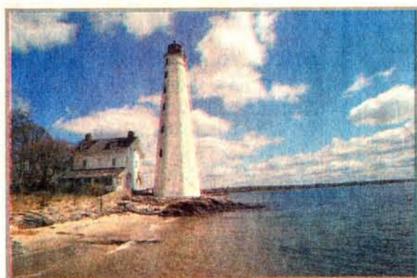


REGION

■ Obituaries

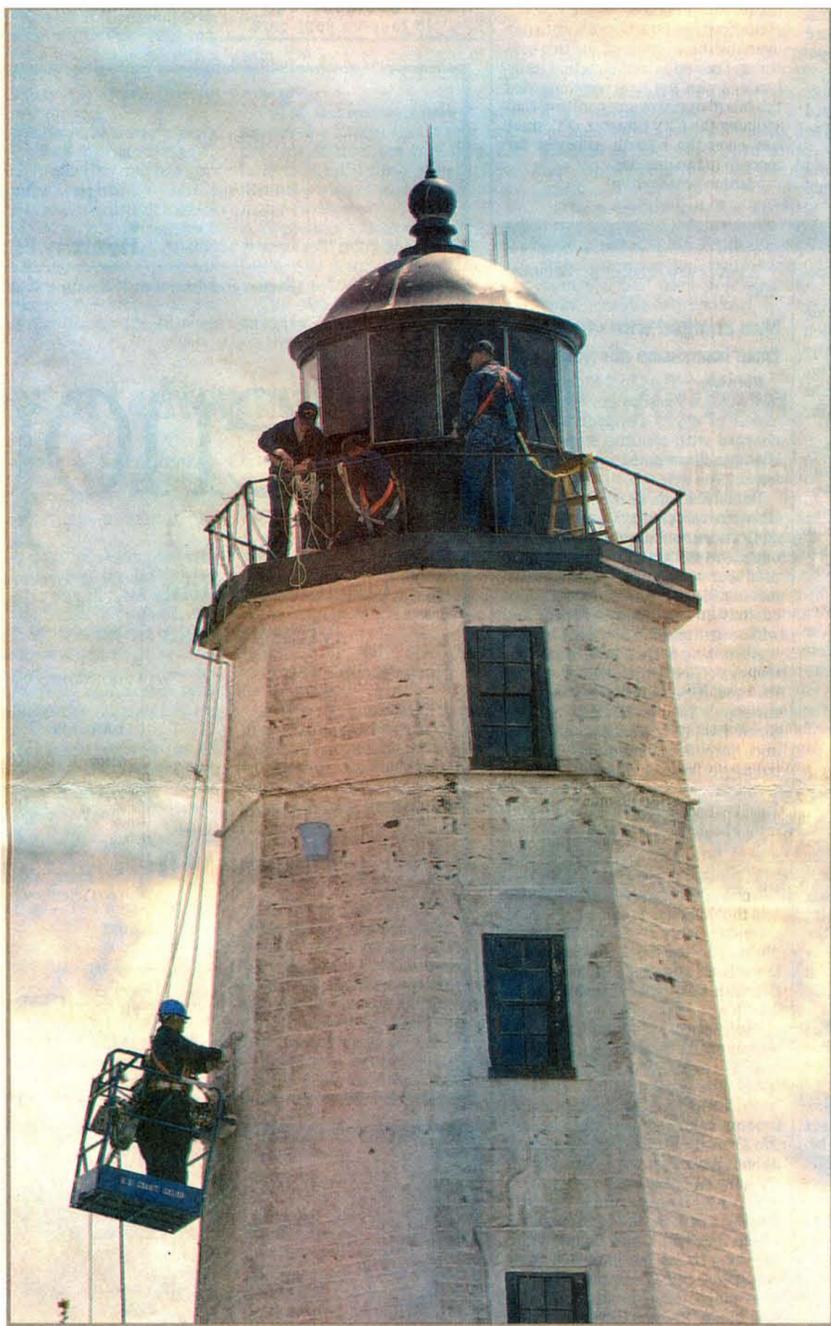
B5



■ The New London Harbor Light, left and below, is getting a facelift from crew members of a U.S. Coast Guard cutter based in New Jersey.

