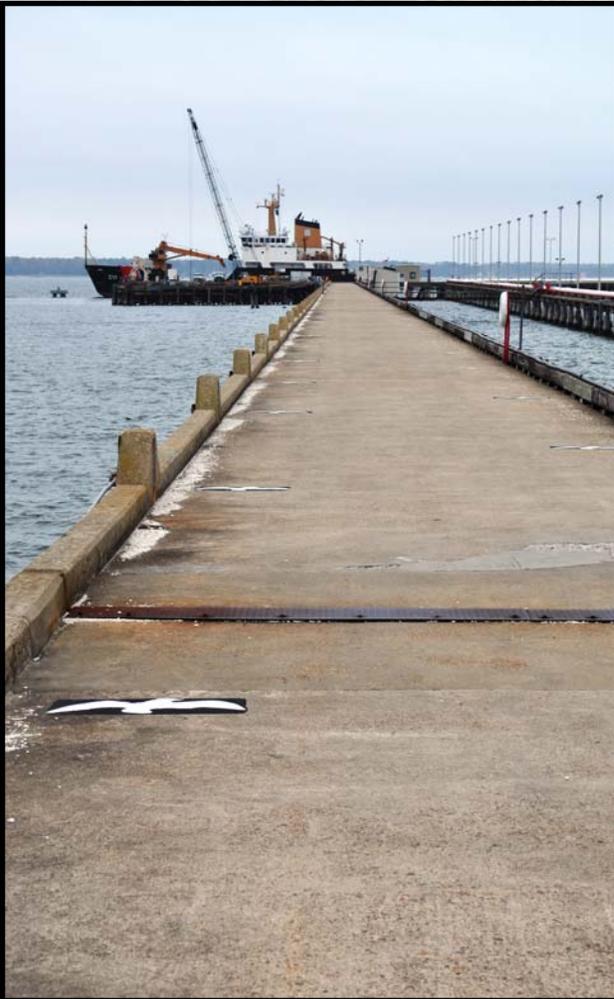


The Shade Tree

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD CUTTER OAK (WLB-211)





Pit Stop in Yorktown, VA

The crew of the USCGC OAK was treated to a two day break at the Yorktown Training Center on the way to dry dock at the Coast Guard Yard in Baltimore, Maryland.

Enjoying the hospitality included invitations to use the Chief's Mess Hall for get-togethers, use of the exercise facilities, and access to many other amenities on base.

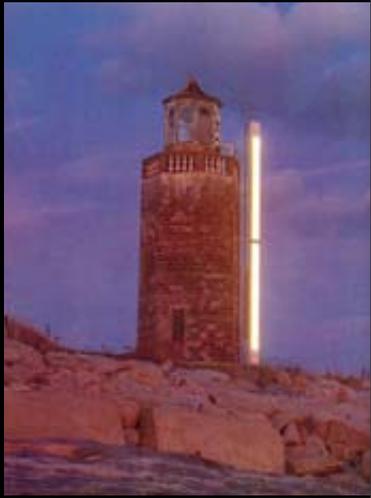
A walk down the pier may have felt like two miles but folks were able to enjoy activities ranging from billiards to volleyball. Just look at those snap shots! Who knew that EMC Morrisett could jump like that?

A big thanks goes out to the generous folks at Training Center Yorktown for all your support and the kind invitation to visit.

National Aids to Navigation School



EDUCATIONAL EXHIBITS DISPLAYED AT YORKTOWN, VA CAMPUS



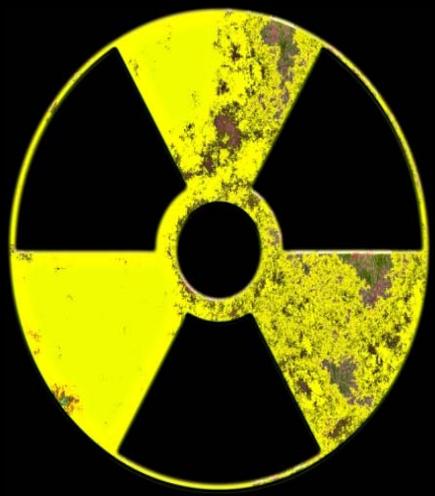
Laser Lighthouse

Beginning in the early 1970's the Coast Guard experimented with the use of lasers in short-range Aids to Navigation. Cancelled due to technical problems, the tests proved that lasers could be used as an effective aid. The Coast Guard again experimented with lasers in the early 1990's. Though the system proved capable and could be operated less expensively than conventional aids, the tremendous cost of overhauling the short-range ATON system was not warranted as GPS has become standard worldwide.



