reasonably sized hydrofoil boat from having the necessary armament and desired range.

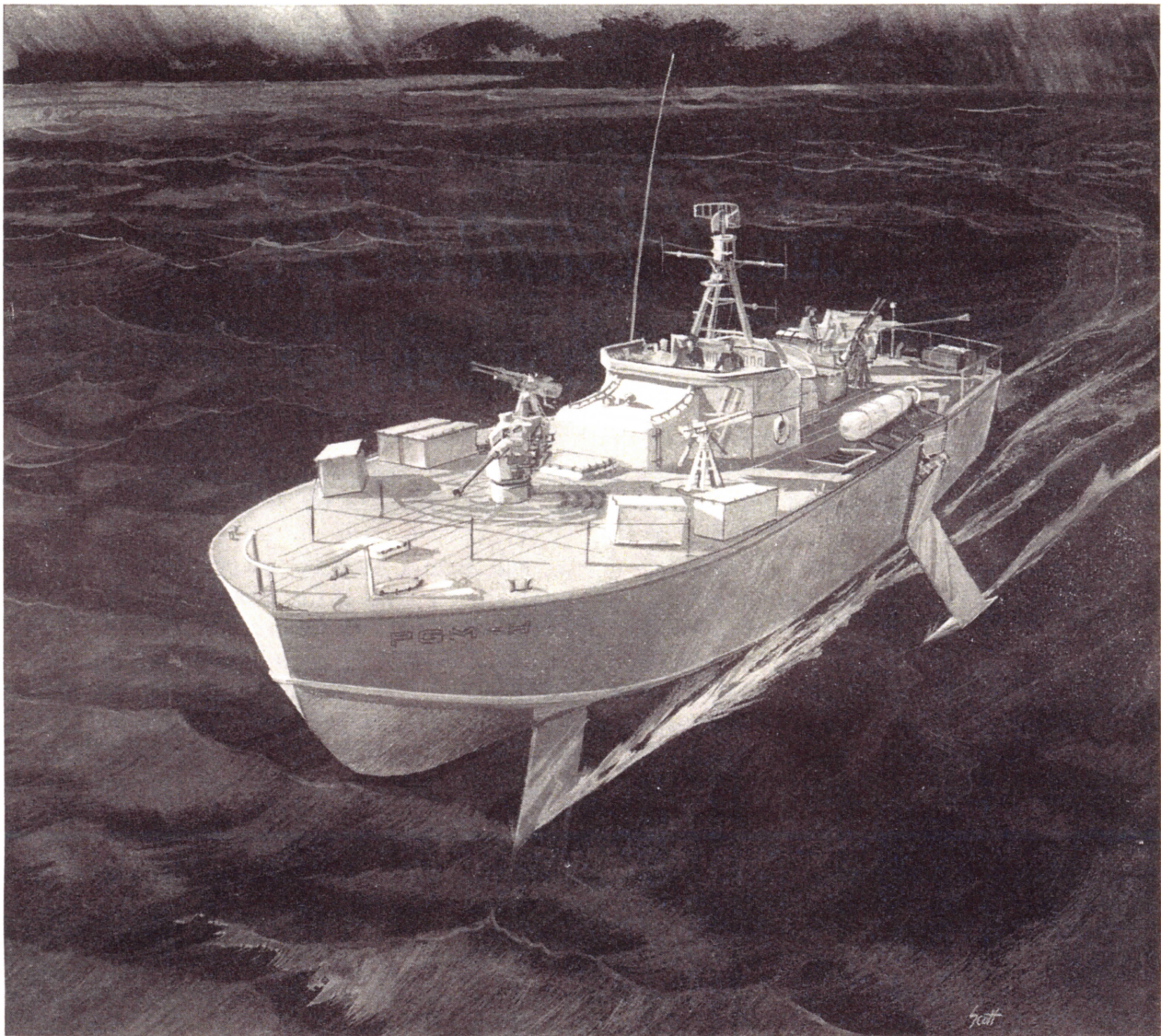
Hydrofoils are currently being used in Europe for commercial passenger operations. Italy, Switzerland, and the Soviet Union have hydrofoil passenger service on various lakes and inland waterways. Stimulated by this commercial application of hydrofoils, the Maritime Administration of the U. S. Department of Commerce, in conjunction with the U. S. Navy, is engaged in a program to develop the first commercial hydrofoil vessel in the United States. Named the HS (for Hydrofoil Ship) *Denison*, this craft has a forward foil configuration of the surface-piercing type, while the after foil is similar to the Navy's submerged foil design. Powered by 14,000-h.p. General Electric gas turbine, the *Denison* displaces 80 tons and has a speed of about 60 knots. The length of the *Denison* is 128 feet and the beam 41 feet.

