

DUWAMISH

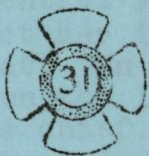
BY

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(Prior to the untimely passing of Mr. F.M. (Slim) Lynch, we had talked about writing the article below, he to do the writing and I the research. We make no attempt to try to equal his magnificent style but in due respect to him shall try to set forth a story that he would enjoy. --- Earl Sugden)

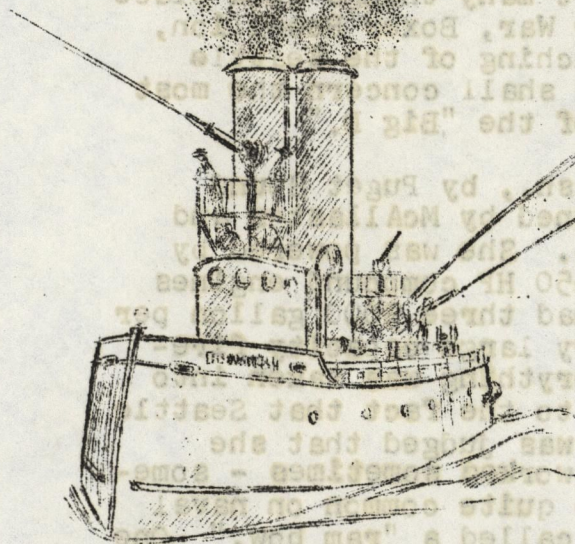
In the years between 1900 and 1909 a great many things took place - the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan campaign, the Boer War, Boxer Rebellion, Russian-Japanese War, the A.Y.P., and the launching of the Seattle Fire Department's "S.S. Duwamish." This story shall concern the most important of these events: namely, the story of the "Big D."

Laid down and built at Richmond Beach, Wash., by Puget Sound Shipbuilding Company, the "Duwamish" was designed by McAllister and Bennett, her machinery by Fulton Machine Works. She was powered by four three-drum type water tube boilers, two 550 HP compound engines with the service speed of eleven knots. She had three 3000 gallon per minute steam piston pumps which made her a very large capacity fireboat for her day. In laying down the ship everything was taken into consideration. She had no external keel, due to the fact that Seattle had large mud flats on her waterfronts and it was judged that she would not be prone to stick in the mud. This worked sometimes - sometimes it didn't. She also had another feature quite common on naval vessels of that day, a reversed stem commonly called a "ram bow." One must remember the large number of wooden ships in those days and the theory that if the fireboat could not put out the fire on the burning ship she would be able to ram and sink it in the shallow water. Unlike her consort, the "Snoqualmie," she was constructed of steel and was thus able to do this. Beyond a doubt, her crowning glory was her twin stacks, side by side, towering 45 feet into the air. They belched thick columns of black smoke until her last days of steam. As stated, the stacks were side by side, thus able to give more deck space for the water streams. She was therefore the latest thing in fireboat construction.

In 1910 the "Big D" posed for her picture at her station at the foot of Madison Street, looking very business-like with her uniformed crew, many with long flowing moustaches.

In 1911 the "Duwamish" steamed around the harbor, putting out fires on the log booms and other such minor things. It was an uneventful year except that there occurred an incident that was to affect her in later years. It was to save her life, as a matter of fact. In this year a young man joined the fire department and entered upon the long and eventful career that was to see him rise to become its chief.

In 1914 the "Duwamish" lay at her new station, being "fat and sassy" as the rest of the mosquito fleet was busy fussing around the harbor. She rather lorded over them all, after all, she was government and could afford to be snooty. Next door the "S.S. Admiral Sampson" was discharging cargo at the CNR (Grand Trunk) dock. A small fire started in some packing and the alarm was given. The "Duwamish" at once raised steam and sallied forth; her hose tender H-5 roared forth from the station and out onto the dock. Then there occurred a tragedy that faces all fireman everytime they respond, today as well as then. Flammable materials were stored where they should not have



