Chatham Marconi Maritime Center is pleased to host its Summer Speaker Series, a summer-long series of lectures and presentations drawn from the resources of the Marconi-RCA Wireless Museum, the STEM After Hours program, and member-suggested topics related to our mission. Due to COVID-19 prevention measures, this season’s programs will be presented virtually via Zoom webinar, and feature topics related to our 2020 exhibit themes:

Tickets are available at eventbrite.com, with a specific ticketing link listed for each event.

The Summer Speaker Series is free to Chatham Marconi Members. General admission tickets are $10.00 unless otherwise noted.
July 16: “The Life-Saving Stations of Cape Cod”
Richard G. Ryder

While radio communication ended the isolation of mariners at sea at the turn of the 20th century, prior to the advent of radio distress calls and continuing well afterward men of the United States Life-Saving Service were dispatched in small lifeboats during stormy weather to rescue the survivors of coastal shipwrecks.

The U. S. Life-Saving Service, established in 1879, was the forerunner of the U.S. Coast Guard. On Cape Cod it began with nine stations previously authorized by Congress. By 1903 there was a total of thirteen stations including four located in Chatham. Richard G. Ryder is personally connected to the U.S. Life-Saving Service through his grandfather, a Surfman at Chatham’s Old Harbor Station from 1906 until 1915 and who in 1932 became the Keeper of the station. The spirit of the Life-Saving Service carried over to the Coast Guard in the form of the unofficial motto, "You have to go out, but you don't have to come back."

Chatham Marconi is pleased to have the assistance of the Centers for Culture and History in Orleans (CHO) in arranging this program.

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-life-saving-stations-of-cape-cod-tickets-112746212958
This year, the Marconi-RCA Wireless Museum features “Chatham on the Air”, celebrating May 17, 1920 when RCA inaugurated service between Chatham Port and Norway, finally realizing Marconi’s dream of sustainable trans-Atlantic wireless communication. But Marconi’s competition, undersea cable, was already well established by then, having been developed and made commercially viable by the late 1800’s. From 1891 until 1959, the French Cable Station was the American termination point for an undersea telegraph cable that came directly to Orleans, Massachusetts from Brest, France. It was called "Le Direct”, a point-to-point cable almost 3,200 miles long completed in 1898, and an engineering marvel.

This evening’s program was prepared for our Summer Speaker Series and is narrated by Joe Manas, President of the French Cable Station Museum, Orleans, MA. We encourage your support of this unique historic museum, which is closed this season due to the pandemic. (http://frenchcablestationmuseum.org)

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/le-direct-and-the-french-cable-station-tickets-112747747548
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August 6: “The Story of U.S. Coast Guard Motor Lifeboat CG36500”
Richard G. Ryder and Patricia W. Hamilton

On February 18, 1952, Boatswain’s Mate 1st Class Bernard C. Webber took Motor Lifeboat CG36500 out of Chatham Station with three volunteers - Seaman Ervin Maske, Seaman Richard Livesey and Petty Officer 3rd Class Andrew Fitzgerald, an Engineman, responding to the tanker Pendleton which had broken in two off Chatham in a storm. The crew fought 60 foot waves, hurricane force winds and blizzard conditions to rescue the survivors. While the CG36500 was leaving Chatham Harbor, her compass and windshield were smashed and the boat began shipping water. Persevering, they finally sighted the stern section of the Pendleton. They rescued 32 sailors, losing only one man to the stormy seas. The four Coast Guardsmen all received the service’s coveted Gold Life-saving Medals for their heroism in what is considered by maritime historians to be "The Greatest Small Boat Rescue in Coast Guard History." The crew is gone now but the CG36500 lives on, and that is a fascinating rescue story all its own.

Richard Ryder is a graduate of Chatham High School, Stockbridge School of Agriculture at University of Massachusetts Amherst, and the Cornell School of Hotel Administration. He retired from the U.S. Navy as a Lieutenant Commander, Medical Service Corps after enlisting as a Hospital Corpsman Recruit in 1959. Richard is the Operations Manager of the restored Motor Lifeboat CG36500 and one of her two Coxswains.

