

Whittier Soundings



Newsletter of the Whittier Flotilla 170-02-04 District 17 Alaska

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District 17 Commander Visits Whittier

By Russ Lyday

On July 10th the Whittier Flotilla was privileged to host Admiral Brooks, Commander of Coast Guard District 17, in Whittier. Admiral Brooks was accompanied by LCDR Sue Albright, Director of Auxiliary for D17. The Admiral wanted to visit Whittier in order to learn more about our flotilla, its operations and our operating area. Representing the flotilla for his visit were Sig Murphy, Roy & Terry Stoddard, Dave Brubaker, Bill Reiter and Russ Lyday.

The first order of business was a briefing for the Admiral and the DIRAUX in the caboose.



Photo courtesy of LCDR Sue Albright

Dave Brubaker gave a terrific PowerPoint presentation about Whittier Flotilla's history, operations, the increase in boating traffic, and SAR cases in Western Price William Sound. Following the briefing the Admiral and the DIRAUX were given an area familiarization tour which included a visit to Blackstone Glacier.

Roy and Terry Stoddard graciously provided their 39-foot Bayliner, "Fresh Aire", for this event.

The original plan for the Admiral's visit included an area familiarization tour on the SAFEBoat. It also included good weather. Neither of those things was to happen on this day. The SAFEBoat was in Seward for repairs and the weather was – well Whittier; wind, rain, waves and fog. Sitting inside the enclosed command bridge on Fresh Aire, we watched spray fly high above our heads as we ploughed through the waves.



Photo courtesy of LCDR Sue Albright

Fortunately, Fresh Aire is a big and steady vessel. The waves were definitely noticeable, but did not cause us great discomfort. Admiral Brooks was able to gain some appreciation for the conditions which our facilities often encounter. On "Fresh Aire" we were all able to spend time sharing ideas with the Admiral and the DIRAUX.

Thanks to Dave Brubaker and Bill Reiter the caboose had been reorganized and really spiffed up. Thanks guys!

And thanks to Roy and Terry for their hospitality.

Helping Hand

By Charlotte Jones

On June 28th an e-mail message was sent throughout the District requesting qualified Vessel Examiners willing to go to Valdez for a special 4th of July Vessel Examination Day that had been advertised and promoted by the Valdez Flotilla. The Valdez Flotilla's problems began when one of their two qualified VEs transferred out of the area – and then their other qualified Vessel Examiner passed away.

Since we are “out of the water” for this summer we volunteered to make the trip. Because we have a motor home, finding a place to stay in Valdez on really short notice wasn't a problem. Hotel rooms might have been in short supply, but camping spaces were “a-plenty”. Our agreement was to do VEs on the 4th of July but since we were able to go earlier (we're retired) and we were available, Lou did 9 exams that day, and I did 6.

That evening we contacted one of the Valdez Flotilla members, Robert Rountree, and found that he was a Vessel Examiner, but he was in REYR. Lou made arrangements for Robert to come by our camping place, set him up with a Vessel Examiner book and got him the “on line” address to take the test.

Robert passed his test on July 4th, and Lou supervised his 5 required exams.



Van Waggoner of the Seward Flotilla also came to Valdez to help. He reports he did a total of “an even dozen” exams on the 4th.

While we were there, and the weather was still good (meaning sunny and warm) Lou and I decided to do a few more VEs on Thursday the 5th.

By the time we left Valdez, Lou had done a total of 27 Vessel Examinations of which 19 passed. I did 23 exams of which 15 passed. Of those 16 boats that failed, most had expired flares or no registration on board.

But best of all, when we left Valdez, we left the Valdez Flotilla with one very well qualified and reenergized Vessel Examiner.



Between Robert Rountree, Van Waggoner, Lou and myself, there were, in a 3-day period, 62 boats who both passed and received the window sticker or who were at least made aware of what they needed to do to comply.

*For those of you who didn't know of our plight, last summer (2006) we lost in the neighborhood of 800 RPM over the previous season. We spent that summer plowing water; only able to get “on step” when we lightened our load by using half of our gas and water.

We discovered the reason for the lost RPMs in May 2007 when we put our boat back in the water. She just wasn't running right so our mechanic son-in-law decided to do a compression test. One cylinder had “0” compression, a couple others had 50#, and none were near normal. This was not good news; at least for the 2007 boating season. There's always next year, right? BOAT = Bring Out Another Thousand (or six).

