For those of you who attended the Flotilla 12-91 Change of Watch, you heard our District 11N Commodore Wally Smith declare, “12-91 rocks!” to describe our flotilla. I agree completely, and I’m incredibly honored to serve as Flotilla Commander this year. We have an outstanding Flotilla Staff Officers who have set ambitious goals for the year. In our Air Program, headed by Gene Wheeler, the goal is to qualify two new pilots and two new Air Observers. In our Diversity program, under the leadership of Richard Martinez, we are working to meet the standards for the National Commodore’s Three Star Award. Our Publications Officer, Andrea Cuppoletti, plans to publish one newsletter each month for the Communications program. Richard Martinez, who also serves as Member Training Officer, set the goal of qualifying 10 members as boat crew. In Navigation Systems, under my direction, we will strive to complete all assigned private aids to navigation and bridge checks by the established District 11N deadlines. Bob Coackley, Operations Officer, wants us to have a minimum of 700 surface patrol hours for the year. Stephen Busch, the Vessel Examiner Staff Officer, set a goal of 120 Vessel Safety Checks and qualifying one new Vessel Examiner. For Human Resources, our goal is to recruit at least 4 new members. Stan Douglas has set a goal of 4 Public Affairs events over the year. Wow! It’s true! 12-91 Rocks! The driving force for all the determination, energy, and goals is to continually advance our overall mission of boating safety. We will never know about the accidents, injuries and deaths that we prevent. What we do know is that if we continue to teach people boating safety, conduct safety inspections on boats, make sure that buoys and daymarks are working properly, qualify more crew and coxswains for surface operations, qualify more pilots and observers for air operations, the likelihood of preventing a tragedy increases significantly. Thank you for your commitment to the Auxiliary and to increasing awareness of boating safety.
Let's defer the program updates to talk about the value of the public education mission. It is outside our AOR, in Louisiana, but this story is an example of three lessons we teach in our About Boating Safely and GPS for Mariners courses.

A group of duck hunters ran aground and their motor quit. They were rescued by the Coast Guard. Then they ran aground again with a larger boat taking the original boat in tow. They were rescued again. One of the boaters then told his story to a news crew. The three lessons from our public education program that were neglected are:

1. Required and recommended safety equipment is crucial to a safe and comfortable boating experience.
2. Planning your voyage and knowing where you are keeps you safe.
3. Hunters and fishermen frequently commit what in philosophy is called a category mistake. Since hunters and fishermen are also boaters.

In the boat they were taking to their duck blind in the morning, they did not have a dewatering device, did not have visual distress signals, and did not have a VHF-FM marine radio. These are all items that would have meant a safer journey and an ability to summon help quickly. They ran aground because they did not know exactly where they were. The course GPS for Mariners covers the basics of chart work and using GPS for navigation. Had they planned their route ahead of time, created way points in a GPS, and steered those courses, they could have avoided the shoal water where they grounded.

In Chapter 7 of About Boating Safely, we stress that fishermen and hunters are boaters when underway. They still have all the responsibilities of a boater. Had the men considered themselves boaters rather than hunters, they would have been more likely to be better prepared for emergencies (the subject of Chapter 6 in ABS).

And now on to program updates...

We taught About Boating Safely to 6 people on February 18. All graduated. John Bogert, who is working on his IT qualification, did a masterful job on Chapters 3 and 4, which cover Navrules and boat handling. Nikolay taught Chapter 7 and assisted with the course (officially lead for John's sections, since he is a trainee). Rick and Georgie did their usual fantastic job on Chapters 5 and 6, which cover legal requirements and handling emergencies. Greg Olsen opened and closed the course with Chapters 1 and 2 then state regulations and administered the test.

The National Directorate has informed all PE staff officers that the course Sailing Skills and Seamanship is no longer NASBLA approved. Finally, we need qualified instructors! When you consider the efforts in member training and public education, we will be well over 150 hours of instruction for our team of (soon to be) 10 qualified instructors. PE is one of the paths to an RBS device. By accumulating 120 points per year for two consecutive years, you will be authorized to wear the RBS device. Each hour of lead PE instruction counts as 1 point and each hour of assisting counts as half a point. That, combined with your VEs, PVs, and certain PA and MS missions, gets you that much closer to 120 points for the year. As Como Wally Smith told us at the Flotilla Change of Watch, Recreational Boating Safety is job #1 for the US Coast Guard Auxiliary. PE is one of the three core missions in RBS. Add to your repertoire and come out and educate some boaters.

