

Whittier Soundings



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Russ Lyday, FC **Bill Morris, VFC**
Cathey Sterling, FSO-PB

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Auxiliary Operations: A Change for the Future

By Sig Murphy

"If you don't like change, you're going to like irrelevance even less." General Shinseki

"Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future." John F. Kennedy

The Coast Guard Auxiliary is a dynamic organization adapting to the changing needs of our nation and the boating public. Our Operations Program has undergone changes this year that are neither burdensome nor complicated. These changes have been carefully developed over the last few years by some of our most experienced operation leaders standardizing procedures across the United States to enhance development of professional Auxiliary Crew and Coxswains prepared to fulfill our mission responsibility to the Coast Guard and thus the boating public.

Some, who have not read the changes or taken the time to reflect on them, may at first surmise that the new procedures will make it harder to become an Auxiliary Crew or Coxswain. This is not true, and, in fact, the national changes fill in some previous "gray areas" and provide a standardized procedure that should make the process easier for trainees.

As is addressed in the *Auxiliary Boat Crew Manual*, COMDTINST M16794.51A, we support the Coast Guard which is a multi-mission maritime service and one of the Nation's armed

forces with a mission to protect the public, the marine environment and our country's economic interests in our ports and waterways, along the coast, and in any maritime region as required to support national security.

The changes to our Auxiliary operational training comes from the Commandant of the Coast Guard who is required by law to train, examine, and qualify Auxiliary members before assigning them to duty (14 U.S.C. 831). This is necessary to ensure the safety of auxiliary members as well as those we assist. In return, properly qualified Auxiliary members are generally afforded protection against liability resulting from the performance of their duties under orders and receive other benefits including fuel cost reimbursement.

Our operational training is necessary to ensure that participating Auxiliarists meet high standards of service and that the performance of our duty meets our mission requirements and reflects positively on the Coast Guard.

Auxiliary members may qualify in three distinct boat crew positions: Crew member, Coxswain, and PWC Operator. Training for the same consists of three parts: *Qualification*, *Certification*, and *Currency Maintenance*. A separate Auxiliary Boat Crew Guide for each of the three boat crew positions sets forth a series of *Qualification Tasks* that define the knowledge and skills required for each boat crew position. The *Tasks* have not significantly changed and are still based on the *Boat Crew Seamanship Manual* (COMDTINST M16114.5). A trainee completes a task by reading the reference material listed, reviewing the skills

with a mentor, and then practicing the task. When the trainee demonstrates mastery of the task without guidance, the task is signed off by the mentor.

While some flotillas already have an informal “mentor” program, many do not and their members are often left to fend for themselves prolonging the process over years. The new operations mentor program merely standardizes the process that has been so successful in the past. Members working on their Crew, Coxswain or PWC Operator position generally will still be able to work with their friends who are member with the knowledge and skill to assist them as mentors, or, the Flotilla Commander or designated Flotilla Officers may assign mentors if requested. This takes the burden off of the member as he or she works to acquire the necessary level of skill required by having mentors ensure that the tasks are properly signed off and recorded when complete.

The *Qualification* process has not changed for the member working on a boat crew position. The process of initial entry into the program, in which the member learns and demonstrates the knowledge and skills required to perform assigned missions, remains the same. After all of the Tasks are signed off by the mentor, the trainee then completes a dockside oral examination and an underway check ride with a Qualification Examiner (QE) who is an experienced Auxiliary coxswain appointed by the Director of Auxiliary to verify that the trainee meets the performance standards for qualification. If the member satisfactorily completes the dockside exam and underway check ride, the QE sends in the paperwork within five days and the member receives a written *Certification* for the position. All of this remains the same as it has been in the past.

What has changed is the process for QE qualification and participation as set forth in Chapter 6 of the *Auxiliary Boat Crew Training Manual*. The OTO represents the DIRAUX as the primary manager and mentor of the QEs and the Boat Crew Training Program and a new position is established for a Chief QE Coordinator (CQEC), presently Commodore Taylor for District 17. They serve with others on a newly created Boat Crew

Advisory Board that reviews district policies and procedures governing the Qualification Examiner Program.

While the new process delineates specific requirements for QEs and defines their duties, it standardizes many matters which should streamline the procedure for having prompt QE assignments and takes pressure off of the trainee who no longer has to set up everything needed for the dockside oral examination and underway check ride.

