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THE CAPSTAN

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Norfolk Harborfest '23

Article page 6.



FIFTH DISTRICT SR ★ DIVISION SIX ★ PENINSULA



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Cover Photo



NORFOLK, Va. — Auxiliarists Chuck Mullen aboard AUXFAC 23848 along with crewmembers, transporting lunches that were prepared by Coast Guard Auxiliary Culinary Assistants in the Hospital Point area of Portsmouth, Virginia to the USCGC KENNEBEC and other government agency patrol boats that were harbored in the Town Point area of Norfolk, Virginia for lunch. Article on page 6. Photo submitted by Scott (Rip) Ripley.

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Edwin Nieves, DCDR
 John Cochran, VCDR
 Todd Egnor, IPDCDR

Editor, Edwin Nieves, AUXPA1

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The Capstan is your D5SR member publication. We encourage your contributions. Please send articles and photos as separate attachments to: Edwin Nieves, enieves2@cox.net. Include photographer's name and captions. Please check photos carefully for uniform compliance. Thank you, we can't wait to read your articles and see your photos!

Cutterman Insignia Ceremony



PORTSMOUTH, Va. — The USCGC SAILFISH command and crew together for a Cutterman Ceremony for Auxiliarist Tom Lappe, front row second from right, and BM1 Brendan Tobyansen, front row right. The ship's bell and salt water are on the table as part of the ceremony traditions. Photo by Coast Guard Auxiliary Public Affairs.

Division 6 Auxiliarist Tom Lappe Earns the Auxiliary Cutterman Insignia

Tom Lappe, VFC
054-06-07

PORTSMOUTH, Va. — The basics for achieving the Cutterman's Insignia are one: to perform a minimum of 52 days per year – equivalent to 1 day per week per year – aboard a cutter 65 feet in length or greater, for a minimum of 2 years underway or inport. Of those 52 days, a minimum period of 24 shall be served as underway days as defined in cutter employment standards as per reference (b). Note: A total of 104 or more days over two years does not meet this requirement if at least 52 days were not served in each calendar year.

Two: complete the Personnel Qualification Standard (PQS) for Damage Control, NAVEDTRA 43119-H (series) – Watch stations 301-308, or for cutters 175 feet in length or less, Special and Emergency Operations and Procedures (SEOPS) Volume I & II – Basic Damage Control as per reference (c).

Three: Complete qualifications to support the cutter in a minimum of one Watch Quarter Station Bill (WQSB) position. The suitability of this position for the individual shall be a commanding officer or officer in charge determination.

Cutterman Insignia Ceremony



PORTSMOUTH, Va. — Auxiliarist Tom Lappe (front left) with the USCGC SAILFISH crew receiving the Cutterman Insignia from BMCM McClellan. Auxiliary Public Affairs photo.



PORTSMOUTH, Va. — USCGC SAILFISH crewmember BM1 Brendan Tobyansen (front left), receiving the Cutterman Insignia from BMCM McClellan. Auxiliary Public Affairs photo.

Watchstander certification shall be achieved by completing any required Coast Guard or unit PQS/Job Qualification Requirements (JQR) process.

With support of the USCGC SAILFISH crew and oversight by the Officer-in-Charge BMCM Kraig McClellan, I completed the time which addressed the requirements in about 12 months spanning the last half of 2022 and the first half of 2023. As an indication of the commitment to my SAILFISH command and

crew, I provided over 692 hours in 2022, and now through July 7, 2023, I have provided over 1245 hours of support and completed qualifications to support Inport Watch, Lookout, and Anchor Watch. I'm currently working on qualifications for Helmsman and Quartermaster of the Watch to be followed by several other deck competencies and Engineering Watchstander. The qualifications are the same as those that Active Duty perform to include sign-offs, written tests, and oral boards. My shipmates treat me no different with the qualification process and expect the same from me as they would all new crew. It's a lengthy process and not taken lightly.

As stated during the recent Cutterman Ceremony, where I was honored to share the ceremony with BM1 Brendan Tobyansen, who was pinned at the same time, BMCM McClellan talked about the sacrifices one must make in order to obtain this designation. This is not a part-time effort on any front. It requires a lot of

Cutterman Insignia Ceremony



PORTSMOUTH, Va. — Flotilla 67 Cuttermen attended the ceremony for Tom Lappe. Todd Egnor (far left). Admiral Shannon N. Gilreath, Commander, Fifth Coast Guard District, was also present for the ceremony (second from left). Tom Lappe and Dave Gamble (far right). Auxiliary Public Affairs photo.

is pretty much fair game. I have had the privilege of assisting with the security zone protection of the downed balloon, assisting in Search and Rescue (SAR) cases – some with good endings and some not – and assisting with President of the United States (POTUS) support. I enjoy being the lookout as our small boat crew heads off to board smaller vessels. My role is to ensure there is always visual contact of our assets and to properly log the results.

