

Scuttled (Purposely Sinking A Ship)?

After seven years of support and amicable relationships with the Harbors Division leadership, all was reversed in 2015 and Friends of Falls of Clyde, the 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is preserving and restoring this unique historic vessel, had its mission challenged. The value of an internationally recognized symbol of maritime history that served as a source of maritime education to generations of school children and an important venue for activities for community members, as well as a draw for tourists, was dismissed. Is almost 75 years of service to Hawaii as a working vessel from the turn of the 20th century into its second decade followed by over 50 years in Honolulu Harbor, mostly serving as a museum, to be ignored?

Harbors Division has made the unsubstantiated claim that *Falls* was a hazard to harbor navigation. This was communicated to the community as a safety concern in TV news and in print media. No concrete safety issue was raised to Friends of Falls of Clyde. Harbors Division was provided technical reports showing that the condition of the ship is not a safety hazard and they could get information about ship construction. They were provided with the mooring plan showing that the ship is safely tied to the berth. This plan is filed with the U.S. Coast Guard and has never been questioned.

At our November 4, 2015 meeting, we heard the same allegations about safety and some what-if questions if we did not attain our goal of raising funds for drydock. I asked that they give us the year 2016 to meet our goals. The response was "I'll take it under advisement." The next communication came in May 2016 with a letter terminating our revocable permit, a permit given to Friends of Falls of Clyde *gratis* from the Harbors Deputy Director when we took ownership in 2008. We wrote to get a reversal, but our plea was rejected and we had to remove the vessel by July 15. We contacted the Attorney General's office to determine if we could appeal. We got a response that Harbors would consider an "acceptable" plan with a timeline. The plan had to include removing the ship from the harbor. We submitted the plan on July 12, but were advised it needed more detail for acceptance, so we got an extension to July 29. Our final plan has the detail to be accepted. We believed that willingness to accept a plan was a sign of cooperation and receptivity to the importance of historic preservation. The plan meets our mission of preserving the ship by going into drydock. As required, we provided two contingency plans: (1) transfer ownership to an entity outside of Hawaii and (2) contact a local company that wanted the ship for a dive site.

We are awaiting response from the Deputy Director, who already indicated that he wants *Falls of Clyde* out of the harbor. He received letters from maritime historic preservation experts who made a case for the importance of having our historic ship restored here in Hawaii. All they received was his canned response.

Forcing the ship to move before being drydocked could create the hazard that Harbors is trying to avoid. Will not the State's goals of historic preservation be undermined by purposely dismantling a National Historic Landmark?

Bruce McEwan, President

Friends of Falls of Clyde