Other current developments in the Navy's hydrofoil program include the 320-ton aluminum hull Auxiliary General Experimental Hydrofoil (AGEH). This ship has an over-all length of 212 feet, a beam of 70 feet (over-all including foils) and a design speed in excess of 80 knots. Four 14,000-h.p. gas turbines will provide power. Although the AGEH is principally designed for antisubmarine warfare, this does not preclude the installation of weapons or equipment for other missions.

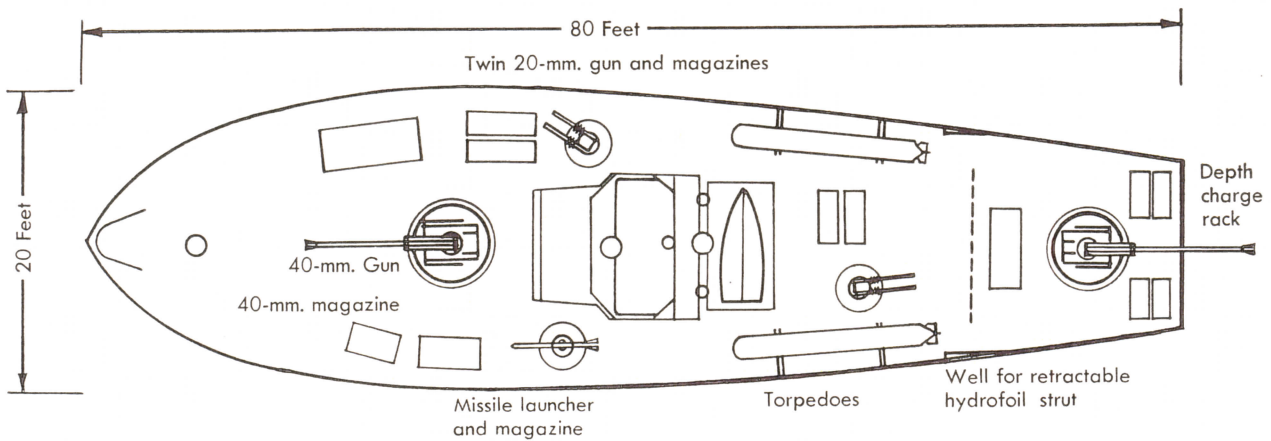
A Landing Craft, Vehicle and Personnel Hydrofoil (LCVP(H)) has been built recently by the Navy's Bureau of Ships. Designed to meet the need for greater speeds for landing craft than was required in World War II, this craft displaces 12 tons and has a speed in excess of 35 knots.