If your boat is losing its “pep” a compression check may be in order.

Membership

Reminder: It's that time of year again; our yearly membership dues for 2008 are due.

*****\$30.00 per person*****

Please mail your check to:

Terry Stoddard
7541 Papa Circle
Anchorage, AK 99518

Operations

By Tom Kane FSO-OP

Coxswain and Crew Activities

With about seven weeks left in the boating season and fall weather fast approaching, I would encourage anyone who is still in need of an initial check ride or 3 year currency QE to request a check ride from Russ Lyday, Rae De Ley or Tom Kane in the very near future. We don't want anyone to go in REYR for something they need to get done before the summer is over.

The SAFEBoat is scheduled to come out of the water at the end of September and there won't be many OPFACs still operating by then. Most everyone has met all their operational requirements for the year, but a few remain.

We had two SAREXs (search and rescue exercises) this summer and two wonderful fellowships on the water. The first was in June at Granite Bay. We had a good turnout and a lot of skills were honed in the towing and MOB (man overboard) recovery evolutions.

The second SAREX was in July, and was mostly a QE (testing) session, where most of the operational requirements spoken about earlier were taken care of. Sig Murphy, who was appointed as a Qualifying Examiner (QE) earlier this summer, had his hands full QEing. Thank You Sig.

John Whitney passed his QE and qualified as OPFAC coxswain. Roy and Terry Stoddard, Sheila Hillegeist and Kathy Lyday had their three year check rides.

Also this summer, Will Frost and Chris Pallister, who had graduated from the Coxswain Academy earlier in the summer, took and passed their check rides qualifying as NSB (SAFEBoat) coxswain.

Ray Miller from the Fairbanks flotilla and Rich Liebe from the Anchorage flotilla, also recently graduated from the Coxswain Academy, received their QE check rides from Sig Murphy and qualified as NSB coxswains.

SAFEBoat

611 had its share of problems this year. A starter motor went out and needed to be replaced. Then a hole in her collar kept her out of the water for a week while parts were ordered and repairs were

made. A second hole was repaired without removing 611 from the water.

OTO Bob Gross put 611 in "Charlie" (out of service) status until the GPS antennae was remounted in a different place in order to reduce the excessive vibration it was experiencing on top of a mast. When it was remounted the GPS was able to get and hold a fix better than before. No patrol time was lost before returning to bravo status.

After experiencing a transmission problem, 611 was sent to Seward for outdrive work and was back before the next weekend.

Unfortunately, it was not here when the Admiral visited Whittier. I am sure the Admiral had a much better time on the Fresh Aire for his tour of the sound.

Operational Facilities

The operational facilities fleet has suffered as well this summer. One hit a rock and had to be beached for repairs. It won't be back in operation before next summer. Another hit a deadhead (floating log) and ruined its outdrive and was out of the water for two weeks. Another had a fire onboard (faulty wiring on a new refrigerator) which was extinguished without much damage. Another was put up for sale and has not run all summer. Yet another has been out for mechanical reasons all summer. Presently, there are seven OPFACs that are scheduled to go out for the rest of the season.

Operational Schedules

The operational schedules that were in effect this summer for the OPFACs and the SAFEBoat worked very well. Five OPFACs were scheduled for every weekend of the summer. We did not always have a full compliment of five boats out there. Illness, lack of crew, and breakdowns caused holes in the schedule. Sometimes other OPFACs could fill in for boats that could not go out. The SAFEBoat only missed two weekends this summer after it arrived in Whittier from the Northern Edge exercises in Seward. I'd like to thank everyone for making up your schedules back in April and sticking to them so well throughout the season.

Another thank you to those who ran the SAFEBoat all season, giving up time from their

own OPFACs and busy lives to make PWS a safer place for boaters.

I think the statistics will show that we had a busy year out there and we did some good things with assists, SAR cases, and Vessel Safety Checks.

And thanks to the determination of Dave Brubaker, the caboose has never looked better nor been more functional than it has this summer. It has been manned most weekends and has been a tremendous resource to residents and visitors to Whittier. Thanks for all the members who worked in the caboose, thanks to Roy for setting up the laptop and wireless internet and to GCI for providing it.

Let's be safe on the water and keep up the great work.

Why I am a Vessel Examiner

By Kathy Lyday

It is low tide on a Saturday morning in Whittier. It is windy and cold. Few boats are going in or out until the tide turns.

