

HISTORY ON THE CHANNEL
YOUR MONTHLY NEWS FLASH

F O J D C M

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June 5, 1940 Wednesday

HAIDA DIVER SEEKS LOST PROPELLER

John Paris of Coast Guard Down for 45 Minutes at Press Time

Crawling on his hands and knees in two feet of mud and 30 feet of water, John Paris, coastguard diver from the Cutter *Haida* this afternoon sought the lost propeller of the charter boat *Forester*. At press time the diver was still down probing the mud and the refuse.

Below the surface at the last report, Paris speaking to Ensign John Pritchard, said that he could not see anything at that depth and that he had not found the propeller. Paris, Pritchard, and George Titus all of the Cutter *Haida*, offered their services to the owner of the *Forester* and were permitted by the commander of the vessel to use the *Haida's* diving equipment.

Hundreds watch



Forester at the City Float, 1939s. ASL-MS10-4-01-57-495

At 3:00 this afternoon, hundreds of Juneau citizens lined the rail near the Juneau ferry dock [at the foot of Seward Street] to watch the operations which were being carried out from the deck of the charter cruiser *Wanderer*.

A message from the diver through the telephone in his helmet once brought

cheers from the Sea Scouts laboring at the pumps but proved to be a false alarm when an object thought to be the propeller was found to be a piece of scrap metal. Paris reported to the surface

that numerous parts of scrap equipment impeded his progress and that often he had to crawl on his hands and knees

A flood of bubbles rushing to the surface indicated the presence of Paris and after being down 45 minutes, George Titus was preparing to go down as relief.

The lost propeller slipped from the shaft of the *Forester* over a week ago when the boat was put into reverse while docking. Owner Bayers dragged the bottom where his wheel dropped and located it but it is thought that the tides and layers of silt had moved \$385 propeller to another position.

June 6, 1940 Thursday

COAST GUARDSMEN FINDS PROPELLER IN FOUR FATHOMS

Almost four fathoms down in murky water tangled in submerged lines and in a leaking suit, John Paris, 19-year-old diver of the Coast Guard Cutter *Haida* this morning stumbled over the object for which he and two other navy divers had been seeking for two days -- a 240-pound propeller from the charter boat *Forester*.

Paris, second diver to go down today in search of the lost wheel, had been beneath the surface for 45 minutes when they stumbled over a partially buried brass blade. With a line dropped from the *Wanderer*, on whose decks the diving party and equipment were working, the youthful diver made fast to the blade and had the deck crew shake the propeller loose from the grip of the bottom.



Haida at the Government Dock, about 1940. ASL-P359-007

On his hands and knees Paris passed the line through the shaft hole and soon the \$385 propeller lay on the deck of the *Wanderer*.

When the diver was pulled over the gunwale of the operations boat, it was apparent that his suit was leaking for his diving garments were soaked with seawater.

Diving operations started yesterday with the return of the *Haida* from Wrangell. Kinky Bayers, owner of the de-propellered *Forester*, got permission and cooperation of the commander of the Coast Guard cutter, and the diving squad of three men. Ensign John Pritchard in charge, was sent to the Juneau ferry float

Three dives yesterday

Paris first went down yesterday afternoon and was followed after an hour's search by seaman George Titus. Both Titus' and Paris' search proved fruitless and Ensign Pritchard went down for an hour. No trace was found of the propeller.



Forester at Lemersurier Island, 1965. Staff photo.

Early this morning Titus donned the heavy suit again and groped his way along the bottom. After an hour he was brought to the surface having covered more distance than any of the other dives.

Paris was sent down and told to work underneath the *Wanderer* and in that direction. It was not much later that the diver reported by phone that he could see the blade of the lost propeller.

Faulty propeller

Said Kinky Bayers, "I can see now what made the wheel drop off when I shoved the *Forester* into reverse. The propeller was defective and the brazing near the shaft broke. "

Bayers expressed gratitude to the *Haida* divers and to Commander Jewell for his cooperation. "They're sure a fine bunch of fellows" he said.

The *Forester*, after its accident of several weeks ago, has been fitted with another propeller and will make a charter trip for salmon derby fans to lower Stephens Passage.

Biographical Note:



Lloyd "Kinky" Bayers, 1940s.

Lloyd H. "Kinky" Bayers was born 1911 in Juneau to Vera Soboleff Bayers (daughter of Father John Soboleff) and Harry "Tay" Bayers, a boatman from Maine, who came to Killisnoo and worked for the Alaska Oil and Guano Company. He attended school at Kake and Juneau.

He was a member of the Juneau High School basketball team, played on the De Molay team and served as an official and judge for the Gold Medal Tournament. Most of Lloyd's life work was involved with the sea. He worked summers with his father on various boats towing logs, tending fish traps, and general freighting. In January 1931, he worked as a deckhand on the *ESTEBETH*, the mail boat

that ran between Juneau and Sitka and other boats. When his father died, in April 1932, he worked various jobs for the Alaska Juneau Gold Mining Company to support his mother and sisters.

In 1939 he purchased the M.V. *FORESTER*, a former cannery tender, and did towing, freighting, and charter work. Later, Bayers became captain of the fish packer, *PELICAN*. In 1941, he joined the U.S. Army Transport Service and commanded various Army small vessels, mostly in Southeast Alaska waters. After the war, Capt. Bayers went to work for the U.S. Geological Survey as master of the vessel *WATRES*, transporting survey personnel in Southeast Alaska. He retired from this position in 1967 and died in 1968.

Captain Bayers was well known in Juneau, a local activist who often represented the underdog position. He opposed water meters for Juneau, the Alaska ferry system (as it was organized) urban renewal, and the organization of borough government. For many years the City Cafe in Juneau, known as the unofficial city council, served as a forum for discussions on local topics and controversy. Bayers was a major participant.

The source of his nickname is uncertain; however it has been attributed to his involvement in controversies and alternatively to his habit of kinking the edges of playing cards.

-- Alaska State Library Historical Collections by Bob DeArmond, abridged