TIM MARTIN / The Day

HIGH LIGHT DUTY



Crew from N.J. cutter is sprucing up the NL Harbor Light

By ROBERT A. HAMILTON
Day Staff Writer

New London — Even wearing a safety harness, Coast Guard Seaman Michael Davidson was hugging the wall of the New London Harbor Light as he used a wire brush to scrape old black paint off the window frame, 90 feet above the solid rock ledge that serves as a foundation for the tower.

"I'm not scared of heights, but I am scared of falling," Davidson said with a grin. "You have to trust your equipment, though, and the people you work with."

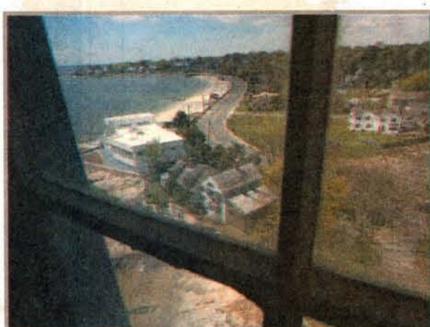
Davidson and a half-dozen other crewmen from the U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Penobscot Bay*, a 140-foot icebreaker based in Bayonne, N.J., are in southeastern Connecticut this week to restore the New London light, as well as Lynde Point Lighthouse in Old Saybrook.

For Seaman Ryan Quinn, who was helping Davidson on the walkway above the water, it's a trip home. He is a 1999 graduate of Ledyard High School.

"We got wind of this job about a month-and-a-half ago, and I was excited, because I knew I'd be able to get home at night and see my family," Quinn said.

Boatswain's Mate 3rd Class Pan Hanlan was in charge of getting paint and equipment to and from Seamen Joe Lovell and Coleman Benner, who were seated on a platform hanging from cables, painting the sheer walls of the lighthouse.

See **LIGHTHOUSE** page B5



■ **Top**, Michael Davidson, a crew member from the Coast Guard cutter *Penobscot Bay*, paints the trim over the lantern room atop the New London Harbor Light.
■ **Above**, A view of Pequot Avenue through a window near the top of New London Harbor Light.

Lighthouse gets a sprucing up

From B1

Having only a knee-high rail between you and the rock 90 feet below might be a little unnerving, "but I think being over the side in the basket would be worse," he said, peering over the edge.

Lt. JG Tom Crane, the executive officer of the icebreaker, said the ship has developed a reputation for this type of restoration project, having done several restorations in recent years, as well as rebuilding most of the light towers in the Cape Cod Canal.

It's also a good use of time. The ship pulled into the Custom House Pier Sunday night, and the engine room crew began doing maintenance on the ship's engines and other systems while the deckhands kept busy off board.

"Typically we do two or three of these a year," Crane said. "But Sept. 11 has slowed us down a little this year."

The icebreaker has been increasingly assigned to homeland security patrols. Last Sunday morning it left Bayonne early in the morning, made a swing through New York Harbor as part of a security detail, then headed up Long Island Sound to arrive in New London in early evening.

The Aids to Navigation unit of the Group Long Island Sound office provided the paint and most of the equipment, and the crew started work early Monday.

Boatswain's Mate Chief Dean Smith said originally he wanted to powerwash the lighthouse, but the water restrictions because of the drought in southeastern Connecticut put an end to that plan, and the crew began scraping it down by hand. By Monday night, they were putting the first coat of bright white paint at the base of the tower.

The New London Harbor Lighthouse was constructed in 1760, making it the fourth oldest public lighthouse in the country, behind three in Boston harbor. Constructed of a course red building block, the tower has stood up to the elements well, Smith said.

"For the age of the light, I would say it's in outstanding shape," Smith said.

The New London light could be finished as early as today, if the weather cooperates. If it rains, the team will head over to Old Saybrook, where interior work is planned on the Lynde Point light.

"I like building the light towers the best, but lighthouses are my second favorite," Davidson said. "I love hands-on work. Anything beats doing paperwork."

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