

SENECA eNewsletter – 12 June - 17August 09

Good day, shipmates.

It's been almost three months since I last wrote to you all. Our dry dock activities were a constant pull on the wagon once we were extended to ensure we had new shafts, then our entertainment activities went into high gear as we readied ourselves and our cutter to safely transit back to homeport. Working around required yard work, we completed 15 All Hands Drills & Exercises, Basic DCPQS, Back to Basics on a Saturday morning, and a Fast Cruise. With Sea Trials, Ready for Sea Operations, Helicopters Operations, and four Search and Rescue (SAR) cases on our transit back home, we were living the dream which was both busy and rewarding. I appreciate all of your dedication to our focus on preparedness and readiness while being flexible. Your attitudes and efforts ensured our safe arrival back in the North End.

We've seen our shipmates promoted and achieve their goals:

BZ, shipmates !

We've also said good bye to a lot of great shipmates.
Fair winds and following seas, shipmates.

We've also welcomed aboard some new shipmates. I'm looking forward to signing all of your qualification letters and Page 7s (administrative remarks).

{I apologize if I've missed someone; please let me know and I'll add them in the next eNewsletter}

I'm including some of our busy days and highlighted activities in the journal that follows. I know that on these and the other days that you were standing taught watches as Firewatch (not the band), drinking plenty of water and ensuring the correct parts of the cutter were burning, Cold Iron Security (CIS) making taut rounds on and under SENECA, as Gangway Petty Officer of the Watch (GPOW) making pipes to keep us on our daily schedule while answering the phone to direct communications, and as Officers of the Deck (OODs) and Engineers of the Watch (EOWs) conducting a myriad of activities for our XO and Department Heads in addition to overseeing the safety and security of SENECA. While watches were being stood, our outstanding Duty Food Service Specialists made three squares a day in challenging yard conditions with the able help of a squad of Mess Cooks who worked around the loss of the Galley Hoist while it was being repaired. Your dedication, devotion to duty and positive attitudes during our challenging dry dock are much appreciated and an inspiration to me).

Thank you

Dry Dock Summary:	Total Cost:	\$2.8 Million
	Total Growth:	60 Percent
	Change Requests:	74
	Planned Contract Days:	60
	Actual Contract Days:	100
	Condition Found Reports (Cfrs):	224
	New zincs, shafts & blades for both propellers.	
	Repainted hull from gunnels to keel.	
	Repaired a dime-sized hole to the sea in Dry Stores.	
	Renewed One Step Decks in 8 spaces.	
	Overhauled the Commissary Hoist.	

Executive Summary (from SENECA's After Action Report message):

SENECA DEPARTED HOMEPORT ON 08 MAY WITH AN INITIAL
PLANNED CONTRACT VALUE OF \$1.7 MILLION. THE CONTRACT

STEADILY GREW TO \$2.8 MILLION THROUGH 74 CHANGE REQUESTS AND 31 EXTRA WORK DAYS. DURING THE DRY DOCK PERIOD, THE CREW EXPERIENCED A 45% TURNOVER. THE CONTRACT WAS SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF EXECUTING A LARGE CONTRACT DURING TRANSFER SEASON. THE IMPACT OF THE LACK OF PERSONNEL CONTINUITY ONBOARD WAS HEAVILY MITIGATED THROUGH THE CRITICAL PARTICIPATION OF NESU BOSTON PORT ENGINEERS, TDY SUPPORT AND THE PROFESSIONALISM OF THE SHIPYARD. THIS LARGE DRYDOCK PACKAGE PRECEDED BY MEP HAS SET THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS OF MISSION EXECUTION AND FOR THE LONGEVITY REQUIRED TO KEEP SENECA FULLY MISSION CAPABLE FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF CUTTERMEN. THE FLEET HAS BEEN ASKING SENIOR LEADERSHIP FOR THE TIME AND MONEY TO REPAIR OUR CUTTERS, THOSE CRITICAL RESOURCES WERE DELIVERED TO SENECA DURING THIS AVAILABILTY FOR WHICH SENECA AND HER CREW ARE MOST GRATEFUL FOR SUCH STRONG MISSION SUPPORT BY OUR SERVICE.

Morale Activities/Events at Drydock:

We took advantage of the myriad of events that Tidewater has to offer. BZ to those that led the events and to those that participated. It's part of your Coast Guard Adventure to try new things in new areas. The Morale Committee provide information and access to over 40 Morale events including; Norfolk Tides games, Busch Gardens trips, Wings & a Movie Nights, Bowling, Sports Nights, Paintball, Go-Cart Trips, Motor World, BBQ's, Water Country, King's Dominion, Dozens of Concerts, Norfolk Harbor Fest, Tour of the USS Truman, Softball games, Concerts on the Messdeck and a Spirit of Norfolk Cruise.

31 July, Friday: About a third of us had a wonderful opportunity to cross the pier and tour one of our sister services newest ships, the USS FREEDOM (LCS 1). The tours were led by FREEDOM's Captain and Executive Officer.

<http://www.freedom.navy.mil/default.aspx>

<http://www.army.mil/medalofhonor/smith/profile/index.html>

Also on this Friday, there was a lunch concert by the cutter's band Firewatch. Jammin' on acoustic guitars were BM1 and WEPS. ANAV pushed out some strong vocals. There was special intro by DC3, who also got the mess deck crowd into the spirit of the concert with his energy and enthusiasm. I believe DC3 could be a professional Roadie.