Patricia Webber Hamilton is the daughter of Senior Chief Petty Officer Bernard C. Webber, one of the Coast Guard's legendary heroes. She continues to tell her father’s story of the SS Pendleton rescue and of his distinguished career in Coast Guard service.
Chatham Marconi is pleased to collaborate with the Centers for Culture and History in Orleans (CHO) on this program. CHO has preserved and maintains the CG36500. (https://www.orleanshistoricalsociety.org)

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/the-story-of-us-coast-guard-motor-lifeboat-cg36500-tickets-113725598326

August 13: “Radio and Safety of Life at Sea”
Ronald Farris

Ron Farris, a member of Chatham Marconi’s Board of Directors and an active volunteer, is a former radio operator at Chatham Radio WCC. He will discuss four different actual distress scenarios where radio and/or the radio officer played a key role in ensuring the safety of life at sea. His talk will include the significance of the Antinoe, Morro Castle, Tashmoo and Marine Electric disasters in improving the effectiveness of radio communications and rescue operations.

Our speaker is a Chatham Native and twelfth generation descendent of William Nickerson – founder of the Town of Chatham. He has deep family ties to Chatham Radio. His Mother was a Navy WAVE stationed there during WW II. His Great Uncle, Francis Doane was a radio operator at WCC from 1928 to 1975. His Brother, Bill Farris was a station technician and the last station manager at WCC. Ron learned the Morse code at age fourteen by
sitting next to his uncle at WCC. After earning his commercial radiotelegraph license, he worked at WCC as a Radio telegrapher from 1978 to 1993.

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/radio-and-safety-of-life-at-sea-tickets-112907039996

Special Date - Tuesday, August 18:

“Rescues Around Chatham”
Stuart Smith, Carlos Hessler, Jeremy Silva & Justin Pago

Radio communication ended the isolation of mariners over a century ago. Since then, radio technology has advanced such that today it is an indispensable life-saving tool in everyday use by agencies entrusted with the safety of mariners everywhere. Chatham, Massachusetts Harbormaster Stuart Smith will discuss the operations of his department in one of the busiest and most unpredictable recreational maritime settings on the East Coast, and highlight some notable recent rescues.

Senior Chief Carlos Hessler, Officer in Charge of Station Chatham, will describe local Coast Guard operations and the communications technology that not only enhances the effectiveness of his skilled rough-water surfmen, but also expedites effective teamwork with harbormasters and other local rescue agencies.
Our Chatham-based speakers will be joined by USCG Lt. Jeremy Silva, Command Center Chief, and OS1 Justin Pago of Sector Southeastern New England located at Woods Hole, MA. The Command Center focuses on search & rescue operations in Rhode Island, Cape Cod and the surrounding waters. They will discuss the Coast Guard’s primary rescue communications tools Rescue 21 and i911. Today’s program will include advice to mariners on how to be safe on the water, what actions to take if they find themselves or another boater in distress, and will conclude with a Q&A session for the Zoom participants.

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rescues-around-chatham-tickets-116551922939

September 3: “Chatham During World War II”
Dick Kraycir

In 1942 there was no question that a war going on if you lived in Chatham. The Navy was at the RCA station, the SPARS were busy at the Coast Guard Station, RADAR was being erected on Stepping Stones, and the hotels were filled with military personnel. Blackouts were in force, the USO was in town, and of course there was a very busy laundry for uniforms! The museum’s Wireless History Gallery’s WWII exhibit has some interesting artifacts and presents the station when it was the main American station intercepting Nazi transmissions. To supplement that exhibit, Dick has
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searched through historical records to present this slice of live in Chatham during World War II. And for anyone who was on Cape Cod and can remember Chatham during that time, Dick would be delighted to hear your story and share your pictures in the talk. Let him know by e-mailing info@ChathamMarconi.org and he will be in contact for whatever you would like to share. This is a virtual program, so get some beer and pretzels and settle in for an interesting presentation.

Our speaker J. Richard Kraycir is a Director Emeritus, Past President and current Chair of Chatham Marconi Maritime Center’s Advisory Council. He has been an active researcher, exhibit designer and volunteer docent since the museum's opening.

Tickets for this virtual program may be obtained at: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/chatham-during-world-war-ii-tickets-114490522234

More to come in the Fall! Please watch for announcements.