

ON SCENE

The Journal of U. S. Coast Guard Search and Rescue



**This Issue:
SAR Gadgets**

Summer 2009

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The last issue published was the Summer 2008 edition.



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On Scene will be posted at: <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg534/> and On Scene articles will also be posted on CG-534's blog at: <http://www.uscgsar-onscene.blogspot.com>.

A Note from the Chief of Search and Rescue...

Captain Davide McBride
Chief, Office of Search and Rescue



If you are reading this note, then congratulations! You have successfully navigated your way to our website's electronic posting of On Scene at <http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg534/OnScene.asp> or to On Scene's new blog at <http://www.uscgsar-onscene.blogspot.com>. If you are still searching for your printed edition in the mail, call off the search! As with many other paper media outlets we have shifted our distribution methods to eliminate escalating printing costs and capitalize on advances in technology and social media. Our hope is to continue to provide the same quality of information found in previous editions in a more timely and accessible manner.

This edition focuses on the effectiveness of today's SAR tools. The Coast Guard is working on several initiatives to improve the use of technology, not just at home but across the globe. This year at the International Maritime Organization's Communications and Search and Rescue Work Group meeting in London, our primary focus was on educating other countries on our recent successes with using 406 MZ direction finding and highlighting the potential SAR applications of Automated Identification Systems (AIS) technology. Particularly discussed was the incorporation of that technology into future Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon's (EPIRB) to capitalize on the existing AIS technology already being carried by thousands of commercial vessels that participate in Amver. Most of these vessels do not have a means of locating an activated EPIRB other than the seaman's eye; this new technology would allow them to utilize their own AIS equipment to detect and locate an activated EPIRB. Additionally, several of our units are prototyping a backpack 406 DF device to improve land-based searching for EPIRBs, ELTs & PLBs. Also in the world of SAR, this summer, we will begin to provide our Search and Rescue Optimization (SAROPS) software and training internationally. Mexico and Malta will be the first countries to receive SAROPS.

We have been busy working with our Interagency SAR partners. The National Search & Rescue Committee (NSARC) promulgated the Catastrophic Incident SAR (CISAR) Addendum last summer and is currently working on this year's updates. In the near future we plan to publish an Inland SAR and Legal Addendum to the National SAR Plan. I encourage everyone to visit our websites and review these new documents as they are released: (<http://www.uscg.mil/hq/cg5/cg534>).

As the Chief of the Office of Search and Rescue, I have had the opportunity to travel and meet a number of dedicated Search and Rescue professionals and heroes that have touched the lives of so many. Their stories are constant reminders of the sacrifices and risks we take on "So That Others May Live"!

Semper Paratus

From the Director of Response Policy...

Rear Admiral Joseph Castillo



Over the years, the Coast Guard has seen a great deal of change. Technology continues to provide us with tools that help us to do our job better. This edition of *On Scene* sheds light on some of these 'SAR tools' and shows how they have helped us to become a more efficient and effective Coast Guard.

From amazing rescue stories where not even a compass was used - such as the *PENDLETON* (included in this issue) - to modern day rescues that involve electronic position finding gadgets - such as EPIRBs - the Coast Guard has been there, saving lives. We have learned to embrace and apply technology to our legacy mission.

Not only do we use our own technology - we share it as well. Currently we are working with countries such as Mexico and Malta to provide them access to our search planning tool (SAROPS) which will give them the most up-to-date tools to perform SAR within their own waters.

Another area in which we have made major progress is Amver, a volunteer group of commercial mariners. With the on-going modernization of Amver's computer application, we will drastically improved the use of merchant vessels in search and rescue.

The Coast Guard, and its legacy mission of search and rescue, is constantly evolving. With the development and phase out of new technologies - such as 121.5MHz beacons - we are an ever changing service. One thing is for certain, that 'SAR tools' allow us to change for the better and continually out-perform our past.

Be safe, get the job done, and have fun!

Semper Paratus!

AFRAS 2008 Awards Ceremony Gold, Silver, and Amver Awardees

Every year AFRAS recognizes a person or vessel that demonstrates selfless courage and heroism during a rescue of life at sea. The Gold award is given to an enlisted Coast Guard member, the Silver award is given to an Auxiliarist, and the Amver award is given to a vessel participating in Automated Merchant Vessel Reporting (Amver). The Gold and Silver medals are the highest search and rescue awards presented to a Coast Guard member by a civilian organization.

Gold Medal Award



While deployed as an Air Station Kodiak HH-65B aviation detachment onboard CGC MELLON, the crew was directed to launch by District 17 for a 406 EPIRB registered to the F/V ILLUSION located in the vicinity of Makushin Bay near Unalaska Island, Alaska. The CGC MELLON was moored at Dutch Harbor, Alaska, for a mid-patrol break, and the helicopter was parked inside a hangar at the local airport when they heard the distress call. Despite the island losing electrical power, the crew innovatively opened the hanger doors and quickly prepped the aircraft for departure. For the 0100 launch that morning, there was a low overcast ceiling at 200 feet and near-zero illumination. The winds were howling up to 30 knots with occasional gusts to 35 knots, moderate turbulence with rain and mist obscuring visibility to ¼ mile.

Shortly after locating a flashing light in Makushin Bay, a flare was observed. Arriving at the raft, AST1 Milam immediately prepared for deployment. The flight mechanic skillfully lowered him to the water within 10 yards of the raft. AST1 Milam disconnected from the hoist cable and swam toward the raft, frequently losing sight of the stricken mariners due to 10-15 foot swells. Climbing into the tossing raft, he found four drenched survivors without protective clothing, one of whom was severely hypothermic. AST1 Milam radioed to the helicopter and recommended that the basket be delivered as close to the raft as possible to minimize the survivors' exposure to the frigid sea. The crew quickly deployed the aircrew's personal survival suits to prevent the mariner's further advance of hypothermia. While disconnecting the suits from the hoist hook, two suits fell into the water and were rapidly drifting away. Without hesitation, AST1 Milam leapt into the rolling seas maintaining the hoist hook and two survival suits in one hand and retrieved the floating suits with the other. Clambering back aboard the

raft, he noticed that his dry suit was filling with arctic water. Despite the unsettling realization, AST1 Milam remained focused as he promptly assisted the hypothermic survivors into their anti-exposure garments.