We should not overlook another vehicle called the SKMR-1 or Hydroskimmer. This type of vehicle is also known as a Hovercraft or Ground Effects Machine (GEM). It possesses many advantages from a military standpoint, such as high-speed ability at zero draft, amphibious capability, and a large load capability when compared with that of the helicopter. The SKMR-1 is a peripheral air-jet aircraft powered by four gas turbine engines which produce a 70-knot speed at a cruising height of one-and-a-half feet. With an over-all length of 65 feet and beam of 28 feet, it was delivered August 1963. The most successful development of hovercraft to date is in the United Kingdom, where a crossing of the





**PATROL GUERRILLA MOTOR BOAT-HYDROFOIL (PGM-H)**



Displacement—70 tons  
 Speed—50–60 knots  
 Armament:  
 Two twin 20-mm.  
 Two single 40-mm.  
 One missile launcher  
 Two torpedoes  
 12 depth charges

Propulsion plant—Gas turbine or high speed bursts, and diesel for cruising.  
 Range—500 miles at 50 Knots  
 Draft—Six feet with foils retracted

Note: When submerged type hydrofoils are developed further, they might be used on this craft to provide better rough water capability.



English Channel was successfully accomplished at a speed of 30 knots. Although the ground effects machine is a little too far in the future to serve our purposes at this time, development of this type vehicle should continue in view of its great potential advantages.

Water-jet propulsion must also be considered, but at present it is less efficient than propulsion by conventional propellers. Its big possible advantage of somewhat less underwater noise is more important to an antisubmarine warfare craft than it is to the type in which we are interested.

All in all, it appears that the advantages lie with hydrofoils for the U. S. Navy owing to the importance of speed and seaworthiness. However, consideration must be given to the state of maritime development of many of our allies who also need small warships. In their cases, the added complexity of hydrofoils, their controls and their engines, must be considered as well as the greater expense. Totaling up the pros and cons for some of our less technically advanced allies, a conventional hull is probably the best.

In view of the relatively small expense of these craft, it would seem best to develop some of each type—the hydrofoils primarily for use by the U. S. Navy and other advanced navies, and the conventional hull for some U. S. use and the use of other allies.

The ship we need could be designated a PGM—not as a Patrol Gun Motor Boat—because today this has a connotation of obsolescence, but as a “Patrol Guerrilla Motor Boat.” Besides using the cover of night and coastline in clandestine operations or during missions against enemy craft which so operate, the PGM would be employed in such forms of unconventional warfare as the support of Underwater Demolition and Sea-Air-Land Teams (SEALs). Thus, these ships would be used in part for waterborne guerrilla and counter-guerrilla warfare. Guerrillas have been successful in some critical spots of the world, and this is a form of warfare to which we should pay more attention.

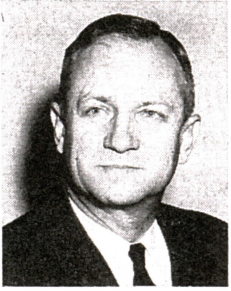
The U. S. Navy is now underway in the development of ships which are designated PGMs, although these are “Patrol Gun Motorboats.” The budget for fiscal 1963 included two, and more are provided for in the 1964 budget. They will be 165-foot conven-

tional hull ships drawing seven feet, with diesels and gas turbines giving them a dash speed of approximately 40 knots. These craft will probably be sufficiently seaworthy, will be able to carry armament of adequate size, and will have a long enough cruising radius for patrol guerrilla motorboat purposes. However, they will be far too large, they will not be sufficiently maneuverable, and they will present much too big a target. Also, they will be much too expensive (about 3.5 million dollars apiece) and they will require too many men (three officers and 21 enlisted men). They will undoubtedly be useful, but not for the missions suggested in this article.

While there is no single specification for hull, power, and armament combination which would operate successfully in all the restricted waters of the world in the manner in which we are interested herein, it is the author's opinion that the best combination to accomplish the patrol guerrilla motorboat mission for the U. S. Navy is a hydrofoil configuration with an aluminum hull about 80 feet in length, 20 feet in beam, and about 70 tons displacement. (*See illustrations on preceding page.*) Diesel engines should be used, with gas turbines for bursts of speed. With foils retracted, draft should be approximately six feet. A range capability of 500 miles at 50 knots would be desirable. The armament mix should be variable with 40-mm. and 20-mm. (bigger if possible) guns, small missiles, torpedoes in lightweight racks, and optional depth charges. A boat with these specifications should be seaworthy, capable of carrying required armament, highly maneuverable in confined waters, operable in shallow water. It should, however, have a long radius and present a small target.

