



# Whittier Soundings



Whittier Flotilla 02-04, District 17, Alaska

June 2006 Sig Murphy FC, Russ Lyday VFC, Cathey Sterling FSO-PB Volume XVI Issue 6

## Operation Big Lake

*By Cathey Sterling*

Operation Big Lake was again a successful joint event of several flotillas. Members from Mat – Su Flotilla, Fairbanks Flotilla, Eagle River Flotilla, Anchorage Flotilla and Whittier Flotilla joined forces to provide Vessel Safety Checks and Safety Patrols on Big Lake and Finger Lake Memorial Day Weekend.



Memorial Day weekend traditionally starts the boating season and on the lakes of Alaska it is close to the first weekend we are usually ice free and able to boat.

The flotillas also use this time to work on operational training. Members working on crew or coxswain qualifications are able to go on patrol and complete the requirements for their qualification. We also offer PWC Operator training and patrol time to qualified PWC Operators. This year we had the advantage of having three Qualified Examiners allowing several people to get their official sign off for operations.

Saturday morning saw several people boarding the two river boats to practice and demonstrate their abilities in the various duties required of operational crew and coxswain. Marilyn Marsh stood radio duty acting as base for the on water patrols. Rusty Scholle, coxswain and Bev Gurtler, crew took several members aboard one boat while Shane Taylor, coxswain and Cathey Sterling, crew had Ray and Jerry aboard the Scholle's boat.



The boats took turns acting as the "vessel in distress" while everyone had a chance to fulfill the various duties required. Towing astern and alongside presented several opportunities for all to get familiar with the proper procedures and



# U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

practice proper safety measures. Richard Liebe was out on his PWC OPFAC assisting in training – acting as distress vessel for part of the day.

Part way into the morning training Robbie Robinson and Marie Scholle were interviewed by the Channel 2 news crew. Shane and Cathey received a request to take the Channel 2 news team aboard for a sample of a typical patrol. Richard Liebe ran his PWC with the boat while we were conducting the underway news interview. The news crew asked lots of questions about boating safety, legal requirements and what our suggestions were for the safety of the boating public. The message of wearing a PFD (lifejacket) came through loud and clear in the news broadcast.

After a busy morning of training and public affairs we had a barbeque lunch. Everyone discussed the training, what everyone still needed to complete and the mentors worked on making sure everyone had the proper sign offs in their crew books.



Marie Scholle sat through her dock side oral board with Shane Taylor.

After lunch one boat went out to continue training and check offs for crew members while the other boat departed for Marie Scholle's Coxswain check ride. Cathey Sterling was coxswain, and Shane Taylor QE. Shane was putting Marie through a thorough check ride until we came across a vessel in distress. The boat was out of fuel, a Good Samaritan with his own boat problems was attempting to tow them. The good sam wasn't able to tow due to his boat's mechanical problems. We took the vessel in tow with Marie making an excellent recovery of the

boat as it was drifting toward the shore in the brisk wind.

After getting a line on the boat, we asked the two men to put on their PFD's. They didn't have any aboard. After loaning them a couple of lifejackets, we commenced to tow them to the nearest marina for fuel. There was a US Coast Guard boarding team on Big Lake for the holiday weekend and we made contact letting them know this vessel may be a vessel of interest. When we went to take the vessel in an along side tow to bring them to the dock, the men, seeing the Alaska State Trooper and the Coast Guardsman, informed us they probably had enough fuel in their can for the kicker motor. We had no option but to drop the tow. The boarding team requested us to transport them to the vessel. Once they had boarded and spent a few minutes going over the vessel, they terminated the voyage. After the boarding team completed their dock side vessel exam, we returned the team to the marina.

While all the day's activities were going on, Stewart Sterling worked on getting the lettering on the PWC loaned to the Auxiliary by Team CC and Kawasaki.



Bev Gurtler, Brian Marsh, Charles Gewin, and others performed Vessel Safety Checks at the launch ramp.





# U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Many of the vessel owners expressed their appreciation to us for being there to do the vessel safety checks and having the boats with the lettering and patrol banners which made everyone more conscientious of boating safety and rules.

Sunday we started off with completing Marie's Coxswain check ride. After completing the check ride we continued with crew training for everyone. Stewart and Shane took a pair of the AXPWC on patrol and to do the break in time on the PWC.

After another lunch break, Shane Taylor, Stewart Sterling took the second pair of AXPWC on patrol and break in while Marie Scholle and Cathey Sterling ran a safety patrol and re-certification ride for Marie. The river boats continued with training and qualifications for boat crew.

Sunday evening we had our traditional barbeque with all members participating in Operation Big Lake meeting at Big Lake for the fellowship. Marie provided the King Crab and Ribs. Others brought pot luck dishes to round out the delicious meal. Last year we learned Nancy Terencio had a great technique for removing the crab meat from the shell.



This year Nancy provided lessons for all in how to easily get the crab meat. We invited the Camp Director and the Camp Host to join us in our meal. The conversations with them assured us our presence at the lake on this busy start to the summer boating season was appreciated.

After dinner, Dean Terencio and Andy Buhler did a safety patrol. When they returned, Paula McKibben, Dean Terencio, Shane Taylor and Stewart Sterling did another patrol on the PWC.



*All photos courtesy of Stewart & Cathey Sterling*

Monday morning most people packed up and headed home. Andy Buhler, Dean Terencio, Stewart and Cathey Sterling did another safety patrol with Marilyn Marsh and Bev Gurtler standing radio watch.

