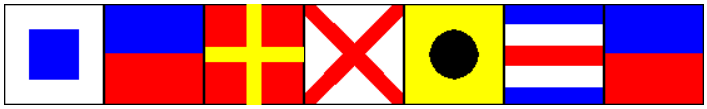
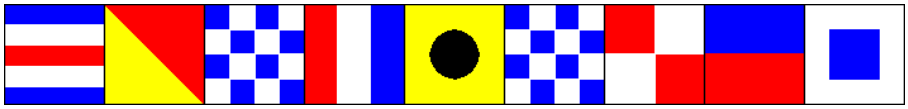
Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council Newsletter

SERVICE CONTINUES





Council co-chairs: CAPT David Bernstein and SCPO Mike White

Issue 2011 04 **5 December 2011**

REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR

Best Wishes for the Holiday Season

Your Council continues to be active, meeting Friday – December 2 at USCG HQ.

Key issues were
HQ Update by CO PSSUHQ
Status of Email Distribution List and Membership Outreach
Help Desk Utilization – (e-mail nrhdesk@gmail.com)
Update on Newsletter
Website Update
Survivor and Caregivers Guide Update
Responses to PSSU Retiree Letter
Report on RADM Ron Silva – RADM Hewitt Meeting
Holiday Cards Mailing and Expenses –
Council Membership and Committees
CARC Initiative on Veteran Status on State Drivers' Licenses
Holiday Party Preplanning, Member Assignments and Expenses

A copy of the Council Newsletters, Agendas and Meeting Minutes are posted on the Council web site, http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/carc , and can be downloaded, or may be requested from Council Secretary, Lula Carpenter, ph (703 913 7390) or e-mail: leecarp@verizon.net.

The Council publishes a quarterly newsletter to provide the **Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Community**, **military and civilian,** with information of interest to USCG Retirees in the Washington DC, Maryland and Northern Virginia Council area and updates DC area retirees on Council activities. In addition, items that are time-critical will be sent using the Council E-Mail list.

Since last September several "CG INFO" mini-newsletters have been sent to DC Area Retiree Community.

All Capitol Area Retirees are invited to contribute to the **Newsletter**, attend a Council meeting, and are welcome to communicate with Council members prior to the Council

meetings, or to provide informational items of interest to retirees. Please send an e mail, call, or write to the Council Co-Chairs, CAPT David Bernstein and SCPO Mike White, the Council Secretary, Lula Carpenter or to the **Newsletter** editor at e-mail: dcareacgretireecouncil@comcast.net. Please "Pass on" this Newsletter to other USCG military and civilian retirees that may be interested. **Additional e-mail / snail mail addresses and phone numbers for the Council mailing list are very welcome.**

The December edition of the Coast Guard Retiree Council Northwest newsletter is now available on the Council's Website, http://www.cgretirenw.org.

All are urged to look at the Capital Area Coast Guard Retiree Council WEB site, http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/carc. The Council believes that access to this WEB site will enable Retirees to become better informed on the current Coast Guard organization and operations. Suggestions for items to be posted are welcome!!!!! Send them to the Retiree Council – Paul Cojeen at navlarch@erols.com .

Your Council looks forward to serving all Coast Guard Retirees, military and civilian, and continues to extend an invitation to attend Council meetings, to participate in Council projects and to keep us informed of your issues and concerns.

Council Meeting Schedule for 2012

Friday - Mar 30, 2012
Friday - Jun 29, 2012
Friday –Sept 28, 2012
Friday – Nov 30, 2012

Meetings are normally held at USCG Headquarters in Conference Room B718 beginning at 0830.

New Helpful Contact Information Posted on CARC Web Page

PUS HQ has provided helpful contact information for the PSU HQ service elements. It is posted on web page http://www.uscg.mil/ccs/carc. Go to SPECIAL INTEREST.

It includes:

- Contact INFO for the PSU HQ service elements
- How to Obtain a DoD Self Service Log On Account

5th Annual Capitol Area Retiree Council Holiday Party A Great Success

A large turnout for the 5th Annual Capitol Area Retiree Council Holiday Party and a great success. ADM and Mrs. Papp and MCPOCG and Mrs. Leavitt attended. ADM Papp shared some thoughts on the USCG, discussed the restoration project for the CG Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery(the Tampa Memorial) called "Lest we Forget", clearly noted that Retirees are part of the "long blue line". He wished all Happy Holidays. The Council gave a big thanks to CAPT Paul Peak for organizing the logistics and venue at Vinson Hall. Pictures will be posted on the Council web page. We look forward to seeing all next at next year's Council Holiday Party on 2 December 2012.

