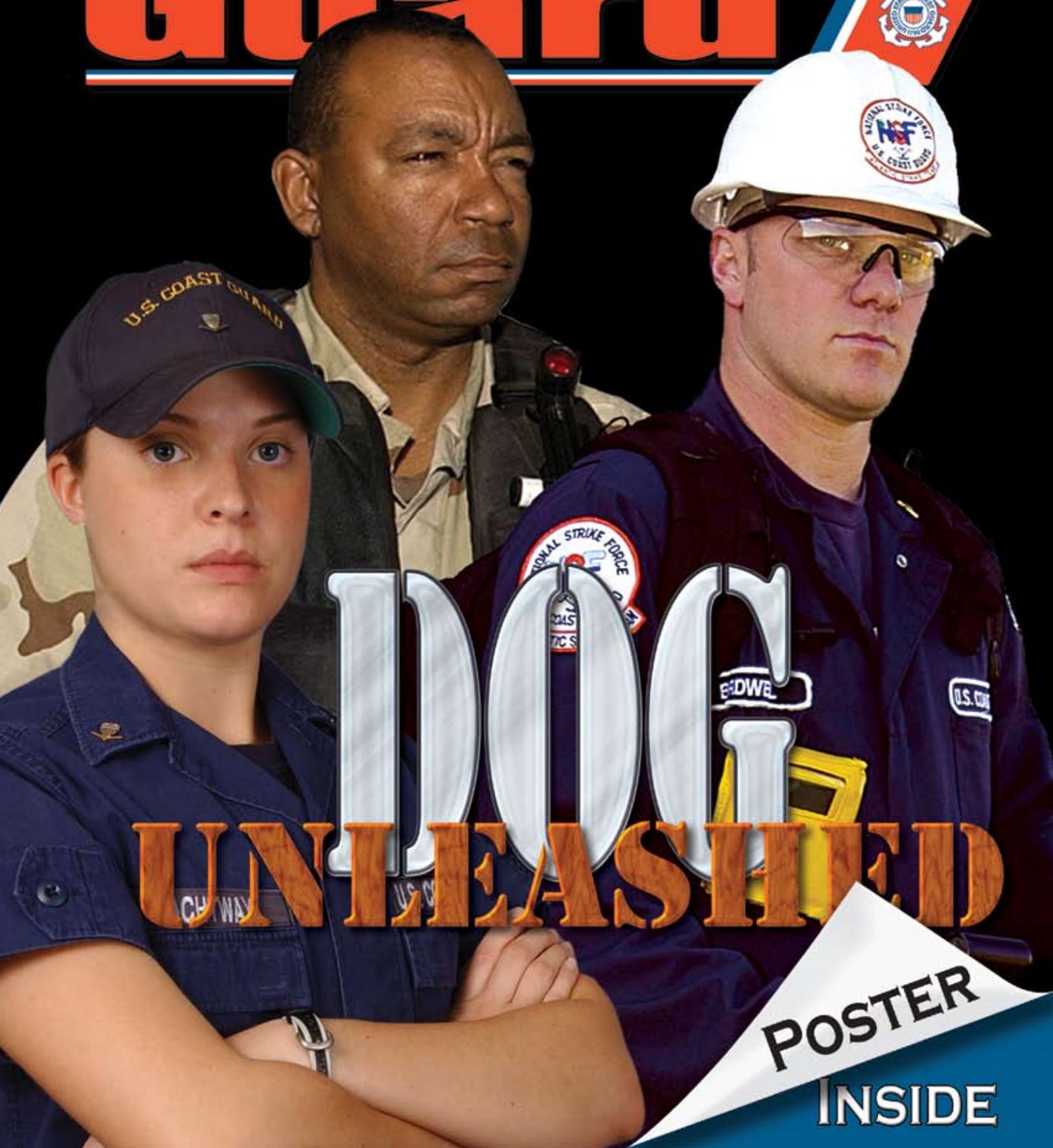


# Coast Guard

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# 100G UNLEASHED

POSTER

INSIDE

# Albatross Discovered

Story by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen PADET St. Petersburg  
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A crew of six departed Air Station St. Petersburg, Fla., in 1967 on a SAR case and delivered a dewatering pump to a disabled yacht only to disappear into the fog from which they came, never to be heard from again.

