

Daily Freeman

Serving the Hudson Valley since 1871



\$1,000,000 CASHWORD Play Cashword from the New York Lottery. Where every completed word gets you closer to a million dollars. [LEARN MORE >](#)

PLEASE PLAY RESPONSIBLY. nylottery.org ©2009 New York Lottery. You must be 18 years or older to purchase Lottery games.

[Life](#)

Historic rescue

More Photos

Click thumbnails to enlarge







[Click to enlarge](#)

Friday, January 30, 2009 3:07 AM EST

By Bonnie Langston
Freeman staff

PT 48 participated in heroic missions during World War II, but the boat — said to be the last of its kind in existence — was on the brink of extinction before a Kingston man rescued it.

Developer Robert Iannucci has added the vessel, a 77-foot Elco Patrol Torpedo Boat, to a group of three other PT boats, 459, 615 and 728, an entity referred to as “Fleet Obsolete.”

PT 48, rescued during hazardous duty by John F. Kennedy’s celebrated PT 109, was wasting away at a trailer park in Leesburg, Fla., near Orlando, when it came to Iannucci’s attention.

“Someone had tried to convert it to a dinner boat. The project failed. The boat sank,” he said. “It was in grave danger of not surviving. It almost couldn’t be seen in dense underbrush ... It was full of snakes and hornets nests.”

Iannucci is rejoicing in the fact that PT 48 is saved and stabilized, but he acknowledges full restoration will take great sums of money and an unknown amount of time to restore it to the capacity of PT 728, which has been offering rides and charters for the past two seasons.

That boat is stored for winter alongside the Cornell building on Abeel Street in Kingston’s Rondout section along with PT 615. Near the opposite side of the building sits the plastic-wrapped PT 48, which arrived one week ago from Florida by way of a blue yacht-hauling Kenworth.

“What a saga, and what an absolutely wonderful group of people who were involved in this,” said Iannucci on the day of arrival.

The boat’s transfer to Kingston, he said, was the culmination of three years of negotiations.

PT 48, built in Bayonne, N.J., launched in 1941 and decommissioned in 1944, will remain at least until April at its current location, Iannucci said, a short distance from the Cornell building where its steel cradle was custom-designed and constructed.

The building and the three boats are on land that is part of an extensive arm of waterfront purchased during the past months and years by Iannucci, a retired Brooklyn lawyer — and former sea scout. The fourth, PT 459, he said, is temporarily in storage at Scarano’s boat yard in the Port of Albany.

Iannucci’s interest in maritime history became evident as he further discussed his latest acquisition, after stoking a wood-stove in the Cornell building and ordering coffee and cannolis for chief engineer Tim Ivory and his crew who were readying PT 48 for its current location.

“Altogether there were over 800 (PT boats),” Iannucci said. “These were very, very effective, particularly in the Pacific. ... Ton for ton, they sank more enemy ships than any other type of vessel during World War II.”

The boats traveled fast, up to 50 mph, and they were quite maneuverable because of their shallow draft, he said. Their increased numbers after the attack on Pearl Harbor proved fruitful against Japanese supply barges known as the “Tokyo Express.”

“They were cheap and quick to build,” Iannucci said of the PT boats. “Our boat-works, from beginning to end, could build a boat in about 60 days.”

On the downside, the vessels were uncomfortable, he said, and because they were made of wood, they were easily destroyed when fired upon. He called the crews who manned them “heroes” — typically a dozen men ages 17 to 21. As for PT 48, the boat’s own war record is impressive.

- It was one of the last to remain in combat service in the Pacific during the war.
- It participated in the rescue of survivors from the USS Northampton, which sank off Savo Island, a minor island in the Solomons.
- It engaged a Japanese destroyer at 200 yards during its first combat patrol.
- It took evasive action after tracking and then being fired upon by a Japanese submarine.
- On patrol with PT 46, it fired at Japanese Transport ship, observed two explosions and probable sinking of ship.
- It was forced to beach and abandon vessel on Savo Island after firing torpedoes at Japanese destroyers. Returned to dry-dock for repairs.

Iannucci said he does not know how much money it will take to restore the formerly decaying PT 48, “but it will be huge. I’m sure of that,” he said.

What he does know is the cost will be beyond his resources. The stabilization and transportation of the boat already have meant a considerable financial undertaking. How much?

“Let’s just say that it would be a modest house in Kingston,” Iannucci said.

He said contributions that would fall under the “Fleet Obsolete” umbrella, are tax-deductible. Iannucci said he is seeking grants as well as funding from other available sources. He also realizes, he said, that community support is of utmost importance for success, and he hopes potential supporters will recognize the benefit of such an historic addition to Kingston.

“There’s no other city in the world that has four PT boats,” he said. “We in Kingston have four PT boats. We’ve got the raw material ... The benefit to the city of Kingston is that this is a way of putting the city on the map.”

Iannucci, who said his style is “free-form linear planning,” would not offer a timetable for the completion of his project.

No matter what happens, he said he knows the rescue of PT 48 was the right thing to do.

“I feel the history gods are smiling down upon us, that we’ve done a good deed,” Iannucci said. “That’s true. That’s exactly how I feel. We’re

certainly not doing this to make money.”

For more information about the rescue of PT 48 and Fleet Obsolete, visit www.pt728.com and www.fleetobsolete.org.

Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of DailyFreeman.com.

Login To Comment

You must be logged in to post a comment.

*Member ID:

*Password:

Remember login?

[\(requires cookies\)](#)

Login

Not Registered? Sign up today for free!

Do not use usernames or passwords from your financial accounts!

Note: Fields marked with an asterisk (*) are required!

*Create a Member ID:

*Choose a password:

*Re-enter password:

*E-mail Address:

*Year of Birth:

(children under 13 cannot register)

*First Name:

*Last Name:

Company:

Home Phone:

Business Phone:

***Address:**

***City:**

***State:**

***Zip Code:**

Create Account