With all of the survivors ready for hoisting, CG 6525 delivered the rescue basket to the raft. The first person entered the basket improperly. AST1 Milam swiftly coerced him into the proper position for recovery. As the flight mechanic hoisted the first recovery AST1 Milam swam back to the raft, which had drifted a considerable distance. With his legs going numb as he battled the onset of hypothermia, he signaled for an emergency pickup. Back onboard CG 6525, AST1 Milam discovered his motor functions were deteriorating from the cold water that had been leaking into his dry suit.



With fuel levels getting uncomfortably low and facing a headwind on the return trip to Dutch Harbor, the crew quickly discussed sending the basket down and having the survivors climb in it themselves. Due to the struggles with the first survivor, AST1 Milam suggested deploying again would be the safest, most expeditious method to recover the remaining survivors. The crew concurred, and the flight mechanic deployed AST1 Milam in the basket. The second survivor also entered the basket improperly. AST1 Milam aggressively repositioned the survivor, who quickly complied, and then signaled for pickup. He astutely briefed the next two survivors to remain calm and follow his instructions. The third survivor was hoisted without incident.

When the basket arrived for the final hoist, the remaining survivor jumped into the basket, knocking it from AST1 Milam's hands. As he swam toward the basket with the final survivor, a wave broke over them, causing the survivor to panic. As a result, the hoist cable inadvertently wrapped around the survivor's neck. (cont. on pg. 21)

Silver Medal Award

The award winners for the AFRAS silver award were members of the District Seventeen (D17) Auxiliary and Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary, participating in the annual D17 Auxiliary SAFE Boat Coxswain Academy in Homer, Alaska on 25 April, 2007. Canadian Auxiliarist Michael Cupit was attending this academy as part of an exchange program between D17 Auxiliary and the Pacific Canadian Coast Guard Auxiliary.



The crew was underway in Kachemak Bay on CG 275594 on patrol orders. They were conducting tow training with another vessel. At the same time, charter vessel HALIBUT ENDEAVOR, a 39-foot inspected vessel, was participating in a Homer Chamber of Commerce Halibut derby tagging event with 13 persons on board.

The weather on scene was 2-3 foot seas with a 10 knot wind. The HALIBUT ENDEAVOR had finished fishing and was headed back to the Homer Harbor when the deck hand reported that the stern was filling with water. The boat captain slowed to investigate and discovered the stern was awash. The captain decided the best course of action was to continue making way toward the nearest landfall, Seldovia. He told all passengers to put on life jackets and move to the bow of the boat. He contacted the Coast Guard at 1606 local time, gave his current position, and informed them he was taking on water.

The crew of CG 275594 had just completed their training in the vicinity of Homer Spit when they overheard HALIBUT ENDEAVOR's radio call. Due to the poor radio reception, the crew of CG275594 understood that there were only two persons on board. Crew members immediately secured the

aft deck by stowing all equipment; Coxswain Taylor took the con and headed toward the position given by HALIBUT ENDEAVOR; it was a 25 nautical mile transit. As soon as the CG 275594 cleared the Homer Spit, they encountered 3 foot seas and winds of 15-20 knots. The crew made preparations to pass a pump if needed.

As CG 275594 arrived on scene at 1636, they noted the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR was listing hard to port and sitting low in the stern. Many passengers could be seen on the bow. The vessel was making way at approximately 8-10 knots with black smoke emitting from both exhaust ports.

The crew of CG 275594 quickly stowed the pump and made ready to take the passengers off the vessel. Coxswain Taylor approached starboard to HALIBUT ENDEAVOR's port side. Once alongside, Coxswain Taylor shouted: "all passengers off now". Miller and Cupit positioned themselves on the foredeck and assisted each of the 11 passengers as they climbed over the rail of the sinking vessel and onto the bow of the CG 275594. Liebe took position on the stern to fender-off the vessel and keep watch on the vessel's stability. Liebe noticed the aft deck was awash and approximately two feet underwater. As the passengers were being pulled off the boat, Liebe saw the vessel roll toward the CG 275594. (cont. on pg. 21)



Amver Award



SHIP: C/S NORDNORGE

FLAG: Norway

DATE: 23 November 2007

LOCATION: 500 nautical miles south of Argentina near Antarctica

NUMBER RESCUED: 154

The United States Coast Guard Atlantic Area Rescue Coordination Center received a digital selective calling (DSC) HF alert that the Cruise Ship EXPLORER was taking on water in the vicinity of Antarctica. MRCC Ushuaia (Argentina) assumed SAR Mission Coordinator. The EXPLORER reportedly stuck an iceberg and was unable to control flooding. All passengers and crew, with the exception of 15 crewmen who remained on board the listing liner, safely abandoned ship into lifeboats.

Despite air temperatures of minus 5 degrees Celsius and water temperatures of 1 degree Celsius all 154 passengers and crew and were rescued by the Amver participating cruise ship NORDNORGE. The NORDNORGE's crew asked that passengers stay away from active lifeboats and requested that no pictures be taken of the rescued people.

The survivors were brought to the ship's seventh-floor observatory where the Captain ensured privacy for them. They were counted and examined by the NORDNORGE's medical staff. The Captain of the NORDNORGE asked his passengers for donations of clothes, since the rescued passengers had no change of clothes and were wet.

CGC BONITO to the Rescue

Written By: BM1 Kevin Stryker

When Mr. Cooley began his Sunday fishing trip, he had no idea what his son and their friends were getting themselves into.

Mr. Cooley departed out of Dauphin Island, Alabama for a fishing trip into the Gulf of Mexico on his 29 foot vessel named HOT PURSUIT; they were going bottom fishing for snapper and grouper. As he steamed out of the harbor, Mr. Cooley noticed one of his inspection plates back aft near the transom was missing. He noted it but continued on with his trip. The weather was clear and calm with seas of 1-2 feet out of the northeast.

The crew of the CGC BONITO was spending their morning and afternoon conducting fisheries boardings approximately 30 miles south of Pensacola in the Gulf of Mexico. Around 1500 they were diverted to a twin engine pleasure craft that had lost one engine and was limping in towards Mobile, Alabama. The duty officer at Sector Mobile wanted BONITO to start heading in that direction just in case. It was July in the Gulf of Mexico and the daily lightning and thunder squalls with heavy rain started around 1600 every afternoon. The Officer of the Deck (OOD) on BONITO's bridge was already tracking several squalls moving from east to west on the radar. Thirty minutes into BONITO's transit, the radar screen was covered in squalls.