Oh yes, there are LOGS and plenty of them. As the Coast Guard is moving away from paper in many areas, just imagine having to man a computer keyboard as you're bopping about in conditions while maintaining an integral set of legal documents. I tend to handle many of the log entries to permit my Watch colleagues an opportunity to fulfill other demanding positions to which they are qualified including Surface Swimmer, Boarding Team Member, etc.

hours and dedication. I've earned the respect from my Sailfish Shipmates and I of them because of the bond we've built due to the hours and commitment.

The WPB 87 class of ships is demanding on many levels, physically and mentally. I love the SAILFISH but it's a cork in water. We've experienced some pretty sporty conditions from both the sea and the wind. I'm fortunate to not get seasick and not require motion sickness pills. But I do wear bands and chew a lot of peppermint candy. Normally I rise by 0500 and in bed around 2300, unless I'm on the 0400-0800 watch where I just alter my time so I'm in bed by 2200 and up at 0300. I take part in all of the drills and perform duties as assigned. It's a constant learning process as you never know what you may be required to do or backfill at any time. Of course, per SOP, I do not partake in the handling of firearms or assist with boardings. Everything else

In addition to standing watches and lookout, I help work the deck, heave lines, support the release and recovery

of the small boat, and anything and everything needed to be performed on the ship. That includes changing oil, assisting in replacing the generator, preparing for main power plant turbo replacements, painting, cleaning the bilge, pumping sewage, filling potable water, manning colors, cleaning the oven, wiping counters and cabinets, stocking supplies, and many other general maintenance and administrative items.

The bottom line is I feel being a recipient of this coveted designation, I've earned a place as a crew member on the SAILFISH and in a position to be a of value to the ship, the command, and the crew. I truly look forward to learning and earning more qualifications to further my value add.

Norfolk Harborfest '23



NORFOLK, Va. — Tall ships and boats parading toward the Town Point Park area of Norfolk for Norfolk Harborfest '23.

Division 6 Auxiliaries Provide Support to Norfolk Harborfest 2023

Scott (Rip) Ripley, Flotilla Commander
054-06-03

Photos submitted by Scott (Rip) Ripley

NORFOLK, Va. — Division 6 Auxiliaries provided support for the 47th Norfolk Harborfest June 9 – 11, 2023. Norfolk Harborfest is the largest, longest-running, free maritime festival.

The event features a tall ship Parade of Sail, food, drink, activities, and entertainment in downtown Norfolk, an evening drone show and a fireworks show. Activities over the weekend included a United States Coast Guard Search and Rescue (SAR) demonstration on Friday and Saturday, a fire and police department Emergency Response Vessel demonstration, a tugboat muster and a Build A Boat challenge.

This year, the ships in the parade included the *Schooner Virginia*, *Godspeed*, *Kalmar Nyckel*, *Pride of Baltimore II*, *Gazella*, NOAA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) vessels and the United States Navy's USS GETTYSBURG

Norfolk Harborfest '23

(CG 64). The USCGC POMPANO led the parade from the Sewells Point anchorage to Town Point Park, on the Norfolk Waterfront. Coast Guard Auxiliary vessels along with law enforcement and fire department vessels, provided a parade escort to ensure safe conditions for all participants.

Every Harborfest seems to have some kind of unique twist to it. This year's curve ball was air quality concerns from the smoke blowing down the East Coast from wildfires burning in Canada. On the day prior to the Parade of Sail, the Coast Guard safety officer for the event, advised crews working outdoors to stay aware of reported Air Quality Index Levels – green, yellow, orange, red, etc. The Auxiliary Strike Team Leader for Operations was asked to advise all supporting Auxiliary crew members involved in Harborfest to self-identify any at risk medical conditions including, but not limited to, past/current asthma, COPD, bronchitis, heart disease, or other respiratory conditions. If conditions were identified, the Coast Guard recommended those members to be removed or replaced at their request. The Safety Officer further advised that coxswains continue monitoring all personnel closely during patrols and if necessary, increase indoor rest periods and allow face coverings.

The event was planned and executed over the entire weekend using the standardized Incident Command System (ICS) structure. Planning started months in advance of the event, and the Coast Guard is already in the early stages of planning for both Harborfest 2024 and the much larger Sail 250 event for Harborfest 2026. Following the ICS construct, an Incident Commander (IC) had overall responsibility for Harborfest. Under the IC LTJG Davis was the Operations Section Chief who was supported by Operations Group Supervisors, a Law Enforcement Strike Team Leader, Fire and Rescue Strike Team Leader, and Scott Ripley was the Auxiliary Strike Team Leader. Each Strike Team Leader was responsible for coordinating and directing assets under their control based on pre-defined work assignments and emergent action requirements. Multiple other sections and supporting staff were also involved in the overall execution of the event. The final pre-event operations brief was conducted the day before Harborfest started. The USCGC KENNEBEC and the

Port of Virginia's Marine Incident Response Team (MIRT) combined to provide the on-scene Incident Command Post (ICP) starting on Friday morning for the Parade of Sail. Situation Briefs were conducted twice daily to provide updates on weather, air quality and safety, emergent issues, and work assignments. Crew Tailgate Briefings were conducted approximately 45 minutes prior to each waterway closure to confirm asset status, assign and confirm tasks and positions, and address questions from the crews.