For the dockside oral examination, the QE will select at least one task from each section of the Qualification Guide, plus three tasks of the QE’s choice, as outlined in the performance criteria set forth in the applicable Dockside Oral Examination Task found in the Qualification Guide. The trainee must successfully demonstrate knowledge of the qualification tasks and must accomplish tasks without prompting or use of a reference. Normally, the dockside oral examination is given at least a day before the underway check ride and will be set at a time and location considering the convenience of all concerned. For example, if the trainee and QE live in Anchorage, the dockside could be in Anchorage even though the underway check ride may begin on another day in another location such as Whittier or Seward. In some instances, such as the unavailability of a participant on a prior day, it may be necessary to conduct the dockside and underway on the same day.

Underway check rides will only be performed under orders. All participants must be wearing the required uniform and gear which is especially important in our cold water environment. A pre-underway check of the facility and personal safety gear must be done with the QE present. If the facility does not have the required equipment on board at the time of the check ride, the QE will cancel the same. The QE will determine if the trainee can accomplish all of the tasks set forth in the applicable Underway Check Ride Task found in the Qualification Guide. As with the dockside oral exam, the trainee must accomplish tasks without prompting or a reference. If possible, before the check ride, a trainee may wish to practice all of the tasks with the same coxswain or

AUX04

By Tom Kane

From May 2nd to May 7th I attended the AUX 04 class in Kodiak, AK. It is a four and a half day course, with travel on either end of that. The Aux-04 course is a basic to intermediate level course that is designed to take the beginner through the basics of PowerPoint Presentations and Web Page Design. There were 13 students in the class mostly from District 17. Two students were from Blaine, Washington to fill the class so it wouldn't be cancelled.

Because of the amount of material and the short time in which to teach it, the classes ran from 8:00 AM until 9:00 PM for the four long days with an hour and a half break each for lunch and dinner. Most of the meals were taken at the CG ISC Galley. Among the students were Dean and Nanci Terencio, Charlie Audino, Helen Williams, Kevin Marsh, Charley Gewin, Tina Mellin, Gail Otto, Suzanne Benson. Also attending were Skip Lewis and Richard Coons from Washington.

The first morning was introductions and security details for base activities and getting familiar with the equipment that we would be using. PowerPoint was started mid morning and lasted until the evening of the next night. Class time flipped between instruction and lab time where the students could work on their projects. You were asked to come to the class with ideas for content for your projects. The lab time was with individual computers that were installed at the workstations. Everyone had a PPP at the end of the second night which was rather refined and in need of very little to make it a finished product.

The next day they started Web Design, and some of us were having problems with it. Eventually the problems were answered enough that everyone got to a place where they had a web site with 8 to 10 web pages that worked, the links were there and working and each page had content.

On Sunday night, each of us had to present our two projects to the group and the instructors. This was not stressful; it was actually fun to see what every body came up with and how much we had all accomplished in such a short amount of time.

crew that will be used for the underway check ride using the same facility.

Districts may set their own additional procedural requirements which should involve input from the membership. With any change in a program like this, there are often numerous rumors that, even if untrue, can have a deleterious affect. If you have a question about any of the requirements, ask the CQEC, Gary Taylor or a QE.

Another change reduces the *Currency Maintenance* to a three year cycle, with certain fairly simple requirements every year during the cycle and a QE qualification check every three years to determine if the member has completed the minimal activities required to maintain currency and demonstrates proficiency.

While Auxiliary units, such as the Whittier Flotilla, that have already developed a very strong Operations Program may view the "changes" now incorporated in the "new" program as creating more paperwork and time to do what they have already been doing successfully for years, the changes do positively set standards across the United States which will be of great benefit to members and their Flotillas who previously did not have strong operation activities.

If any member questions the need for change, reflect back when you were younger and we did not have computers, cell phones, GPS, PWCs and a rapidly growing population of boaters with faster vessels requiring more Search and Rescues and other assistance. Times change and we need to adjust.

After the initial year of implementation of the new program has allowed adjustments for the changes, which are neither complex nor burdensome, the Coast Guard Auxiliary Operations Program as a whole should be strengthened and improved to the benefit of all.

Remember that the bottom line of being in the Auxiliary is to assist the Coast Guard and the boating public and to have fun and be safe while doing it.

"The world we live in has changed and we must change with it or we will find ourselves merely equipped for a world that no longer exists."

SEM

The instructors were extremely knowledgeable about all the topics and were right there the entire time giving one on one help as needed. They were fun guys and easy going which made the environment very conducive to productive learning. They had plenty of high tech gadgets and toys. I think we were all impressed by the quality of the instruction and the professionalism of the instructors.

The most amazing thing was that every single day in Kodiak was more beautiful than the last. The temps reached up to the 50's and there was not a drop of rain. Everyone was in good spirits even after sitting at the computer all day.