BONITO was weaving around the passing squalls to make the best time possible. These common storms in the Gulf of Mexico in July and August have winds of 30-50 knots and seas of 6-8 feet with zero visibility in their center and 20-30 knot winds on the outside of their bands. The storms this afternoon were much bigger than usual. As BONITO headed west, their VHF-FM channel 16 radio was cluttered with people in trouble as these storms passed from the Gulfport Mississippi to Mobile Alabama. Around 1600 Sector Mobile directed BONITO to "stand down" because the vessel had fixed its other engine and was headed in. One hour later BONITO was directed to head to a position 17 NM south of Fort Morgan, Alabama, to the vessel HOT PURSUIT, which had since become disabled and was taking on water. A helo from Air Station New Orleans (AirSta NOLA) was also dispatched.

A good samaritan on vessel RED EYE was able to establish communications and retrieve a GPS position just before communications with HOT PURSUIT were lost. RED EYE was headed to this position with a twenty-minute estimated time of arrival (ETA). BONITO had a fifty-minute ETA with thunder and lightning along the way. Five minutes later, the vessel RED EYE reported having engine troubles and their ETA became one hour. AirSta NOLA's helicopter was also delayed due to the weather. BONITO made best possible speed towards HOT PURSUIT; sunset would be within twenty minutes after arriving on scene, which would make it very difficult to find five people in the water.

At 1820 BONITO arrived on scene with no vessel, people, or debris in sight. Ascertaining drift to be southeast, BONITO started searching. Sunset was approaching and numerous thunder storms were surrounding the area. Within ten minutes the lookout spotted a bow pulpit bobbing up and down in the water. It looked to be the bow of the HOT PURSUIT.



BONITO arrived on scene and verified it was a 29-foot pleasure craft with two outboards. There were no people or debris around the vessel. BONITO energized its lights and continued searching. Ten minutes passed before BONITO came upon debris from the vessel and launched its small boat. After launching the small boat, the lookout spotted a head bobbing up and down in the water. The bridge vectored the small boat in. The adult male was pulled onto the BONITO's small boat;

he verified there were five people on board the HOT PURSUIT. He told the coxswain he had been separated from the others when a squall came through the area bringing 3-5 foot swells. BONITO continued searching. Minutes later BONITO's small boat pulled two 13-year-old boys from the water. The crew of the small boat will never forget the looks on the faces of these two boys as they were brought over the side. One of the boys told the coxswain he did not see his dad. BONITO kept searching. Finally BONITO came across Mr. Cooley and his friend. Mr. Cooley was not wearing a lifejacket and had been struggling to stay afloat. BONITO's small boat pulled the last two individuals on board and transferred them to the cutter. (cont. on page 21)

SAR GADGET Saves Crew of Five

Storm Sinks “Pirate” Ship in the Bahamas

By: Scott Croft

ALEXANDRIA, VA, March 3, 2008 - A rented emergency rescue beacon from the BoatU.S. Foundation for Boating Safety and Good Samaritans aboard a local dive boat helped prevent the loss of five lives aboard a weather beaten “pirate” ship that took on water and sank Wednesday, February 27, near the Bahamas.

The TREASURE SEEKER, a 65-foot, diesel-powered pirate ship replica was being relocated from St. Petersburg, FL to a new business location in St. Thomas, USVI, when it experienced stormy sea conditions on the evening of February 26. A routine crew check early Wednesday morning found water rising in the bilge and after it was determined it could not be fixed, the TREASURE SEEKER’s captain activated their Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) which had been acquired through the BoatU.S. EPIRB Rental Program.

Unbeknownst to TREASURE SEEKER’s crew, the U.S. Coast Guard in Miami, FL received the EPIRB distress signal which includes GPS location information and immediately relayed the emergency call to local mariners in the Bahamas. The 104-foot dive boat S/V JULIET, which was departing Turks and Caicos at the time, heard the USCG call and

diverted 45 miles to the sinking boat’s location and safely removed all five persons from TREASURE SEEKER.

Soon afterward, with a USCG helicopter hovering on scene, the twin-masted excursion vessel disappeared below the waves. There was no time to salvage any of the crew’s personal possessions. The S/V JULIET then safely returned TREASURE SEEKER’s crew to Providenciales in the Turks and Caicos.

The captain of the “pirate” ship later commented that without the EPIRB from BoatU.S., the rescue most likely would not have been successful because the only other calls for help sent over the vessel’s VHF radio never received a response.

NOTE: The BoatU.S. Foundation EPIRB Rental Program is funded by the voluntary contributions of 650,000 BoatU.S. members. The \$750 EPIRBs can be rented from the Foundation for as little as \$40 a week, and are intended to fill the short-term safety need for occasional offshore passages. For more information, call 888-663-7472 or visit <http://www.BoatUS.com/foundation/epirb>



TREASURE SEEKER, a 65-foot, ‘pirate ship’

TAKING THE “SEARCH” OUT OF SEARCH AND RESCUE

‘EPIRB - A SAR Gadget’

By: LCDR Joseph Deer

Situation: You are on your vessel 200 miles out in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean cruising along when, all of a sudden, you find yourself in the middle of an at-sea emergency requiring assistance. You make a quick mayday call on VHF-FM Channel 16 for any vessels that may be within range, but do not receive a reply. You know you are out of cell phone and radio range from shore facilities and understand that the only way to get rescue assistance is to activate your modern 406 Megahertz (MHz) EPIRB.

Once activated, your modern EPIRB rapidly transmits four items: 1) a 5 watt 406 MHz pulse every 52 seconds; 2) the hexadecimal code (a “fingerprint” for your specific EPIRB); 3) if equipped, a GPS position; and 4) the 121.5 “homer” transmitted at a constant rate, at 25 milliwatts. (It is important to note that the 5 watt 406 MHz signal, although it only pulses every 52 seconds, is 200 times the strength of the 25 milliwatt 121.5 signal.) This stronger power output allows the 406 signal to penetrate common structures such as buildings, hulls of ships, or even a human body. You may ask why the 406 MHz signal is not constant and only transmits every 52 seconds. It is a function of battery life preservation; the EPIRB battery is required to last 48 hours, and if the stronger signal was constant, the battery life would be significantly reduced. These four items – the 406 MHz signal, hexadecimal code, GPS signal, and 121.5 MHz signal - are transmitted to two different types of satellites: GEO satellites approximately 22,000 miles above the earth’s surface and LEO satellites that are much closer and travel at the speed of the earth’s rotation. This data is transmitted from the satellites to Rescue Coordination Centers (RCC’s), and rescue resources, typically the U.S. Coast Guard, are activated.

