

Around The Horn

Gulfport Flotilla 3-7 Newsletter

1 October 2014

Meet our new DIRAUX



Commander Craig Neubecker was recently transferred to the Coast Guard's 8th District Headquarters in New Orleans and will serve as the Director of Auxiliary for the Gulf Coast.

Cmdr. Neubecker is a MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter pilot who last served at Coast Guard Air Station Mobile, Alabama.

In 2011 Cmdr. Neubecker was stationed at Coast Guard base Kodiak Alaska. On Feb. 11, then Lt. Cmdr. Neubecker was involved in a daring rescue of five fishermen from the fishing vessel *Midnight Sun*. The vessel had run aground near Malina Bay west of Afognak Island. The weather was fierce with 40 to 60 knot winds and 25 ft. seas. All five crewmembers were safely rescued and returned to Kodiak.

What's new on the "DOO"

On the 25th of September the crew of the RING-DANG-DOO had the pleasure of meeting for the first time, our new Director of Auxiliary. Cmdr. Craig Neubecker came aboard to see for himself what the Coast Guard Auxiliary is all about. The "DOO" crew also enjoyed having aboard District 8CR Commodore Larry King. The crew welcomed both leaders with the respect and consideration they so justly deserve.

We are all pleased to find that our new DIRAUX Commander is enthusiastic toward the Auxiliary's contribution to the Coast Guard air program and its efforts to save lives by reducing accidents through boater safety education. Joining the "DOO" crew on an actual retrieval mission of the Coast Guard's simulated emergency equipment, Cmdr. Neubecker was able to see and appreciate the contribution the Auxiliary provides to the Coast Guard and the boating public.

Commodore Larry King seemed to enjoy pitching in with the retrieval of equipment dropped by the Coast Guard aircraft. We all visited with the Commodore as we worked side by side. The men and women of the Coast Guard Auxiliary are fortunate to have the support and encouragement from such devoted leaders. Let us all continue to follow their example, as we promote the Coast Guard's safety agenda to the Gulf Coast.



Auxiliarist of the Month

Presenting James McReynolds, affectionately known as "Mac" as our October Auxiliarist of the month.

Mac hails from Evansville, Indiana, and is a decorated Army Ranger from the Vietnam War. After moving to South Mississippi in early 1996, he launched his boat into the Mississippi Sound for the first time. It wasn't long before he found himself hung up on one of our many shallow reefs. After an embarrassing struggle to remove his boat from that hidden sandbox, he decided that the best approach to safe boating would be to join the Coast Guard Auxiliary with whom he had taken a boater safety course on the Ohio River near Evansville. Mac joined the auxiliary and quickly learned about boating safely in the Mississippi sound while operating in its shallow waters, and vowed never to enter a sandy dry-dock again. Mac decided to try his best to prevent other boaters from making similar mistakes by teaching them the principles of boater safety through the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Mac worked hard, studied hard, and became a valuable asset to Gulfport Flotilla 37, while accomplishing that goal in record time. Shortly after joining, Mac willingly took over the responsibilities of District Materials Officer, and from then on, never stopped giving of himself for the good of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. By the middle of 1996 Mac was voted Flotilla Commander and was re-elected to that position two more time in his illustrious career. Over time Mac held every leadership position at the Flotilla and Division levels of the Auxiliary. Mac has become a qualified instructor, qualifications examiner and boat examiner just to mention a few of his many achievements. Mac has held these positions for over ten years and continues to serve in each capacity today. During his first tenure as Flotilla Commander, Flotilla 37 had only 27 members, but through his teaching of boater safety classes, and boat inspections, Mac managed to increase the membership to 54 by the end of 1997. Throughout his years as an Auxiliarist, Mac has brought aboard over 60 members, many of whom have gone on to be great leaders in their own right.

