



Whittier Soundings

May 2004 Roy Stoddard FC, Brad Wells VFC, Cathey Sterling FSO-PB Volume XIV Issue 5

Training

This year the coxswain academy was held May 1-9 in Seward. Brad Wells of Whittier Flotilla, Charles Audino of Eagle River Flotilla, Craig Williamson of Seward Flotilla, Normand Lemoine of Valdez Flotilla, George Eischens, Gayle Forrest, Craig Forest, Sandy Mazen, and Dennis Taute of Homer all attended.



SAFE Boats in Seward



PPE by BMC3 Casey Loken

The intensive training given by Chief David Borg, BMC3 Casey Loken, Como Gary Taylor and our incoming Auxiliary OTO Bob Gross prepared the students to become UTM Coxswain qualified.



Students in UTM Coxswain Academy - Seward 2004



They had a variety of tasks including navigation, search and rescue, non-standard boat regulations, communications, pacing, station keeping, night navigation and a variety of other boat handling skills.

The completion of the academy comes as a great relief to all. Long days in the classroom and on the water boat handling, evenings of homework and cramming to learn the correct procedures are hard work.



Students training on the SAFE Boats

It shows a commitment and dedication to the Auxiliary above and beyond. The dedication of the Coast Guard to providing this training to the Auxiliary is outstanding and appreciated.



Heaving line practice



Debrief during lunch break



Towing practice



Making approach for throwing the heaving line.

Photos courtesy of Craig Forrest, Andy Buhler and Stewart Sterling

Thank You

We give special thanks to our OTO Chief Dave Borg for his superior dedication to the Auxiliary and to the SAFE Boat program.



Auxiliary OTO Chief David Borg

With Chief Borg's dedication, support and guidance and the dedication of the Auxiliary personnel to this program we have become a great example for the rest of the country.



*Bob Harvey, Chief Dave Borg, Paul Thiel
Discussing pacing techniques*



*Chief Dave Borg with And students at the PAC AREA
training 2003*



Chief Dave Borg demonstrating heaving line toss



And watching the students practice the heaving line

Thank you Dave for the time you've spent with the Auxiliary. May you have fond memories and know you have started a great program in Alaska.

Best wishes in your new posting.

District 17 U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary



Member's Corner

Brad and Linda Wells bring a boat to Whittier. Will it stay? We can only guess...or hope...or put it on stilts on shore nearby. We are waiting for positive reaction from Whittier's power structure.

April 5th was a long awaited date. Once it arrived the hours of procrastination ticked off and ticked-off the guy wanting to get underway. The gal grappled under loads of phantom checklist items yet to be done. Then the very last available unique moment happened when the lines were cast off and the course was begun for a fourteen hundred mile journey from Bellingham Washington to Whittier Alaska. Two relieved individuals took on the pace of a fast trotting horse and took advantage of good weather – a high-pressure ridge – and put in some 10 to 13-hour days starting well before dawn at each departure point.



Seymour Narrows chasing Faithfully



SOTA & Faithfully in Qwakume Bay, B.C.

It pays to take the Navigation course three times in a row. Panic is fended off when features on the chart do not match up with features on the land. Still, it takes flexibility when the electronics take a vacation at the same time as we. It pays to take the Weather course. Millibars make much more sense and fog is not entirely mysterious. And then, when glassy seas appear instead of the feared sea spray that was predicted, you know that weather is unique in areas that are not always reported at that particular moment. The Seamanship course is so packed with information, you stand back and take it a piece at a time while underway, and the review is marvelous. Still you find tools at the boat shows that are amazingly useful, such as a hook that makes docking single-handedly in the wind, more of a breeze.

Communications courses are invaluable at late midnight hours on the Gulf of Alaska, when the helmsperson looks up and sees vessel lights on the horizon. With the radio call, the reassuring answer comes back that "you've been on our radar screen for hours already. We are past you and well out of your way! Have a good evening!" Administration or Patrols courses come to mind when speaking with Coast Guard Valdez on two-hour radio guards when four-hour guards would have been just as good.

The other courses in AUXOP are beneficial too. These stand out more at the time you are on a trip like this. Are there more courses? Hmm, well being an Auxiliarist is just the ticket then for getting a good picture of what to expect.



Coast Guard Ketchikan



Bob Harvey & Brad Wells crossing the Gulf of Alaska

Much thanks goes to you all for your help and encouragement and excellent advice throughout our journey. I cannot list everyone's name, but it would begin to look like the flotilla roster. In awe we report we came in a few days earlier than was expected. April is a marvelous time to travel up the coast but is highly weighted with the need for flexibility in weather watching. Sometimes you have to wait a week or more and sometimes you have to skip your planned night's moorage in Elfin Cove to stay well ahead at your particular pace of speed before an approaching system. We had quite a nice trip and much education at the same time.



