

SENECA eNewsletter - 20-28 SEP 08

Good day, Shipmates.

As we patrol the waters today east of Cape Cod, we are experiencing the large, gentle Pacific-like swells that are the aftermath of the energy that Hurricane Kyle collected and left in the Northwest Atlantic.

We have seen a few whales this trip, including about a dozen Humpback Whales feeding this morning along our track.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humpback_whales

To make this easier for a simple cutterman like me to recollect and write, I'm going to provide you this eNewsletter in a timeline with a few embellishments and digressions.

20 September, Saturday: SENECA got underway at 1000Q to execute a patrol for Coast Guard District One (D1) patrol. After a busy inport with a Change of Command, overhaul to #2 Main Diesel Engine (MDE), and much training, including schools and pistol/long gun qualifications at the Cape Cod Coast Guard Range, the cutter and crew were ready to get underway, which is what cutters are for. After securing from Special Sea and Anchor Details, we needed to break in the #2 MDE so my intrepid engineers executed a great plan created by my Engineer Officer, to ensure #2 MDE was ready to answer all bells.

21 September, Sunday: We took time to thank God for our blessings and rested. We also continued to break in #2 MDE. In the afternoon, the weather was wonderful and we took advantage of it to conduct a Living Marine Resources Enforcement (LMRE) boarding on a fishing vessel. SENECA's primary boarding team checked the vessel's safety gear and compliance with all Federal Laws and Regulations, including National Marine Fisheries regulations. Shortly after the boarding, we were tasked by D1 to make best speed 350 nautical miles east of Cape Cod. The Motor Yacht GRAND COUNT had become disabled with five people on board while transiting from Canada to Venezuela due to a burned out clutch.

22 September, Monday: SENECA arrived onscene with the GRAND COUNT in the early morning hours to the relief of the Captain and his four shipmates. After making and briefing the plan, Team SENECA executed our tow plan. BMC took a team over to the GRAND COUNT to assist her seasoned crew with bringing aboard the bridle and heavy towing hawser. The weather was most helpful to passing a tow line and SENECA was conn'd adroitly to within 50 feet of the bow of the GRAND COUNT. Once the bridle was set, we recovered SEN 1. SEN 1 is SENECA's starboard small boat, the Over The Horizon (OTH) ridged hull. We then began our transit to south of Nomans Land Island on the southwest corner of Martha's Vineyard to drop off the tow. This was to be the first of three changing destinations.

23 September, Tuesday: The towing continued; however, early Tuesday morning the port leg of the towing bridle broke (yes, like a bridle for a horse) after wearing through both the chaffing gear and the 4 inch line. We still had one leg on the bridle, but we had a long way to go and needed to get a bridle reattached. We were blessed with warm waters - almost 80F - and sunshine though it was a bit lively and windy. Our Deck Force worked some bos'n mate magic to replace the bridle on the GRAND COUNT, lead by the First Lieutenant, BMC, and BM1. Once a new wire bridle was affixed on we continued our trek to our second of three destinations, Halifax, Nova Scotia.

24 September, Wednesday: The towing continued. The weather was gorgeous for the transit with many of my shipmates saying, "Wow! This is September in D1. I thought we were in the Caribbean." EM2 qualified as an Engineer of the Watch (EOW). My EOWs and Officers of the Deck (OOD) are my two primary watch team leaders in keeping SENECA on track and safe.

25 September, Thursday: Towed GRAND COUNT to the "S" Morse Alfa Sea Buoy south of Shelburne, Nova Scotia, which became our final destination, and passed the tow to the Tug ATLANTIC BEACH. After 80 hours

of towing, the Captain of the GRAND COUNT and his four shipmates were most grateful for the seamanship, professionalism, and response of Team SENECA. Once we dropped the tow, SENECA headed west.

26 September, Friday: We continued to patrol the Gulf of Maine and the Hague Line, which marks the offshore Exclusive Economic Boundary between the United States and Canada. It is usually not a good idea to "Cross the T" of a Hurricane; however, I had great weather products, very dependable MDEs, and three days of lead time. Moreover, I needed to be in Boston for operational parts and supplies. That evening, one of my Tactical Units (TU) working for SENECA as Commander Task Unit (CTU) 44.1.1 detected a fishing vessel illegally operating in Closed Area II (CAII), which is on the east side of Georges Bank and abuts the Hague Line. Subsequent coordination with D1 Command Center, National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), and USCG Air Station Cape Cod (ASCC) resulted in the F/V's departure from CAII and returning to homeport for a following boarding by NMFS agents. The TU was an ASCC HU-25 Falcon, like a Lear jet, tail number 2133.

27 September, Saturday: SENECA stood into the Port of Boston with a welcoming fog layed in thick with 50 yards of visibility at the "B" Morse Alpha Sea Buoy. We needed to replace a flight deck net that we had broken when getting underway Saturday and to get some Lube Oil. Our fine Food Service Specialists (cooks) took advantage of the time to load some stores too. Though I took my time getting into the pier, Team SENECA quickly, safely, and efficiently accomplished all of our Brief Stop for Logistics (BSL) tasks in two hours which enabled us to get underway prior to other large traffic standing into port. The transit from sea buoy to pier took two hours, which shows how important the net and oil were to SENECA's operations.

28 September, Sunday: A day of rest. We ran a barrier patrol (BARPAT) in Cape Cod Bay in the On Deck SAR Circle (SAR = search & rescue) while awaiting Hurricane Kyle to pass well east of us. Unfortunately, my Vikings lost.

While towing enroute to Nova Scotia, I offered my shipmates the opportunity to conduct a port call in Halifax; however, they wisely saw the downside. Such a shift in our schedule would have resulted in almost three weeks underway at the end of the patrol with no portcall, just BSLs. However, the Liberty Call Advisory Board (LCAB) came up with some good suggestions which resulted in me adjusting one of our port calls to be in for Halloween. There will be more on that after the event; hopefully with some good photos of my shipmates in costume ~ in good, clean fun of course.

For family and friends of SENECA: If you would like to know more about our fine cutter and myself, please visit these web sites.

Cutter SENECA <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcSeneca/>

USCG District One (D1) <http://www.uscgnewengland.com/go/doc/778/228815/>

(D1's web page has our tow press release.)

Hurricane Kyle is a reminder for all of us to be ready for whatever Mother Nature can throw at us. We live in a great, powerful, and wonderful country, but our country requires her citizens to make good choices and to be able to take care of ourselves for 72 hours after a disaster. For some good ideas on how to be prepared, please visit <http://www.ready.gov>.

Be well, God bless, Semper Paratus ~ Always Ready,
Sincerely,
wjw

CDR Wm. J. "Willy" Wolter
Cutter SENECA (WMEC 906)
~ Underway; patrolling our East Coast ~