



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Kirsten Ferguson, Media Pro Int'l for CCA, 401-849-0220

**Cruising Club of America
Brian and Mary Alice O'Neill presented the 2011 Far Horizons Award**

New York, N.Y., USA (January 30, 2012) – The Cruising Club of America (CCA) has selected Brian and Mary Alice O'Neill (Bainbridge Island, WA) to receive its Far Horizons Award for an admirable 25-month cruise circumnavigating the Pacific Rim, North Pacific Ocean. En route the two delivered school supplies to those in need and toured WWII sites. The award is given to a member of CCA "for a particularly meritorious cruise or series of cruises that exemplify the objectives of the Club." The award will be presented by Commodore Daniel P. Dyer, III at the annual Awards Dinner on March 2, 2012 at New York Yacht Club in Manhattan.

The two met in Japan in 1977. Brian, a Marine Corps Aviator, taught Mary Alice, then a kindergarten teacher, how to sail. In 1978, they were married and quenched their thirst for the sea with many cruises over the years. In 1987, the couple sailed to New Zealand and sold their boat upon arrival in Auckland. In 1992, the couple bought *Shibui*, a 44-foot Robert Perry designed sloop, and began a 5-year circumnavigation of the world.

The CCA is honoring them for their most notable journey in 2009 when the O'Neill's, put their three passions – Military history, education and sailing – to work and embarked on a new adventure. Their goal was to visit many of the WWII Pacific Ocean sites and help out island schools along the way. They filled *Shibui* to the brim with schoolbooks and supplies and departed from their home in Bainbridge in August 2009. The first stop was Hawaii where, for all intents and purposes, the war in the Pacific began. From Hawaii, the O'Neill's traveled 1000 miles south to the island of Palmyra Atoll (U.S. territory), which was the site of a large WWII airbase protecting the southern flank of the Hawaiian Islands. It is now owned by The Nature Conservancy and used for environmental research.

From there, the couple sailed to the island of Maloleop (Republic of the Marshall Islands), home to a WWII Japanese airbase, where they visited the school and delivered school supplies.. Continuing westward, the two visited Kwajalein Atoll (Republic of the Marshall Islands), used presently as a U.S. missile tracking station, and continued westward to the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) where they visited schools on the islands and explored former Japanese military installations. When the O'Neills visited Lamotrek (Yap State, FSM), an island with a population of approximately 350, Mary Alice worked at the small school while Brian worked as a handyman.

After 10 months of cruising, the two arrived in the Republic of Palau in May 2010. They spent the next seven months exploring the island nation. Peleliu, a state in Palau, was the site of a horrific battle, known as the Battle of Peleliu. The battle resulted in approximately 20,000 U.S. and Japanese casualties on the beaches and in caves on the island. Now with a population of 400, Peleliu still shows the scars from over 50 years ago with weapons and unexploded ordnance littering the jungle and surrounding ocean.

To avoid the typhoon season, in December the O'Neills next voyaged west to the Philippines and north to Japan. They explored many of these country's islands, including Okinawa, well known for the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, leading to the end of WWII.

Upon leaving Japan, the O'Neill's sailed northeast to Adak, Alaska, the site of a WWII U.S. military base, and across the Bering Sea, stopping in Dutch Harbor, Kodiak Island, Lituya and Glacier Bay. In September 2011, after two years at sea, the O'Neill's arrived back in Bainbridge Island and look forward to future voyages.

About the Cruising Club of America

The Cruising Club of America is dedicated to offshore cruising, voyaging and the "adventurous use of the sea" through efforts to improve seamanship, the design of seaworthy yachts, safe yachting procedures and environmental awareness. Now in its 90th year, the club has 11 stations throughout the U.S., Canada and Bermuda, with approximately 1200 members who are qualified by their experience in offshore passage making. In even-numbered years, the CCA organizes the Newport to Bermuda Race in conjunction with the Royal Bermuda Yacht Club. Through the club's Bonnell Cove Foundation, grants are made to 501 C3 organizations for safety at sea and environment of the sea projects. For more information on the CCA, go to <http://www.cruisingclub.org>.