been and the pier exploded! H-5 was trapped. Five men were to die before this holocaust - the only general alarm in the history of the fire department - was fought down. The "Duwamish" steamed out of her slip around the face of the pier in between Grand Trunk and Colman Dock her large fire streams playing water upon the raging inferno. Flames shot into the air, walls fell, and timber as large as small trees crashed through the dock. Out on the street, horse and motor driven rigs pumped water by the tons. Hose No. 5, trapped, burned and charred, fell through the dock into Elliott Bay. To this day she lies

on the bottom. The "Duwamish" by this time joined by her running mate "Snoqualmie," pumped tons of water into the fire. "Duwamish," with half of her streams on the fire and half on Colman Dock, managed to keep the fire from spreading to the south.

The new fire station was badly damaged and had to be rebuilt. Thus the "Duwamish" on her first big fire was to show that she had the stuff to stand with the best - a fact she has proved many times since.

In the First World War the "Duwamish" donned her war colors and steamed around the harbor in a very grim manner. She was then under the command of Capt. S. Stahre, who paid us a visit at Station 5 in 1959. He was 80 at that time. He told us many stories of interest. One of them concerned the time the "Duwamish" steamed to an alarm at Smith Cove to fight a fire on an old barge. It turned out to be a dump for the local bootleggers, and the "revenooers" finally arrived and confiscated the evil booze. There was no ship around to place it on other than the "Duwamish" so she was duly loaded up with over 300 cases of good beer. The crew no doubt smacked their lips but duty is duty and she steamed back to her station. This is probably the only time that the Seattle Fire Department was engaged in rum-running.

In the early twenties the ship performed her general fire duties in her usual efficient way. This was a time in our nation's history when everyone was having a whooping good time. The "Duwamish" joined in by making a little more smoke and popping her stack safetys every now and then, a trick that would raise the hackles on a razor back hog.

It was during this time that the old girl got her first face lifting. The steamboat inspectors decided that her fire mains should be above deck. This was done and she also received a fine pair of stack shields with the big number five on them. She also had her monitors replaced with fine new Invincibles, small decks around each deck

monitor. The lifeboat slung on a new davits and two towers, fore and aft. Thus "Duwamish" emerged with the look that she was to carry for the next twenty plus years.

However, there was a story around about a new boat to replace the "Duwamish" at Station #5. Seattle, under the administration of Mayor Bertha K. Landes, authorized the building of a new boat that assumed the nickname of "Bertha's Yacht." Her true name, as we all know, of course, was the "M.S. Alki." The "Alki" could fill a book in her own right so we shall not dwell upon her story at this time. The "Duwamish" went out into Elliott Bay to welcome the new boat that she no doubt looked down upon as a gas pot. She most likely managed to get in between the "Alki" and the shore and by emitting a large amount of thick smoke, "blacked out" this new upstart. Her pilot at this time was George Spaulding, Sr., while his son, George, did the honors on the "Alki." Since George Senior no doubt thought he could still paddle George Junior he felt no qualms over his rude reception of the newcomer.

The change was made and the "Duwamish" lost her historic number 5 to the upstart but she used her seniority to take the "Snoqualmie's" number 31. She steamed out of the slip at Station 5, belching smoke all over the "Alki" and proceeded with much dignity down to Charles Street.

On station at Charles Street the "Duwamish" sulked, no doubt, for a time but a true fire horse, did her duties as she was expected. Besides, the new boat had some teething pains and she lorded it over her at these times. As time passed and the world wide depression overtook the nation the area at Charles Street became known as Hooverville. The "Duwamish" with her crew performed her duties with dispatch, as usual, but the pall that hung over the world seeped into all corners of the nation. There can be no doubt the firemen who manned the "Duwamish" gave out of their own pockets many times to the population of this city within a city, a trend that to this day is carried out by the members of the department to those in need through no fault of their own. In 1938 the young rookie who entered the department in 1911 placed upon his sleeve the gold stripe of Chief of the Department. This was William Fitzgerald who for the last twenty-five years has guided the destiny of the "Duwamish," all her consorts and crews. The record of the ship, the department and the personnel, second to none in the nation, speak for him and his administration.