Another important item to mention here is the importance of registering your EPIRB. If properly registered, the hexadecimal code for your EPIRB becomes part of a database that the RCC can quickly access to find out important information such as the size and style of your boat, survival equipment on board, contact names and phone numbers, and more. This will greatly assist the rescue personnel so they know what to

look for.

Once a Coast Guard asset is en-route, the newer 406 MHz signal comes in. Older-style aircraft direction finding equipment aimed at the 121.5 MHz signal; typically, the rescue resource would have to be within 5 miles of this weaker signal in order to detect it. The 121.5 signal is easily attenuated by structure, which sometimes complicates search efforts. In contrast, the modern 406 MHz signal is not easily attenuated and has been detected by as far away as 150 miles (from 25,000 feet) by aircraft and greatly increases the efficiency of rescue workers. The 121.5 signal is still important: once the rescue resource is within close proximity of the EPIRB, the constant 121.5 signal vectors the resource the last few miles. The USCG has had consistent positive results homing in on the 406 MHz signal and has located vessels in distress on multiple occasions when traditional means were not successful:

-11 Apr 07 S/V PARADOX case : after several non-406 equipped aircraft searches were completed and unable to locate the source of the signal, a 406-equipped C-130 from Clearwater was launched and went directly to the scene, resulting in two lives saved.

-20 Dec 07, an HU-25 out of Corpus Christi, TX launched, climbed to 25,000 feet and locked onto the 406 MHz signal from an unprecedented 150 MILES away!

-In a December SAR case, a 60-foot fishing vessel sank in the Gulf of Mexico, placing two fishermen in 60F water at night in 12-foot seas; fortunately, the EPIRB came out of its bracket, floated to the surface and started transmitting. After arriving on scene, the HU-25 quickly vectored in several Good Samaritan vessels which located the first survivor clinging to a life ring. An H-65 out of New Orleans was vectored to the scene and located the second survivor after being on scene a mere six minutes. Quickly locating the 406 EPIRB and survivors in 60F waters was critical to saving their lives.

IMPORTANT NOTE: satellites will no longer detect a 121.5 signal after 01 Feb 09, so if you experience an emergency and all you have is the older style 121.5 MHz EPIRB, only passing commercial airliners may notice. It is incumbent upon all to switch to the modern, superior 406 MHz technology. In the event of an emergency, the modern 406 MHz EPIRB will quickly and accurately make your position known.

'Digital Selective Calling' (DSC) a Rescue 21 'Gadget'

By: Rusty Gardner Edited by: Robin Harriff and Jodie Knox

This article was written as a project through Florida Community College, Jacksonville. Rusty Gardner was working with the Rescue 21 Program to produce this script which was broadcast on the radio in Jacksonville and through educational channels on television. Although On Scene is read by SAR folks who may already know about DSC and its importance, the people you deal with on a day-to-day basis may not be as informed. This article will educate you so that you can inform those who really need this information.

Hello! If you're a new boater or even if you've been boating awhile, you may have noticed the features found among today's available selection of marine radios seem a little overwhelming, and far too complicated! There is one feature, however, that strives to be as simple as possible and that's called DSC, or 'Digital Selective Calling'. Today, we're going to look at the proper use of the DSC/VHS radio, and how this feature could save your life!

First, what is Digital Selective Calling and what are its benefits? DSC is a digital transfer between radios versus voice transmission. This service allows mariners to instantly send an automatically formatted distress alert to the Coast Guard. DSC capability is part of the International Maritime Organization's Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) treaty for Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS). The Coast Guard's Rescue 21 system, currently being deployed in stages across the country, is allowing the Coast Guard to receive these digital transmissions. So, why is it necessary to use the DSC technology? In case of emergency when the 'distress' button has been pressed, DSC will relay vital information to the Coast Guard, such as the name and description of your boat, location (ONLY if connected to a GPS), date and time of distress, emergency contact information, and even the nature of distress (if it has been entered). This makes it possible to drastically reduce the period of time it takes the Coast Guard to reach you. It's simple to use. Even a first-time guest on your boat can signal for help in a crisis. But in order for the system to function properly, it is imperative

that your DSC is set up correctly. Today as we overview the DSC/VHF radio we'll take a look at the features, functionality, setup, components and learn how to test your DSC/VHF radio. For specific information, please refer to your radio and/or GPS users manual.

Here's How It Works: Let's say you're out on the water for a relaxing day of sightseeing, when an emergency occurs. It could be a fire, flood, or medical emergency. You need assistance and you need it fast! In order to summon help, turn to your DSC/VHF radio. On the front of the radio you will see a red "distress" button. Press and hold the button for about five seconds. Here's where DSC and Rescue 21 take over. Once you press the distress button, a digital signal is sent over Channel 70 to the Coast Guard, as well as other boats within range that have DSC/VHF radios. Your radio will continue to send the distress call until it is acknowledged. This message is fast one-third of a second, accurate, complete, and is automatically recorded. Once the signal is sent, it alerts the Coast Guard of a distress situation. This signal relays the location of your boat in longitude and latitude (ONLY if the DSC radio is connected to a GPS), as well as your personal contact information (and the information previously mentioned). The watchstander will acknowledge your message, and your radio will automatically switch to Channel 16 in order to allow you to communicate verbally with the Coast Guard. In addition, other vessels in the area will also be aware that you are in a crisis and will know your location.



In order to take full advantage of you DSC/VHS radio, you'll need five things:

1. *A DSC/VHF radio*
2. *An MMSI (Maritime Mobile Service Identity) number*
3. *A GPS or Loran C Receiver*
4. *A two-way connection to your GPS (NMEA 'in' and 'out')*
5. *Working knowledge of your DSC Radio*

Getting Started: There are lots of VHF radios on the market today for the recreational boater to choose from. In order to ensure that you get the type of radio that fits your needs, you must first understand the three classes of marine radio.

