



Tug Tales #8 November 15, 2013

Another Ultra-Rare Beresford Tugboat Plaque Surfaces....But Was It Ever Used?

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Once again my online “tugboat” presence has resulted in a contact which led to my acquisition of another rare plaque...this time it’s an intact Olson Corp plaque from the last of the Korean Era boats built at Beresford, Florida, in 1953: **ST 1987**. But of course, if you’ve been following the history you know the last ten Olson boats are a confusing mess in the records: it appears that Olson had a conflict with the US Navy administrators over errors in the tugboat building plans and only **ST 1978**, the first boat, was verified to have been 100% completed at Lake Beresford. **ST 1979** possibly may have been completed, but most sources agree that the remaining incomplete hulls were sent to Jacksonville to be finished by another contractor, Rawls Brothers. **ST 1987’s** hull MIGHT have been built at Olson but no proof exists. More than likely, this plaque, along with the pieces (!) we have



found of three other plaques meant for the ten boat run, were never installed on the boats and have thus survived for us to find. It would appear that Olson Corp either made these up, as they did have a furnace, or perhaps more likely they contracted them out and perhaps ordered all ten only to lose the contract and never mount most of them.

Regardless, they are a neat tangible artifact from the period and offer the chance that the other few might turn up in the

future. I would think the odds of finding another of the earlier WW2 period plaques like the **ST 679** plaque I have are slim and none unless it’s on a boat we purchase. But! *Who knows?*

ST 1987 ended up being very well known. A great model of it exists at Ft. Eustis, Virginia, where it went in the 1950’s, and I also have a Ft. Eustis postcard where it is shown along with **ST 844** and **ST 1978** which are also DeLand/Beresford boats. The tug also went to Vietnam, and amazingly enough, returned to Canada where it was seen as recently as 2007. I have not heard of many other ST’s returning from Vietnam.... read more history on my website.

The plaque was found by DBCC student Derek Hartsell in the garage of an elderly lady in Cocoa, Florida. She had no idea what it was; only that it probably was picked up by her deceased government-employee husband in his travels. Hartsell was given the plaque but I had to give him real money to get it, which of course, was only fair. It will remain with the rest of the *DeLand Warboat* Items and history I’m accumulating for posterity... I’m glad he called! Derek says he also will help in the restoration...when we are ready. www.usarmysttugs.com