In 2004 Mac suffered a heart attack and had to leave the Auxiliary to recover from his surgery and regain his strength. After hurricane Katrina Auxiliary membership on the Gulf Coast had dropped dramatically and Division Commander Bob Burton asked Mac to once again serve in an effort to rebuild a devastated Auxiliary. After Commander Burton agreed to reinstate all of Mac's previous certifications, Mac re-qualified as Crewman, Coxswain, Instructor and Qualifications Examiner, once again jumping into the fray of rebuilding Flotilla 37 and the Mississippi Gulf Coast Auxiliary.

Mac has dedicated his life to serving others, whether it be his family, country, fellow man, or fellow members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Mac loves to teach, and watch new members as they develop their skills as safe and efficient members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. He encourages their efforts as they begin to work seamlessly alongside other crewmembers with whom they serve. To this day Mac is still an active member of the 3-7 and an inspiration to all who serve with him.

Mac's philosophy is easy to remember "Keep it simple, and keep it safe". Thank you from all of us in the Mississippi Gulf Coast Flotilla's for your unwavering service, and giving spirit.



Photograph provided by Rick Quinn

Commander's Notes

I had been retired for a short time, when I happened to see the Ring Dang Doo in the marina at the Gulfport Yacht Club. The sign boards were up, and the words "Patrol" were plainly visible. Being curious, I walked down the dock and introduced myself to Rick Quinn and Jim McReynolds. That was my introduction to the Auxiliary, and the beginning of the comradery and education that is the US Coast Guard Auxiliary. My experience is not unique. Most people do not know this organization exists, nor what we do to support our brothers and sisters on the Gold Side. Of the many things we do well in our support roles, we aren't very good at promoting our own organization. So wear the uniform to meetings, volunteer to man a booth, assist in class instructions, and introduce yourself to the Coast Guard men and women when you meet them.

September has been an active month for 03-07. We have completed our usual ATC support missions, but this month we were also involved in a week long scenario with Seal Team 4 out of Corpus Christi, Texas, playing the role of arms smugglers. The scenario took place across the gulf coast, culminating in a night time take down of the smugglers in back bay Biloxi. It was a privilege to have worked with these Seals, as they train. Hopefully, more of this type of activity will come our way in the future.

With October fast approaching, staff officers should increase their efforts to complete their Silver Oar requirements as soon as possible. We are really close, but not there yet. Also, now is a good time for facility owners to check their boats and equipment for any changes, repairs, or upgrades that may be needed. And lastly, time is approaching to vote new staff officers for next year, so start thinking who you want to lead 03-07 next year.

Auxiliary Supports the Coast Guard by Floyd Landry Flotilla 3-5

Mobile Aviation Training Center Support

Auxiliary assists with training operations

The Coast Guard Aviation Training Center (ATC) in Mobile, Alabama, is a multi-mission unit, acting as the Coast Guard's aviation and capabilities development center, as well as an operational air station. Training is conducted to qualify Coast Guard pilots in the HU-25 "Guardian", the HH-60 "Jayhawk", the HH-65 "Dolphin", the HC-130 Hercules, the HC-130J Hercules, and the HC-144 "Ocean Sentry." All pilots initially trained at ATC return once a year for a one week proficiency course in their designated airframe. The ATC Mobile evaluation center is responsible for ensuring that Coast Guard aviation forces are using the best equipment and tactics to successfully complete all required missions. The Operations Division, flying the HC-144A Ocean Sentry, is a segment within the ATC command that conducts traditional Coast Guard air station missions including Search and Rescue, Homeland Security, and Environmental Protection.