The most expensive is **Class A**. This type of DSC/VHF radio has two receivers, which means it can receive DSC signals while still transmitting and receiving. This is required on larger ships. **International Class D** has two receivers, and can receive DSC signals while receiving on another channel. However, it cannot receive DSC signals while transmitting. Lastly, **Class -1SC101 & US Class D** both have one receiver and cannot receive DSC signals while receiving on another channel. **It's recommended that recreational boaters use the International Class D radio.**

The GPS Receiver: When selecting or ensuring that your GPS is compatible with your DSC/VHF radio, you will need to verify that the GPS supports NMEA. This should be advertised on the packaging, or in the user manual under 'specifications.' Look for NMEA 0183 input, and NMEA output. Alternatively, it may say 'supports DSC', meaning it displays position data from a DSC-enabled VHF radio.

Maritime Mobile Service Identity (MMSI) Number: The MMSI number is a vital step in making sure your radio and GPS will work with Rescue 21. Please note: your DSC radio will NOT work correctly without an MMSI number. The MMSI number is easily obtained by going to the following website: <http://www.boatus.com/mmsi/>

This service is free and only takes a few minutes. Your MMSI number will be a nine-digit number that identifies your boat as well as your emergency contact information. The number can also be used to hail other vessels and allow other DSC radios to contact you. Think of it as caller-id for your DSC/VHF radio. The most important feature of DSC is the ability to transmit information about you and your vessel's identity to the Coast Guard once the distress button is activated. As soon as you have your MMSI number, it will need to be programmed into your DSC/VHS radio.

Testing the system: To test the system, do **NOT** press the

distress button! You will need to determine the MMSI number of a friend or a local shore station. Enter their MMSI number into the radio you wish to call, just as if you were using a phone. Choose a working channel, **not channel 16!** Select 'routine call' from your radio. Press 'enter' or 'send.' Your radio should indicate that the call was sent and that the station you called received your call. Finally, it will switch to the working channel you chose. You can now communicate with the station to ensure that everything is working properly.

DSC/VHF radios WILL:

- Provide a one-button emergency transmit capability that sends out the vessel's unique MMSI number and, if properly connected to a GPS or LORAN, the vessel's latitude/longitude position.
- Continue sending the distress signal, even if the captain is incapacitated.
- Allow for a non-experienced VHF user to send a goof-proof continuous distress message.
- Privately hail another DSC-equipped vessel, or shore station, with a known MMSI number. Similar to having a 'VHF phone number', this avoids having to monitor high-traffic channels to get a hail from your boating buddy. It even 'rings' your radio, similar to a telephone, notifying you that you have a call and then switches you automatically to the channel your caller is waiting on.
- If another vessel with DSC queries your position (called 'polling') and you are properly connected to a LORAN or GPS, your radio will respond to the query by transmitting your vessel's position, in digital display, so that it can be monitored by the polling home station/fleet station or boat.
- Fully function as any other VHF radio would.

DSC VHF radios WILL NOT:

- Be monitored by the U.S. Coast Guard in all areas until that area's Rescue 21 system is operational (<http://www.uscg.mil/acquisition/rescue21/>). However, DSC-equipped vessels in the area may receive your distress call.
- Provide private radio-to-radio voice communication. After the 'private' digital hail, DSC radios automatically switch to an open VHF channel for voice communications. Voice communication is carried on an active working channel chosen by the caller making the initial hail.

Gadget saves pilot who ditched at sea

By: Alyssa J. Miller (www.aopa.org)

If Maurice Kirk hadn't been carrying a personal locator beacon (PLB) on February 16 when his J-3 Cub went down more than 70 miles out to sea, he probably wouldn't be alive today.

Kirk's story exemplifies why pilots should assess the type of flying they do and equip their aircraft with the type of ELT or alternative emergency equipment that best suits their needs. While AOPA opposes any attempt to mandate a change to 406-MHz ELTs, it does encourage members to proactively seek emergency equipment that matches their flying habits. "Pilots can have a 121.5-MHz ELT or 406-MHz ELT installed in their U.S.-registered aircraft," said Rob Hackman, AOPA senior director of regulatory affairs. "Because satellites will stop monitoring 121.5 MHz next year, pilots should be evaluating their choice of ELTs and all other emergency equipment, including PLBs."

Editor's Note: This serves as an excellent example of the added advantage that carrying a PLB (aka "gadget") gives a pilot.

Right now, the FAA is not mandating a switch to 406-MHz ELTs. Both units will continue to satisfy the Federal Aviation Regulations and work after February 1, 2009; air traffic control and pilots will still monitor 121.5 MHz.

Pilot talks about his accident, rescue

Kirk, a 62-year-old pilot from South Wales, United Kingdom, ditched his Piper J-3 Cub in the ocean between the Dominican Republic and the Turks and Caicos Islands after an engine failure. The FAA notified the U.S. Coast Guard at Great In-



Mr Kirk's downed aircraft

gua of Kirk's mayday call, and a HH-60 Jayhawk twin-engine search and rescue helicopter set out based on information from Kirk's Visual Flight Rules flight plan.

Kirk, who was carrying a 406-MHz PLB, estimated that he activated the beacon about 20 minutes after he ditched the aircraft and swam to the surface. Kirk said the cold water shocked his system and deteriorated his ability to think clearly, so he did not think to activate the beacon while he was trying to inflate his life raft. When search officials received the PLB signal and the unit's registration information, they contacted the facility in New Zealand where he purchased the unit and then contacted his wife in South Wales to ensure the PLB hadn't been stolen (and that her husband was indeed flying in the Caribbean).

The HH-60 helicopter diverted to the PLB's transmitted location and rescued Kirk, who was suffering from hypothermia, a little more than two hours after the J-3 Cub went down. "There's no doubt that if I had not had this particular personal locator beacon, I would have been shark meat, simple as that," Kirk told AOPA. He said now he'd carry the PLB wherever he flew.

AOPA's position on ELTs

AOPA supports the FAA's current policy that allows pilots to choose what type of ELT to use and will oppose any type of mandate. The association has compiled information on the two types of ELTs to help members decide which will work best for them after 2009.

NOTE: A 121.5-MHz ELT continuously transmits a signal that rescuers can use to vector in on the aircraft, but it is limited to line of sight. A 406-MHz ELT can be GPS-enhanced and emits a data burst at specified intervals that contains registration information. Alternative emergency equipment, like a PLB or a cell phone with GPS technology, are other options to consider. The advantage of a PLB or cell phone is that pilots can activate them before making an emergency landing. A 406-MHz ELT includes a cockpit switch, so it can also be activated in advance.