Chuck Mullen Sr., Frank Hudson and Kevin Shortell, Auxiliary coxswains, conducted a total of four patrols under the guidance of Scott Ripley, the Auxiliary Strike Team Leader. Specific work assignments were provided to each crew in advance. In addition to escorting the Parade of Sail, Auxiliary patrols were generally tasked with enforcing safety zones during scheduled waterway closures, enforcing recreational boater safety requirements, conducting roving patrols in areas of dense vessel traffic – namely the event anchorage – providing personnel transport and conducting SAR in response to SAR incidents. Mr. Mullen's crew also provided the sector commander and the deputy with an anchorage tour and ring side seats for the Saturday SAR demonstration.. Alessandro (Alex) Ambrosi supported Sector Waterways during the waterway closures, monitoring vessel traffic in the area.

Auxiliary Culinary Assistants (AUXCA) provided the food service for the entire weekend, feeding all Coast Guard and Other Government Agency (OGA) boat crews lunch and dinner. The food service activities were organized under the Logistics Section Chief with Ron and Ginger Ellis leading the food crew. Ron and Ginger are AUXCA and ICS Food Service Team Leads. Their food service team included active and retired AUXCAs Fred Matthies, Robert Harlan, Kent Hobbs and Kurt Metcalf as well as four Coast Guard reservists Bill Doetzer, Sam Broyles, Jacki Foss and Jake Malkowski. Over the weekend the AUXCA served five meals and almost 400 people. The menu included hamburgers, hot dogs, pulled pork, BBQ brisket, grilled chicken, potato salad, coleslaw, chips, and cookies. The food was supplied by the Port of Virginia.

Norfolk Harborfest '23

Flotilla 57 members staffed a public affairs tent on the Harborfest grounds at Town Point alongside a USCG Recruiting tent. Flotilla 57 maintained a public affairs booth all three afternoons of Harborfest. They had a lot of foot traffic from people asking what the Auxiliary is, what it does, how it's affiliated with the Coast Guard, etc. Auxiliarists handed out literature about the Auxiliary, safe recreational boating, and used a game board to illustrate the lifespan of various common pollution items like paper, plastic, aluminum, and more. The flotilla especially extends a big thanks to LTJG Jaclyn Davis from Sector Virginia who helped the flotilla get a table from the Harborfest organizer.



Top photo

NORFOLK, Va. — Harborfest' 23 fireworks activities overseen by Coast Guard Auxiliarists from the USCGC KENNEBEC.

Bottom photo

NORFOLK, Va. — USCGC KENNEBEC with other government agency patrol boats rafted up for a lunch prepared for them by Coast Guard Auxiliary Culinary Assistants.



Auxiliary Aton Verifiers Provide Assistance to the U.S. Coast Guard

In just over four months, an Auxiliary team inspected and completed more than 900 PATONs for both ANT Milford Haven and Hampton Roads. Both units responsible for a total of 1217 PATONs. This data was entered into the I-ATONIS immediately as part of the augmentation.

Raymond Procopio, Staff Officer – Operations and Staff Officer – Navigation Systems
054-06-06

The summer of 2022, United States Coast Guard Senior Chief Petty Officer Eric Righter, Station Milford Haven's Aids to Navigation (ANT) Officer in Charge (OIC), asked members of the Auxiliary if they could assist in a project to focus more on inspecting Private Aids to Navigation (PATON) and to follow with inputting the data from these inspections into I-ATONIS. This is an automated application which manages all significant logistics efforts in maintaining over 100,000 Federal and private aids to navigation throughout the country.

This is when things got even more meaningful and exciting for a small group of Auxiliarists from Flotillas 66 and 63, members who regularly provide direct support to the Coast Guard with diverse activities. These include watch standing, culinary assistance at the small boat station and training support with 2-boat exercises with the active duty and administrative support at DIRAUX, to name just a few.

Use of private aids to navigation or PATONs are used to extend a particular Federal aid system to mark obstructions, pier-heads, and channels that may be of use to a large utility such as a power plant or a small user group like marina operators, homeowner associations or local municipalities.

One of the primary responsibilities of the Auxiliary Aids to Navigation Program is the reporting of discrepancies observed on both Federal Short-Range Aids to Navigation (ATONs) and Private Aids to Navigation (PATONs). It is a

partnership between the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary that focuses on assisting the in "backwater" and remote water way areas where the Coast Guard doesn't transit in the normal course of daily operations, as well as the more traveled waterways of the country.