**Welcome Millie**
By Virginia Luchetti

Millie resting at the dock, ready for new adventures.

Our flotilla has another new facility for surface patrols. Thanks to Richard Martinez, Millie, a 22 foot Seaswirl Striper, has joined our fleet. She is the perfect boat for the delta! We look forward to many training and PATON patrols aboard Millie.
As a Coast Guard Auxiliary pilot one of the requirements is that you will attend two C schools within your first year after qualification. They are Aux 17 which is Cockpit Resource Management and Aux 18 which is Spatial Disorientation. These titles don't include all the subjects that the class was exposed to. Going deeply into the content of these topics is beyond the scope of this article but I will touch on the ones that made an impression on me.

Aux 17. Engage the entire crew in the mission briefing, perhaps have the newest member lead the discussion. Be prepared to change the GAR score if circumstances change, such as changing weather, a SAR call out, or physiological issues that may occur with the crew. Another of the topics was "normalization of deviance". OK that doesn't mean that we are deviants! It means that we allow operations to depart from the safe procedures that we would normally expect to follow. If we take a shortcut and got away with it we tend to think that the shortcut is acceptable. If the shortcuts add up in the wrong direction it can lead to safety problems. There were a couple of things that I am going to carry with me in all my flying. Staying hydrated is important. If you take your water in a container that you freeze it will require you to sip the water. This keeps you hydrated and doesn't put an abrupt load on your bladder. Perhaps this isn’t problem for the younger Auxiliarists. The general topic of communications came up. When you are face to face 55% of the communication comes from body language, 38% comes from tone of voice and only 7% comes from the actual words. So when we are on the radio we only have the actual words as best as we hear them. As a TCO, boat crew, aircrew, and watch stander there are texts that describe a standard form of radio communication with standard syntax. There are “Pro Words” that have standardized meanings. If you use non-standard language that can lead to confusion at both ends. If you were dealing with vessel in distress or other emergency situation it’s good to have everyone literally on the same page.

Aux 18. I had an opportunity to experience spatial disorientation in an airplane simulator. The range of the reactions in the class was from finding it slightly upsetting to a really interesting ride. It was a learning experience for me, and everyone reacts differently. The deep water survival training was the most eye-opening for me. We started inside an actual King Air fuselage that had been modified for training use. We went through ditching checklist, simulated water landing and then evacuated through the emergency exit. We did this in groups of four, as I was the first in my group I got to open the door, step out on the wing and throw the simulated life raft into the water. I then inflated my personal flotation device, grasped the tether to the life raft and jumped in the water. Naturally even though I had been well briefed, I managed to get tangled up anyway.

Another adventure was actually putting six people into a "six man" life raft. Not as easy as you might think! If you were in the middle of the ocean far from shore I believe you would try to find a way to make it work! The Takeaway for me was that I believe I had trivialized the idea of the ditching. Not anymore!

Here are two quick check lists:

1. When you are confused, Stop, Think, Observe, Plan
2. If you have to ditch then,

Make a good landing, evacuate the aircraft, keep alive, make radio calls.

We also had a simulated airline evacuation that included performing the exercise in complete darkness and in presence of smoke! There was a demonstration of the use of night vision goggles that was impressive.

One of the major events was entering the hypoxia chamber. We had an opportunity to identify our own individual symptoms of hypoxia. The biggest danger of hypoxia is that you can't effectively self-diagnose. We were given the opportunity to learn our own personal symptoms.

By the way, you don't have to be in the Auxiliary to get training at CAMI, anyone can sign up.

When we survey a bridge, we check a multitude of features, first during the day. Is there any damage to any part of the bridge? Is there debris in the water? Are the signs correct? Is the clearance indicator clearly visible and properly marked? We also take pictures of all of these parts of the bridge.

When night falls, we return to check the lights. Are they lit? Are they the right color? If they blink, do they blink with the correct frequency?