EPIRB Activation and Flare Saves Four in Winter Storm

Written by: PA2 Luke Pinneo

“If they didn’t have the EPIRB or flares, it would have been extremely hard to find them out there in the snow,” - LTJG Ben O’Loughlin, USCG

The Coast Guard rescued four people aboard a storm-ravaged sailboat about 7 miles south of Block Island, R.I. The crew of the 45-foot MOONSHINE left East Greenwich, R.I., Friday morning, bound for Puerto Rico, when they were caught in an offshore storm, which ripped their sails and disabled their propulsion. They activated their Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB). The Coast Guard received the signal and tracked their position. It was a cold day on the water with the air temperature at 39 degrees and the water at 42 degrees.

The First District Command Center in Boston launched a 47-foot motor lifeboat from Station Point Judith, R.I. and a helicopter from Air Station Cape Cod. Both crews arrived at approximately 1 a.m., at the last position the EPIRB indicated. Because of the 30-40



knot winds, the sailboat was drifting out of position faster than the beacon could transmit. Visibility was less than one mile, and the seas were 8-12 feet.

The crew of MOONSHINE shot off a flare, and the rescue crews were able to locate the disabled sailboat; they determined that no one was injured. The motor lifeboat crew took the MOONSHINE in tow. After a nearly seven-hour transit, they arrived near Montauk, N.Y., and transferred the tow to a Station Montauk lifeboat crew who took the MOONSHINE and crew safely to Montauk arriving at about 9 a.m., on Saturday.

“If they didn’t have the EPIRB or flares, it would have been extremely hard to find them out there in the snow,” said LTJG Ben O’Loughlin, the watchstander at the Command Center in Boston.

The sailing vessel Moonshine is pictured at the dock at Coast Guard Station Montauk, N.Y., Saturday, Dec. 20, 2008. The Coast Guard rescued the four-person crew when they were caught in an off-shore storm that shredded their sails. (U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class Anthony Figueroa)

Profile of a SAR Hero



Master Chief Boatswain's Mate John "Jack" Downey, USCG (ret)

BMCM John "Jack" Downey

In the last issue of On Scene, we included a SAR Hero article that received great feedback. While I was researching our next SAR Hero, I received a story by Petty Officer Lauren Jorgensen. I went into the office of Boat Forces to find out more about this retired Master Chief and found that he was quite the celebrity. This particular SAR Hero is the first ever recipient of the 'Joshua James Ancient Keeper Award'. I think you will find BMCM John "Jack" Downey is the true mold that SAR Heros are cut from.

I was honored to finally reach him. A Warrant Boatswain from the Office of Boat Forces had helped me and said, "Good luck in trying to get the old Master Chief to talk to you". Despite the Boatswain's warning, I gave Master Chief Downey a call. The phone rang twice and I heard a voice that was exactly what I expected. It was strong, gruff, and endearing all at the same time. I told him that I wanted to do a SAR Hero story on him to which he replied, "I don't consider myself a hero, I just did the best I could". I only had to ask a few short questions to get him started on his incredible string of story telling. I started by asking him why he joined the Coast Guard. He said there were two answers to that question.

As a young person, I was always exposed to the Coast Guard; my boat had even been towed by them. I worked on the docks, next to the Coast Guard station at Point Judith. In the '50s, I used to watch them run 'Lyle-gun' exercises. So I joined and served 8 years active duty before transferring into the reserves. I became a plumber and kept doing my drills. In the '70s, there was this tragic case. I was a BM2 doing my drill time and the fishing vessel COMET sank and all but 3 or 4 people perished. There were about 20 people on board. It made me want to go back in the Coast Guard.

And as they say, the rest of the story was history. Master Chief Downey served a total of nearly 42 years in the Coast Guard. He told me that the thing he missed the most about being in the Coast Guard was the people. He said, "...the names and the faces would change, but our goals always stayed the same". He spoke a lot about the changes he had seen in the Coast Guard. He told me about one of the first jet-driven rigid-hull inflatables to be commissioned into the Coast Guard. It was delivered to his station when he was the Officer in Charge of Station Chatham in the late '80s. He mentioned how they used the boat to do security for then Vice President, and later President, George H.W. Bush. I listened to his stories wishing I were there at the other end of the phone to see him telling them in person with his hands illustrating and his face smiling. At the end of our conversation, I mentioned that his old friend, the Boatswain, had given me a hard time when I began trying to contact him. He chuckled and said to me, "Oh yes, I remember him. You can tell him that Warrant Boatswains like him are sometimes worse than the Master Chiefs like me!" -ENS Jodie Knox, Editor

Master Chief Petty Officer John Downey, the Coast Guard's first Ancient Keeper retired Friday, June 20, 2008, after nearly 42 years of service.

BMCM John "Jack" Downey



A LITTLE SAR HUMOR!

"It was sometime in the '80s and I pulled up to this guy's boat. He was broken down and needed a tow. He says to me, "I recommend you pull me by my bow". I didn't say it to him then, but I was wondering if someone had previously tried to pull him by the stern!! (laughter) I wanted to ask him if there was any other way to pull a boat, but instead I just told him that we would take his recommendation."

-BMCM Downey, USCG (ret.)

- Retired from nearly 42 years of Coast Guard duty
- Credited with 5,000 search and rescue missions
- Credited with saving 700 lives
- First recipient of 'Joshua James Ancient Keeper Award'
- Responded to 500 mariners in distress

BMCM John Downey

Written By: Petty Officer Lauren Jorgensen

John Downey has helped save mariners' lives in New England for the past 41 years. The Coast Guard Master Chief has stayed in the Northeast his entire career, but Friday he is finally going to step down and let someone else take over.

Downey, 60, joined the Coast Guard four decades ago in 1966. Over 41 years and a wealth of experience later, he was honored with the Coast Guard's first and only Joshua James Keeper Award. The award's namesake is credited with saving more than 600 people and is said to be one of the world's most celebrated lifesavers.

The prestigious award, along with the title of Ancient Keeper given to the award recipient, was created to recognize Coast Guardsmen with outstanding performance and longevity of service at boat forces units, which are multi-mission units excluding cutters and air stations.