Under the current system, qualified Auxiliary ATON and PATON Aid verifiers, when on patrol or from a land-based area, comes upon a discrepant Aid, follows up by reporting the discrepancy on a form forwarding the information to a Coast Guard ANT unit who in turn enters it into I-ATONIS database. Senior Chief Righter's request was immediately embraced by a group of seven active aids verifiers from both Flotilla 63 and 66. Training to use the I-ATONIS application began soon afterward at Coast Guard Station Milford Haven. The Auxiliarists were then authorized to access the database from any Coast Guard workstation.

The responsibility of the program is to inspect and verify the condition of Class I, II and III PATONs at specified intervals. Class I and Class II private aids are the most important and are checked regularly. Class I aids are verified annually. They are

aids to navigation on marine structures which the owners are legally obligated to establish, maintain, and operate, like utility power line towers crossing a major waterway. Class II private aids, verified every three years, are used in general navigation of smaller tributaries which may access a local municipality. Class III aids are those not ordinarily used by general navigation and are verified every five years. These can be a channel accessing a private marina or marking an oyster reef. Once a private aid is established, the owner is

Senior Chief Righter went on to say "As the Officer in Charge of ANT Milford Haven, I would like to personally say Thank you for your devotion to duty and sacrifices you have made to be a force multiplier for our unit. Your work does not go unnoticed, and I am grateful to be working alongside each and every one of

Auxiliary Aton Verifiers Provide Assistance, continued

legally obligated to maintain it in good working order which includes reflective paint, a visible number, a solid undamaged back board, and a working light, if applicable.

Each year, Coast Guard Fifth District Waterway Management Branch in Portsmouth, Virginia, directed by Private Aids to Navigation Manager Mr. Ryan Doody, provides the Auxiliary with a list of all the Coast Guard documented PATONs within the district. The report is also sent to the local Coast Guard Aids to Navigation units. Once our team of Auxiliarists entered the information into the I-ATONIS database, Waterways Management reviewed the information to determine if they needed to contact the private aid's owner for a discrepancy. In the beginning, the effort was focused on the private Aids in Station Milford Haven's area of responsibility but soon expanded to ANT Hampton Roads.

In 2023, a systematic approach was introduced to further streamline the process for inspecting Class II and III aids by dividing inspection tasks by area of responsibility into North, Central, and Southern zones of the three Peninsulas. This will ensure coverage and allow the inspections to be spread out over a 3-year period for Class II and a 5-year period for Class III, making it possible to complete a class of private aid inspections in a zone within one boating season which can be limited by weather and water temperatures.

The effort and results by this small group of Auxiliary Aids verifiers were astounding as Senior Chief Righter commented: "The local Auxiliary have done extraordinary work verifying the PATONs within the AOR. In years past, aid verification has never exceeded 50%, and this year due to the hard work and dedication by Flotilla 63 and 66, over 95% of PATONs have been verified, reported, and documented properly. The countless volunteer hours underway and door knocking at the marinas increased safe navigation within the waterways of the southern Chesapeake Bay and the rivers feeding the port of Virginia, Richmond, the District of Columbia, and Baltimore, resulting in eight thousand square miles of water covered".

In a little over four months, the team inspected and completed more than 900 PATONs for both ANT Milford Haven and Hampton Roads, both units responsible for a total of

1217 PATONs. All this data was entered into the I-ATONIS immediately with the help of Ryan Doody and Auxiliarists Gary and Heidi Derby.

The Auxiliary team assisted the ANT units in accomplishing their mission of making our waterways safer, increased accountability of private aids to navigation owners and set the precedent to expand to other ANT units to use this model. It also increased our platform to be operationally more productive in keeping the recreational boating public safe.

Senior Chief Righter went on to say "As the Officer in Charge of ANT Milford Haven, I would like to personally say Thank you for your devotion to duty and sacrifices you have made to be a force multiplier for our unit. Your work does not go unnoticed, and I am grateful to be working alongside each and every one of you."

Contributing editors:

BMCS Eric Righter, OIC ANT Milford Haven

Civ. Ryan Doody, Private Aids to Navigation Manager, D5 Waterways Management

Gary Derby, Aton Verifier

Photos by Mary McCoig and Gary Derby

Special thanks to coxswains and AV crew members Gary and Heidi Derby, Jim Powell, Mary McCoig, Matt Smith, Ray Procopio, Flotilla 33 members Brian McArdle and Terry Medhurst.

Senior Chief Righter went on to say "As the Officer in Charge of ANT Milford Haven, I would like to personally say Thank you for your devotion to duty and sacrifices you have made to be a force multiplier for our unit. Your work does not go unnoticed, and I am grateful to be working alongside each and every one of you."

Continued page 8.

Types of Private Aids That Division 6 ATON Verifiers Inspected and Verified

Photos by Mary McCoig

Auxiliarists from Flotilla 054-06-06 and 054-06-03 assisted in a Coast Guard project inspecting PATONs and inputting the inspection data into I-ATONIS.



1. These can be a channel accessing a private marina or marking an oyster reef. Once a private aid is established, the owner is legally obligated to maintain it in good working order which includes reflective paint, a visible number, a solid undamaged back board, and a working light, if applicable.

