



The Cary Flotilla



3rd Quarter 2007

US Coast Guard Auxiliary - Fifth Southern District - Division 9 - Flotilla 11



History

In 1947 two of what would be the four "cornerstones" of the modern Auxiliary were established: vessel examination and education. The Courtesy Motorboat Examination (later Courtesy Marine Examination) and now the Vessel Safety Check quickly became one of the Auxiliary's most important assignments. The recreational boating community accepted the concept with enthusiasm.

The Public Education (PE) program got under way in January, 1948, when Auxiliarists offered a series of free courses at the annual Motorboat Show in New York City. The boating public responded enthusiastically. June 23, 1949, the organization's tenth anniversary, was declared Coast Guard Auxiliary Day in New York.

Fun with "Blue Donut"



One of the many benefits of membership in the Coast Guard Auxiliary is the nearly continuous opportunity for learning. Whether this involves instructor-based classroom training or hands-on practice in operational training, there are nearly limitless ways that members can learn and practice everything from their fundamental boating skills to how to participate in a full-scale search and rescue operation. This wide range of learning is what member training is all about. And along the way, we try hard to make it enjoyable and fun!

This past August, the Cary Flotilla organized a night-time patrol training exercise on Jordan Lake. We had participation from both new operational trainees as well as experienced members "honing their skills." When the Auxiliary is called to assist in a night-time operation, the environment is very different than the one we are all most familiar with during the daytime. Most landmarks are difficult or impossible to see

in the dark, and new features of the lake and surrounding land become visible only at night. From the warning lights on top of radio towers and other tall structures to the patterns of headlights on the highways that pass near the lake, a whole new set of "landmarks" have to be learned.



BLUE DONUT CREW

In cooperation with Phil Vasko, our Flotilla Staff Officer in charge of Communications (FSO-CM), we constructed a training exercise for the operational trainees to use their skills at "visualizing" the lake after dark. The problem to be solved would involve simulating a boater who was unfamiliar with the lake even in daylight, and who was now stranded somewhere on the lake after dark with nothing more than a VHF marine radio to call for help.

After patrolling the lake at dusk to familiarize the crew and trainees with night-time points of reference, we sta-

tioned ourselves near Buoy 6 and started the training drill. After our FSO-CM announced on the radio that a training drill was being conducted, we heard "BREAK," which is the word that means a new message was coming as part of the same transmission, followed by the simulated request for assistance. Imagine our surprise when it was delivered in a thick and halting Russian accent!

As part of the training drill, the FSO-CM had decided to adopt the persona of someone who was not very familiar with English to make the training drill more challenging. This training is important, as it reflects the fact that increasingly we find that recreational boating is being enjoyed by many visitors and new residents of our country who may not always speak English fluently.

The trainees—after getting over their surprise

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“Blue Donut” continued

that “Boris” was the one in need of help with his disabled vessel “Blue Donut”—set about solving the problem of locating the simulated disabled vessel. After ascertaining the status of person(s) aboard the vessel and the vessel itself, the trainees communicated with “Blue Donut” using the following techniques to learn its general location:

- Determined where “Blue Donut” had put in at the lake.
- Determined the general sector of the lake where Blue Donut had traveled during the day.
- Determined that “Blue Donut” could see the lights on the cooling tower at the power plant.
- Determined that “Blue Donut” could see car headlights on the bridge near Ebenezer Point.

Using this information, the trainees determined that “Blue Donut” was south of the Highway 64 bridge near Vista Point. The more seasoned

crew provided some helpful suggestions on how to solve the next step of the problem, while admiring our FSO-CM's steadfast ability to “stay in character” during the drill.

Based on suggestions from the crew, the trainees directed our vessel's searchlight in the direction we anticipated finding “Blue Donut” and flashed the light several times in different directions until “Boris” indicated he could see it, and used this to home in on the location of “Blue Donut.”

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It took only a few more minutes to locate the search target. We had chosen the mooring buoy off of Vista Point as the simulated location of the disabled vessel—a large round mooring buoy with a bright blue ring painted around it—hence the vessel name “Blue Donut.”

Training is a team effort! My thanks to my crew and trainees for making the “rescue” a success, and my special thanks to our FSO-CM for his creativity and talent in playing the part of Boris, beleaguered captain of “Blue Donut.”