RADM Watson USCG RET Takes Over at Interior as New Offshore Drilling Chief

It's official: RADM James Watson USCG RET was sworn in on 2 December as director of the Interior Department's new Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement. He replaces Michael Bromwich, a former federal prosecutor who spent 17 months spearheading an overhaul of the nation's offshore drilling programs.

Watson's last assignment was as the Coast Guard's director of prevention policy for marine safety, security and stewardship. But Gulf Coast residents and oil industry workers may know Watson best from his time leading the government's response to the Deepwater Horizon disaster after June last year.

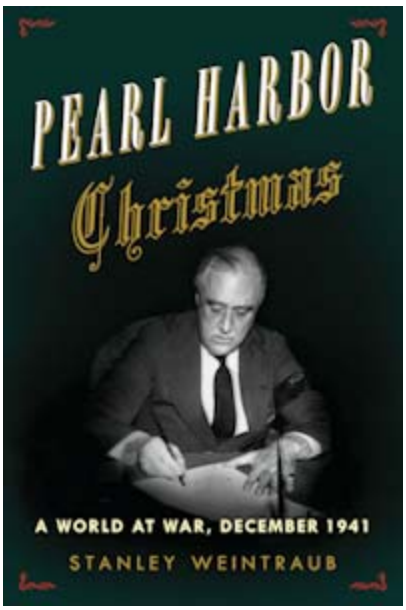
Watson retired from the Coast Guard to take on the new job at the safety bureau.

Interior Secretary Ken Salazar administered the oath of office. Watson was sworn in with his wife Anne Watson by his side.

Watson takes on a job that will put him on a political hot seat - dealing with the oil and gas industry and frequently answering questions from congressional critics unhappy with the pace of new regulations imposed since the Deepwater Horizon disaster. During less than a year and a half overseeing offshore drilling, Bromwich testified 15 times in front of Congress.

Remembering Pearl Harbor

In honor of the 70th Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day, the United States Navy Memorial will be hosting a series of events on 7 December:



At noon, historian and author **Stanley Weintraub** will present his latest work, *Pearl Harbor Christmas: A World at War, December 1941* – an exploration of the wartime strategies that were developed in Washington while the rest of America attempted to celebrate the holiday season. Each chapter, written in pristine detail, coincides with the last ten days of 1941 and the first day of the New Year. Following the presentation, Weintraub will be available for a Q&A and book signing.

At 1:00pm, guests are invited for a subsequent wreath laying ceremony with the U.S. Navy Band and Ceremonial Guard on the Memorial's outdoor plaza.

At 2:00pm, the Navy Memorial welcomes local veteran survivors and witnesses of the attack for a panel discussion led by noted historian **Paul Stillwell**, author of *Air Raid: Pearl Harbor! Recollections of a Day of Infamy*. Panel members will include former U.S. Navy Memorial President and CEO **Rear Admiral Edward K. Walker** USN (Ret), who witnessed the battle as the young son of a submarine officer stationed at Pearl Harbor.

25 June Designated as Day of the Seafarer by IMO Assembly

The United Nations' International Maritime Organization Assembly has designated 25 June as Day of the Seafarer.

The FENIX 2 Mining Rescue Capsule Displayed at IMO HQ During the 27th Assembly

The FENIX 2 Mining Rescue Capsule was built by the Chilean Naval Shipyard and used for the successful rescue of 33 miners trapped for 69 days 700 meters underground in Chile during October 2010.

ADM Papp Speaks at IMO Assembly Focusing on Counter Piracy

ADM Papp led the United States delegation to the 27 session of the Assembly of the International Maritime Organization, a United Nations specialized agency, at IMO headquarters in London. This cooperative effort is essential to international coordination on matters involving the world's seas and vessel operations.

The Coast Guard is America's lead agency at the IMO, and has represented the nation for all maritime policy development within the organization since it was established in 1958. Working alongside IMO's 173 members, the Coast Guard advocates for U.S. maritime policy interests. The primary focus is on development of international standards for marine safety, security and environmental protection.

At this year's Assembly, one of the most significant issues facing the international maritime industry was piracy and its effects on maritime commerce. IMO has issued guidelines that provide mariners with best practices to deter piracy and is addressing requirements for ships entering foreign nations when carrying weapons for security. The Coast Guard has been actively engaged on these issues as a flag state for several years. Piracy has gained significant international attention with a rise in incidents in the Gulf of Aden and Indian Ocean over the past several years, including U.S. vessels. It is increasing off West Africa as well.