2. Discrepant Class II PATON, Warehouse Creek #2 on the Great Wicomico River.



3. PORTSMOUTH, Va. – Class I private aids to navigation, owned by Craney Island Fuel Terminal on the Elizabeth River. Photo by Auxiliarist James Powell.

4. WHITE STONE, Va. – Class II Mooring Buoy, owned by a private shipping company, east of the Norris Bridge.



5. MATHEWS, Va. – Class II Private Aid, Channel Marker #8 at the "Hole in the Wall", Milford Haven East, southern entrance to Milford Haven. It is owned and maintained by Mathews County, Virginia.

6. DELTAVILLE, Va. – Moore Creek entrance (Piankatank River), with Class III private aids marking the channel owned and maintained by Middlesex County, Virginia.





KEY WEST, Fla. — Auxiliarist Antonio Mendibur standing on the bridge of the USCGC ANGELA MCSHAN. Mr. Mendibur was augmenting as an Interpreter aboard the ANGELA MCSHAN in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry. Auxiliary Public Affairs Photo.

Operation Vigilant Sentry, First Encounter

An Auxiliarist's Personal Experience as an Interpreter on a Coast Guard Cutter

Antonio Mendibur, Auxiliary Interpreter
054-06-03

The Mission

The ANGELA MCSHAN was performing its first Alien Migrant Interdiction Operation (AMIO) in support of Operation Vigilant Sentry (OVS). In command, LT Ryan S. Foust, Executive Officer, LTJG Christopher B. Jaques, and Operations Officer, LTJG Dylan Robert. The cutter was named after Angela McShan, a highly regarded member of the Coast Guard who is the first African-American female to be promoted to Master Chief Petty Officer and appointed as an instructor at the Chief Petty Officers' Academy.

On January 6, 2023, at approximately 3:00 p.m. local time, the

ANGELA MCSHAN left Coast Guard Station Key West in Florida for its first AMIO, in the Florida Straits. As with other cutters assigned to support OVS, the mission was to interdict and provide assistance to non-citizen boats intending to arrive on the United States coast from Cuba and Haiti.

Spanish language interpreters from the Coast Guard Reserve and Auxiliary are assigned to provide mission support. In my case, I was assigned to the ANGELA MCSHAN for a period of five days as an Interpreter. A unique, once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that tested my compassion and humanity for those less fortunate than

me.

