



NAVIGATOR

The U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Magazine | 2012 Annual



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NAVIGATOR

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UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY
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on the cover:

A Coast Guard Auxiliary vessel owned by Scott Handschuch and coxswained by Tom Evans, with crew, Marcus Witkowski, Stephen Peters, Richard Flinn and James Geannakakes, serves as a public affairs boat for the retired Space Shuttle *Enterprise*. "We picked up the media in lower Manhattan and tracked the shuttle from the Statue of Liberty to the *Intrepid* at midtown," said Handschuch. "The *Enterprise* is a beautiful part of history. It will make a great centerpiece for the *Intrepid* Air & Space Museum." The Coast Guard worked closely with its port partners to ensure the *Enterprise* reached its new home at the museum safely. The crew are all members of Flotilla 22, Sandy Hook, New Jersey.

US Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 2nd Class Erik Swanson.



Three Auxiliary vessels and shore-side support provided a safety escort for a Santa Cruz California charity fundraiser.

Photo by Dick Reizner, Flotilla 48, Almaden, California.

From the Bridge ...



My two-year journey as your national commodore (NACO) has come to an end—a journey filled with challenges and rewards.

As I began my term in 2010, the challenge was to steady the course, while trimming the sails. The budget has been a concern, not only for the Coast Guard, but also our nation. Both faced economic needs to develop a workable budget. Belt-tightening affects all our membership. I assure you, the leadership is mindful of how budget cuts affect our members. The national leadership has worked tirelessly to establish a realistic budget for 2012—2014. Realizing the need to trim the sails in the national staff, we reduced to a more manageable number.

Much of the success of the Auxiliary over the past two years is due to the accomplishments of you—the membership. The dedication of Auxiliarists to support our missions and the Gold Side remains the reason that we are a number one volunteer organization.

We should take pride in the fact that on a two-year average, members have donated approximately 4,300,000 mis-

sion hours and saved an average of 334 lives. Our mission to save lives through the vessel safety check program is strong and growing. The two-year average of safety checks has grown to approximately 94,500 per year.

The education of recreational boaters remains a primary goal of the Auxiliary. The need to improve our internal and external educational products and delivery methods has been a focal point for the past two years. A committee, under the chairmanship of Commodore Tom Venezia, worked diligently and completed its research with a report in May to the national executive committee. The final report with the path forward was presented at the national Auxiliary conference.

It is critical that we stay focused on providing the public with the best, most modern course materials. Additionally, it is crucial that our instructors remain of the highest quality. Our delivery methods must be in tune with the digital age for us to remain the best of the best in the educating of recreational boaters.

As I pass the torch on to the NACO-elect, I am thankful for the support of the Coast Guard leadership, the Auxiliary leaders, and our 30,000-plus members.

I look forward to the next two years as immediate past national commodore and remain dedicated to serving the Auxiliary.

Very respectfully,
JAMES E. VASS, JR.
National Commodore
Flotilla 7-10, Victoria, Texas



Striving For Proficiency

Admiral Bob Papp assesses the course of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Interview by Christopher Todd, Flotilla 6-11, Miami, Florida, deputy director, department of government and public affairs

In the Fall 2010 issue of *NAVIGATOR*, we had the pleasure of interviewing Admiral Bob Papp, the 24th and current commandant of the Coast Guard. Papp provided his perspective on a number of issues important to the Auxiliary. At the 2012 national conference, we were fortunate again to have the opportunity to speak with him. The following is an edited transcript:

NAVIGATOR: You have served as commandant of the Coast Guard for more than two years. How has the Coast Guard

Auxiliary performed during your tenure?

PAPP: It's really hard to believe that two years have flown by since the last time I was with the Auxiliary at its national conference. It's been great. This last week we've had a chance to review a number of efforts and I was very pleased to see all the progress that's accumulated. A lot of that is due to work behind the scenes. The Coast Guard Auxiliary is an integral member of our Coast Guard family. We couldn't get the job done without you.

NAVIGATOR: Is the Auxiliary presently aligned effectively with the organizational structure of the Coast Guard?

PAPP: I think the Coast Guard Auxiliary is aligned perfectly. The Auxiliary leaned forward, actually starting about four or five years ago when we started the reorganization of the Coast Guard, and you moved out very smartly in terms of reorganization. I felt a little badly two years ago when I asked you to change that organization slightly. It was really my strong belief that

we needed to retain Atlantic Area and Pacific Area, because those areas are so vast and have so many complex concerns, I just didn't think we could leave it under one operational commander.

NAVIGATOR: In 2010, you clearly identified recreational boating safety as the most important mission for the Coast Guard Auxiliary and expressed some concern that the Auxiliary might be taking on too many new missions—such as incident command systems—which deviates from our core mission. What is your present assessment of this landscape?

