

SENECA eNewsletter – 17 – 31 OCT 08

Good day, shipmates.

Here is the next installment of the SENECA saga. As always, I will consider input; just try me.

Friday-Sunday, 17-19 October: Portland, ME portcall for two days. Underway in the afternoon, however, the weather recommended another course of action and we returned to anchor in Portland, ME harbor. The portcall was two days of crisp, classic New England fall weather. The colors were brilliant and inspiring as we went around town and pulled in and out of port.

Monday-Thursday, 20-23 October: Maritime Security Cutter (MSC) Operations for USCG Sector Northern New England. We shifted our immediate boss to work for the northern most Coast Guard Sector on the East Coast to do some near shore maritime security operations. However, Mother Nature had other ideas for us this week. My team got creative and we were able to conduct multiple boardings while at anchor in Casco Bay while exercising the anchors on multiple occasions.

We had more shipmates completing their qualifications and passing their oral boards with ANAV becoming an Inport Officer of the Deck (I/P OOD), C3IO qualifying as a Maritime Law Enforcement Boarding Officer (MLE BO), MK2 meeting the dynamic duo requirements of a Small Boat Engineer for both the CBL and the CB-OTH, FS3 passing his Basic Damage Control PQS, and MK3 completing his Advanced Damage Control PQS.

Decoding: CBL = cutter boat large
 CB-OTH - cutter boat over-the-horizon
 PQS = professional qualification system

Friday, 24 October: Transited Cape Cod Canal. It was another bright sunny day; however, this time we had some traffic to contend with as we safely passed a tug pushing a loaded gasoline barge and a lightly loaded oil tanker in the canal. It gets a bit cozy but our Army Corps maintains a nice, deep canal right up to 10 yards off the bank, even though I didn't go that close.

Saturday - Tuesday, 25-28 October: Portcall in Newport, RI for three days. Due to another operation, SENECA's boss, D1, directed that we cancel the portcall to St. John, New Brunswick (not to be confused with St. Johns, Newfoundland). The crew was looking forward to Halloween in this Canadian town; however, we got to spend some time near home while most enjoyed Newport, RI again. While SENECA was preparing to get underway from Naval Station Newport, D1 offered me the opportunity to remain moored or go to anchor while a major storm blew through New England. As a prudent mariner, I jumped at the chance to remain moored; however, we were prepared to get underway for Search and Rescue (SAR) if needed ... see tomorrow's entry.

Wednesday, 29 October: 0311Q got underway for SAR. While in a Bravo 2 status (B2 = get underway within two hours of notification), SENECA was tasked by D1 to get underway from Newport, RI for urgent SAR involving the 44 ft Sailing Vessel (S/V) FREE FALL with 2 people on board (POB) and 1 person in the water (PIW) 105 nautical miles (NM) east of Atlantic City, NJ. It was a dark and stormy night with the wind blowing 30 knots off the dock; however, the most challenging unmooring evolution was adroitly executed by my Executive Officer as the Conning Officer with the assistance of our powerful main diesel engines (thanks Engineers) and excellent line handling (Team Deck Force). The S/V was taking on water and the PIW was injured. A Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City (ASAC) HH65C Dauphin helicopter was on scene with the S/V along with a HU25 Falcon jet orbiting. There was a hoist problem with the HH65C which scramble another ASAC HH65C and an HH60J from Air Station Cape Cod. By the time all was said and done, there were 9 Coast Guard assets involved in the rescue: 2 HH65Cs, 1 HH60J, HU25, C130, CGC NORTHLAND (sister cutter of SENECA), CGC MAKO (patrol boat), and CGC SENECA. When ETAs were worked up SENECA was the closest so we were ordered to continue to proceed. The rescue was partially successful with 2 POB recovered from the S/V and one deceased person; all were recovered by the ASAC HH60J. At 0830Q 29 October 2008 with the people and body recovered, SENECA was released from the case to continue our patrol. The sea is a dangerous place, however, I am proud to be the captain of

a crew that answered the call and was prepared to render assistance in dangerous seas. In the days following, all the units involved in the SAR case received Bravo Zulu (BZ = well done) messages from both the District Five and the Atlantic Area Commander. After consuming a bunch of my crew's readiness by an early morning underway evolution and pounding through some heavy seas, I decided to do some Crew Endurance Management (CEM) by anchoring by late afternoon in Narragansett Bay's West Entrance just south of the Route 138 Bridge, i.e. to get some rest.

USCG Air Station Atlantic City (HH65C): <http://www.uscg.mil/d5/airstaAtlanticCity/>

USCG Air Station Elizabeth City (C130): <http://www.uscg.mil/d5/airstaElizabethCity/default.asp>

USCG Air Station Cape Cod (HH60J): <http://www.uscg.mil/d1/airstaCapeCod/>

USCGC NORTHLAND (WMEC 904): <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/cgcNorthland/default.asp>

USCGC MAKO (WPB 87303): no public web site, but IBIS is a sister cutter

<http://www.uscg.mil/d5/cgcIbis/default.asp>

Thursday, 30 October: After a good 24 hours of rest, SENECA got underway and resumed patrol of D1 area of responsibility (AOR).

Friday, 31 October: Boarding and Halloween. Before the scary frivolities, SENECA enforced all applicable Federal Laws and Regulations on a fishing vessel out of Sandwich, MA targeting lobsters. A well attended Halloween Bingo Party was hosted by the enthusiastic Morale Committee with MPA on the mic calling out Bingo. There were many winners who received cool prizes. There were also some cool costumes and one very scary one worn by OSC, but he'll have to show you the pictures. The hands down winners of the costume contest were ETC and MKC who teamed up to come as Willy Wonka and an Oompa Lumpa. They were very cool, but I'll let them tell you who was who. I do have pictures. Good clean fun was had by all. I give a big shout out to all the shipmates who made it happen.

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/>

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

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

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