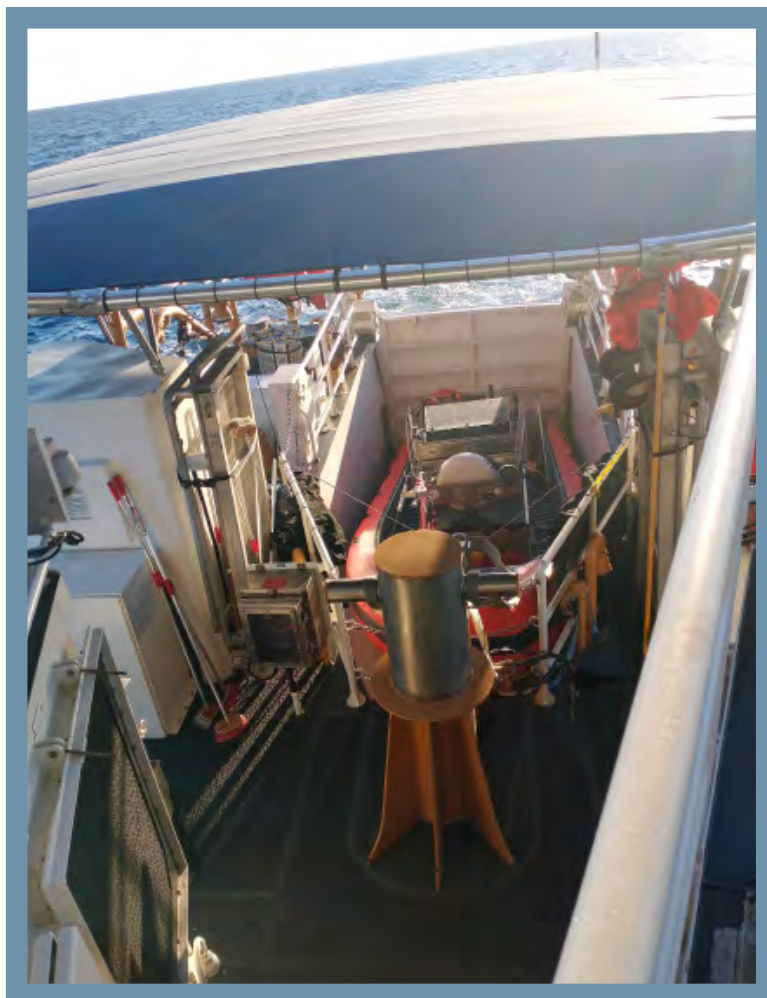
Contact

Soon after our departure we were tasked to assist a Coast Guard 45-Foot Response Boat Medium (RBM) from U.S. Coast Guard Station Islamorada in Florida. Earlier that day, Station Islamorada had received a distress call from a nearby boater who had spotted what looked like a sinking small non-citizen boat off the Florida coast. The Station quickly launched an RBM which arrived at the reported location to find four male non-citizens already in the water surrounded by gasoline and oil. No doubt, these four non-citizens were thankful to the Coast Guard for saving their lives. However, the rescue put an end to their hope of reaching land. Soon after the pick-up, the RBM's coxswain established radio contact with the ANGELA MCSHAN's commanding officer to arrange a transfer of the non-citizens. Although the RBM was capable of accomplishing the initial rescue, it was not equipped to provide the necessary initial short term logistical support. The transfer occurred in the hours of darkness without any incidents. I saw first-hand the skills of the RBM coxswain as he aligned the RBM vessel along the port side of the ANGELA MCSHAN while battling three-foot waves and providing a fairly manageable platform for the weary non-citizens to climb the pilot ladder onto the cutter.

The four non-citizens were dehydrated, tired, and they were in need of dry clothing and a place to rest. Under a full moon and forward of the cutter's bridge, the crew had set up a small intake processing area to conduct the initial personal interviews. As the interpreter, I became the communication link in establishing the non-citizens' identity, well-being, departure location, length at sea, and other pertinent information. Once the questioning was over, each non-citizen was asked to turn in their valuables and place them in a plastic bag for custody. Their wet clothing was replaced by a white vinyl overall one-piece suit providing protection from the environment. Plenty of drinking water was made available to calm their thirst and help them regain their faculties. Once the Cuban non-citizens came onboard, there was a new rhythm of activity on the vessel. Temporary bathroom areas were established, additional food had to be cooked, and a 24-hour non-citizen watch schedule was placed into motion to monitor non-citizens' well-being, setting the stage for next day's event.

The Encounter

It is early morning on January 7, I was quickly awakened by the non-citizen alert alarm notification, phase I. Over the loud-speaker with a follow-on call to a crew brief at the bridge began, phase II. I jumped off my bunk and began to get ready. There was really not much to do, since from the previous night's event, I had learned that sleeping in my operational dress uniform without my blouse



STRAITS OF FLORIDA — The USCGC Angela McShan stern ramp for launching and recovering the over-the horizon rigid-hull inflatables (RHIB). Photo by Antonio Mendibur.

was 50 percent of the battle of getting ready quickly.

As I walked out of the executive officer's quarter where I was residing for my tour, I passed the galley area and asked what was happening. A crew member informed me that a small non-citizen boat had been sighted, and we were getting ready to interdict the vessel. While climbing the ladder from the lower deck onto the bridge area, I was imagining what was to happen next. Once on the bridge, I stepped outside on the starboard side of the cutter to see a small wooden boat about 800 feet away from the cutter drifting at the mercy of the sea. It was possible to make out a couple of men waving their arms high in the air, reassuring themselves that we had seen them. In return, I acknowledged their call for assistance by waving my arms back. My arms gesture was just that reassurance they needed. They were stranded in the middle of a large body of water without land in sight. The ANGELA MCSHAN had already come to a stop as we gathered for the mission brief.

Operation Vigilant Sentry, First Encounter



MIAMI, Fla. — The Coast Guard Cutter ANGELA MCSHAN (WPC-1135) underway. Coast Guard Photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Murray. Archive Photo

Commanding Officer LT Foust was seated on the captain's chair. He looked at me and said, "Tony I would like for you to be part of the initial contact team and ask if they need assistance," to which I answered with a resounding "yes Sir." LT Foust instructed the over-the-horizon cutter (RHIB) crew to get ready for launch. He once again asked me if I felt comfortable riding on the RHIB. I answered without hesitation, *Semper Paratus*.

What an honor, I thought, as an Auxiliary interpreter, my translating skills were about to be put to use in a challenging marine environment - the middle of the Straits of Florida. As part of the ongoing risk management assessment, the crew identified hazards, discussed ways to deal with those hazards, developed controls to make decisions, and finally implemented and provided continuous assessment of the mission as it evolved.

Crew experience, environmental factors and unknowns such as number of persons onboard, and the medical and physical condition of each were all integral to the on-going risk and gain level assessment using Coast Guard risk / gain management procedures. Finally, the well-known GAR, Gain versus Risk matrix assessed prior to every Coast Guard and Auxiliary mission indicated a medium risk – high gain level, an acceptable assessment for conducting this mission. We all gave a big clap as an indication of

agreement and moved to mission execution, phase III.

Now I had to go through my mental checklist to ensure I would execute the mission assigned to me in an effective and safe matter. We were going to get wet since the waves were about 2-3 feet high. I dressed in my rain gear and strapped on a personal flotation device and helmet. I was ready to go.