PAPP: Maybe I was concerned that the Auxiliary was taking on too much, but if I was at the time, I'm not now. I think there is a lot of room within this family for people with various talents to go above and beyond just recreational boating safety. What I don't want to do is throw the rudder over every couple of years and get the Auxiliary steering off in one direction because the Auxiliary is a pretty big ship, and it's hard to gain momentum, and it's hard to make a big course change. How do we position ourselves? What are the long-lasting, enduring qualities of the Auxiliary? Why was the Auxiliary created in the first place? What do they do best? What void do they fill that the active duty can't? These questions are paramount. The thing that always comes to mind for me regarding the Auxiliary is teaching, exhibiting, validating, performing boating safety duties to help the public, and then to augment, whether it's regattas, security zones, or any other way that the Auxiliary can help the Coast Guard. And let's focus on becoming very, very good at doing that. I'm talking a lot about proficiency lately—making sure that we're the absolute best at what we're called upon to do, and not asking us to do too many things that perhaps dilute the experience.

NAVIGATOR: During our last conversation, you identified engaging and recruiting America's youth as a priority for the Coast Guard Auxiliary. We now have implemented the Coast Guard Auxiliary University Program. Are we doing enough to recruit new, younger members to the organization?

PAPP: I think you are off to a good start. I see a lot of young faces walking around, and a lot of them I recognize because I have had a chance to chat with the younger Auxiliarists that are joining. They're excited, they're enthusiastic, they're reaching out, and they're growing their groups. I'm pleased with the start that we've made, we just have to keep the throttle down and push ahead.

NAVIGATOR: Where does the focus of the Coast Guard Auxiliary need to be over the next two years?

PAPP: We need to focus on doing the absolute best at our key missions and ensuring that we remain extremely proficient. We're doing that throughout the entire Coast Guard right now. After the attacks of September 11, we tried to do a lot of things, but we weren't necessarily doing all of them well. Focusing on teaching boating safety and helping the Auxiliary keep their facilities running—the boats and the aircraft we need to augment the active duty will be priorities. That is where the emphasis should be over the next two years.

NAVIGATOR: Do you have any additional closing thoughts you would like to share?

PAPP: I would just like to share with the Coast Guard Auxiliary how absolutely happy they make me. I have the great privilege and honor, first of all, to be the senior leader of the entire Coast Guard. It's a service that I've devoted my entire adult life to, and I've done that because I love it. If you love the Coast Guard it's because you love Coast Guard people, whether it's the active duty, the Reserve, the civilians, or the Auxiliary. Because Auxiliarists are just such unique individuals, because they volunteer their time, because they're patriotic and enthusiastic, it just never fails to bring a smile to my face. It's a smile that is not only happiness, but also of pride, and because it is such an honor for me to be able to work with all of you.

NAVIGATOR: As commandant, you asked the Coast Guard to focus on four principals: "steady the service," "honor our profession," "strengthen our partnerships,"

and "respect our shipmates." What impact have you seen from this initiative?

PAPP: We have seen significant results. The original thought of reorganizing the Coast Guard was based, in part, on increasing budgets. I knew coming in as commandant that I wasn't going to be facing increasing budgets. We had been expending so much institutional energy, including the institutional energy of the Auxiliary, in just reorganizing and realigning the service and the Auxiliary, we needed to steady the service.

My wife Linda and I have championed what we call the "Year of the Coast Guard Family" under respecting our shipmates. "Year" may not have been the best choice of words because it implied the initiative would only last one year. We've signed off on a number of option years to keep the program going and we're moving ahead with housing, child care, ombudsman programs, and a few other things to try to help our folks.

Honoring our profession; I'm definitely interested in Coast Guard history—what makes us who we are? The services and agencies that have come together over the years to form what is today's Coast Guard. We started a couple of initiatives there. Hopefully within the next couple of months I'll be able to announce that we're going to break ground on a national Coast Guard museum in New London, Connecticut. We have authority to do that and I am determined to make sure we get that started before I leave. You know there is probably going to be a Coast Guard Auxiliary wing in that museum as well. It's going to be a really classy museum. We're just down to the point of choosing between two parcels of land of where it's going to be built. More to come on that soon.

Finally, strengthening our partnerships—our partnerships within the Department [DHS], with Customs and Border Protection, with air, marine, ICE, and others, but also across the river with the Department of Defense, and at the state, local, and federal levels, wherever Coast Guard people operate.

We've seen good progress on all four of those efforts.



Fellowship! It's the glue that holds...

Fellowship, the glue that holds the Four Cornerstones together. Noel Brumfield, Flotilla 42, Covington, Louisiana, and Lee Tallas, Flotilla 7-11, Flour Bluff, Texas, celebrate a good day on the water.

Photo by Judy Darby, Flotilla 42, Covington, Louisiana.