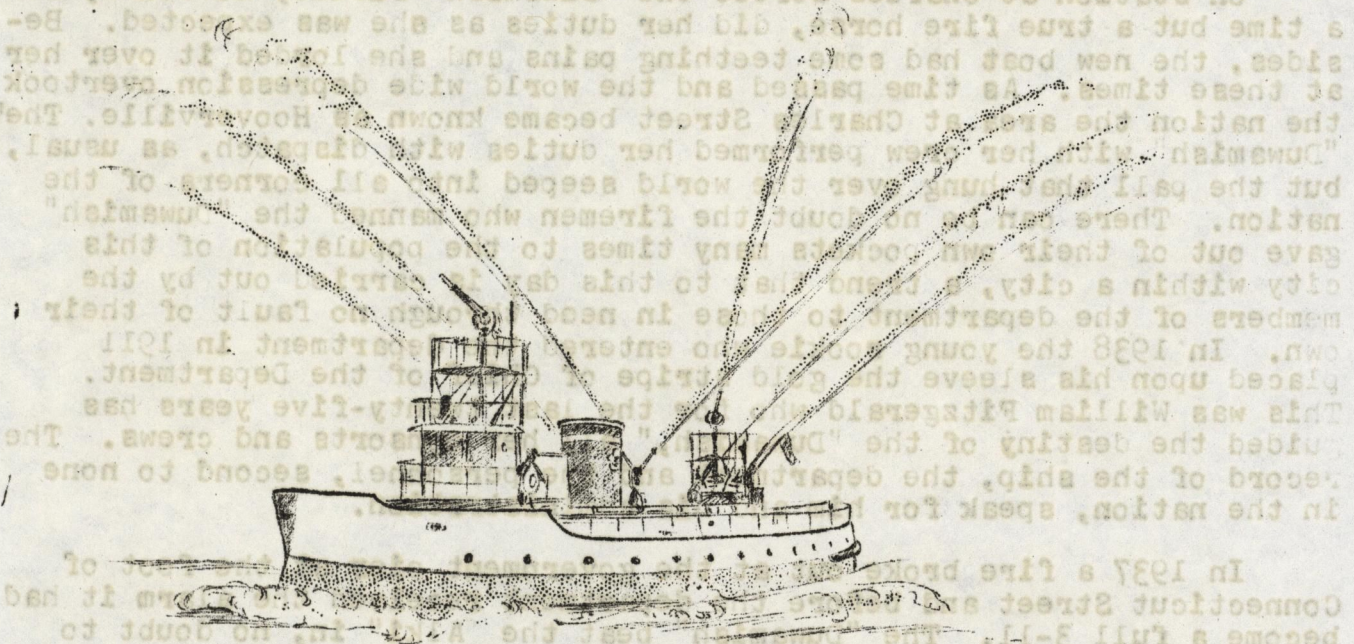
In 1937 a fire broke out at the government pier at the foot of Connecticut Street and before the department received the alarm it had become a full 3-11. The "Duwamish" beat the "Alki" in, no doubt to her glee, and assumed position on the downwind side of the fire. With her pumps striving mightily, she poured tons of water on the fire. The "Alki" joined her on the north side, engine companies arrived, and the grueling job of fighting a dock fire continued. Several men were to be injured before this fire was contained; never the less the men went ahead with the job they were entrusted with. Of this fire the "Alki" crew claimed that all the "Duwamish" did was to turn water on them. You can assume that the "Duwamish" crew claimed all the "Alki" did was to get them wet and besides, they had better button up until they ate a little smoke!

It was during this time a humorous event took place that is still laughed about today. A member of the crew fell overboard (a trick that is repeated to this day). The crewman had on "long John" underwear due to the cool weather; as there was a brisk wind he hung them over the rail. One of the enterprising crewmen, trying to help, hoisted them up the flagpole and managed to foul them in the block. About that time the bell struck and the "Duwamish" responded, presenting a picture on the Bay - "flying her battle flag of swallowtail long-Johns."