Within the RHIB, there were three fixed mounted seats with handles to hold on to during the rough ride. The crew consisted of a coxswain, one crewmember and me. We all secured ourselves in the seats and deployed from the stern launch ramp onto the water. The coxswain skillfully maneuvered the RHIB away from the cutter and proceeded to the small boat in distress.

The coxswain ensured that the we were next to the non-citizen small craft so that I could begin translating as needed. LT Foust directed me to ask the passengers if they were in need of assistance. The answer was unanimous, yes. This boat had been badly damaged by the environment and the non-citizens were ready to find a safe heaven. The 10 to 12-foot wooden boat had lost steering control a couple of days after departure from Cuba, had no motor, and the homemade sail, which was more like a large piece of tarp, was damaged. The chances of their

reaching land with no power or steering was very low. To add to the already poor seaworthiness of the boat, the non-citizens had been between four and five days at sea without food and had only a medium-size plastic container of drinking water. In total there were sixteen persons onboard, three were women. No children or animals were on onboard. There was no major illness among them with the exception that one of the women was four to five months pregnant and barely conscious.

The first priority of the crew was to get her to the cutter as quickly as possible. Both vessels were next to each other to facilitate the transfer of persons however, it was no easy task since both vessels kept moving apart and up and down from the waves. Water was spraying everywhere and the fragile pregnant woman had to be moved quickly while avoiding potential injury to her unborn.

Finally, in a moment of calm seas, two crew members and I transferred her into the RHIB. We quickly realized that she was in no condition to sit upright. She was extremely weak and the rocking boat was making her seasick. I quickly sat down on the forward deck floor of the RHIB and asked the crewmembers assisting with the transfer to sit her in front of me so I could support her. Her upper torso rested against my chest as I used my legs to stabilize her body. I placed my left hand on her forehead so that I may hold her head on an upright position. With my right hand, I held a small bag to use in case she got sick. As I braced this woman, I noticed her moving one of her arms over her lower belly area motioning a possible problem. She expressed concern about possibly losing the baby. I was emotionally touched as I later recounted this once in a life time moment. A brief instant that changes a person's outlook on life. Within a few minutes of the pregnant non-citizens transfer, the other two female non-citizens were onboard the RHIB and we headed back to the cutter.

The Intake Process

As we had done with the four non-citizens picked up the night before, an intake station was set-up forward of the cutter's bridge. As the interpreter, I stood by the crew member collecting the non-citizen's personal information and made sure questions and answers were properly translated. The pregnant woman continued to be very weak and I was there to assist once again. I sat down on the forward deck with her torso leaning against me as she sat in front of me. From this position I translated all questions and answers for her. The intake process began by first establishing the non-citizen's identities. Their valuables such as currency, cell phones, and jewelry were all placed in a medium size plastic bag along with proper accountability and bag tagging. Each of them changed from their wet clothing into an issued white vinyl one-

piece overall along with shower sandals. Their clothing was then placed into a second bag for accountability.

Once the intake process was completed for each non-citizen, they were escorted to the aft upper and lower decks where they would stay for the remainder of their time on the Angela McShan. There were now 20 non-citizens being held for follow-on processing on a larger cutter. As the ANGELA MCSHAN waited for orders to transfer the non-citizens to a larger cutter, it was tasked to look for a possible Haitian sailboat which had been reported by a Coast Guard helicopter. The helicopter had reached mission fuel capacity and returned to base. The cutter quickly picked up the search and we continued the patrol in the Straits of Florida. No sighting was made of the possible Haitian sail boat.

Reflection

Later that evening, while sitting down for a meal in the dining room area next to the galley, I began to recap the challenges faced that day. I was not the only one. Crew members were commenting on the rescue, intake process, non-citizen watch-standing, and other day's events. This was when I began to fully understand the impact of our actions today, being part of a rescue at sea that could have ended badly for 16 people. I thought that if the ANGELA MCSHAN and the small Cuban boat had not crossed paths, the outcome may have been completely different. The non-citizens were in a desperate situation. No steering, no motor, no food, and a badly tattered sail, adrift at sea.

As I stated at the beginning, some call it fate, others pure luck, but there is no argument that the ANGELA MCSHAN was there to save the day.

Division 6 Celebrates National Woman's Month

Division 6 Highlights Two Members to Celebrate National Woman's Month

During the Month of March, the United States Coast Guard celebrates the contribution women have made to "Team Blue" and the rest of the Nation. The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary, a descendant of the Coast Guard Temporary Reserve, saw its first large influx of female members during World War II. Since then, women have remained a cornerstone of the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Division 6 membership is made up of about 30% women across four active flotillas. These female members hold a variety of leadership, operations, and staff officer positions and remain active both on and off the water.



A photo from a 1943 newspaper article about SPARs, the Coast Guard and the Women's Reserve in World War II. The name SPARs is the acronym for Semper Paratus – Always Ready.