Downey's career includes more than 28 years in those assignments, every one of them in New England. But Friday morning his Coast Guard career will be over. The symbolic change of watch ceremony will be held on the lawn overlooking Narragansett Bay in Rhode Island next to a lighthouse Downey has fond childhood memories of. There, he will pass his cherished title on to someone else while about 500 of his peers, family and friends look on.

He grew up in Narragansett, R.I., in the house right next door to the Coast Guard station, saved his first life there - a fisherman in distress - and was the Officer in Charge in 1980 and again in 1998. So, it was no surprise when he announced that he wanted to hold his change of watch and retirement ceremonies there as well. "It's been a part of my life forever," Downey said of Station Point Judith.

He used to watch search and rescue drills and play in the boathouse at the Coast Guard station when he was a boy.

He credits those experiences for his decision to join the Coast Guard.

Senior Chief Petty Officer Chad Curth, the current Officer in Charge of the station, said he's honored that Downey chose Station Point Judith as the location for the ceremonies. "Master Chief Downey is sort of a legend in the First District," Curth said. "As the first (Ancient) Keeper award recipient, I think it is very fitting that he relinquishes that title at the place where he was first in command and the only unit he has commanded twice."

During his last two years in the Coast Guard, Downey has not been in command of a unit but has continued to fill an important role as the First District Command Master Chief. Downey is a liaison between the operational units he led for so many years and the two-star admiral in command of the entire district. "One of the best decisions I made coming in was selecting him to work with me as the Command Master Chief," said RADM Timothy Sullivan, Commander of the First District, which extends from Maine to northern New Jersey. "You can trust him 100 percent of the time to do the right things for the right reasons. I really respect him a lot."

Downey seems to inadvertently command respect from everyone he works with. As is the case with command staff duty driver SN Zach Coleman, who occasionally drove Downey to official functions. "He treats everyone the same - from a seaman apprentice all the way up to the admiral," Coleman said. "He gives people the respect they deserve, regardless of their rank."

"He has a down-to-earth way about him that makes him very effective at his job," said Curth. And despite some challenges, his family life has been equally successful. He married his wife Judith when he was 20 years old.

(cont. on next pg.)

"What you do in the present becomes the past. That, coupled with good deeds, I hope will be my legacy." - BMCM Downey, USCG (ret.)

BMCM John Downey (cont.)

Written By: Petty Officer Lauren Jorgensen

Early in his career they decided together that they would do what was best for their children when it came time for him to transfer to a new unit. That meant rather than making their five children switch schools every few years, Downey and his wife chose to live several hours apart for a large part of his career. "When he was home, it was more about the quality of time than the quantity," Judith said.

They kept their children on a stable, routine schedule, and Downey made his best effort not to miss any softball games, school events, or other important activities, she said. Although that would be difficult for many couples, the Downeys never questioned whether or not it would work. They celebrated their 40th anniversary in December. Now that he's leaving the Coast Guard, he's looking forward to spending more time with his family, even though they may have to get used to that.

"I don't know what I'm going to do when he's home all the time," Judith said, laughing. But the grandfather of six is happy to have more time at home. "Now I'm going to do the things I haven't found the time or made the time to do," he said. Still, he knows saying goodbye to his shipmates will be difficult.

"I'll miss the camaraderie," Downey said. "I'll miss the fantastic feelings I get when I see people accomplish great things. I'll miss it."



Editor's Note:

In 2003, the 'Ancient Keeper' Award was created to honor Captain Joshua James. The award recognizes seniority and highest record of achievement. The recipient is charged with oversight of Coast Guard boat operations to ensure that tradition and professionalism remain intact. They must attend ceremonies within the Boat Forces community and speak at one Coxswain, Surfman, and OINC/XPO course annually.

The Award ceremony is held at the lifesaving museum in Hull, MA at the burial site of Captain Joshua James. The Award winner holds the distinction until retirement.

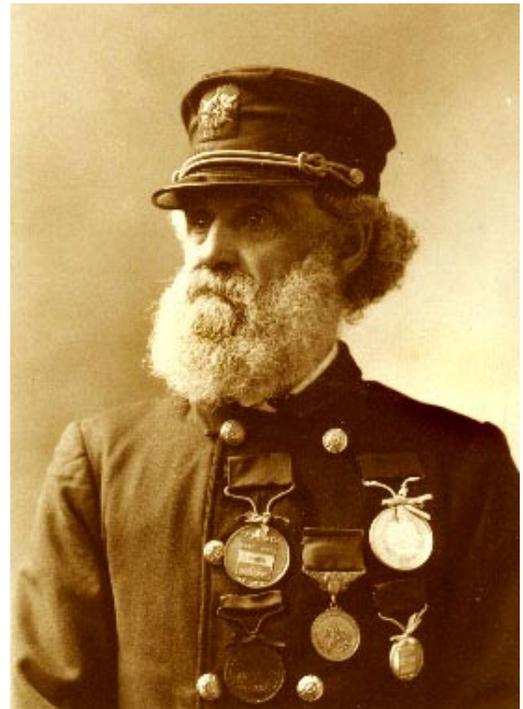
"I just did the best I could with that job. When you had great people to work with, you really can't screw it up." -BMCM Downey, USCG (ret.)

THE ORIGINAL 'ANCIENT KEEPER'

Joshua James is buried in a lifeboat on Gallup's Hill in Hull, MA. Inscribed upon his gravestone is:

CAPTAIN JOSHUA JAMES
BORN IN HULL DIED IN HULL
NOVEMBER 22, 1826 MARCH 19, 1902
*Greater Love Hath No Man Than This That
A Man Lay Down His Life For His Friends.*

*Erected by the Humane Society
of the
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
in memory of
Joshua James
Captain of the Humane Society's Life Boats
At Hull and Nantasket for Many Years
And Keeper of the United State's Government's
Life Saving Station at Hull 1889 to 1902*



The most celebrated lifesaver in Coast Guard history, responsible for saving 626 lives

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Joshua James began saving lives at the young age of 15. Captain James lived from November 22, 1826, to March 19, 1902. At the age of 15, he joined the Massachusetts Humane Society where he was a volunteer life-saving station keeper. He later served in the U.S. Life-Saving Service where he continued his selfless rescues until the age of 75. He was engaged in search and rescue up until the day of his death. He died while conducting rescue drills with his men.