Over the past two years, the Coast Guard Auxiliary 8CR, Division 3 has played a significant role in support of Mobile ATC's objective of producing mission ready aircrews and developing aviation capabilities. Training requirements for the HU-25 "Guardian" and HC-144 "Ocean Sentry" pilots include airdrops of life saving equipment including life rafts, emergency pumps, medical supplies, food and water, etc. to disabled vessels. For training operations, a safe location for practice air drops requires open water and an area where airspace is not restricted by flight patterns of other aircraft. In addition, marine traffic has to be minimal. The Mississippi Sound in an area about 4 miles south of Pass Christian, Mississippi and north of Cat Island has proven to be an excellent location to conduct these training operations. Here is where Division 3's three Mississippi Flotillas, 3-5 (Pass Christian), 3-7 (Biloxi-Ocean Springs), and 3-8 (Gautier) help contribute. Rick Quinn's Operational Facility from Flotilla 3-7 is based in the Gulfport Small Craft Harbor near Station Gulfport.

The “Ring-Dang-Doo”, Aux 7795, is a 50 ft. trawler with ample deck space to safely retrieve and store the equipment dropped during training operations. At nine knots it takes only an hour to reach the designated drop zone and the crew (comprised of members from the three Mississippi Flotillas) can be ready on relatively short notice to accommodate ATC’s training schedules. During 2011, Aux 7795 provided over 600 hours of service in support of these missions, and in 2012 the vessel has already logged over 300 hours. Without the Auxiliary, the Coast Guard would have to contract for this support at an estimated cost of \$500,000 per year.

A typical mission involves departing about one and a half hours prior to the scheduled drop time. Once the vessel is on scene, the aircraft will usually contact the vessel for exact coordinates and provide an estimated ETA. The HU-25 (typically called a Falcon Jet by the crew) or HC-144 (twin engine turboprop, called a 144 by the crew) each have unique packages to drop. Depending on the training mission, they will drop a smoke canister to use for wind direction and as a target or use the vessel as a target. Equipment drops include an ASRK (three weighted bags tethered together to simulate two life rafts and food/medical supplies) or a Can (Enclosed metal container to simulate a pump or other equipment) which has a main parachute and a long line with a drogue chute. After several data gathering flights over the target and other preparations, the aircraft will approach the drop zone on a final approach path at reduced speed and an altitude of approximately 200 feet to deliver the package. Obviously, many environmental and physical factors contribute to the complexity of determining when to release the package(s) relative to the target, one of the most important being wind speed and direction. After the package hits the water, the crew reports to the aircraft the approximate distance from the target and relative positioning of the packages that are tethered together. Next, the crew will carefully approach the equipment and retrieve it and store it on the deck. Typically, the 144s will have two to four drops and the Falcons one to two drops. On many occasions, after the aircraft has completed its training drops and is returning to base, a second aircraft will arrive for its training. Hence, the crew may have a total of as many as eight airdrops to support and retrieve on a single mission.

Over the past two years, the crew has become proficient in managing these operations. Under coxswain Rick Quinn’s leadership, the retrieval process has evolved from a manual pulling and coiling of line (as much as 500 feet on a single drop) and securing with tie-wraps to a safer and more efficient spooling operation with a homemade spooling device and a handle to rotate. Maneuvering the vessel to safely retrieve the equipment can be very challenging, especially in strong winds where the parachute does not deflate. The crew has developed skills and techniques to mitigate these problems and many crew members have trained on all aspects of the different tasks. Fortunately, an average crew of about five will have four coxswains and well over 50 years of combined crew years of experience.

Once the equipment is onboard and operations are completed, the crew heads back for a one hour ride to Station Gulfport where Coast Guard personnel help unload the equipment. They store it until a vehicle from Mobile ATC drops off some empty spools and takes the equipment back for rigging and redeployment. The crew will take on a few empty spools for the next operation. A big advantage of the close proximity of Station Gulfport is not only for offloading the equipment, but providing diesel fuel for the vessel. The personnel of Station Gulfport have really been a terrific asset for supporting the crew of the Ring-Dang-Doo and the Mobile ATC operations. It’s a team effort and it’s a great feeling to know the Auxiliary’s efforts are appreciated!

Famous Quote Of The Month

The superior man blames himself. The inferior man blames others

Don Shula