Another important issue for IMO is setting standards, or a Polar Code, to ensure the safety of crews that sail on ships operating in the Arctic and Antarctic polar regions. As the Arctic Ocean becomes increasingly navigable due to diminishing ice, it will offer new routes for global maritime trade from Russia and Europe to Asia and the Americas, saving substantial transit time and fuel costs from traditional trade routes. IMO began work on the Polar Code in 2010 and aims to complete it in 2012. The new Code will include requirements for operations in cold environments and remote areas, communications in high latitudes, training for watch standers and ice navigators and mitigation of the environmental impacts of vessel operations. The Coast Guard strongly supports development of the Polar Code

Shipmates 17 - The Coast Guard Ethos

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SUBJ: SHIPMATES 17 - THE COAST GUARD ETHOS

1. THIS MESSAGE ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF THE COAST GUARD ETHOS TO REFLECT THE ENDURING VALUES AND CHARACTER OF COAST GUARD MEN AND WOMEN IN THE ACTIVE, RESERVE, CIVILIAN AND AUXILIARY FORCE. IT PAYS HOMAGE TO OUR LONG LINE OF PROUD COAST GUARDSMEN AND SETS THE STANDARD FOR THE MEN AND WOMEN WHO SERVE TODAY, AND WILL SERVE IN THE FUTURE.

2. EARLIER THIS YEAR A SENIOR-LEVEL WORK GROUP CONVENED TO EXAMINE THE GUARDIAN ETHOS AND DETERMINE WHETHER ADJUSTMENTS WERE NEEDED TO MAKE THE ETHOS A MORE ENDURING SERVICE CHARGE. THE WORK GROUP RECOMMENDED MINOR CHANGES TO THE EXISTING LANGUAGE. AFTER CONSULTING WITH THE MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE COAST GUARD AND OTHER SENIOR LEADERS, I APPROVED THE CHANGE. THE RESULTING COAST GUARD ETHOS WILL SERVE AS AN ENDURING STATEMENT OF THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER AND SPIRIT OF OUR SERVICE IN A WAY THAT HONORS OUR PROFESSION AND AFFIRMS OUR DISTINGUISHED HERITAGE.

3. THE COAST GUARD ETHOS: I AM A COAST GUARDSMAN. I SERVE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES. I WILL PROTECT THEM. I WILL DEFEND THEM. I WILL SAVE THEM. I AM THEIR SHIELD. FOR THEM I AM SEMPER PARATUS. I LIVE THE COAST GUARD CORE VALUES. I AM PROUD TO BE A COAST GUARDSMAN. WE ARE THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD.

4. THE COAST GUARD ETHOS WILL REPLACE THE GUARDIAN ETHOS EFFECTIVE 1 DEC 2011 AT TRAINING CENTER CAPE MAY, USCGA AND OCS. COAST GUARD RECRUITING COMMAND WILL TRANSITION FROM EXISTING MATERIALS AS THEY ARE EXPENDED TO THE NEW COAST GUARD ETHOS. ALL COAST GUARD UNITS AND OFFICES SHALL DISCONTINUE USE OF DISPLAYS AND MATERIALS FEATURING THE GUARDIAN ETHOS BY 1 JUL 2012.

5. A DIGITAL VERSION OF A COAST GUARD ETHOS POSTER FOR LOCAL PRINTING IS AVAILABLE AT HTTP://WWW.USCG.MIL/TOP/ABOUT 6. STAND A TAUT WATCH.

7. ADM ROBERT PAPP, COMMANDANT, AND MCPOCG MICHAEL LEAVITT, MASTER CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE COAST GUARD, SEND.

8. INTERNET RELEASE AUTHORIZED.
BT
NNNN

New Coast Guard Cutter Bears Name of Seaman Apprentice William R. Flores

The U.S. Coast Guard introduced its newest fast-response cutter to the waters of the Gulf of Mexico at the end of November. Attached is a link to a video of the Fast Response Cutter underway. http://www.bollingershipyards.com/PageDisplay.asp?p1=6905

Seaman Apprentice William R. Flores -- Billy to all who knew him -- never made it to his 19th birthday. He died trying to save the lives of crewmen aboard his rapidly sinking ship in the winter of 1980. He had joined when he was 17 and had been in the Coast Guard barely a year.

"He was really gung-ho," said Alan Nations, a retired master chief petty officer who served with Flores at the Coast Guard station in Galveston. "He was eager and already very self-disciplined. You don't see a whole lot of 17-year-olds with as much discipline as he had. And he was sharp, too."