The Fresnel Lens

The Fresnel lens is the 1822 invention of French physicist Augustine Fresnel who invented a lens that would make his name commonplace along the seacoasts of Europe and North America. The lens could be as tall as twelve feet high with concentric rings of glass prisms above and below a center drum section to bend the light into a narrow beam. Because of its amazing efficiency, a Fresnel lens could easily throw its light 20 or more miles to the horizon.



Nuclear Lighthouse

In May 1964, Baltimore Light became the first atomic-powered lighthouse in the world. Similar in size to a 55 gallon oil drum, the atomic reactor was intended to supply continuous electricity for 10 years without refueling. Nuclear power in Aids to Navigation never achieved reliable success and within a few years it was discontinued.





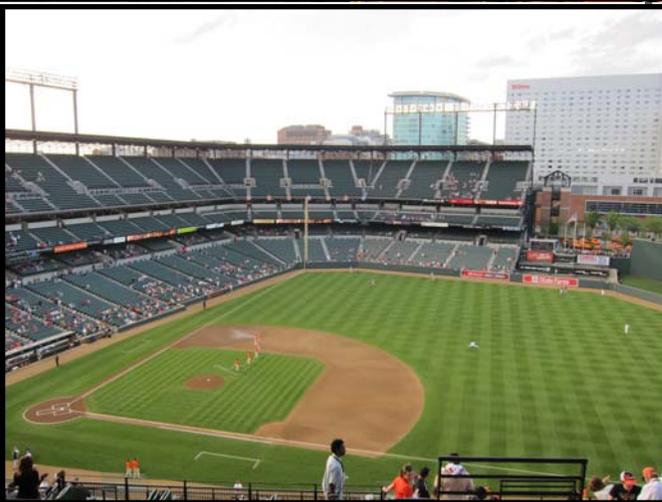
-Dry Dock- Baltimore, Maryland

It had to happen sooner or later, the OAK is in need of some tender loving care— and the US Coast Guard Yard is just the place to get what the doctor ordered.

There are many jobs on the to-do list, however, shiny new white paint on our super structure and classic colors covering the exhaust stacks will be the most noticeable. Due to Hurricane Season rapidly approaching and the growing need for OAK to return to service; the ship and her crew will need to return to dry dock sooner than originally planned.

The work days are long and the projects may seem lengthy at times but morale remains high among shipmates. Thankfully the Command devised a plan that allows each person to return home for a break twice during the dry dock period. Meanwhile, people are finding all kinds of ways to keep themselves entertained on liberty.

The local area, especially downtown Baltimore, provides great dining spots, sporting events, and plenty of shopping malls to explore and enjoy.





SHAKE & BAKE

THE HIDDEN TALENT OF MK1 JESSE PONDER



When it first happened, people thought that our cooks made a fancy designer cake to boost morale and celebrate crewmember birthdays for the month. When it happened again and I walked in on MK1 Jesse Ponder covered in flour and hard at work on another master piece, his story had to be told...

Q: How & when did you get into cake baking and fondant icing?

A: About 2 years ago, my wife started a project and I helped her, haha I do whatever she wants... even baking. I'd do anything for her. We were watching one of those Cake Boss shows and thought that was something worth trying.

Q: What's your role in the production and what's your creative inspiration?

A: I've got the Hand & Eye coordination skills to center the fondant pieces and the brute strength to pound and roll out the icing. It's easy, just go online and find something you like, then try and make it. What's next? I want to make a Rice Crispy Treat person. We'll see what happens.

Parting Thoughts

PEARLS OF WISDOM & FOND MEMORIES FROM DEPARTING SHIPMATES

MK2 Perry Clement: "Underway on Monday be back on Thursday... relay that- leave Tuesday back on Thursday due to weather."

LTJG Gwen English: "There are so many millions of things to do, you can't keep up!" P.S.- Fondest memory? OAK's 1st swim call in years... anchored off of St. Thomas at sunset."

MK2 Justin Nyby: "My favorite times were in the Caribbean with water 30 feet deep and so clear you could see the sandy bottom.

FS1 Scott Kroll: "Being a part of Obama's Presidential Inauguration, Haiti's Earthquake, and Deepwater Horizon, three very significant Coast Guard historical events... all in one tour." " P.S.- Cooks love a thank you!"

ET1 Raymond Hernandez: "It was awful repeatedly getting rocked in the jibs during Deepwater Horizon, but at the end of the day it was the right thing to do..."