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This kind of training opportunity is one of the many great things about Auxiliary membership...the chance to learn new things, the chance to enjoy the fellowship and support of other Auxiliarists, the chance to stretch our skills in new and creative ways. We always want our training to be a positive experience, but we are most successful when the event is just plain fun!

— Carl Ralston, FSO-MT

Promoting VHF Radios

A neighbor of mine (we'll call him “Al”) called me mid-afternoon last month to let me know that they had a dead battery and were in need of help. Unfortunately, they were on their boat on Jordan Lake and I was on the road near Greensboro.

I couldn't offer much more than a gentle admonition that they should have a VHF radio to ask for help on the lake. To which my friend Al replied that it probably wouldn't do much good since no one else has a radio on the lake either. He sort of has a point, I'm sorry to say.

There are way too few radios on the lake, and I strongly suspect most of the ones that are on the lake are probably not guarding Ch 16.



This got me to thinking that it would be in our best interests if the auxiliary could develop a strategy, program or initiative specifically designed to encourage adoption of radios by boaters on the lake.

And in particular I wondered if we could combine forces in a way to do this more effectively. I'm specifically thinking if there is a way we can connect the boating public to the radio vendors through our programs. PE, PV, VE, CM, and PA all working together to get more radios on the lake, as it were. For example:

- Could we invite vendor participation as part of one or more VE days? We could even offer a quick 10-minute “Everything you absolutely need to know about VHF radio.

- The night after we talk about radio gear in BS&S we could invite vendors to set up a table before class to promote their wares.
- At PA activities/safety booths, we should have a radio present to demonstrate proper radio usage.
- We might invite local retailers to offer an incentive discount/radio certificate for BS&S graduates.
- In our outreach materials we should include some kind of tag-line or reference to the need to have and use a VHF -FM marine radio properly. “STAY IN TOUCH: Have a marine radio with you at all times, and know how to use it!” But the point is, to make it a regular bullet point in our messaging to the public.



Given the absence of radios on our inland lakes, doing “business as usual” isn't getting the job done.

— Tom Cole FSO-SR

District 5S Conference

The District Conference was held in RTP so it was an opportunity in our own backyard to get together with friends, new and old, from all over the District!



CARY FLOTILLA WAS THERE

Being active in Operations, I felt fortunate to be able to attend “Professionalism In Operations” offered by the new Operational Training Officer (OTO), CWO Timothy Luton. Mr. Luton (he prefers “Chief” or “Tim” to “Mr. Luton”) comes to us from a CG Cutter in Hawaii! He has been in the Coast Guard for 26 years, 18 of which have been aboard ship! He says he had quite a few different assignments aboard ships because of his expertise in navigation, which apparently is in high demand.



CWO LUTON

The Chief talked about his plans as OTO for Fifth Southern. He looks forward to visiting every Flotilla in the District, no small goal! He wants to ask how we do Operations, what are our needs. His office (the OTO works in the

Director’s office) has equipment that he plans to distribute so he would like to find out what we could use. For example, he has batteries for the PEPiRBs that all Coxswains are required to carry (check the expiration date on your battery).

CWO Luton also made a point of uniforms while on patrol, and for that matter, any time we are in public together. He pointed out that the Coxswain determines which uniform is to be worn on the patrol, much like the Commodore determines the Uniform Of The Day for a District Conference. While there are several options, the Chief said the most important thing is that all people on a patrol should be in the same uniform!

I look forward to meeting CWO Tim Luton again when he visits Flotilla 9-11!

Next I went to see NACO Commodore Gene Seibert present “USCG – Auxiliary Protocol and Uniforms”. The Commodore was perhaps the best person to discuss those issues. During his time as National Commodore he has met with various military and government dignitaries, both from the US and from other countries! The Commodore said we could find much of the protocol information in the “Auxiliary Flotilla Procedures Manual”, which can be found on the Chief Director’s website under “Manuals”, see http://www.cgaux.info/g_pcx/

Commodore Seibert talked about saluting, boarding a Coast Guard ship, flag etiquette, courtesy and protocol. He discussed subjects that were a little weak with me since I rarely have the opportunity to talk to a Commodore or an Admiral, or board a CG Cutter! I found it all very interesting and went right home and downloaded the Manual he recommended.