What began as an afternoon of scuba diving with friends turned into a discovery of heroism, honor and bravery. In July 2006, a recreational diver and explorer, Michael Barnette, came across the wreckage of a missing Coast Guard HU-16E Albatross, CGNR-1240, that crashed during a search and rescue mission 40 years ago in the Gulf of Mexico.

Albatross was a 60-foot aircraft with an 80-foot wingspan. The aircraft was able to operate from land or water and with skis, from

snow and ice. The 1240 had a speed of 240 mph at 7,600 feet and could operate in more than 4-foot seas.

On the night of March 5, 1967, the 40-foot yacht Flying Fish became disabled and took on water. The CGNR-1240 was dispatched from Air Station St. Petersburg, in St. Petersburg, Fla., to assist the vessel. Despite a heavy blanket of fog, the Coast Guard crewmembers located the Flying Fish just before 9 p.m.

◀ **BACK IN TIME** A Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission underwater diver photographs the memorial plaque that was placed at the wreck site of the CG-1240 Albatross that crashed March 5, 1967, with six Coastguardsmen aboard. The plaque was lowered into the water by a crane mounted onboard CGC Joshua Appleby June 19.

The aircraft made a low pass over the distressed vessel, dropped a dewatering pump and disappeared into the foggy night. The Albatross, with its crew of six Coast Guardsmen, crashed sometime later that evening 22 miles east of Apalachicola, Fla. All six crewmembers perished. At the end of an exhaustive 13-day search, three of the men's bodies remained missing.

Lt. Clifford E. Hanna, Lt.j.g. Charles F. Shaw, AMT1 Ralph H. Studstill, AET1 Eckley M. Powlus, Jr., AET2 James B. Thompson and AET3 Arthur L. Wilson lost their lives while in the service of saving others.

Barnette was researching other maritime accidents in archived newspaper articles when he came across the Albatross 1240 incident.

"Having dived the wreck a few months prior, something just clicked and I started to investigate more thoroughly, which resulted in the identification," said Barnette. "It was quite exciting to stumble on the answer when I previously thought any identification would be unlikely after my initial exploration dive on the wreck."

Barnette provided the Coast Guard a precise position of the wreckage along with numerous photographs and documentation of months of research correlating the wreckage to the missing rescue plane.

Believing that Barnette's information would bring closure to the case, the Coast Guard enlisted the Florida State University Underwater Crime Scene Investigation dive team to validate the discovery of the aircraft and analyze the condition of the wreckage. The identity of the CGNR-1240 was confirmed, however, no remains or personal effects were found.

"It was great to answer some basic questions on this previously unidentified wreck," said Barnette. "For someone who spends a great

deal of time on the water, and who appreciates the service history and ongoing efforts of the U.S. Coast Guard, it was a wonderful but tragic discovery."

Recognizing the aircrew's dedication and sacrifice, the Foundation for Coast Guard History and the Coast Guard Aviation Association sponsored the placement of two bronze plaques to memorialize the crew of CGNR-1240.

One plaque was fixed on a monument at Air Station Clearwater during a memorial ceremony held by the air station. Coast Guard Seventh District Commander and "Ancient Albatross" (Senior Aviator) Rear Adm. David W. Kunkel presided over the ceremony. Family members of the deceased crew, and Congressman C.W. Bill Young also attended. The ceremony honored the six fallen flight-crewmembers and their bravery.

The second plaque was placed permanently attached to a marker at the underwater site. Coast Guard Cutter Joshua Appleby, homeported in St. Petersburg, lowered the plaque into the water at the site of the crash. Divers from Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and FSU's Underwater Crime Scene Investigation dive teams then fixed the plaque to the site. Family members of the deceased crew watched the ceremony from aboard CGC Seahawk, homeported in Carrabelle, Fla. The Seahawk crew laid a wreath and rendered a 21-gun salute in honor of the fallen flight-crew.

"I told my brother I loved him today, I don't think I ever told him that when we were young," said Richard G. Powlus, brother of deceased AET1 Eckley M. Powlus, Jr.

"Today the Coast Guard showed great respect. I thought the ceremony was appropriate and showed concern and compassion, it gave closure to the family," said Powlus. 

Photo by Keith Mills, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