CWO John Difrancesco: "It's been real it's been fun but not always real fun".

LT Justin Vandenhuevel: "I'll have to get back to you... < sigh > I'm in travel claim land right now. It's a scary place... not somewhere that you'd want to get lost."





The command and crew of the Cutter OAK is always proud of accomplishments from within. Most recently John Difrancesco has successfully achieved the rank of Chief Warrant Officer.

Top Left: ENS Taylor Volkman assists Mr. Difrancesco with his new cover, shining eagle and all.



Lower Left: MK1 Jesse Ponder was the first crewmember to salute Mr. Difrancesco immediately following the ceremony.

CWO Difrancesco has also recently hit another professional growth milestone by completing his Associates Degree. Considering the OAK's underway demands the past year, that is quite a feat!



EM3 Kecken (left) and FS2 Joiner (lower left) were in attendance of Mr. Difrancesco's big day and also witnessed MKC Plotner (below) moving up into OAK's Command Chief role.

Being a unit's Command Chief is an important responsibility onboard a ship. Both the crew and command utilize the Command Chief as a vital communication link for important issues and concerns.



Check out the new tread! BM3 Janes, SN Wagner, and EM3 Kecken pose with OAK's brand new treadmill. It's a welcomed addition to the ship's gym equipment.



Top— Members of OAK visited 6th grade classes at a local Baltimore, MD school to teach environmental issues including the Deepwater Horizon oil spill response.

Bottom— The OAK was one big happy family during a show at Medieval Times. Black & White Knight!





The Captain's Corner



Families, friends, and sailors of OAK,

As you read this, OAK will be finishing a dry-dock period at the Coast Guard Yard where your OAK sailor has been away from home for six-weeks. The crew has worked hard to get OAK back in ship shape and ready to perform the Coast Guard missions.

As the summer nears, we will lose many valuable crewmembers that have left a lasting legacy to their new OAK shipmates. We wish them fair winds, following seas, and a beacon to guide them in their next adventure.

I wish I could tell you that our summer will be one of sitting at home, but our duties already are calling. We will spend most of July underway conducting aids to navigation, international partnering, and enforcing laws and treaties. Our summer will culminate in an intensive evaluation of our ability to save our ship from fire or flooding; which is critical to our safety. The new crew will have to become proficient quickly and I am sure they will.

June 1st begins Hurricane Season and be assured that OAK will respond if a storm makes landfall from Puerto Rico to North Carolina. Our role will be lifesaving and reestablishing the critical waterways affected. I will meet with families to discuss Hurricane season preparations when we return to homeport. I hope to see you there.

Thank you for supporting your OAK crewmembers, family, or friend. Knowing you care and understand their commitment to their country is critical. Kathy and I wish you all a safe and happy summer.

Pete Niles

P.S.- Lifejackets float, you do not. Please wear them when boating.



“LTJG Radcliffe Departing, Fair Winds & Following Seas”, soon the quarterdeck watchstander will be proclaiming that very phrase as I walk across the brow of CGC OAK for the last time. It’s hard to believe that it’s been two years since I first joined the crew straight out of Officer Candidate School.

Before life in the U.S. Coast Guard, I was a broadcast meteorologist and news anchor for an ABC affiliate in western Colorado. The local celebrity aspect was fun for a while, but “the biz” is more drama-filled and hollow than you can imagine. I needed to find something that would be challenging, rewarding, and really impact people’s lives as well as my own.

After 17 weeks of O.C.S., a major reward was earning a spot in Charleston, South Carolina on the finest Buoy Tender in the fleet. Learning the ropes as a junior officer, especially with being so green in the military, was a mountain of qualifications, challenges, and successes. Thanks to the stern guidance from an extremely talented Executive Officer and the constant competition of an incredibly intelligent and capable fellow Ensign; I not only survived but developed.

Historical events dominated OAK’s last two years including the earthquake response in Port au Prince, Haiti and the Deepwater Horizon oil cleanup. Our crew has endured numerous months away from home, faced natural and man-made disasters, and still kept up with a full schedule of Aids to Navigation maintenance.

Never have I been so overwhelmed, exhausted, and run-ragged, yet felt so damn satisfied in my life. I’ve learned that is the credo of a Black Hull sailor, an understanding of sacrifice and devotion known only to those who have labored, bled, and endured together on a salty hull of blackened steel.

**Sincerely,
J. A. Radcliffe, LTJG**

-A special thanks goes out to OAK’s family, friends, fans, and avid readers, I wish I could have squeezed out more time for extra newsletters!