MEET TWO OUTSTANDING MEMBERS OF DIVISION 6



Auxiliarist Heidi Derby, past District Captain (DCAPT) – Virginia, at the helm of AUXFAC, Hookie Time.

Division 6 Celebrates National Woman's Month, continued.

HEIDI DERBY

Heidi Derby's journey with the Coast Guard Auxiliary started after taking a safe boating class. She was captivated by the Auxiliary mission and service to the recreational boating community.

Mrs. Derby has been in the Auxiliary now for over 25 years. During this time she has learned a great deal about boating and leadership. A participant in the 2006 International Search And Rescue Competition (SAR), Mrs. Derby honed her skills and met many Auxiliarists from outside of the United States.

To keep her operational skills up to date, Mrs. Derby and all of the Flotilla 63 crew members, participate annually in The Operational Excellence Program. Their goal is to achieve keep their operational skills sharp by achieving the Coast Guard Auxiliary Excellence "E" ribbon.

Throughout the years, Mrs. Derby has held the elected office of: Vice Flotilla Commander (VFC), Flotilla Commander (FC),



Division Vice Commander (VCDR), Division Commander (DCDR), and District Captain (DCAPT) – Virginia. Currently, Mrs. Derby participates as boat crew and ATON Verifier. She is the Flotilla Staff Officer – Information Services (FSO-IS), and Flotilla Staff Officer – Finance (FSO-FN), as well as an Administrative Assistant in the District Director of Auxiliary (DIRAUX) office.

Mary McCoig



Mary McCoig, Vice Flotilla Commander at the helm of an Auxiliary facility.

Division 6 Celebrates National Woman's Month, continued.

MARY McCOIG

Mary McCoig joined the Auxiliary in 2017. She had some experience with boating – mostly under sail and for pleasure. Her main motivation was to learn about recreational boating and how to boat safely.

Mrs. McCoig was taking some time off from a demanding health care career and found the qualifications and practical exercises to become a crew member and coxswain a morale booster and it gave her a new a sense of purpose. She also found support and encouragement from U.S. Coast Guard Station Milford Haven and the Aids to Navigation Team (ANT).

Mrs. McCoig became qualified in the Coast Guard 29-foot response boat small II, which is a high-speed deployable asset. It operates year-round in shallow waters along coast borders. She plans to continue her journey and qualify in the 45-foot response boat-medium (RB-M), which is a multi-mission capable boat, operable from shore stations and conducts search and rescue, living marine resources, recreational boating safety, enforcement of laws and treaties and port, waterways, and coastal security.



Mrs. McCoig is currently serving as the Vice Flotilla Commander (VFC), and the Flotilla Staff Officer – Member Training (FSO-MT) of Flotilla 054-06-06, Matthews, Virginia.

When not under way, Mary supports the station standing in when a crew member calls out, she supports her local Flotilla as Vice Flotilla Commander, SO- Member Training and is always ready to assist anyone in obtaining crew and or coxswain qualifications.

2023 BOATING SAFETY CALENDAR

JANUARY
Cold Water Boating

FEBRUARY
Communication Devices

MARCH
Take a Safe Boating Course

CERTIFICATE
Safe Boating Course

APRIL
Boating Preparedness

What do I need?
Essentials

VESSEL SAFETY CHECK
YES

MAY
Boating Safety • Life Jackets
Engine Cut-Off Device

JUNE
Water Sports
Rental Boat Safety

BOAT RENTALS

JULY
Boating Under the Influence

AUGUST
Search and Rescue

SEPTEMBER
Fall Cleanup • Storing Boat
and Equipment

OCTOBER
Hunting and Fishing

NOVEMBER
Registration Renewals

Visit your local state boating agency website about boat renewal information.

DECEMBER
Holiday Gift Guides

Mark Your Calendar

Jan	Various Boat Shows
Feb	Various Boat Shows
Apr 6	#406Day
Apr 16-19	International Boating & Water Safety Summit
May 19	Wear Your Life Jacket to Work Day
May 20	Kids to Parks Day
May 20-26	National Safe Boating Week
May 22	National Maritime Day
May 27-29	Memorial Day Weekend
May 29	National Marina Days (thru Labor Day)
Jun	National Safety Month
Jun 3-11	National Fishing and Boating Week
Jun 18	National Go Fishing Day
Jul	Summer Sailstice
Jul 4	Sun Safe Boating Month
Jul 4	Independence Day
Jul 2-4	Operation Dry Water
Sep 4	Labor Day
Sep 23	National Hunting and Fishing Day
Sep 28	World Maritime Day
Oct	National Hunting and Fishing Month
Nov	Child Safety Protection Month
Dec	Holiday Parade of Boats (check local community calendars)

facebook.com/boatingcampaign

twitter.com/boatingcampaign

WEAR IT

SAFEBOATINGCAMPAIGN.COM

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
CERTIFICATE OF BOAT REGISTRATION

Produced under a grant from the Sport Fish Restoration and Boating Trust Fund, administered by the U.S. Coast Guard.