

Yesteryears

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Presidential yacht hosted 8 presidents

By Lois Firestone

FRANKLIN DELANO Roosevelt jotted down the details for his New Deal on the vessel, his wheelchair drawn up to a small table on its upper deck.

From the 1930s to 1977 when it was auctioned, the Presidential Yacht the Sequoia was a haven for presidents — eight men from Hoover to Carter relished the chance to relax and enjoy a few hours of privacy away from the prying eyes of their public.

Her builder was John Trumpi, known as the crown prince of achievement in boat building. His peers called his ships the Gold Standard of Wooden Boats.

A wealthy Philadelphia banker named Cadwallader commissioned Trumpi to build the craft of mahogany and teak in 1925. After it was built, however, its owner wanted a more ostentatious craft and sold it.

From the beginning, the Sequoia has had a checkered life, being traded and sold and resold. At 73, she is an unpretentious 104-foot-long, capable of churning through the waters at 14 miles an hour, maximum.

Her namesake was a Cherokee warrior of mixed ancestry, Sequoya, or George Guess, born in 1760 and living into his mid-80s. Sequoya is credited with inventing a written Cherokee language, so-called talking leaves.

An able linguist who mastered several languages — French, Spanish and English — he was determined to preserve the Cherokee culture, and resented the American intrusions into his tribal lands.

Sequoya's syllabary of 86 symbols used English letters to represent Cherokee sounds. His invention led to the founding of the Cherokee Phoenix, a Cherokee language newspaper on Feb. 21, 1828.

The Sequoia caught President Herbert Hoover's eye when he

was secretary of commerce — she was tracking rum runners up and down the Mississippi River during Prohibition Days. The 31st president was the first to enjoy its presidential stateroom.

After he bought it, he often fished from the deck, taking time to relax playing a little medicine ball on the sundeck.

FDR loved the sea and frequently slipped out to the cool sea to avoid sultry Washington summers.

For two years, in 1935 and 1936 he toiled over the New Deal planning. He installed an elevator so he could go below in his wheelchair, and often brought important guests of state aboard.

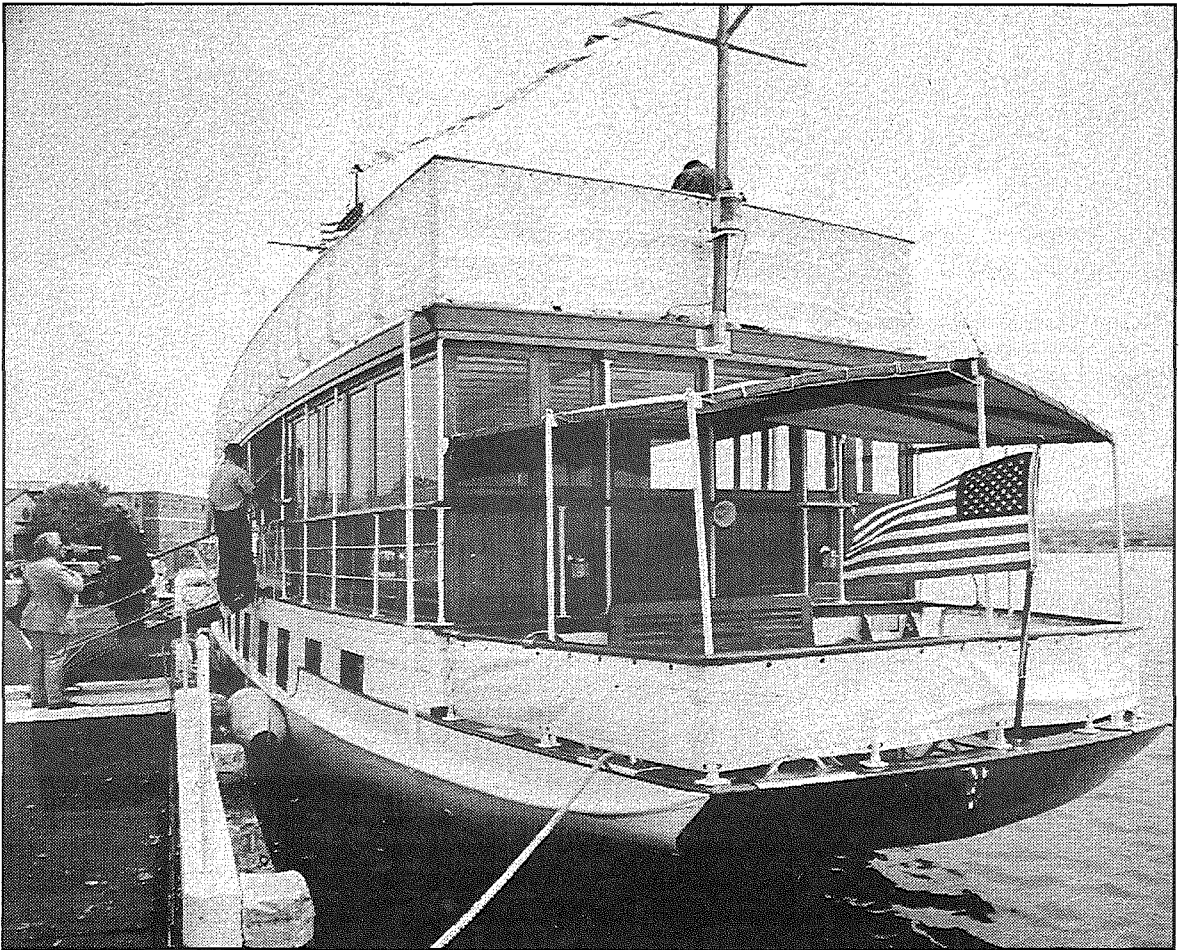
Winston Churchill loved the boat and spent hours watching the churning waters leaning back on the rail chairs brought from the Queen Elizabeth when she was converted to wartime duty.