Linda & Brad Wells bringing SOTA to Whittier
All photo's in this article courtesy of Brad & Linda Wells



Safety Information

Department of Education
Department of Homeland Security
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
PE SpeedGram
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HYPOTHERMIA – ARE WE FOCUSED ON THE WRONG THING?

In all boating safety education, including ours, the focus for many years has been on the dangers of hypothermia and what to do when in cold water and protect you from hypothermia. Very valid scientific research on individuals exposed to immersion in cold water shows that the first problem is surviving long enough to even worry about hypothermia!

Depending upon an individual's physiology the real risks of **COLD WATER IMMERSION** occur when falling into water below 15°C (59°F) and most generally for everyone exposed to water below 10°C (50°F).

The steps in the process of dying from cold-water immersion include:

1. COLD SHOCK
2. SWIMMING FAILURE
3. HYPOTHERMIA
4. POST-RESCUE COLLAPSE

As you can see, hypothermia is the third problem encountered in cold-water immersion and our teaching needs to focus on having a boater survive long enough for that to be a problem! Let's look at each of these elements in a bit more detail.

COLD SHOCK – When someone falls into cold water their first unconscious response is to take a large breath of air...if their face is in the water when that gasp occurs, then their chances of survival immediately diminish. If the immersed boater doesn't inhale water on that first gasp, the breathing rate increases dramatically, the ability to

hold one's breath may diminish to as little as 10 seconds, the heart rate and blood pressure rise substantially and there's a gradual loss of the ability to move the hands and feet.

“Gradual” as used here is most definitely relative when you realize that this phase of cold-water immersion lasts only 3 to 5 minutes.

SWIMMING FAILURE – After one has been in cold water for 3-30 minutes there's a continued inability to hold one's breath, loss of coordination in the arms and legs results in a body-angle incompatible with swimming...this results in the use of excessive amounts of energy in an attempt to swim, there is reduced ability to match breathing with swimming efforts and as a result of uncoordinated swimming, it becomes more and more difficult to keep the head above water.

HYPOTHERMIA – Here is the subject on which we have historically focused and about which we are fairly familiar. It usually takes about 30 minutes in the water for real hypothermia effects to set in but they may include shunting of blood from the extremities to the core to retain heat, shivering (which eventually ceases as the body's systems begin to fail), loss of consciousness and heart failure or lethal heart rhythms.

POST-RESCUE COLLAPSE – The hypothermic boater is not out of the woods after rescue. Blood pressure can drop to a dangerously low level as the blood vessels in the extremities re-warm or when their ability to remain constricted fails, inhaled water can damage tissues in the lungs to the point that the boater is incapable of properly getting oxygen into the system or expelling CO₂, heart problems may develop as colder blood from the extremities is released into the core of the body, other physiologic abnormalities can occur and bleeding may reach lethal levels from previously unrecognized traumatic injury.

So, what is the answer to all of this? The answer is to do everything possible to prevent early death from Cold Shock and Swimming Failure and then hope that rescue takes place before hypothermia becomes irreversible.

The key then is for anyone who is on board a boat when the water temperature is below 60°F has to be wearing a PFD at all times versus having it nearby...after hitting the water, even with the PFD in-hand, we now know that they might not be able to get it on.

Further, if they end up in the water and are wearing a PFD, they remain upright and their head is maintained in a position so that they don't inhale water during Cold Shock. In a PFD, even if they experience Swimming Failure, they will continue to remain upright and can be rescued.

We also need to teach boaters that if they're ever called on to rescue someone who has fallen into cold water that the individual in the water may not even be able to grab onto anything that is thrown to them and, as a result, the use of a boat hook to get the victim to the rescuer's boat is a real likelihood.

The key to all of this is the wearing of a PFD and ideally an anti-exposure garment. It is pretty evident that if someone falls into very cold water they will drown from a combination of Cold Shock and Swimming Failure unless they are very, very lucky. No matter how fit they are, no matter how good they are at swimming, these things happen in anyone who goes into cold water and the life-saving device that will keep them alive long enough to be rescued is a PFD. If you teach recreational boating safety anywhere where water temperatures get below 60°F or to people who boat in such waters, it's critical that we hammer home the mandatory use of a PFD for everyone onboard.

DC-E

Crossing the Bar

New Whittier flotilla member Melissa Paquette passed away last Tuesday May 11th in Delta Junction of natural causes.

Husband Michael and Melissa had only become members of our flotilla in January.

Please keep Michael and Melissa in your prayers.

Roy..

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY



17th District

Whittier Flotilla Web Site
<http://www.uscgaux.org/~1700204/>