Two decades after Flores' actions, somehow overlooked in the aftermath of the Coast Guard's worst peacetime disaster, he was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal, the highest decoration that service can bestow. The Coast Guard chose to name its latest fast-response cutter after Flores. The ship was launched from the Bollinger Shipyards in southern Louisiana and will undergo several months of testing before it is commissioned and joins the fleet.

"This class of cutter is known as the Sentinel class. Each of the fast-response cutters will be named for an individual in Coast Guard history who went above and beyond the call of duty and represents the very best of our service."

Flores' first assignment was in Galveston, where he took to his job with relish. "He liked to save lives," his father said. "That's why he lost his life."

Flores worked on the 180-foot Coast Guard vessel Blackthorn, which had been undergoing extensive repairs and updates in Tampa, Fla.

On the night of Jan. 28, 1980, the Blackthorn departed from Tampa Bay in the dark and collided with a 605-foot oil tanker named Capricorn. The Capricorn's anchor slashed the Blackthorn's hull open, and the Blackthorn started rolling portside and sinking.

An orderly evacuation wasn't possible. Men started jumping in the water. Flores, however, stayed aboard, made his way to the starboard life jacket locker and began throwing life jackets to crewmen in the water. Even as more crewmen abandoned ship, Flores "remained behind to strap the life jacket locker door open with his own belt, thereby contributing to the survival of struggling shipmates who retrieved life jackets as they floated to the surface," according to his citation.

"Even after most of the crew members abandoned ship, Seaman Apprentice Flores, with complete disregard for his own safety, remained on the inverted hull to assist trapped shipmates and provide aid and comfort to injured and disoriented shipmates," the citation continued.

Then the Blackthorn went down. Twenty-three men died that night, but 27 of them survived.

The night of the collision, Flores' mother, aunt and youngest brother had been in a car wreck in far West Texas, returning from a funeral in Carlsbad. Robert Flores was on his way to the Colorado City hospital, undoubtedly when the Coast Guard was trying to reach him.

At some point that night, one of Flores' daughters called the hospital and told him the Coast Guard was trying to reach him with bad news.

"It took an eternity to get back here," his father said. "I didn't know what was going on."

All the Coast Guard could tell the Floreses was that their son was missing. Day after day, they knew nothing of their son, except that it became clear he likely had not survived.

"That was the longest time," his mother said. "Waiting and waiting and waiting. It was terrible."

Finally, six days after the collision, Billy Flores' body washed ashore on the coast of Florida.

The Floreses had a funeral at St. Patrick Cathedral downtown because it was much larger than their church, San Mateo Catholic just off Vickery Boulevard. They buried him near their home, in Benbrook Cemetery.

Amid all the investigations into what happened and who was at fault that night, the actions of Flores were overlooked.

In fact, no commendations were awarded to any men on that ship.

"I think it was the magnitude of the whole thing," said Nations, who at the time was president of the Chief Petty Officers Association. "That was the Coast Guard's biggest peacetime tragedy. It was shocking. At Base Galveston, for six months people walked around and didn't even speak. The Coast Guard is a very small organization and very tightknit."

But the men who survived that night kept talking about Flores, even if Coast Guard commanders weren't doing anything about it. Nations promised the Flores family that he wouldn't let it go and persuaded a close friend, former Master Chief of the Coast Guard Vince Patton, to help initiate another investigation. "I knew that Billy Flores had done something heroic," Nations said. "When I retired in 1994, I made the Flores family a promise that I would see this through concerning their son."

Nations was present at Benbrook Cemetery in 2000 when the Coast Guard Medal was presented to Flores' parents, as were Patton and the former chief who recruited Flores in 1978.

Admiral Thad Allen Named as Booz Allen Senior Vice President

Admiral Allen has been named a Senior Vice President at Booz Allen Hamilton. He will join the firm's Justice and Homeland Security business and lead development of thought leadership and client engagement regarding the direction of law enforcement and Homeland Security 10 years after 9/11.

ADM Allen brings to Booz Allen unique experience as the head of a major homeland security agency (USCG), as well as an unequalled record at achieving operational effectiveness at the interagency level. In addition to his main focus in the homeland security market, Allen will

contribute to other firm initiatives in energy, defense and international markets.

"As I consider the next phase of my career, I'm pleased to have the opportunity at Booz Allen to take a broader perspective on issues so critical to our nation, promoting a discussion among government and industry about how to make our homeland security and law enforcement efforts even more effective as security and budget challenges become even tougher," Allen said.