Truman used the Sequoia for relaxing with his pals over friendly games of poker. A piano was a necessary diversion for him — he loved playing while his daughter Margaret sang — and he created a space for one on the boat. Truman liked the Williamsburg for serious fishing trips.

Lyndon Johnson made two changes. He tore out the Roosevelt elevator and had a wet bar installed in its place. And, to accommodate his 6-foot 3-inch frame, he had the shower raised by several inches.

John F. Kennedy celebrated his last birthday aboard the Sequoia, and legend has it that Marilyn Monroe was one of the guests. The moment is commemorated with the famous picture of the actress, her skirts billowing, hanging in the ship's gallery.

Richard Nixon often dined aboard the yacht to escape his Watergate woes. In 1973 alone, he took the Sequoia out 31 times.

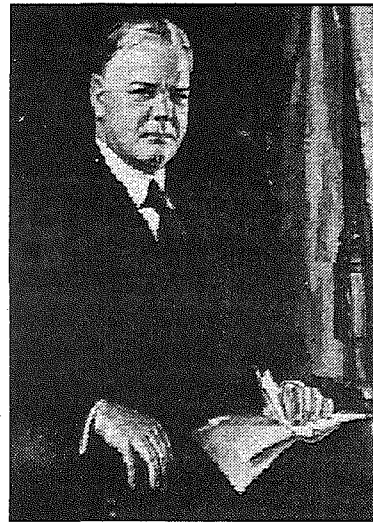


The old presidential yacht prepares for a nostalgic cruise down the Potomac River in Washington in April. Custodians of the pleasure vessel for eight presidents hope to keep her as a national landmark.



The yacht was named to honor a Cherokee Indian of mixed ancestry, Sequoya, or George Guess, who invented a written language for his people in 1821.

Nixon used the yacht more than any other president, although records showed that Gerald Ford entertained 18,000 guests during his tenure, 1974 to 1977.



President Franklin Delano Roosevelt spent hours working on the New Deal on the Sequoia.

President Herbert Hoover discovered the yacht when he was secretary of commerce and bought her for a presidential retreat.

Among the historic moments which have taken place on the yacht are the relaxing hours the USSR General Secretary Leonid

Brezhnev and Richard Nixon spent in private talks.

Nixon's final cruise was memorable. After giving up an incriminating tape recording that would force his resignation, he gathered his wife Pat and daughters Julie, Trish, a son-in-law and

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his secretary, Rosemary Woods, and left for a dinner cruise to escape the evening news broadcasts.

Coast Guard speedboats darted around the yacht, protecting her, and photographers hung over every bridge the boat passed under. Julia Nixon Eisenhower later recalled that evening: "We were the subject of a death watch," she said. "Being on the Sequoia was like bobbing along in a glass bottle."

Jimmy Carter was an old Annapolis man prone to respecting the modern nuclear Navy as opposed to antique-looking crafts, at the same time disdaining any show of

pomp. He was aghast at the idea of paying \$800,000 a year to keep her afloat, so he auctioned it off for \$286,000 in 1977.

The new owner took her to Myrtle Beach where she fell on hard times. From 1979 to 1984 she was docked in Greenwich, Conn. In recent years, its owners have taken her out often for summer excursions.

The Norfolk Ship Building and Dry Docking Co. in Virginia owns the boat and carried through a multimillion dollar restoration. She's under the care of the Presidential Yacht Sequoia Foundation which hopes to raise an endowment for her upkeep — she'll cost \$400,000 a year to operate.

Foundation co-chair Ben Brown says they're looking for the original furniture used on the boat. The floors are carpeted and the walls are paneled in walnut, but the furnishings are far from luxurious.

The Sequoia is the last of the presidential yachts. The only other one that was operational was the Williamsburg and by this writing she's probably been broken up in an Italian seaport where she's been docked. A replica of Sequoia's sister ship, High Spirit, is often moored at Hilton Head.

10 YEARS AGO

MAY 5: Ron Waite has been named advertising manager for the Salem News.

MAY 6: Richard Stoudt was appointed Butler Township clerk.

MAY 7: Todd Carlson was second-place winner in the National Bicentennial competition.

MAY 8: Kim Powell was elected president of Reflections of Love Chapter of the Ohio Child Conservation League.

MAY 9: Helen Penjamin was elected president of Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 4579 Auxiliary.



Pepi and Joseph Deutsch sit for their 1919 wedding portrait with (back left) Rose Deutsch and her fiance Lazer Saloman, Margaret Deutsch and husband Morris (right). Pepi is one of the country's oldest living Holocaust survivors.

Inmate-made furniture in governor's mansion

INMATE-MADE FURNITURE at the governor's home in Bexley that worry preservationists will be well cared for, a governor's

spokesman assured them last week.

The furniture and other items were moved to the governor's residence in 1990 from a warehouse at the old Ohio State Reformatory in Mansfield, says Tom Stickrath, assistant director of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

"Our intent was to make


some good use out of some period pieces," he said of the furniture, which is state property.

Gov. George Voinovich's wife, Janet, toured the warehouse in 1990 and selected some of the items to be moved to the governor's home.

Some members of the Mansfield Reformatory Preservation Society, which

runs the former prison as a museum, recently asked the state for some of the items.

But the furniture will remain at the governor's mansion after Voinovich's term ends, Voinovich spokesman Mike Dawson explains. A commission that oversees the governor's residence is required by law to protect those and other items.



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