In addition, a conventional wooden hull rather than hydrofoil, but with the same general characteristics, should also be developed. True, that is a large order, but our designers and shipbuilders are capable of handling these assignments.

At first impression, the boat recommended here would appear to be the same as the World War II PT boat. As a matter of fact, it is about the same in size, but there are highly significant differences. The recommended hydrofoil PGM is superior in seaworthiness because it rides over the seas; the conventional



A GRADUATE of the U. S. Naval Academy with the Class of 1934, Rear Admiral Harlee saw extensive service in PT boats during World War II and was executive officer of the USS *Manchester* (CL-83) during the Korean War. Commander of Destroyer Division 152 (1955-1956), and Chief of Staff for Commander De-

stroyer Flotilla 3 (1956-1957), he commanded the USS *Rankin* (AKA-103) in 1957-1958. At the time of his retirement in October 1959, he was in charge of the Weapons Production Program in the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations. He was appointed a Member, Federal Maritime Board in 1961 and subsequently appointed Commissioner. In August 1963, he was designated Chairman of the Federal Maritime Commission.

hull recommended must be superior in construction. It is superior in armament because of advances in guided missiles and other weaponry and because of a better built-in interchangeability (i.e., better ability to vary the mix of weapons). The suggested boat has a greater cruising radius because of the much smaller fuel consumption of diesels as compared to gasoline engines. It has more maneuverability because of the bursts of high speed permitted by gas turbines. It requires less logistic support because less diesel fuel is

required and diesels are easier to repair and keep tuned up.

The craft the U. S. Navy now has which are closest to these specifications are the PTFs. Two of these craft have large aluminum hulls, 95 and 105 feet in length, built in the United States for the U. S. Navy in 1951 as PTs. The other six are Norwegian "Nasty" PT boats (PTFs 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8), 80 feet in length, with 45 knots speed, two 40-mm., and two 20-mm. The "Nasty" boats have proven quite seaworthy with all wood (mahogany laminated) hulls and metal alloy bulkheads and superstructures. They have diesel engines, which represents quite a breakthrough in speed for this type of engine. The six "Nasty" class PTFs have been deployed to the Pacific and will operate out of Subic Bay.

We should develop with much greater dispatch a sizeable working nucleus of "Patrol Guerrilla Motor Boats" and encourage our allies in the development and exploitation of these essential weapon systems. Part of this nucleus should be kept in the United States near Washington, D. C. (at Norfolk, for example) for developmental purposes, but some should be positioned near the narrow waters, the trouble spots of the world. If we do not proceed vigorously along these lines, we shall be neglecting an element of sea power to which our Navy should be dedicated.



AS I REMEMBER JOHN FITZGERALD KENNEDY

I first met John F. Kennedy in July of 1942 in a room at Northwestern University, Chicago, Illinois. Lt. John D. Buckley<sup>e</sup>, U. S. Navy and I interviewed him separately for assignment to PT boats. I recall him as a young man of very boyish appearance and great enthusiasm and desire to get into combat. He had had considerable sailing experience including an achievement of a sailing championship, and had participated in athletics. He was a Harvard graduate and apparently an inadequate student. On these bases we selected him for assignment to Motor Torpedo Boat squadron training at the training center at Melville, Rhode Island (near Newport).