All of these things are observed, and if there is a problem or discrepancy, we document it.

The Old River Bridge is a truss swing bridge. This kind of bridge rotates about an axis at its center. Normally the bridge is oriented to allow road traffic to pass over the bridge. However, when a water vessel that is too large to go under the bridge needs to pass, road traffic is stopped with traffic signals and barriers. Once the traffic is cleared, the bridge rotates 90 degrees to allow the water vessel to pass. Then the bridge rotates back to its usual position and road traffic is once again allowed to travel over the bridge.

We thanked him and continued our survey. It was so nice of him to give us a tour!

Winter has given us the much needed rains to put a dent in our five year drought. It also put a dent in our first Vessel Examiners day we had planned for March fifth. We have rescheduled Marina Bay for April 15th from 10:00 to 14:00 hours.

Spring and early summer are the best times to issue the Annual Decals to those who pass the exam. April is packed with Safety check events and opportunities. Our goal is to perform 120 of these checks this year. If you are a Vessel Examiner please try to attend some of these events. If they were doing, and since he had come down to meet us, I asked if we could go up to see the bridge control room and he was very happy to bring us up for a tour.

He explained that the Old River Bridge was built in 1915 and is one of the two oldest swing bridges in California. The cast-iron controls installed at that time were still in place.

We thanked him and continued our survey. It was so nice of him to give us a tour!

NS activity
By John Bogert

On Sunday, 5th March 2017, Virginia Luchetti and I surveyed the Old River Bridge, as well as the BNSF Railroad Bridge and the two Old River Boom Lights in Discovery Bay.

VE Report
By Steve Busch

Winter has given us the much needed rains to put a dent in our five year drought. It also put a dent in our first Vessel Examiners day we had planned for March fifth. We have rescheduled Marina Bay for April 15th from 10:00 to 14:00 hours.

Spring and early summer are the best times to issue the Annual Decals to those who pass the exam. April is packed with Safety check events and opportunities. Our goal is to perform 120 of these checks this year. If you are a Vessel Examiner please try to attend some of these events. If they
don’t fit your schedule, contact me and we may be able to set up alternate dates to do some VSCs.
If you are not yet a Vessel Examiner, I encourage you to study the online manual, take the test, and join us. You would do 5 VSCs as a trainee with a mentor, to get the hang of this courtesy service the auxiliary provides to boat and paddle craft owners. It is also an opportunity to let the public know about classes the auxiliary offers. Safe boating makes for fun boating!

**Training Patrols**

By Virginia Luchetti

On January 29th, Bob Coackley was Coxswain for the inaugural patrol of Aquamarine, a 36 foot sailboat. Ron Ouimette, Virginia Luchetti, Greg Olsen, Stephen Busch and Steve Kakihara enjoyed the sunshine and warm weather as we practiced calling out relative bearings and worked on our radio communication protocols. After traveling from Marina Bay in Richmond to Angel Island for lunch, the wind picked up and we were able to sail most of the way back to the dock.

On March 18th, George Rogers, from Flotilla 01-04, served as Coxswain aboard Aquamarine so we could engage in two-boat training exercises with Melody, with Bob Coackley at the helm. We were able to practice stern towing evolutions and learned how to toss the heaving line back and forth between boats.

**A day of Honor and Celebration**

By Jim Losi

My wife Beverly and I have a long history of opening our home to many different types of guests who live their lives serving others. It has been our way as citizens to honor those who serve others and thank them in some small way for their selfless service.

Over the years, we have hosted guests and employees of the International Red Cross, the American Red Cross, the US NAVY, Gardens for Health International and many more over the years. The events have been generally very interesting with guests engaging in interesting and fun conversations.

On Saturday 11 March, we had a very special reception with a very special guest of honor at our home. That day we honored the Commandant of the USCG Admiral Paul Zukunft and his wife Fran, along with 80 additional guests from the USCG and members of the USCG Auxiliary. Admiral Paul Zukunft assumed the duties of the 25th Commandant of the U.S. Coast Guard on May 30, 2014. He leads America’s oldest continuous seagoing service and the largest component of the Department of Homeland Security, comprised of 41,700 active duty, 7,800 reserve, 8,300 civilian and 31,000 volunteer Auxiliarists.