As for uniforms, the Commodore suggested that we spend the extra



COMMODORE SEIBERT

time to look up the uniform that we are putting on in the CG Auxiliary Manual, to be absolutely sure it is accurate. You can find the latest version of the Manual, M16790.1F, on the same Chief Director’s web site. Be proud of the uniform! Wear it correctly!

It is always fun to attend a Conference, so when it is held so close to home, attending is a must in my book! I got to talk with old friends from around the District and make new ones. It is interesting to ask them about their Operations, PE classes, membership issues, and discuss the differences and similarities. Sharing ideas often brings home new things to try in our own Flotillas!

The District store was available at the Conference as always. There were many other workshops available and of course there was the Commodore’s Banquet. But those are topics for another article.

— Jim D’Errico FSO-OP



New Members Notebook

Once you decide you'd like to join the ranks of *America's Volunteer Lifesavers*, there are a few pieces of business to attend to get you started on your journey with the Auxiliary. This article talks about the process of joining, and how you can get started benefiting from your new association.

Joining the Auxiliary consists of several fundamental steps. First, taking time to meet with flotilla members (and particularly the Personnel Services officer for the flotilla, identified as the FSO-PS) to discuss the nature of the Auxiliary, what it is, and (just as importantly) what it is not.

Secondly, take the Initial Qualification (IQ) test which is a simple open-book test that really just helps ensure you have gotten a well-rounded understanding of the Auxiliary. Third, complete a small pile of paperwork that includes your application for membership and information for a minimal background security check.

This can be a little intimidating, but it makes sense if you think about it – it's good that the Coast Guard wants to be sure you are who you say you are. When the Homeland Security Act of 2002 was enacted, the Coast Guard (and the Coast Guard Auxiliary) moved to the new Department of Homeland Security, and became the lead

federal agency for maritime homeland security.

They say a little bureaucracy goes a long way, and that's true of your membership application too – literally. The security check travels through the Coast Guard Auxiliary infrastructure, and then is passed to a separate agency that takes care of this check for many parts of the government – not just the Auxiliary. This can take weeks to complete and in some cases a couple of months – however, the Coast Guard has made great strides in clearing out the backlog of applications in the past year.

As a new member, be sure to make a copy of your application paperwork before your Flotilla Commander (FC) sends it in, in case you need to help your FSO-PS or FC with any follow-up on your application.

Whew! That seemed like a lot of busywork, but it lays important groundwork for what we hope is a long voyage with the Auxiliary. Okay, now that the paperwork has been sent off, what should the new member expect next?

First and foremost, attend the monthly flotilla meetings. Get to know the members of the flotilla and learn about what the Flotilla does in support of the missions of the Auxiliary. Each flotilla is different – the geographical location of the flotilla, the interests of the members, and the resources available to the flotilla will influence where the flotilla puts its emphasis.

You can use this time to find activities that you'd like to participate in, or even find out about areas that interest you that bring something new to the flotilla.

Secondly, meet with the Member Training officer for your flotilla (FSO-MT) and talk about what things you are interested in, and plan what training you'd like to start with. If he or she doesn't contact you first, feel free to call the FSO-MT up directly and schedule time to talk about your member training – that's what they are here for!

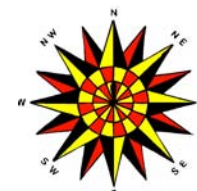
Third - and maybe most importantly - ask your Flotilla Commander to assign you a mentor. The value of a mentor cannot be overstated! If the flotilla doesn't have a formal mentor program in place, then this is the time to ask that they set one up. Each new member should have an experience member assigned to them to be "on call" to answer questions, interpret the alphabet-soup of acronyms and terminology, assist with planning training opportunities – in short, the mentor's job is to ensure that your first months in the Auxiliary be successful and fun.

As soon as your application has been accepted for processing by the Director of the Auxiliary (DIRAUX) responsible for your flotilla, then you will be issued a member number. This is your unique identification among the tens of thousands of volunteers who make up the Auxiliary, and you will use it with every official communication you make while in the Auxiliary.

Most importantly, once you have a member number you can be sworn in and begin participating directly in Auxiliary training and activities. Congratulations and welcome aboard!

Next time we'll talk about the questions every new member has that even the most seasoned veterans sometimes forget need to be answered – the new member Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) list.

— Tom Cole, FSO-SR



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Homeland Security