I was Senior Instructor of the MTB Training Center and observed young Kennedy in classes and on the boats as very promising material for the service. He was a sincere and hard working student and showed particular aptitude in boat handling. As a matter of fact, he was such an outstanding student that I selected him for assignment to the training squadron at Melville. This was in the days - in the summer of 1942 - before there were enough necessary combat veterans to fill the ranks of the instructors required for the massive number of students undergoing Naval training all over the country. At the MTB Training Center as well as elsewhere, we took a few of the best students and made them instructors. Kennedy was extremely unhappy at being selected as a member of the training squadron - in effect an instructor - because he yearned with zeal to get out to the war zone and do his share of the fighting. As a matter of fact, he and I



had some very hard words about this assignment and I thought I had made another enemy for life, but I insisted that he remain with us. It was not our intention to hold him as an instructor for the rest of the war but for 6 to 12 months. Due to his impatience to get into action, this seemed an eternity.

My wife and I had dinner a few times with Jack Kennedy, as I called him then, in the home of a mutual friend whom I had also assigned to the PT training squadron at Melville, Raymond C. Turnbull. Jack Kennedy impressed me as an eager, widely read young man of broad interests and tremendous dedication to his country and enthusiasm for the part he hoped to play in its great conflict.

After a couple months in the training center at Melville, Kennedy received orders out into the war zone. I was somewhat surprised to the orders but I suspected that some strings had been pulled. This suspicion was later confirmed when I had occasion to review his record in the Bureau of Naval Personnel in 1947. Tremendous effort had been brought to bare to get him into the combat zone and I must say that this is an admirable use of such influence.

Soon after I was also ordered into the Pacific but in a different area; i.e., New Guinea. I did not see him again until he was in Congress in Washington early in 1947. Early in that year I visited him in the House Office Building and we talked about the Navy and in particular about methods of selecting the best possible officer material for Annapolis and West Point. He became so interested in the subject that he asked Secretary

of the Navy, Forrestal to assign me to his office for research work along these lines. I spent the last 6 months of 1947 doing this on a part time basis, and then the first half of 1948 I was assigned to his office full time basis to complete the job. Congressman Kennedy was extremely interested in seeing that the best possible midshipmen and cadets were selected because he felt that they would play an important role in the welfare of their country in the future. He was especially inclined toward the more progressive and advanced methods of personnel selection. We worked out a system which divorced him and political influence completely from the selection of the candidates, the final decision concerning which was done by the board of three persons appointed by him - a clergyman, a reserve military officer and a school official or teacher.

During the period that I was in his office I was tremendously impressed with him and believed that he was so similar to Franklin Roosevelt in magnetism and political pragmatism that I became absolutely certain that he would someday be President of the United States. I thought that it was interesting to note that he also had superficial resemblances to FDR, such as his connection with the Navy, health problems, wealth, a prep school and Harvard background and an apostle of the Democratic party faith. I admired his political courage, determined by his advocacy of the St. Lawrence Seaway (which almost everybody else in New England opposed) and his opposition to James Curly, then an extremely powerful figure in Boston politics. On social occasions I noted the grace and sparkle of his personality.

From 1948 to 1960 I made contact with him from time to time including attendance at his wedding in September, 1963. On that beautiful occasion I remarked to my wife as we danced on the platform put up on Hammersmith for the reception, "We have attended the wedding of a future President of the United States".

Early in 1959 I asked him to help me get a more challenging assignment in the Navy because the one I had in the Pentagon was too routine and easy. *It sounded very good - in charge of weapons + weapons production programs in the office of the chief of Naval Operations was actually too routine + too easy. I wanted a more*  
 He immediately sent a letter to the Chief of Naval Operations which was extremely kind and thoughtful on his part.

During the campaign of 1960, on the recommendation of his brothers, Bobby and Ted and Paul Fay Jr. of San Francisco, the then Senator Kennedy appointed me Chairman of Citizens for Kennedy in Northern California (I had voluntarily retired from the Navy in October of 1959, largely in hopes of playing some part, however minor, in what I was confident would be his campaign for the presidency). To flash back for a moment, I knew that he would run for the Presidency in 1960 because after he lost the Vice Presidential nomination in 1956 he was determined to try for the presidency in 1960 and I knew that when he tried he would win.