Times were tough in the thirties and a rash of lumber mill fires broke out. Many of these were set by arsonists, some of them reputed to be members of the "Wobblies." At the Pankrats fire in Seattle the "Duwamish" responded up the river of her namesake. She was credited with pumping water over half a mile to the fire and supplying all engines that were at the scene.

The "Duwamish" finished out the rest of the thirties doing her usual duties and managing to stay out of trouble of any serious nature outside of butting a dock every now and then.

Times were getting better as the forties came upon us. There was a war in Europe but people hoped it wouldn't involve us. The "Duwamish" had served over thirty years and was a little tired when the Day of Infamy fell upon us. The war years ushered in an era in her life



of which she can be justly proud. The government, looking for protection on Harbor Island, requested the "old ship." For the second time she donned her wartime colors of drab gray and up on her main truck was hoisted the horizontal pennant of the U.S. Coast Guard. Taking up station on Harbor Island she guarded the shipyard installations with bulldog determination. There is no doubt she looked a little out of place beside the slick naval ships that surrounded her. Her Spanish-American War looks were laughed at by the young sailors but she was determined to do her job and do it well. It was at this time that several of her present crew joined her. They are with her

to this day, having been discharged from the Coast Guard and duly appointed in the Fire Department to the fireboat.

Following her wartime service she received her honorable discharge and was returned to the city of Seattle. For a time she remained on station at Harbor Island. After almost forty years of service her engines were worn and her boilers tired. She even made more smoke than before. Pilot L. Williams tells of the time on a clear sunlit day with a very gentle south wind when the "Duwamish" responded blowing fog signals as the smoke rolled over her bows.

In November 1946 the Duwamish received orders to report to Station #5. There lay her old running mate, Alki, and "Duwamish" was warped in alongside. For the first time in several decades she was back home. Perhaps she gave a sigh as she rested her side along the station pier. Steam was maintained for several months but she did not respond to any fires. The "Alki" took all the runs. After all these years she had been relegated to second section status. It was during this time that the cost of maintaining her was mounting. Finally it was with much reluctance that the fires were pulled and for the first time in nearly forty years she became a dead ship.

Her stacks were covered and the seagulls roosted on her monitors. The crew of the station kept her washed off but there is no doubt she presented a heartbreaking picture. At that time also some publicity hungry people handed her another insult by offering a can of red paint to slick her up. There is no doubt that she looked drab but the gray paint was a badge of honor to her. It was her war paint, on her wheelhouse - she had the right to wear the ribbons due her the same as any veteran of the war.

She lay and slumbered for several months. The "Alki" responded to a fire at the creosote plant - 2-11! Special call for the "Duwamish"! Firebox doors clanged open; wood, coal, rubber tires, everything that would burn went into her boilers; bunker "C" does not flow well when it is cold. Smoke rolled out of her stacks; a pall hung over downtown Seattle; more calls were received about the fire on the waterfront than about the real fire. Slowly the pressure gauges mounted. Stack safeties popped. With siren screaming, the grand old lady steamed forth but by the time she arrived the fire was under control.

It was very apparent that steam power for a fireboat was a thing of the past. What was her fate to be? After all these years of loyal and faithful service would she become just so much scrap? Chief Fitzgerald, knowing full well the need for two first line boats, fought for her modernization along with the "Alki." Her hull, built by master builders, could never be replaced today without funds that would stagger the city. "Her main monitors and hull are in good shape," said the Chief. "Give her a chance. New engines and pumps would give us a boat second to none."