LONGER TOURS COMING FOR SOME USCG ENLISTED BILLETS
From The Navy Times Monday, November 28, 2011

Think you're transferred too often? So does the Coast Guard's top officer, who has ordered longer tours across the force to cut costs and to boost quality of life and competence on the job.

The initiative, which began with Admiral tours when ADM Papp became Commandant last year, is moving down the ranks to officers and enlisted. Last year, the changes saved $20 million in reduced transfer costs, Papp said.

"We rotate our military people way too often," Papp told Navy Times in September. Having longer tours, he continued, "gives you a chance to build up greater proficiency and competency in your particular ratings." Personnel officials are extending tours for some enlisted billets in the deployed specialized forces and are reviewing other ratings and assignments. Enlisted tours average a little more than three years.

Some officer billets are also being considered for extensions, with the larger aim of curtailing the number of officers transferring early.

Officials say having fewer transfers not only would +be cheaper, but would enhance quality of life.

The plan takes a cue from the Navy - where four-year tours for enlisted and two- year tours for officers are routine - including one particularly shrewd move in which the Navy secured Coast Guardsmen for seven years in return for training them as SEALs, Papp said.

"Why, might you ask?" he said. "Well, because they invest a lot of money in that training. And they want to get a return on their investment. So I saw that as not a very good investment for the Coast Guard, very good for the Navy.

"But I learned some lessons from that," he continued. "If you're going to spend a lot of money on people first to transfer them to a location, then training en route and every-thing else, you want to get a return on that investment. And you don't get it if you transfer a person after one year or two years."

The plan

For the enlisted force, the initiative is rolling out with the maritime enforcement specialist rating.

About 20 percent of the billets in the 1,060-person ME rating will be getting longer tours, according to a personnel official.

"Work is underway to extend the tour lengths for personnel in the maritime enforcement specialist rating from four years to six years at some units that have some very high-end capacities," said Lt. Frank Morrison, a central assignment coordinator in the enlisted personnel management division at the Personnel Service Center.

All ME billets on maritime security response teams will come with longer tours starting next year, Morrison said, adding that some ME assignments on maritime security and safety teams may also be longer, but this will not "apply holistically." These extensions will occur only when new orders are issued, Morrison said.

These specific billet extensions are a result of a review of the deployed specialized forces. But personnel officials are looking at other ratings and officer communities.

"We are currently reviewing other areas right now," said Capt. Ric Rodriguez, chief of officer personnel at PSC, "both from the officer side and the enlisted side, to identify tours where we can increase tour lengths to achieve cost savings, increased specialization or mastery of their specialization or ratings." Enlisted tours now average 3.13 years, Rodriguez said; no comparable figure was available for officer tours. Rodriguez said the longer-tours initiative centers on enlisted personnel, but has implications for officers as well.

The Coast Guard is looking at extending officer tours at area and district command centers and intelligence coordination centers to three or four years, Rodriguez said. PSC, in general, is holding officers to their full tour length, instead of allowing them to transfer early. That's especially true for commanding and executive officers. "As the Commandant put it, 'There's no position better in the Coast Guard than a commanding officer, so why are we allowing commanding officers to short-tour for other opportunities?' " Rodriguez said.

Rodriguez was unable to quantify how many COs had been transferred early or how often such transfers had taken place.

PSC anticipates the longer tours will "have a positive impact on retention" by limiting moves, Rodriguez said.

Papp said this initiative will improve quality of life. Frequent moves dislocate families or cause hardships because the spouse will have to find new employment or the service member will have problems selling his house, Papp said. He added, "I think we can do better by our people."

ADM Papp Visits Activities Europe

ADM Papp was updated on maritime safety and security initiatives during a visit to Coast Guard Activities Europe in Rotterdam, The Netherlands, in November.

Papp described the Coast Guard strategy in his June 14, 2011, testimony to the House Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security (PDF):

"The Coast Guard's overarching strategy is to increase maritime border security through a layered security system that begins beyond the country's physical borders. This layered approach to security begins in foreign ports where the Coast Guard conducts foreign port assessments, leveraging the International Port Security Program, to assess effectiveness of port security and antiterrorism measures."

Within Activities Europe, a team of International Port Security Liaison Officers work with maritime trading countries in Europe and Africa covering an area that spans from the Arctic Circle to the Cape of Good Hope to improve security procedures at ports sending goods to the U.S. This post-September 11th initiative is meant to provide the first line of defense against threats delivered by the sea. These liaison officers review security practices, increase security awareness and champion best practices. They've completed approximately 350 country visits since the program began.