7 August, Friday: Sea Trials and Degaussing Range. The Dry Dock ended: 100 days and \$2.8M in work and refurbishment. On the way out to conduct Sea Trials we ran the Norfolk Degaussing Range both ways for a satisfactory certification. We had to interrupt our runs to safely conduct a Medical Evacuation as one of our shipmates had severely injured his hand and needed to be seen at a hospital ASAP. We got an assist from our shipmates at Sector Hampton Roads who took our shipmate to the pier at Naval Hospital Portsmouth, oldest Naval Hospital in the Country. It was a severe injuring to his fingers, but we expect a full recovery in a few months. We conducted successful Sea Trials in the Chesapeake Bay west of the Bay/Bridge Tunnel. The Sea Trials consisted of using the Main Diesel Engines (MDEs) in all modes: Pilot House Control, Engineering Control Console Control, and Emergency Manual Control. We ran the MDEs up to Handle Position 10 (HP10 ahead is max speed) and they love it, as did our engineer shipmates. We back down hard (HP6) and twisted (6/6 split) and our MDEs performed wonderfully. After completing Sea Trials, we moored up at our sister service's Naval Amphibious Base (NAB) Little Creek Virginia.

<http://www.med.navy.mil/SITES/NMCP/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Degaussing>

8 & 9 August, Friday: Normal weekend away from homeport. No firewatches, some yard workers on Saturday working some issues from the Sea Trials on Friday. It was a stand down from our dry dock, but not a true stand down, which would come later.

<https://www.cnic.navy.mil/littlecreek/AboutCNIC/index.htm>

10 August, Monday: The Guardians from Afloat Training Group (ATG) Norfolk arrived to work with us through some drills while inport. A key group of drills were Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises (BECCEs, pronounced "Becky's"). The training team (ECCTT in this case) continued to knock off the rust and work on their teamwork and communication.

11 August, Tuesday: The ATG shipriders got underway with us for some more Damage Control drills. We were delayed a bit while our diligent and safety minded engineers worked on making sure the #1 clutch for the starboard shaft operated as designed. We then returned to an anchorage off of NAB Little Creek which was nestled next to the Chesapeake Bay/Bridge Tunnel and south of Thimble Shoals Channel. We conducted small boat operations to return the ATG Riders to shore and were most grateful for their services.

12 August, Wednesday: SESEF Range & Helo Ops. We got underway to run the Shipboard Electronic Systems Evaluation Facility (SESEF) Range which consists of driving in circles offshore to ensure that our Tactical Air Navigation (TACAN) equipment work as designed so we can land helicopters. We later renewed our capability to conduct helicopter operations with Aviation Training Center (ATC) Mobile HH-65C which also tested out their new navigation system, which was good multi-tasking with ATG Mobile.

<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/atcmobil/>

http://www.rockwellcollins.com/ecat/gs/AN_ARN-153V.html

13 August, Thursday: Swing Ship. To explain the simple, yet very important magnetic compass procedure, I've included a link that provides you with more information than you'd ever want to know. The short explanation is that we swung ship to shake off the bad magnetism habits after been in a yard on a constant heading for 100 days. However, I offer that the link is most worthy for a quick glance considering that the reference it comes from was written during the Revolutionary period by one of the United States maritime heroes and pioneers, Nathaniel Bowditch. I thought it appropriate to share with fellow Guardians. Captain Bowditch was a native of Boston's North Shore and hailed from Salem, Massachusetts. After we completed Swinging Ship, we moored up at the Quay Wall at NAB Little Creek to prepare for our Ammunition Onload with briefs, safety walk throughs, and ammunition handler training.

www.irbs.com/bowditch/pdf/chapt06.pdf

14 August, Friday: Safely and efficiently conducted a full 76MM (Big Gun on SENECA's bow) and SRBOC (Super Rapid Blooming Chaff) onload. After the ammunition was onloaded, you all made my family and friends feel most welcome. I appreciate the special efforts by FSC and his team for putting out some great eats and for OSC and the CIC team for scrubbing Combat so I could take folks in there.

15 August, Saturday: Worked four SAR cases, see the article attached. Supporting fellow Guardians from the Cutter SAILFISH, we repaired a hole in the hull of the Fishing Vessel BLUE DIAMOND with 3 souls on board yesterday afternoon. BZ ~ Well Done to our shipmates DC1, DC2, and MK2 provided a strong Rescue and Assistance (R&A) response. As darkness fell, we took the Sports Fisher TUNACIOUS (yes, they like to fish for tuna) with 4 souls on board in tow after they struck a whale and broke both of TUNACIOUS' shafts and rudders. The 4 Long Islanders spent the night on board SENECA vice on a 29 foot fishing boat; they were most grateful and welcomed by you all. Thank you for your hospitality; all the small things do matter to our fellow citizens and others that we rescue from the sea. HS1 (Doc) got into action too with a small boat ride to check on some minor injuries of the Cutter SAILFISH's crew.

16 August, Sunday: We released the tow of TUNACIOUS this morning south of Shinnecock Bay on Long Island. We then transferred the four overnight citizen guests to TUNACIOUS, and the Sea Tow Shinnecock boat took them in tow back to a safe harbor for further repairs and to see their grateful families.

17 August, Monday: Safely moored SENECA at USCG Base Pier 3B in the North End on a gorgeous day.

Please be safe and make good choices this inport while on liberty and leave and while driving and finding entertainment. We'll do some good Limited Team Training (LTT) with some underway days in September for LTT and to test our MDE Governors. I look forward to going back to sea with you all in November.

For new shipmates: If you would like your family and friends to receive this periodic eNewsletter, please send me their emails and I will add them to the distribution list.

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/>

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

CDR Wm. J. "Willy" Wolter
Cutter SENECA (WMEC 906)
Inport, preparing to get underway.