I made the Whistle-Stop-Train campaign with him down through California in September of 1960 and I was again impressed by his speaking ability and his charisma with the crowds.



I will comment briefly on the items listed in the letter from the Attorney General with which I have some connection.

REORGANIZATION OF REGULATORY AGENCIES

President Kennedy asked me to come to Washington to be a member of the old Federal Maritime Board and ultimately as Chairman. His father had been the first Chairman of the predecessor agency the United States Maritime Commission back in 1936, and I considered it a great honor to receive such an invitation. The Antitrust Subcommittee of the House Judiciary Committee, after an investigation that lasted three years reported that the regulation of the ocean freight industry had been grossly neglected by the Federal Maritime Board. President Kennedy as a result of this investigation and report of a similar investigation by the House Merchant Marine and Fisheries Committee decided to re-organize the Federal Maritime Commission and Maritime Administration so that the promotional and regulatory aspects of whipping would be completely separate. The purpose of this was to allow the Government to adequately promote the American Merchant Marine and at the same time to insure that the public interest was served by adequate regulation of the ocean borne trade and commerce of the United States, 90 percent of which is carried by foreign flag ships. Most of the general cargo is carried by steamship lines which belong to conferences. There conferences are cartels or near monopolies and Commerce determined after both the Alexander Committee Investigation from 1912 to 1916 and the Antitrust Subcommittee of the House Judiciary (Celler Committee) investigation referred to above, that these conferences must be regulated to insure that

*no promotional functions, only regulatory functions*  
*remained in the Dept of Commerce + was assigned responsibility for all functions of promotion of the American merchant marine*

*Dept of Com*

they were not detrimental to the commerce of the United States. After I had served a week on the old Federal Maritime Board, the reorganization went into effect and I was appointed by President Kennedy as a Commissioner on the new Federal Maritime Commission which was responsible for the new regulatory functions. By August 26, 1963, it had become apparent to the Joint Economic Committee of the Congress, <sup>headed by Senator Novitski</sup> that the new Federal Maritime Commission, under the leadership of the Chairman who had served since 1956 as a member of the old Federal Maritime Board and for two years as Chairman of the new Federal Maritime Commission, had continued to perform the regulatory functions inadequately. <sup>+ had been detrimental to American exports</sup> President Kennedy consequently <sup>designated</sup> made me Chairman of the Commission in an effort to improve the situation. He remarked at one time that the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 was the most important piece of regulation passed during that session of Congress, and he strongly believed that trade expansion would not only promote the welfare of the free world but would help in the solution of the economic problems, mainly, unemployment and the balance of payments. <sup>in the history of this Board and Commission</sup>

*This was unprecedented. Not before had a chairman been relieved before his term was up.*



BALANCE OF PAYMENTS

As indicated previously, exports from the United States directly contribute to a favorable balance of payments position. Perhaps the principal purpose of the Federal Maritime Commission is to insure that the operations of the steamship conferences and independent carriers do not in any way discriminate against American exporters as compared to exporters from other countries or in any other way inhibit our exporting. Furthermore the carrying of cargo by American ships rather than foreign ships contributes directly toward a favorable balance of payments position. One of the other very important functions of the Federal Maritime Commission is to insure that discriminatory measures of other nations do not reduce cargo carried by American flag ships. This has been a particularly acute problem in Latin America.

TRADE - ESPECIALLY IN CONNECTION WITH OCEAN SHIPPING

I believe this has been covered above.

COUNTER-INSURGENCY

President Kennedy of course had an interest in PT boats. I shared that interest with him and advocated the retention by the Navy of small, fast combatant craft with a shallow draft, which are capable of delivering weapons of great destructive power. Such craft are important in coastal or inter-island waters in many of the critical areas of the world and President Kennedy's administration revised programs providing for such craft including purchasing the Nasty PT boats from Norway. I have written an article for the Naval Institute Proceedings which might be of interest to you.