The City Council, faced with the prospect of building a new boat or rebuilding the "Duwamish," pondered the matter for some time. Chief Fitzgerald, holding out for rebuilding, watched and waited. On a dull day in 1949 a tug came alongside the gallant old ship and lines were passed and made fast. Then silently and majestically, she moved

out, a sad and forlorn sight. Her war paint was dull and dark. Was this to be her end - a wrecker's torch after all these long and faithful years? Passengers on the cross Sound ferries saw her at the end of the tow. She was a lady, however, and didn't take to being bossed along, but the tug had power and she had to go. Out from Elliott Bay she went, across Puget Sound to Winslow. At Commercial Ship Repair she was dragged upon the ways. There her decks, stacks, vents were ripped off, her stem and bows chopped free. Her soul was crushed to die like this in an out of the way place, not even at her home. But a strange thing was taking place! High on the crane alongside her gutted hull appeared an impressive sight: huge, ponderous Cooper Bessemer diesel engines; three of them of near 1000 HP each; GE electric motors, reduction gears, auxiliary engines, monstrous centrifugal pumps, electric generators, miles of wire, steel plates for a modern clipper bow. She became alive once again. Over \$1,000,000 in equipment went into her, purchased at only a fraction of its cost. Down from the ways slid a sleek modern ship valued at \$2,500,000. She was the most powerful fireboat in the world, with a capacity of 22,800 gallons of water per minute. Her name was still "Duwamish" but she had a whole new life ahead of her.

Out from Winslow she steamed, her squat red stack showing a haze of blue smoke, her white and black hull gleaming, white water sparkling at her bow and stern. She was alive, clean and proud. Seattle was proud of her, too, and the Fire Department even prouder. Out across Elliott Bay she came; from her monitors thundered white plumes of water, and like a strutting peacock she saluted the world.

Into her slip at Station #5 she was saying "hello" to her running mate, "Alki." Once again the historic #5 was hers. The wheel had come full circle once again, from Engine 5 to 31 to U.S. Coast Guard and back to 5 in forty years of service.

Her duties were the same. She was still a fireboat and fire duty was her job. A job she did well. The list of alarms would be long: Oceanic Building, where she pumped water to numerous land companies; Sidler's Mill, where she flicked timbers the size of telephone poles across the street and chopped 16X16 upright timbers off at the base. So it went - doing her duty as always, day in and day out. Nearing her half century mark, "Duwamish" lay at her slip on a warm summer evening. It had been a hot year; so far no rain to speak of since March and now it was May.

On May 20, 1958, "C" Platoon, Second Division, First Bn. came on duty at Station #5. Capt. E.J. Hanson was in command. One of the Senior Captains of the Department, he had been in command of #5 for eleven years at that time. The 6 o'clock roll call was made, fresh coffee brewed, the evening drill and orders passed out. It looked like a normal night shift. At around 9:45 p.m. the joker came to life and banged out the 3-3 of a telephone alarm. It was followed by the confirmation box giving the location. The fire was in Ballard. Someone remarked they hoped the engine crews



had their "passports" (a standard joke in the department). There was a time lapse of several minutes. It seemed as if they had a little fire out there. "Let's see, what was that address? 17th Avenue N.W. and Shilshole Avenue. That would be near the cedar mill." Once again the alarm system sprang to life, 3-11?

This time things really got moving. The code tapper was jumping off the watch deck, engines were being speacialed in from all over; off shift personnel were being called. The word was passed. Seattle Cedar was going up! At 9:47 p.m. the big brass bell in the stairwell rang out the three strokes of the fire alarm. On the watch desk the fire phone rang out: "fireboat to Seattle Cedar, the Locks will be open for you!"

On the "Duwamish" Chief Marine Engineer F.M. Lynch and Engineer M.W. Mackie threw the main air induction valves. The big Coopers growled into life; with super chargers winning they settled down to their powerful rumble. On deck Fireman D.C. Augdahl and big Mike Petheric cast loose the mooring lines. In the darkened wheelhouse Capt. Hansen said "OK, let's go." Pilot G.E. Froyd slammed down the dual telegraphs to full! In the engine room throttles were spun over feeding juice to the propulsion motors. With screws churning and ship's siren screaming, the "Duwamish" thundered from the slip on her greatest fire and test of endurance. On her run to Ballard she was to prove herself a racehorse of sorts. Capable of around 14 knots, on her 22 mile dash she was to be staggering just under 16 mph. The ether was alive with traffic and the radio on the ship cracked out for her position. The reply was fitting for the time: "between 4 mile rock and West Point, coming hard." Around West Point Don Augdahl, fireman and former fisherman, long familiar with the waters near the Ballard Locks, helped take her in. Shaving near the shelf running out from shore, the ship plowed up the Lake Washington Ship Canal. Into the Locks, gates slammed shut, water washed in, up she came to the level of Lake Union and the Ship Canal. The off-shift personnel came aboard - the ship had a crew to supplement her on-duty personnel. There was to be over twenty hours of work before her and the gallant men who manned the equipment of the department on this night. Over all hung the red glow and fireball of this gigantic fire. Up the canal came the ship. Chief Fitzgerald radioed the ship to move in on the east side and put out the fire. With her bows in flames she helped the brave men of Patrol #1 pull out. This small boat that did stellar work must not be ignored, but her story is one of her own and justice cannot be done here.

