

USCGC MELLON Commanding Officer's
SOUTHPAT (Southern Patrol) Newsletter
May 2011

Greetings from the high seas! Since my last newsletter in August 2010, MELLON underwent an extensive maintenance period and now we are 1/3 complete with our current South Patrol. We accomplished an extraordinary amount of training to work up to proficiency after 6 months inport. We are now engaged in the counternarcotics mission in the Eastern Pacific. Before we bring you up to speed on this mission, allow me to review our activities that got us here.

MELLON sailed to the Fairhaven Shipyard in Bellingham, WA in September 2010 for extended dry dock availability. The crew worked tirelessly alongside contractors to make \$4M in repairs and improvements stem to stern. The cutter is in excellent condition and it shows during the current intense operational tempo. By December 2010, MELLON returned to Seattle only to enter an unscheduled dockside maintenance period to address a problem with the main reduction gear discovered while in drydock. This project took nearly 3 months. While it was going on, we took the opportunity to bring forward a great deal of planned work, including replacement of obsolete food cold storage systems and upgrades of 3 berthing areas.



Left: MELLON on the blocks at Fairhaven Shipyard, Bellingham, WA.
Right: CWO Devin Scroggins standing on the drydock floor posing with the starboard propeller.



In late March MELLON got underway for three days of “shakedown” to test propulsion and auxiliary equipment and to conduct basic crew training.



Right: BM2 Dillon Smith is ready for patrol. **Left:** OS2 Steven Ross unloads food stores in homeport.

Finally in early April, it was time to start heading south! MELLON made a brief stop to onload ammunition. Due to an approaching weather system that was causing rough seas, MELLON hustled out of the Straits of Juan de Fuca and headed south as quickly as possible to avoid the worst of it.

During the first leg of the trip, we honed our skills with the help of USCG and US Navy ship riders from Afloat Training Group San Diego. MELLON ran numerous damage control, machinery casualty control and navigation drills and by the time we reached San Diego 5 days later we attained basic proficiency and deemed ready for patrol.

An overnight stay in San Diego allowed us to refuel, resupply and correct equipment casualties experienced on the way down. The sunny, warm weather was welcome after rainy springtime Seattle. The crew enjoyed one night of liberty to explore downtown Gas Lamp District and relax for a few hours after their hard work.

Underway from San Diego we immediately began ship-helicopter operations training with Air Station Los Angeles/Long Beach. A Coast Guard HH-65 helicopter conducted several landings and launches, allowing the crew to complete qualifications and retain proficiencies in advance of receiving our own helo later in the patrol.

MELLON's small boat crew escorting the ship through San Diego harbor.



Left: SN Josephine Leugers at special sea detail. **Right:** IT3 Josiah Williamson and EM2 Michael Searles are happy to be in San Diego.



Two weeks and 3,000 miles later we arrived at our first patrol port call was Balboa, Panama. It was Easter weekend, strictly observed in Panama with no alcohol sales and entertainment venues closed. However, the crew enjoyed a number of tours, including golfing, fishing, snorkeling, and a trip to the spa. Also in Panama, we embarked a Coast Guard Helicopter Interdiction Tactical Squadron (HITRON) team and an MH-65 helicopter. With the team and helo embarked, MELLON departed Panama to conduct more training and flight operations. We now had all the tools for a successful counterdrug mission.



Left: The view from anchorage on the Pacific side of the Panama Canal. That's the capitol, Panama City, in the background.



Above: The gang showing off their “bass thumbs” after a day of fishing on Lake Gatun, Panama.

Below: A nice catch of Peacock Bass. We had them for lunch about an hour later.



Before long, MELLON was in the action. All of the training and preparation paid off as we disrupted drug smuggling activity and prevented hundreds of kilograms of cocaine from reaching the streets of the United States. MELLON still has a ways to go and work to do on this patrol, but look forward to returning home to our families.

One item to put on your calendars is a Dependent’s Cruise, tentatively scheduled for July 2 in Everett, WA. Look for more details on this event from Mrs. Andrea Pawlowski, our Ombudsman, and in the next Newsletter.

*******BRAVO ZULU!!!*******

These crew members received special recognition in April:

MK3 Castro was selected as the Sailor of the Quarter and awarded a well deserved **Letter of Commendation**.

ET3 Defeo received the Coast Guard **Good Conduct** award.

The following crewmembers received the **Coast Guard Sea Service Ribbon**: MK1 Simpson (four years of sea service), SN Stewart (one year), SN Malhiot (one year), FSCS Paige (ten years), BMC Klein (seven years), IT1 Chirico (four years), OS1 Mansfield (one year).

*******WELCOME ABOARD!!!*******

The following crewmembers joined MELLON temporarily for the patrol: LCDR Hollinger, LT Daigle, ET1 Sly, AMT1 Gardner, AET3Trujillo, AMT3 Yates, all from HITRON and BM3 Denehy from the Polar Star.

*******A SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS*******

May 6th marked **Military Spouse Appreciation Day** and May 8th was **Mothers Day**. These occasions remind us that the service members aren't the only ones who make sacrifices for the good of their country. Our families also make sacrifices. Our families support the mission at home while our crewmembers are doing the mission at sea. Without their support and love, our jobs would be much more difficult. We miss you and look forward to seeing you when the mission is done.

That concludes this edition of the MELLON newsletter. Thank you again to our families and friends who continue to support us from shore.

Sincerely,

Dave Klipp, Captain
Commanding Officer

Questions or suggestions about items in this newsletter? Please write me at David.S.Klipp@uscg.mil