

**September 29, 2013**

**To the DeLand City Commission:**

*On October 7 I'll be speaking briefly to you about a dream, one that has a slim chance of success but still deserves thought and effort. I've recently discovered via research that at least six of the WW2 era US Army tugboats made by 300 DeLand-area workers still exist around the world over 65 years since they were sent down the St. Johns river to Jacksonville. One of them even appears to be a D-Day Normandy survivor; a very original tug with original superstructure and engine just as it was built.*

*Very few cities in the US have been able to find and acquire a WW2 vessel: almost none have been returned to the place where it was built. I along with others have formed a group to attempt to eventually return one of the boats for a relatively inexpensive static display. It might not be possible to purchase one, or to convince the US Navy to help us return it, or to figure out how to get it to DeLand after it makes the coast of Florida, but nothing can happen without first having an indication of welcome and support from the City of DeLand.*

*We are not asking for money for the project: we will work with private sector potential donors on a challenge grant basis probably with requests for letters granting a future donation if all arrangements can be made and a boat can be purchased reasonably within a certain time frame. Lots of "if's" here: but at this point no one can even predict which boat might make sense, if any. I do know that one DeLand boat was abandoned in New Jersey a few years ago and was free for the taking....if we had only known about it! It ended up with the fishes off the New Jersey Coast.*

*To say this is a unique opportunity is an understatement. Return of the boat would mean quite a bit to descendants of area workers, area veterans, and the community itself as a reminder of what extraordinary things happened back then: and it would remain to be a source of pride for us all. We have already been promised the engine, propeller, and driveline from ST 479: now we need to bring the rare parts back which will be our first project if a miracle can't prevent the "renovation" of ST 479 which is now slated to begin Dec 16...too soon for us to react. Your indication of welcome, whether a letter or a resolution, and the consideration of a permanent static site in DeLand, would be greatly appreciated.*

**Dan Friend** *Researcher* **DeLand Army Tugboat Preservation Group**  
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## **DeLand History Teacher Forms Group to Preserve, Bring Home DeLand's 'Warboats'**

By ANTHONY DeFEO [anthony.defeo@news-jrnl.com](mailto:anthony.defeo@news-jrnl.com)

**Published: Daytona Beach New Journal Wednesday, August 7, 2013 at 9:06 p.m.**

**DeLand's ST 479 in Stockholm**

**DELAND** — For former history teacher-turned-historian Dan Friend, tracking down the 33 tugboats built at the Beresford, Florida boat works during World War II has become a passion. Now, he'd like to bring one of the few surviving boats back home to DeLand, or at least parts of one.

From the shores of Lake Beresford to the beaches of Normandy and now a river in Stockholm, Sweden, some of the Army tugboats built in West Volusia have traveled far. Friend was recently contacted by John Higgins, a British engineer working in Sweden, who read articles about the DeLand "warboats," as Friend calls them. Higgins said he was working on something that Friend might be interested in: restoring a DeLand tug used in the invasion of Normandy on D-Day.

"It's amazingly original," Friend said of the boat, known as ST-479. "It still has its original Clark diesel engine" with 650 horsepower. In a phone interview, Higgins said the current owner of the boat is an associate of his who wishes to renovate the tug into a houseboat. The plan is to remove most of the original equipment, but leave the original steel structure largely intact. "She's been used in Sweden since the end of the war" for commercial purposes, Higgins said.

The boat is one of only two DeLand tugs that Friend has been able to verify through research as being present during the D-Day invasion. The other was lost in combat. Friend's records show ST-479 was damaged by a German grenade, but remained intact.

Higgins and his associate have offered to donate the original engine and other innards of the ship to Friend for free. However, there's one catch: "It's in Stockholm, Sweden, and weighs 20 tons." Friend, a former DeLand High School teacher, hopes to raise the money to buy the entire boat before the owner undertakes any renovations. His ultimate goal: ship it to DeLand and put it on static display.

To that end, he's formed the DeLand Army Tugboat Preservation Group and says he plans to incorporate it as a nonprofit group to bring the boat back to DeLand, something he believes he can do for under \$100,000. In addition to ST-479 in Sweden, he's also recently found evidence of two surviving boats in use in Finland and one in Venezuela. **\*(Actually, six total DeLand Warboats have now been found! DF)**

The Beresford boat works was actually in Beresford, Florida, a small community which existed until 1954: the area has for decades been considered a part of DeLand. The facility was operated by the American Machinery Corp. and employed about 300 DeLand-area workers between 1942 and 1945. It was among a dozen companies around the country that produced more than 700 tugboats for the Army during the war.



# City of DeLand

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October 9, 2013

Mr. Dan Friend  
West Volusia Historical Society  
137 West Michigan Avenue  
DeLand, FL 32720

Dear Mr. Friend:

After your presentation on October 7<sup>th</sup>, the City Commission was supportive of your efforts to obtain a DeLand made US Army Tugboat for historic preservation purposes. I understand that you are personally trying to raise funds to secure one of approximately a half dozen known remaining war boats that were built on Lake Beresford in DeLand.

I think that this endeavor is commendable and the City of DeLand supports your effort to obtain a DeLand-specific piece of US history. If your effort is successful in obtaining a vessel, the City has several areas where it might be possible to display the boat for public viewing and would welcome further discussion with you. Please contact Mike Grebosz, Assistant to the City Manager for more information about potential locations.

Very truly yours,

Michael Pleus, ICMA-CM  
City Manager

cc: City Commission  
Dale Arrington, Assistant City Manager  
Rick Hall, Parks and Recreation Director  
Keith Riger, Public Services Director