The really good news is that this course will be given again in September 2007 by the same instructors. The class will be given at the Naval Academy in Alameda, California. Alameda is an island in San Francisco Bay. There will be room for 16 people at the class so think about getting your name in and learn something new. Auxiliary Distance Education Technology Training Instructors: Bob Fritz, Brett Grooms and Tom Miller.



Following the clean up members met on deck of Auxiliary Station Whittier for a cook out fellowship.



Harbor Clean Up VE Ramp Day

Whittier Flotilla participated in the Harbor Clean Up in Whittier May 19. Several members and some family members donned gloves, toted large yellow garbage bags, and removed trash and debris that accumulate shore side over the winter.



The Vessel Examiners held a VE ramp day as part of the flotilla's participation in National Safe Boating Week.



National Safe Boating Week
May 19-25, 2007

Member Profile

By Sig Murphy

Having the good fortune of being the youngest child of a family that loved the ocean and boating, I grew up around boats and completed my first solo ocean adventure when I was 12. During my youth, I crewed on all types of vessels from big windjammers to a variety of motor boats. Life took on more meaning as I matured and had to make a living, and, by my early college years I did not have the time or funds to go boating. But, my luck changed when I began working for a marine science professor as a diver and then on oceanographic vessels and submersibles.

When I met the love of my life, Mary we had a lot of love but little money. We saved up and bought our first “boat”, a Korean War surplus life raft with a 1 ½ horsepower Seagull engine. She was named the “Mary J” and gave us many adventures including the time we were in San Diego’s Mission Bay and learned how insignificant one can feel when Navy flattop is moving your way; but, having never heard of the *Rules of the Road*, I told Mary not to worry for we could maintain the eye-watering speed of 2 knots and surely we had the right-of-way.

After we arrived in Alaska more than 35 years ago, we quickly learned a new style boating and the wonders of the “Last Frontier”. In the early 70’s, we saved our funds, bought a 40 foot vessel with another couple and traveled all over Prince William Sound. We have since enjoyed owning a number of motor vessels over the years from riverboats to trawlers, and two sailboats.

For decades, my military career and international law practice took me all over the world and I was able to navigate and dive the waters of many countries, oceans and seas from military and private vessels; but, when abroad, I always heard the song of the Sound calling me home.

To ensure I had more time in Alaska with my family, I became a Judge, retired from the military and we purchased SEAHUNT, a Fisher motorsailer we kept in Whittier. It was then that I began noticing more activity in the harbor with the Auxiliary and considered joining then; however, our children were teenagers and it seemed that all

we ever had time for was centered on their activities, which did not include boating, so we sold our boat and began a two year boating hiatus. Finally, Mary put her foot down as the kids went off to college and said we should go back to the one activity we both liked best and concentrate our spare time boating and enjoying life.

Then September 11th happened and everything changed. I was assigned to work with other past and present General Officers regarding missile defense matters and felt compelled to do more for our country. I studied the new mission of the Coast Guard Auxiliary and realized that we could serve the country while also enjoying boating. Remembering that Dave Brubaker, whom I had the pleasure of working with in the military, talked highly about the Whittier Flotilla, I called and met with Mark Poe, Bob Harvey, Roy Stoddard and others and was invited to go out on 611. After spending hours on the SAFEBoat learning about the Flotilla and visiting all of our old haunts and learning new ones, I knew that the Auxiliary was everything we had been looking for. Russ Lyday found a 2859 for sale and we bought “SeaQuester” beginning our adventures with the Coast Guard Auxiliary on Prince William Sound.

Mary and I are both involved in a number of activities with various groups; however, I can say categorically, without hesitation, that I have had more fun, met the best of friends and learned more about a favorite pastime because of the Auxiliary. Even after a lifetime of boating, joining the Auxiliary has taught me more and made me a safer vessel operator than I could have anticipated and has given the two of us great adventures while enjoying our favorite activity in the Last Frontier. Mary and I thank all of the Auxiliary members that have been so delightful, helpful and friendly to us and revived our love of the sea.



One of my failings in life is a never-ending compulsion to continue learning, and I have found that the Coast Guard Auxiliary presents boundless opportunities to sharpen existing skills and learn new ones while providing a meaningful benefit to society as we enjoy something we love to do.

What else could anyone want!



New Members

Please welcome our two new member applicants, Charles (Buck) Adams and Ron Paye.



Charles (Buck) Adams, introduced by Sig Murphy.



Ron Paye, introduced by Tom Kane.



<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