In addition to the International Port Security program, Activities Europe also has a Coast Guard Marine Safety Inspection team to conduct safety and security inspections on U.S. vessels as they call on foreign ports. These inspectors check for lifesaving equipment, seaworthiness, structural integrity, vessel security plans, and other factors that ensure the health and safety of the crew and increase the likelihood of survival in the event of trouble. If an accident involving a U.S. vessel does occur, they conduct marine casualty investigations to develop the insight necessary to help prevent such accidents from happening again.

The Coast Guard first established offices in Europe near the end of World War II to support U.S. merchant ships and seaman after the war. The marine safety duties were consolidated into one Europe-based office in 1975 and moved to New York in 1982. However, the extensive travel required for the unit's mission drove Activities Europe to be re-established in 1995 in Rotterdam. The mission has evolved over the years, but the requirement for overseas operations as part of Coast Guard missions has remained constant.

Alaska Based CG Earns Female Athlete of the Year

A Juneau-based Coast Guard officer was named the Coast Guard Elite Female Athlete of the Year Nov. 28.

Lt. Nicole Auth, assigned to the 17th District prevention division, received this award for her participation in the 5th CISM Military World Games where her team earned the U.S. women's military sailing team the bronze medal and for her notable community service while stationed in Hawaii.

Auth was the acting bosun and crew's bow woman for the sailing team during the games held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 22. This is the first time the United States won a medal in a sailing event at the Military World Games.

"We weren't expecting to place that well," said Auth. "But we were excited to be able to represent the U.S. and its armed forces."

The Coast Guard selects an elite male and female athlete to be recognized annually. These athletes are recognized for making a significant contribution in a national team sport placing in the top three and for having a notable positive impact in their community.

Auth shares her passion for the sport of sailing by volunteering her time teaching sailing to high school students and she was an active instructor with the Sea Scout Youth Sailing Program in Hawaii.

The World Military Games, sponsored by the International Military Sports Council, are held every four years.

Military athletes, as well as a few Olympic athletes, from around the globe come together for the eight-day competition. A total of 37 sports are represented, including everything from basketball to skydiving. The council also organizes more than 20 international military sports championships every year.

The U.S. sailing team, sponsored by the Navy, was made up of Coast Guard, Navy and Marine Corps members, had only 11 days to prepare for this year's event during training in Annapolis, Md.

Auth, originally from Lamoine, Maine, has been sailing since high school and sailed for the Coast Guard Academy's team before graduating in 2004. She was a member of the U.S. coed team at the international sailing championship in Bahrain in 2010. Since then, she and her teammates have been recruiting their fellow service members to apply for the program. This year the U.S. had enough sailors to create a four-person men's team and five-person woman's team for the games.

Maine-based Coast Guard Icebreaking Tugboat Bound for Great Lakes

The Thunder Bay, a 140-foot icebreaking tug, departs from Rockland on Tuesday and will arrive in the Great Lakes region in a couple of weeks. Once it arrives, it'll be assisting other Coast Guard vessels in operations Coal Shovel and Taconite.

Coast Guard cutters from the Northeast have successfully assisted with icebreaking in the Great Lakes for the past three winters.

Council Member CDR Ben Stoppe Receiving Well Earned Recognition

Capital Area Retiree Council Member CDR Ben Stoppe was awarded the CG Meritorious Public Service Award while attending in the Coast Guard Aviation Association's annual convention, or "Roost" in Mobile, AL. VADM John Currier, USCG (Ancient Albatross) made

Vice Commandant (Select),VADM John Currier presenting the Award to CDR Stoppe

the presentation. The citation recognized his service as Coast Guard Aviation Association treasurer for almost six years, and also noted his work on the Capital Area CG Retiree Council, as well. Congratulations Ben!!

Repairs Cancel Annual Tree Ship Voyage for Mackinaw

Mackinaw's long awaited trip for repairs to a leaking bow-thruster will finally take place. She is scheduled for dry-dock at the Fraser Shipyards of Superior, Wis.

The Mac last visited Fraser in June 2009 when a leaking shaft seal in the starboard engine pod was repaired there.

But all was not lost see below ----

Duluth-based Coast Guard Cutter Alder assumes role of Chicago's "Christmas Ship"

The U.S. Coast Guard Cutter Alder, acting as the "Christmas Ship," arrived from Sault Ste Marie at Chicago's Navy Pier December 2.

With the Chicago Fire Department shooting water cannons, to celebrate her arrival, the Alder arrived at Navy Pier bearing the stacks of Christmas trees.

An official welcoming ceremony was held Saturday with a live military band and a flyover by a Coast Guard helicopter. Then, the trees were unloaded and distributed Dec-3-4.

