

SENECA eNewsletter – 16 – 31 March 2009

Good day, shipmates.

It is good to be underway again. Again, thank you for a great February and March inport which saw us complete some extensive work items, including: the overhaul of the #1 Main Diesel Engine (MDE) in record time with our Mission Support teammates from Naval Engineering Support Unit Boston (thank you NESU Shipmates); the change out of the Gun Control Panel (GCP) with the help of our shipmates at Weapons Augmentation Team (WAT) Boston; and the restoration of our Operations Lounge by Boston Industrial.

Monday, 16 March to Wednesday, 19 March: MDE Testing in Buzzards Bay. SEN got underway on time to test that the overhaul of #1 MDE was good to go and follow up with other engine tests to clear Casualty Reports (CASREPs). I decided to take us through the Cape Cod Canal (CCC) because of a threatening Low Pressure system offshore that had the potential to disrupt our Engineer Officer's (EO's) MDE testing. We conducted numerous tests with MLCA(vad) and NESU MAT personnel onboard; however, we were unable to complete the testing and achieve a Full Power Trial because of #2 MDE's high crankcase pressure and high exhaust back pressure, which limit full power. We returned to our homeport of Boston on Wednesday with a lot of work to do to enable SENECA to attempt to test our MDEs again.

Wednesday we were met at the pier by our Mission Support partners (MLCA(vad), NESU, WAT, MAT, Industrial) and crafted a way ahead to attack our issues with #2 MDE. It would be a major and impressive team effort.

Friday, 20 March to Sunday, 22 March: This is what I sent to my boss trying to capture the level of effort and teamwork that our engineering shipmates and Mission Support partners completed in 48 hours working two shifts.

" SEN/NESU/MAT/MLCA(vad) personnel will replace #2 MDE turbocharger while, on a not to interfere bases, replacing all 18 #2 MDE cylinder heads (high oil use; 14 of 18 heads leak oil, failed since overhaul last summer) and finishing #1 MDE alignment from DESA data. I am impressed by and proud of the Guardians in SEN's Main Space (20-30 depending on when you count), and I am most proud of the diversity of the people, gender and languages (music too) that make up the Coast Guard Team that is repairing and aligning SEN's BMDE(s). "

You accomplished all that was planned in a very short time frame; very impressive shipmates; thank you. I ask you to not be discouraged with the lack of desired results (full power trial). Troubleshooting a complex system like our MDEs sometimes takes time as the whole team (SEN/NESU/MAT/MLCA(vad)/ELC/CG Yard) learns what's not working as designed, how to repair it, how to identify it in the future, and how to fix it quicker in the future.

Monday, 23 March: Underway, #2 MDE Testing, Storm Avoidance. Safely underway from Pier 2B with the assistance of the Tug Freedom and pilot as SENECA needed assurance from the tug that our bow would not blow down on SPENCER in the 15 knot winds, which is definitely worth the \$1,200 cost of the tug and pilot. Unfortunately, all of the work over the weekend did not correct the issues with our #2 MDE. We also avoided the strong storm with northerly winds by running a trackline south of Cape Ann, Massachusetts.

Tuesday, 24 March and Wednesday, 25 March: Patrolled south of Cape Ann for storm avoidance while continuing with tests of #2 MDE. We also saw a few Humpback Whales.

Wednesday, 25 March: Patrolled east of Cap Cod and conducted an Integrated Training Team (ITT) Drill, which is a lot of drills rolled into one period. We were unable to do boardings due to the sea state.

Thursday, 26 March: Boardings, PAX XFER, Right Whales, DLQs. We enforced Living Marine Resource (LMR) regulations by boarding the Fishing Vessels. Using our small boat, we transferred (XFER) some passengers (PAX) ashore and got some shipmates back onboard. To wrap up the busy day, CG Air Station Cape Cod HH60J Jayhawk 6004 conducted a few deck landing qualifications (DLQs) with us. And, as it's the season in Cape Cod Bay, we saw some more Right Whales.

Friday, 27 March: On patrol. Lots of fog which cancelled our .50 caliber (50 cal) machine gunnery exercise. No boardings due to sea state.

Saturday, 28 March: Boardings and Gunnery Exercise. On a nice calm morning, SENECA boarding teams inspected the F/Vs. One F/V had some engine trouble which disabled it. Two of our engineers gave it a look see -- but the repairs required other tools or a drydock. With the weather nice for the next 24 hours, multiple fishing vessels in the immediate area, a communications schedule with Sector Northern New England, and a fishing vessel committed to tow him in, we left the F/V disabled 70 nautical miles east of Cape Ann. We do not tow people unless they are in immediate danger. The next morning, our CIC confirmed with Sector NNE that the F/V made it safely to port that morning.

We were also able to get in almost half of our scheduled Gunnery Exercise in the afternoon until the fog socked us in -- you need to be able to see where you're shooting, even way out at sea. Connecticut moved on to the Final Four; I'm still alive in the Morale Pool.

Sunday, 29 March: Returning shipmates and storm avoidance. Steamed into Cape Cod Bay to recover four shipmates from various temporary assignments, esp. since Cuttermen are to be on their cutters and cutters are meant to be at sea. We also put ashore a couple of shipmates for medical attention.

Peering through the fog, one of our lookouts saw pods of Right Whales for most of the morning, whereby SENECA's Deck Officers slowed her speed and or stopped to ensure these leviathans did not hit us. There are less than 300 Right Whales in the world and we saw about 2% of them today (6-8); almost like seeing a Snow Leopard in the Himalayas. I saw a pod of 4 myself; they are very distinctive and it looked just like our NOAA provided Whale Training video.

http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/species/mammals/cetaceans/rightwhale_northatlantic.htm

<http://animals.nationalgeographic.com/animals/mammals/right-whale.html>

Monday, 30 March: Anchored in Cape Cod Bay for storm avoidance; underway late after noon to continue patrolling. With the strong Low passing through New England, we took shelter from the storm. It was good to call home - OPSEC considered - though I'm pretty sure I heard the blow of a Right Whale close aboard the port bow and off the starboard bow while I was on the phone with my wife on the foc'sle. We saw our sister cutter and previous temporary home, TAHOMA, underway in the Bay conducting helicopter operations with CG Air Station Cape Cod.

Tuesday, 31 March: Drills. Clear skies are great for boardings, but confused six-foot seas are not; so we didn't. However, there is always stuff to do on a cutter. Today was Basic Engineering Casualty Control Exercises (BECCEs), workday afternoon, and a drill.

Decoding the terms:

CIC = Combat Information Center

OPSEC = operational security

If you have questions on other terms/acronyms, please ask; I'm happy to decode and educate.

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)

~ Underway; patrolling our East Coast ~

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If you received this in error, I apologize for filling your In Box.
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***** personal favor *****

Please watch this. I would consider it a personal favor, and you would honor my friend and his family ... a great Coastie, Guardian and shipmate ... by watching this piece (3 min) and very well done by our Coast Guard Public Affairs staff.

Please keep his wife, Carolyn, and their son and daughter in your thoughts and prayers.

http://cgvi.uscg.mil/media/main.php?g2_itemId=479599

I am very proud of my service for the manner and methods for which they honored my friend and his family.