Through the efforts of Robbie Robinson and the Mat-Su flotilla in setting up the sites along with the support of all the members of the various Flotillas, Operation Big Lake continues to stand out as one of the most popular events in division three. The weekend was successful in getting the boating safety message out to the public through the news media, by our constant presence on the water, providing vessel examinations at the docks and ever vigilant safety patrols by boat and PWC. Members walked away with much needed training and sign-offs and a weekend of memories of wonderful fellowship. Congratulations to all who participated.



# U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

## SAREX

The SAREX June 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> took place just outside of North Granite Bay. The weather was sunny and winds variable; it was a great weekend for getting work accomplished.



And that we did. The plan was to get as many people through the crew training as possible and then get them on a check ride with a QE. In all, six people became crew. They were Jerry Jenkins, Lou Jones, Charlotte Jones, Chris Pallister, Craig Woolard and Lisa Woolard.



Then Bill Holzheimer was QE'd as a Coxswain. Craig, Lisa and Lou moved on continuing their training as coxswains. John and Sue got out of REYR and got current for this year.



John is now working toward coxswain. Terri Telkamp, who is rejoining our flotilla after spending some time in the Juneau flotilla, came to the SAREX and got current for 2006. I know that others became current for the year but I do not have all the details at present. Kudo's to you all.





# U.S. COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

There were twelve boats that joined us during the day on Saturday. Eleven stayed for the party.



We had three QE's working on Saturday and one on Sunday- two of the QE's (Bob and Stewart) got called out on a SAR case with Cathey on the safe boat and they also escorted an OPFAC that was returning to Whittier with an out-drive problem.



In all, there were 37 people who came to the event including Chief Bob Gross, the Operations Training Officer.



I'd like to thank Bill and Linda for offering to take so many people out to the SAREX who needed a ride. Then I'd like to thank each and every one of you for all of the work that you did on this weekend and all through the winter, mentoring and doing the signoffs and all of the other things that went into certifying all of these people. And thanks to Deanna for organizing the fellowship.



## Damage Control

*By Dave Brubaker*

Two Petty Officers (Chris and Owen) from the Kenai Marine Safety Detachment traveled to Whittier on June 7-8 to provide training with the CG's Damage Control Simulator.



The simulator provides a wide assortment of small and big leaks boaters can expect to encounter and the rocks in PWS make this simulation a perfect fit for our boaters.



The trick is to use the CG's Damage Control kit to stop the leaks. Despite the damp and often rainy weather, charter boaters and tour boat crews spent 90 exciting minutes testing their skills against the rising water. As soon as the split in the hose was sealed two more leaks would spring up, keeping the trainees on the move and frequently wet. The Whittier Flotilla sent e-mails and fliers advertising the event to tour boat and charter boat captains and crews in Whittier. Petty Officer Owen Dicks offered to bring the simulator back to Whittier on a Friday afternoon/evening to allow Auxiliarists a golden opportunity to learn first hand.

On June 24<sup>th</sup>, the flotilla is having a barbecue at the caboose, preceded by a cleanup of the harbor and followed by an exercise in Visual Distress Signals. We will go down to the beach and fire off expired flares and smoke bombs. On Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 PM, we will hold the June AUX general meeting in the pavilion.

On July 15<sup>th</sup>, we will have our first EMDEX (Emergency Disaster Exercise) at the head of the passage canal in Whittier. It will include a morning of instruction including raft handling and person in the water retrieval. In the afternoon, we will put into practice the ICS system during a joint exercise with the city of Whittier and the Coast Guard. We will simulate an actual disaster and coordinate with all the entities during the rescue. The auxiliary will do hands on training with rafts in the shallow waters at the head of the canal, transferring people from outlying Operational facilities to the beach and will also pull volunteer active duty swimmers out of the water and transport them to the triage center on the beach. The helo will land on the airstrip and instruct auxiliarists in the techniques of preparing victims for a med-evac. They will also demonstrate a basket retrieval of a swimmer in the water. This will be followed by a fellowship at the pavilion on the business triangle. All auxiliarists are encouraged to attend. **This is not just for operational folks; it is for everyone in our flotilla.**





## Member Training

*By Rae De Ley  
FSO-MT*

Lately there has been some interest in what it takes to be selected to attend the USCG Auxiliary Coxswain Academy. While I can not say how the selection process works exactly, I can provide a little information on the requirements you need to apply.

You must have a minimum of 14 hours underway as Auxiliary Crew or Auxiliary Coxswain; have passed Navigation Rules of the Road; and have a strong desire to be an active member of the Auxiliary Operations Program.

You do not need to already be UTM Crew qualified. You do not need to be young, nor perfectly physically fit. But you do need to be motivated and willing to work pretty hard for a full week. The training is fast paced and intense. There is homework every night including a night navigation exercise. Class location varies from year to year, and class size is limited. This year the academy was in Homer, and class size was limited to nine students.

So what will you get out of it? You will receive some very strong on the water training that will lead to you receiving your Auxiliary Coxswain Qualification and/or SAFEBOAT Certification. This will provide opportunities to become even more active in the Auxiliary Operations Program.

So next spring when you receive an e-mail asking who is interested in going to the Coxswain Academy, don't be shy! If you meet the minimum requirements, toss your name in the hopper. Maybe you will be selected to attend. Attendees will spend a week receiving some very fine training.



<http://a1700204.uscgaux.info>

<http://a170.uscgaux.info>

*FSO-PB Cathey Sterling  
P.O. Box 210643 Anchorage, AK 99521  
907-529-7353 alaskaaux@gci.net*