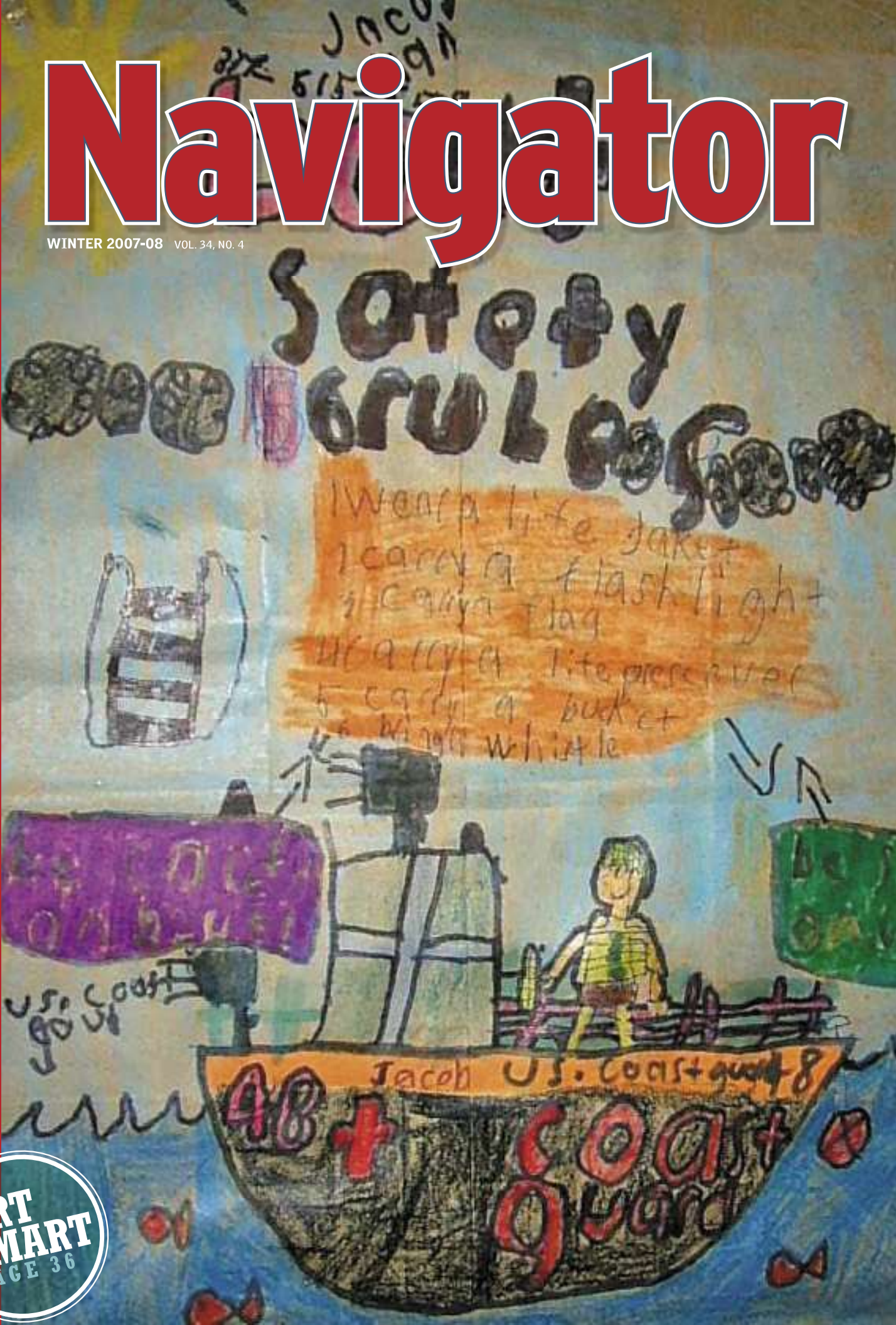


# Navigator

WINTER 2007-08 VOL. 34, NO. 4



**UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY**  
America's Volunteer Lifesavers®





Ken Reynoldson, FSO-CM  
87 D11NR, pulls fuel hose  
prior to laying it out at the  
helicopter pad.

# 'RECIRC' IN MOTION



Story & Photos by  
**BRUCE ROGERSON**  
SO-PB 8 D11NR



Doug Pohlson (left), FC-87, and Ken Reynoldson, FSO-CM 87 D11NR, identify the key valves in the fuel recirculation system.

## AUXILIARISTS PUMPED UP HELPING AT HELO FUEL FACILITY

Some Californians, such as Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, may prefer pumping iron, but for members of Flotilla 87 D11NR's Point Arena Detachment, there's nothing more satisfying than pumping fuel.

The detachment has taken on the mission of providing weekly maintenance tasks at a Coast Guard aviation fuel supply facility near the historic Point Arena Lighthouse. The facility is critical for helicopters operating from USCG Air Stations Humboldt Bay and San Francisco.

While the refueling mission is rather unusual for Auxiliarists, it is not all that unusual for Flotilla 87 (Fort Bragg, Calif.), which has made a habit of taking on unusual missions. Most notable among these is its eight-year maintenance, in behalf of USCG Group Humboldt Bay, of the historic and priceless Third Order Fresnel Lens at Point Cabrillo Light Station.

Two years ago, the flotilla established a southern Mendocino County detachment to assist with stabilization and upkeep of

the First Order Fresnel Lens at the historic Point Arena Lighthouse. The unit has since grown to 13 members, who share work on the lantern room and lens.