The big monitor capable of 7,000 gallons per minute spewed out with a roar. Before the startled eyes of the men the huge stream of water turned into steam, so intense was the heat. Flames bellowed thousands of feet into the air, embers and debris carried high overhead by the updraft. Could it be that the most powerful fire-fighting machine put together by man had met her match? No! If she could not drown it she would strangle it. Down the face of the fire she moved, then, as the mighty engines deepened their rumble, 100-200-300-400 feet she reached out, cascading tons of water into the edges of the inferno, cutting it off from its food and fuel like an axe severs an artery.

Chief Fitzgerald made the statement a short time later that "This

fire is going no further."

Hour upon hour "Duwamish" pumped - nineteen and a half hours were to pass before she was to take a break. Even then the men afloat and ashore faced more long grueling hours of hard, dangerous duty. In the engine room the temperature stood at 133 degrees but the big engines purred like contented kittens; they were doing the job they were intended for. High up on the tower the big monitor swung from left to right and back again like a giant pendulum, each time leaving black burned debris behind, only to have it spring to life again soon after. Then slowly the black stayed, the fire retreated reluctantly. Land companies advanced forward, the big monitor sweeping before them. The fire was stopped! Stopped, but not out. Pilots Williams and Richmond in the wheelhouse advanced the ship to the very edge of the flames, and with her bow in the mud, she poured more tons of water into the inferno as more and more monitors were brought into action. Paint blistered on her hull, wheelhouse glass became too hot to touch, but she stayed. Inch by inch, yard by yard, the flames were pushed back and the fire was at long last under control. Dawn broke to find a scene not unlike Dante's INFERNO - blackened burned timbers and buildings, mounds of ashes, flames still leaping skyward but not advancing.

The long hard task of overhaul began. Hose lines were snaked ashore, hand lines brought into play. As the men from the "Duwamish" pushed forward, over their heads thundered the streams from the monitors. Then, as the flames died down and only the intense waves of heat rose skyward, she rested. Over twenty five hours she had fought this monster, but she had won. Nothing must be taken from the land companies, however, and there is no intention to do so. Time and again they advanced, each time at risk of their lives, only to be thrown back, then onward once again. They, too, had won the fight.

Homeward bound came this veteran, her greatest fire behind her. Her paint blistered, she wore it like a battle star. At her slip she rested, put on a little paint, dolled and primped herself up. Deputy Chief H.D. Molenkamp once said: "Fires are like earthquakes; the farthest away from one, the closer you are to the next." So she is waiting, always ready, perhaps a little fat and sassy at times, but hot water runs through her engines and fuel tops her tanks; in two minutes she can dash forth to meet her old enemy as she has done for over fifty years. The senior fireboat in the nation, the most powerful in the world, the likes of her shall never be seen again, with construction costs as they are today.

When her time comes, as it is inevitable that it shall, she will meet it as brave and strong as ever. If ships have a heaven, and many believe that they do, there is a place for HER, for when the silken tow line that stretches across the "Fiddler's Green" comes to take her on that long last voyage, ghosts will man her and a crew will be waiting at the dock - a crew that stretches back over half a century of duty to her and the department.

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Chief Fitzgerald made the statement a short time later that "This