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ISSUE**

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Connecticut *Cruise* NEWS

New York, New Jersey & Massachusetts *Cruise* NEWS

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The Volunteers of the Boothe Park Car Show

The Volunteers of the Boothe Park Car Show

Submitted by Gwen Ackley

Since 2010, there has been a car show on Opening Day on the third Sunday in May at Boothe Memorial Park & Museum in Stratford, CT. This year it will be held on May 19. But who or what is Port Five that is listed on all of the ads for it? Here is the Mission Statement and a brief history, taken from the PortFiveUSA.com website:

Mission Statement:

Raise awareness of Veteran and Naval affairs. Participate in public functions. Provide a facility for Veterans; meeting hall, kitchen/bar and dock. Provide charitable funds to veteran organizations.

"After the American Civil War, Navy Veterans began forming organizations throughout the United States. One such organization was the Admiral David Farragut, National Association of Naval Veterans, formed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1866, becoming Port Number 1.

In subsequent years a total of 41 such organizations were formed, with the National Associations of Naval Veterans, Essex Association, from Salem Massachusetts becoming Port Number 5 on February 26, 1887.

After World War One, another navy organization known as the Navy Veterans was formed. Their original headquarters was a clubhouse built around 1920 at Lordship Beach, Stratford, Connecticut, after which other locations were occupied within the Bridgeport general area.

Prior to 1933, members of the Navy



Veterans, became cognizant of a National Associations of Naval Veterans, Port 5 Essex Association and before long, both organizations began to hold combined meetings. One must note that the year 1933 was at the height of the Great Depression. Many organizations were put upon hard times. Such was the case with the National Associa-

tions of Naval Veterans, Port 5 Essex Association. With a dwindling membership they appealed to the Navy Veterans to take over their club charter. On March 3, 1933 the Navy Veterans acquired the Charter of the National Associations of Naval Veterans Port 5 Essex Association and brought it home to the Bridgeport area. From club rooms on Fairfield Avenue, Park Avenue and Olive Street and in 1949 to the former Soundview Yacht Club, at the foot of Brewster Street and Black Rock Harbor, where the Charter is now displayed.

Port 5 is the last and only active National Association of Naval Veterans in the entire United States, making it one of the oldest service organization dating back to 1887."



To support Port Five's mission statement, to "Provide charitable funds to veteran organizations," the members were looking for ways to raise money to help fellow veterans. The Boothe Park Car Show provided that means.

So how did Port Five first become involved with presenting the car show at Boothe Memorial Park & Museum? We learned from automotive historian George Dragone that during the 1960s cars shows were held at Boothe Park. In 2008, my husband and I planned a tour with an antique car club from Westport to Stratford. Rich Iannucci and friends with their cars met our group at Boothe Park. Rich saw the potential, and like us, he had great interest in reviving the car shows. When Rich Iannucci was elected the Commander of Port Five in 2010, he decided to make the car show at Boothe Park a fundraiser for a Seeing Eye dog for a blind veteran. This was the beginning of the Port Five/Boothe Park car shows.

The first car show at Boothe Park was run by a combination of many volunteers from Port Five, the Packard Club, and the newly formed Connecticut Seaport Car Club. It takes a large group of volunteers, along with money to start a car show. For the initial start-up, Rich invested his own finances for trophies and expenses.

It also takes a lot of time behind the scenes to organize, plan and publicize a car show. The Men's and Ladies Auxiliary along with the Veterans of Port Five all contribute their help where needed, such as parking cars, working registration, baking delicious foods and desserts, selling 50-50 tickets



and providing raffle basket prizes. The members of Port Five provide and prepare the food for breakfast and lunch. The Port Five Color Guard assists with a noontime flag raising ceremony and provide a fresh new flag for Boothe Park to display throughout the year.

I happened to have a conversation with Don Clady, whom I had met in 2009 at the Sycamore Drive-In. Don gave me priceless advice regarding publicity that really helped to get the word out to show car owners and help to establish the event. (Thank you so much Don Clady!) Soon our dream of reestablishing a regular car show at Boothe happened, and has kept growing since.

For ten years Rich Iannucci as the Commander of Port Five organized a devoted

team of volunteers until he retired. Since 2022, Men's Auxiliary Commander John Buehler has continued the tradition of holding the car shows with flag raising ceremony on the park's Opening Day. Proceeds from the show benefit many local veteran and community charities.

Along with the Boothe Park Car Show, Port Five hosts car cruise nights with panoramic views of Long Island Sound at their home location at 69 Brewster Street, Black Rock, Bridgeport, CT. The car cruises are run by the Connecticut Seaport Car Club. Port Five's bar and food service are open to participants to dine on the patio overlooking the water. This year, car cruises at Port Five are held from 5 pm - 8 pm on Thursdays: May 16 (Rain date 5/23), June 20 (RD 6/27), July 18, (RD 7/25), August 15 (RD 8/22), Sept. 19 (RD



9/26), and a Saturday Oktoberfest is held from 12-3 pm on Oct 5, 2024. Car Cruise updates are posted at: ctseaportcarclub.com/carshows.htm.

From the PortFiveUSA.com website: "National Association of Naval Veterans (NANV), Port 5, is a 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization that welcomes all branches of the military. Port 5 has three types of memberships: Veterans, Men's Auxiliary and Women's Auxiliary."

For car show information, please go to <https://www.portfiveusa.com/carshow>

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