At the end of the dock is a 10-12 foot inflatable. Aboard this vessel are two adults and several children. Although everyone on the vessel is wearing a life jacket, few warm clothes or other supplies are apparent except several 5-gallon containers of extra gas. While talking to these adults, we discover they were one of the last boats to go into the water before low tide. They are new to the area and have little knowledge of the local area or conditions.

This is a rather common occurrence in Whittier since the opening of the tunnel. Many boaters are going out "just for a little while", are "ok because they have their cell phone", don't need safety gear because they have "been boating for many years", "my husband (friend) knows what he's doing", or other reasons to believe they do not need all that "safe boating stuff".

At first, I laughed at the thought of becoming a vessel examiner. I know very little about engines and boats in general, but I believe I save lives as an examiner.

I am very competent doing vessel exams. Although I do not understand engines, I can say,

"Please show me your flame arrester", and then decide if it is clean. Most other items on the checklist to evaluate are in the "yes" and "no" category.

In my years of doing VEs, I have found that owners of larger boats tend to think examiners know everything about every boat ever made. I do not qualify for this "job" at all! My mission seems to be with the owners of smaller boats with outboard engines. These boaters also have some of the highest accident rates.

In Whittier, we have a unique situation. Boaters using the ramp to dock their boat must park their cars in a lot a trillion (maybe not quite) miles away. Once the boat is in the water, the driver must drive to the lot, park the car and trailer, and walk back. This whole process takes from 15 to 30 minutes depending on conditions (and conditioning).

The driver usually leaves a wife or other family member on the boat. Many times this person is totally clueless about boating in general or Prince William Sound in particular. Doing a vessel exam with this person is a wonderful opportunity for a "crash course" in boating safety education. Also, fellow boaters on the dock may be influenced to boat safely.

Many of these boats do not pass the vessel exam. However, if the boaters begin to think about safety; if they locate their safety equipment (and it's not "packed in one of these containers"); or if they learn about some of the dangers they may encounter and the lack of "help" "out there" in the 15-30 minute "crash course", I know my time and energy is well spent!

Land Based Training

By Rae De Ley FSO-MT

The Whittier Flotilla conducts a yearly land based sign off session for folks working toward Auxiliary Crew, Coxswain, or Personal Water Craft (PWC) Operator. Maybe you attended last spring when we had mentors, props, and prospective Crew and Coxswains together for training. In these Trainees learn new skills or actually demonstrate these skills before a mentor.

Trainees learn such skills as marlinspike, seamanship, navigation, proper use of visual distress signals (VDS), first aid, and how to use a fire extinguisher. Successfully completing the land based skills will result in a sign off and a jump on the training process. When summer arrives most of the remaining skills for sign off are those that can only be tested on the water.

I noted last year we seemed to be missing some training props. If any one knows the location of the flare gun with the practice flares, the empty fire extinguishers, or the box of ropes with the practice tow bit, please contact me. I'd like to use these items for training this fall.

List to Determine Latest Revision of Training Courses

Have you ever wondered if the program qualification guide, AUXOP course book, or the exam you are about to use is current and aligned with the material you have studied? Wonder no more. Visit the [National Training Department](#) and on the left side of the home page select "Current Documentation Revision List". This PDF document provides a list of the current revision of training material required for program qualification and AUXOP courses. All items listed have been reviewed by responsible departments and confirmed as the latest revision. Earlier or previous editions of training material are obsolete and should not be used or retained.

[Posted: 21 AUG 2007. Source: Ken Kendall, DVC-TD]
Article reprinted from the Nat'l USCG Auxiliary web site

BoatU.S. Foundation's Boating Safety Grant Program

Applications are now available for the [BoatU.S. Foundation's Boating Safety Grant Program](#). A total of \$50,000 is available to small nonprofit organizations and groups to fund projects that promote safe boating on local waterways, with each Grantee receiving up to \$4000 for their project. Since 1988, the Foundation has awarded over \$750,000 in grants. Application deadline is November 1, 2007 with grants awarded in January 2008.

[Posted: 24 AUG 2007. Source: Bill Griswold, BC-BRG]
Article reprinted from the Nat'l USCG Auxiliary web site.

There is a recently published D17 Directive that outlines procedures and format for all grant requests that are submitted by flotillas.

You can obtain a copy of the D17 Grant Directive from our FC.



<http://a1700204.uscgaux.info>

<http://a170.uscgaux.info>

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