For more than 15 years, the Coast Guard has maintained an aviation jet fuel supply facility near the Point Arena Lighthouse. The facility is critical for helicopters whose crews train for, and execute, search-and-rescue (SAR) missions along the southern Mendocino and northern Sonoma coasts, as well as offshore.

In December 2006, Captain Mark Butt, Commanding Officer, Group Humboldt Bay, requested Auxiliary assistance with the weekly Point Arena aviation fuel maintenance tasks. Group personnel soon began training Auxiliary detachment members.

Shaun Fyfe, a Coast Guard civilian employee, spent hours making sure that Flotilla 87 members Ken Reynoldson, FSO-CM; Chris Jewell, FSO-MS; Jan Jewell, and Ray Hurst had every procedure of their new tasking down pat. Bruce Rogerson,

FC, and Doug Pohlson, VFC, were also trained, to provide back-up.

Once a week, at least two Auxiliarists perform the required mission, known as "fuel recirc." This involves pumping 75 gallons of fuel from a hose back into the storage tank, taking fuel samples and testing them for water and sediment contamination, then recirculating the entire contents of the tank through filters to keep the fuel ready for use.

The Auxiliarists were also asked to be at the site to take delivery of fresh fuel and to prepare the supply when helos on SAR missions come in for refueling.

"Until recently, the McKinleyville and San Francisco Air Stations flew weekly missions to Point Arena to recirculate and test the fuel," CAPT Butt said in a recent newspaper interview. "Once asked, the Auxiliary unequivocally volunteered to take on that responsibility. Their efforts enable me to schedule nearly 75 hours of additional flight time (valued at approximately \$470,000) into furthering our SAR



and homeland security missions for the Lost Coast of Northern California.

“The fuel must be tested and recirculated on a weekly schedule. Our crews can do this upon arrival at the helo pad, but it is a time-consuming process. With the assistance of our wonderful Coast Guard Auxiliary, the fuel is recirculated and ready for immediate use. My deep appreciation goes out to those outstanding Americans and the rest of the Auxiliary.”

Last year, the facility’s fuel-readiness system played a role in enabling two USCG helos to successfully evacuate an injured seafarer from a large merchant ship off the Mendocino coast and transfer him to a hospital for urgent care.

Not long ago, the Auxiliary fuel team was again called to action to prepare the system for refueling helo SAR activity when a lone English rower disappeared more than 90 miles offshore Fort Bragg.

In addition to the fuel recirc activity, Auxiliarists also provide much-needed local weather information to flight crews, via VHF radio.

Auxiliarist Jan Jewell, the detachment Recirc Team Coordinator, said, “This worthwhile mission in support of Coast Guard air ops has given our detachment members a whole new focus. The pilots really appreciate the service. When we finished a recent fuel recirc for a helo, the pilot told us, ‘We appreciate your coming out. This is like visiting a full service gas

station!’ To which I replied, ‘Well, almost; we didn’t do the windshield.’”

After flying a recent SAR case, helo pilot Lieutenant Stephen Baxter told the Auxiliarists, “We cannot thank you enough. [Your assistance] will some day mean the difference between a life saved and a body recovered.”

His words were to prove prophetic. Just a few days later, the team was in action again, as Jan and Chris Jewell were called out by Group Humboldt Bay to recirculate helo fuel at Point Arena during a SAR case off the Mendocino coast.

Group had been notified of an EPIRB (Emergency Position-Indicating Radio Beacon) from the 38-foot sailing vessel *Passing Wind II* at approximately 1015. An HH-65C helo from CGAS Humboldt Bay and a C-130 fixed-wing aircraft from CGAS Sacramento went airborne to seek the EPIRB.

At about 1230, the helo located it and began a search pattern. At 1320, it found the vessel in distress. It had lost its mast and was foundering in seas estimated at 10-12 feet. Both crew members had jumped overboard. A Coast Guard rescue swimmer was deployed to recover the two sailors, both of whom were transported by the helo to Point Arena, where Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) met them.

Meanwhile, the Auxiliarists had driven to the fuel facility and performed the required operations, finishing just before

the helo’s arrival. Once the survivors had been taken over by the EMTs, the Auxiliarists informed the helo crew that fuel recirculation was complete. The aircraft was refueled, allowing it to return to CGAS Humboldt Bay without delay.

The Auxiliarists then released pressure in the hose and returned the unused fuel to the tank. They stood by until the helo departed. For the Auxiliarists, spending that afternoon assisting the Coast Guard was time well-spent.

The many hours of training, the weekly testing, the fuel recirculating, and the emergency call-outs of the Auxiliary team did not go unnoticed. Just before last year’s Thanksgiving, each team member received a note from Rear Admiral Craig E. Bone, Commander, Eleventh Coast Guard District, thanking them for all their efforts.

Meanwhile, the flotilla commander received a Thanksgiving card from one of the rescued sailboat crew members, who wrote:

“Last month, I was rescued, along with my shipmate Greg, after his boat was damaged in a rollover. It took the helicopter a while to find us, even with our best efforts to make the EPIRB transmit clearly. Thanks to the fuel depot your volunteers maintain, they had enough time to find us. For me and my family, this Thanksgiving will be very joyous, thanks to your efforts to keep mariners safe.”

*Semper Paratus.* 🌀

A Coast Guard HH-65C helicopter sits on the landing pad awaiting refueling. Historic Point Arena Lighthouse is visible in the distance.