The Alder's crew is participating in the event while also performing their aids-to- navigation maintenance duties in southern Lake Michigan as part the 9th Coast Guard District's Operation Fall Retrieve.

"The story of the Chicago Christmas Tree Ship is really an incredible story because it starts right here," said Capt. Dave Truitt, Chicago's Christmas Tree Ship Program chairman.

The Rouse Simmons was the original Christmas Tree Ship that came to Chicago at the beginning of the holiday season for over 30 years in the early 1900s. It could carry more than 5,000 trees, but in 1912, it never made it to Chicago. The ship sunk near the Wisconsin coast and the crew perished.

"Little Ruthie Fleswig was standing here, and it got to be dark and her father leaned over and said Ruthie, 'Why don't you go home?' And she looked up and said, 'Dad, you don't understand, for a little girl, without a Christmas tree, there is no Christmas,'" Truitt said.

Chicago always remembered the old ship, and the marine community brought the tradition back in 2000. This year's vessel came from Duluth, Minn., picked up 1,200 trees in Sault Saint Marie, Mich., then paid tribute over the site where the Rouse Simmons was last seen -- before heading to Chicago.

"This is an outstanding tremendous opportunity for the whole entire ship. All of the crew are excited," said Commander Mary Ellen Durley, Coast Guard Cutter "Alder." "As you can tell they hoisted one of the traditional Christmas trees -- as was the custom when they came here -- and we did that this morning in honor of the Rouse Simmons and the other ships before her. So, we are excited."

Public tours of the CGC Alder were held on Saturday, from 1:30 p.m. - 5 p.m. Alder departed on Sunday, 5 December.

On the Wings of Eagle
From the Coast Guard Channel

Coast Guard Commandant Robert J. Papp spent many years leading students and Coastguardsmen aboard the U.S. Coast Guard Barque Eagle. During his time on the Eagle, we were fortunate enough to spend a trip with him during a sail from Oregon to San Francisco. During that cruise, we captured the work of crew and cadets from the time they boarded to the time they disembarked. It took six years for Tam O'Connor Fraser to complete editing on this film. It was a labor of love for him and the time he spent on it created an extraordinary depiction of life on board Eagle. If you have not had a chance to view *On the Wings of Eagle*, now's your chance as it has been added to the Coast Guard Channel. It's also for sale in our store if you would like to have a copy for your collection; purchase it here.

CG Awaits Radiation Claims from LORAN Workers
From, The Navy Times December 3, 2011

After years of pressure from veterans, the Coast Guard acknowledged on Nov. 17 that some people who worked at long-range navigation stations may have been exposed to harmful radiation, clearing the way for current and former service members to apply for compensation.

Veterans hailed this as a chance for the service to come clean after decades of hiding the risks of radiation from LORAN personnel, some of whom have suffered from or died of cancer.

In all likelihood, dangerous levels of radiation affected only a small portion of the approximately 10,000 Coast Guardsmen who served at LORAN stations during the nearly seven decades they were in operation, according to a 2011 report by the Defense Threat Reduction Agency. Those most at risk were electronics technicians and other maintainers who performed "exceptional" repairs to the vacuum tubes, 2-foot-tall devices that amplified the stations' signals.

At close range, vacuum tubes release harmful levels of X-rays, which can cause cancer.

"We didn't find any significant exposure," said Dr. Paul Blake, the report's lead author and a senior health physicist at DTRA. "The challenge is, though, LORAN units were different than even the most high-powered AM and FM radio and television stations in this country."

Before the 1990s and the arrival of the satellite- based GPS, LORAN was the nation's primary electronic navigation system. At its height, more than 150 transmission stations around the world beamed it at high power, according to the report.

Users ranging from merchant ships to ballistic- missile submarines depended on it for precise navigation. There was little tolerance to take towers offline.

The byproducts of high power in the vacuum tubes were low-energy X-rays.

"In most cases, you can shield effectively," Blake said of the X-rays. "The difficulty is when you don't have a shield in place and people are working close to it. There were some anecdotal cases where people had to do some work to keep these things going."

Shields weren't routinely installed until 1995, 53 years after LORAN stations began transmitting; LORAN was shut down in 2010 in a round of budget cuts.

The Coast Guard is aware of a "handful" of cases in which a member or veteran has reported radiation sickness or cancer stemming from LORAN exposure, Coast Guard spokesman Lt. Paul Rhynard said. He was unable to provide statistics or an estimate for how many people have come forward.