The primary goal of the reception was to have junior enlisted active duty members have the opportunity to meet and mingle with the Commandant and his wife. It was a unique and rare opportunity indeed. Adding to the excitement of the reception, in attendance was Vice Admiral Fred Midgette and his lovely wife Mary. Vice Admiral Midgette assumed the duties of Commander, Coast Guard Pacific Area in August 2016, where he serves as the operational commander for all U.S. Coast Guard missions.
within half of the world that ranges from the Rocky Mountains to the waters off the East Coast of Africa. He concurrently serves as Commander, Defense Force West and provides Coast Guard mission support to the Department of Defense and Combatant Commanders. Additionally, the District 11NR USCG Auxiliary Honor Guard was present not only to honor our special guests, but also to honor all of the remaining guests who crossed the portal to our home. It was a grand spectacle and the Honor Guard performed in a crisp and precise manner as was noted by both the Commandant and the Vice Admiral. Lastly, in attendance representing the Auxiliary was COMO Wally Smith, Chief of Staff Mary Kirkwood, DCAPTs Will Sumner and Dean McFarren and DSO-PA Jane Smith. Having the leadership of the Auxiliary present added to the special nature and intent of the event. Many members of the active duty side made incredibly favorable remarks regarding the Auxiliary which made my heart swell with pride. Of special treat for me was the attendance of several members of the CGC ASPEN along with its Commanding Officer LCDR Justin Vanden Huevel. I received my Auxiliary permanent Cutterman device aboard the ASPEN and so it holds a very special place in my heart. I had the honor of having my photograph taken with the CO and crew of the CGC ASPEN along with the Commandant (see above). By all accounts, everyone had a very enjoyable time. Bev and I have received many notes of thanks but one stood out and was especially meaningful to me. It is worthy of sharing. In it a guest wrote, “Thank you for hosting the Coast Guard reception at your beautiful home. I was honored to have the opportunity to attend and really enjoyed meeting CG and Auxiliary shipmates from around the Bay Area that I otherwise wouldn’t have a chance to interact with.” Mission accomplished!
Upcoming Events

Flotilla 12-91 meetings are held the second Thursday of every month, except December, at 7 PM in the San Ramon Fire District Offices in San Ramon

Division 12 meetings are the fourth Thursday of every month at 1900 in RADM Harvey Johnson Jr. Learning Center on Coast Guard Island

District 11N meetings – See District Website

2016 Elected and Appointed Officers

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April

Thursday 6-Sunday 9
Strictly Sail Pacific-Richmond, CA.
Saturday 8
VSC activity – Berkeley Yacht Club, Berkeley, CA
Thursday 13
1900 Flotilla Meeting - District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA
Saturday 15
VSC activity – Marina Bay, Richmond, CA
Saturday 15
0830 GPS for mariners – District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA
Friday 21-Saturday 22
0900 Semi-Annual Swim Test, Alameda, CA.
Wednesday 26-Sunday 30
Antlers OPTREX, Lakehead, CA.
Thursday 27
1900 Division Meeting, CGI, Alameda, CA.

May

Wednesday 3
Public Safety Majors Fair – Las Positas College, Livermore, CA.
Thursday 11
1900 Flotilla Meeting - District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA.
Wednesday 17
1900-USCGAUX University Night - District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA.
Sunday 20-Saturday 26
National Safeboating Week.
Thursday 25
1900 Division Meeting – CGI, Alameda, CA.
Sunday 28-Monday 29
San Ramon Art & Wind Festival.-Central Park, San Ramon, CA.

June

Saturday 3
0830 About Boating Safely (ABS) - District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA.
Thursday 8
1900 Flotilla Meeting - District Fire Offices, San Ramon, CA.
Thursday 22
1900 Division Meeting – CGI, Alameda, CA.
Friday 23-Sunday 25
Division 12 OPTREX – CGI, Alameda, CA.

How to contact us:
e-mail: cuppoletti@gmail.com

web page: http://wow.uscgaux.info/113-12-91

Editor: Andrea Cuppoletti
Please take pictures at events and operations and send them with comments or with articles to Andrea (cuppoletti@gmail.com) so that can be published on our newsletter.