"We have no reliable way to estimate the numbers of those exposed or susceptible, but the report has helped to define a specific scenario where a member might be a risk," Rhynard said. "We strongly encourage anyone who performed the maintenance task[s] described to follow up with their doctor and take the necessary steps to identify or address any health concerns."

A first step

Dave Hans said he believes his four years at LORAN stations altered his life. Hans, a retired electronics technician first class, has battled cancer since 1976, two years after leaving his LORAN station in Yap, Micronesia.

He said surgeons have removed cancerous tumors from his prostate gland and lungs.

Cancer has repeatedly attacked his thyroid.

"Every one of these is a radiogenic disease," said Hans, who earned a master's degree in pathology after leaving active duty in the 1970s.

"Going back and recalling the type of work that we did on our transmitters and amplifiers, there was no protection that we had."

Station personnel didn't wear dosimeters, designed to measure radiation exposure, he said, or any protective garments. They weren't even aware there was a risk of exposure - no warning signs were posted, and there was no mention of radiation risk at LORAN school.

Hans said his crew tried to keep the signal going at all costs on Yap.

"We were the master station for the southeast Asian chain. And we were still thick in the Vietnam War at that time," he said. "And the last thing you want to have is your master station going out."

Reflecting on this and his subsequent cancer, Hans said the report is a good first step but thinks the service must go further.

"The Coast Guard has to acknowledge that they erred in how people were trained in LORAN, that they erred in keeping information from LORAN personnel, even after they knew of the radiation danger," Hans said.

"My first claim was put in in 1977," he added. "And since then, mine has been remanded any number of times. I will file for my claim to be reopened. For what it has cost me in a lifetime, I will go after what I'm entitled to."

“More common than they realize'

Cases of radiation exposure may be more common than the Coast Guard would like to admit, according to one LORAN veteran and a co-author of the DTRA report.

"I don't think it's very exceptional," retired Master Chief Electronics Technician Chuck Severance said of the risks of exposure. "I think it's going to be more common than they realize."

Severance, who spent 16 years stationed at LORAN stations over his career before retiring in 1992, said what the report characterizes as "exceptional"

maintenance was routine - procedures such as preparing new vacuum tubes or troubleshooting high- voltage breakdowns, which required technicians to get very close to the tubes. He also said it was standard for maintainers to bypass another safety measure known as interlocks.

Interlocks disable the transmitter when the cabinet housing the vacuum tubes is opened. In 1982, military health physicists discovered dangerously high levels of radiation one foot away from the cabinet and recommended that interlocks should not be bypassed, according to the report.

But Severance, who eventually wrote LORAN maintenance procedures, said the findings were never shared with the LORAN workforce and that there were standard procedures for operating the transmitters with the interlocks bypassed.

For many military units, LORAN was mission-critical, and the institutional emphasis was on keeping it transmitting.

"When the equipment goes down, you do maintenance with the interlocks bypassed," Severance said. "You do what you have to do to keep the equipment running while you fix the problem."

Severance led the effort to get the Coast Guard to examine radiation exposure, a campaign prompted by watching fellow LORAN vets die of radiogenic diseases, including retired Senior Chief Electronics Technician John Milohnick, who died of leukemia in 2006. Severance said he "couldn't think of anybody that got exposed to radiation much more than I had," but declined to say whether his health has been affected by this exposure.

"Reason I got involved with this is, I was a master chief," Severance said. "I wrote a lot of maintenance standards, and wherever I worked, I always required our equipment to run at 100 percent. I put people in harm's way, and when John got sick - the LORAN community is very, very tight - I really suffered this guilt complex."

He continued: "I really felt that I had to do something about this."

Ft Myer- Henderson Hall Joint Base Information and Events Listing

The schedule for December has a number of special Holiday services and events.

The following is posted on web page. ---
Take a look at the Ft Myer- Henderson Hall information and events listing at
http://www.jbmhhmwr.com/ T

The Joint Base Ft Myer- Henderson Hall has many events for the Military Retiree, including special brunches, pool parties to celebrate labor day, Big Band Night, "Doggie Dip" in the Ft Myer pool, Tennis, Seafood Buffet, etc.

Also listed are events at Ft McNair and the Spates Community Club at Ft Myer, the Army Community Service (lots of classes, meetings for parents, toddlers, "Lunch & Learn"), the JBM-HH Bowling Center, the JBM-HH Library, the Ft Myer Fitness Center, the JBM-HH Recreation Center (Redskins Tickets, Travel Deals from the Armed Forces Vacation Club, tickets to movies, theme parks, classes in Tae Kwon Do). Also Child, Youth & School Services, Swimming, Water Aerobics.

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