Coordinated Chaos

Story and photo by Petty Officer Lauren Downs

When the call comes in for the Coast Guard to search for a fishing vessel lost at sea in sub-zero temperatures with howling winds kicking up 20-foot swells, there isn't time for hesitation or uncertainty.

Coordinating the boats and aircraft involved in a large search in New England or New York is the responsibility of the Coast Guard First District Command Center, housed in the eight-story John Foster Williams building in Boston's financial district.

Inside the Command Center, groups of three people work around the clock in a small windowless room to coordinate hundreds of search and rescue (SAR) missions, law-enforcement operations, and other U.S. Coast Guard activities. The watch standers look at computers with multiple screens, each displaying different maps, grids, and data and use phones with up to five individual lines, all while speaking what sounds like a foreign language of acronyms and Coast Guard jargon.

They are responsible for an area that covers roughly 2,000 miles of shoreline from Maine to New Jersey and along that lengthy area, nearly anything is possible.

Though the command center staff handles a myriad of activities, their formal training is primarily for SAR. "That's our bread and butter," said LCDR Kendall Garran, the Command Center supervisor. "We are the search and rescue experts."

The Command Center staff sees SAR cases such as medical evacuations, missing or overdue boaters, disabled vessels, collisions, flooding boats, electronic mayday calls, fires, and man-overboard cases.



LTJG Andrew Madjeska gathers information during a routine twelve-hour watch period in the Coast Guard First District Command Center Wednesday, March 5, 2008.

Local Coast Guard units typically coordinate small SAR cases, but the Boston Command Center handles complex missions such as aircraft emergencies or mass rescue operations.

LCDR Kendall Garran said that while the cases can be quite complex, only three watch standers are needed to coordinate responses.

Each of the watch standers goes through an extensive qualification process to learn the routine immediately after reporting for duty at the command center.

The IMO award recognizes a single notable act of bravery and is awarded to an individual who has risked their own life, performed an act of bravery at sea in an attempt to save a life, or attempted to prevent damage to the marine environment in an exceptional act.

At approximately 5:50pm on December 19, 2007, the crew of U.S. Coast Guard Air Station Los Angeles was requested to respond to the activation of a 406 Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon (EPIRB) in the vicinity of the Northern Channel Islands. The activated 406 EPIRB was registered to the 37-foot fishing vessel ALEGRIA; its reported position indicated that the vessel was aground on the northeast corner of Santa Rosa Island. Sector Los Angeles/Long Beach (LA/LB) had established radio communications with the master of the vessel who reported that he was the only person on board and that he was extremely cold due to the surf and wind conditions and his lack of foul-weather clothing.

Coast Guard Helicopter 6555 departed Air Station Los Angeles in search of the ALEGRIA. At 7:06pm, CG 6555 identified two vessels in the vicinity of the reported position and proceeded to the vessel that was closer to the shoreline and confirmed that it was the ALEGRIA. The vessel was aground on a sandy beach with its starboard side abeam to 5-7 foot breaking waves, which were violently rolling the vessel from side to side. CG 6555 began a low-altitude search of the shoreline and noted various pieces of debris, fishing gear, and personal belongings, but could not locate the survivor.

At 7:36pm, CG 6555 deployed AST2 Nettles to the beach approximately 50 yards from the disabled vessel to search the shore for the master. There he found personal belongings and a backpack containing water, food, clothing, and the activated 406 EPIRB; he began to follow footprints he saw leading him away from the debris. AST2 Nettles called out many times with no results and despite the evidence that the master had safely made it to shore, AST2 Nettles was still concerned that the master might still be on the vessel.

AST2 Nettles waded waist deep into the water and carefully timed the breaking surf to make his way to the vessel ALEGRIA. Thrown by a crashing wave, the ALEGRIA rolled towards him and he launched himself onto the rail at the lowest point in the roll. As the ALEGRIA snapped back in the opposite direction, AST2 Nettles used the momentum to catapult himself over the transom and into the boat.

Below decks, the unrelenting surf had dislodged a majority of the fishing gear, creating multiple hazards and obstacles to maneuver through. AST2 Nettles spotted the survivor under the cabin's bench in the fetal position staring ahead with unfocused eyes. He saw that the master was not breathing, unconscious, and bleeding from the back of his head. When he checked the survivor for a pulse, the master suddenly gasped for air.

AST2 wrapped his arms around the unconscious survivor's chest and used his legs to inch his way up a short ladder out onto the aft deck to find a suitable hoisting area for the helicopter. Awaiting the delivery of the recovery sling, AST2 Nettles was required to support both himself and the survivor's near-lifeless body while keeping the survivor's head above the surf.

CG 6555 hoisted the survivor, and he was taken to the hospital where doctors stated that he would have only had another 30 minutes or so before he would have succumbed to hypothermia and his injuries.

IMO AWARD WINNER - 2008



Fishing Vessel ALEGRIA



Rescue crew from left to right: AMT3 Lopaka Helepololei, AST2 Laurence Nettles, LT Jonathan Kimura, LT David Middleton

Gold AFRAS (cont from page 3)

Maintaining control of the basket, AST1 Milam carefully untangled the cable from the survivor. Quickly growing tired of the persistent struggles, AST1 Milam released the basket and expertly subdued the survivor. He forcefully placed the survivor in the basket, properly positioned him, and signaled for a pickup. Drawing upon his final remnants of strength, AST1 Milam climbed into the basket and was hoisted aboard CGNR 6525.

With the difficult part of the rescue complete, the crew quickly made their way to Dutch Harbor. AST1 Milam faded in and out of consciousness during the return flight. Upon landing in Dutch Harbor, he was transferred to an awaiting ambulance along with the survivors.

With little regard for his personal safety, AST1 Milam exhibited an extraordinarily valiant effort to save these four mariners. His dedication, persistence, and bravery are the epitome of the ideal Coast Guard rescue swimmer.

AFRAS Silver (cont from page 4)

Keeping one hand on the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR through the starboard cabin door of the CG 275594, Coxswain Taylor also felt the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR begin to heel over to port. Taylor immediately reacted, backing the CG 275594 away from the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR. The boat captain and deck hand were still onboard the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR and crawled onto the bow as the boat turned sharply to starboard and lay over on its starboard side.

Taylor instructed his crew to move the 11 passengers from the foredeck to the cabin. It was difficult to persuade the passengers to move from the bow due to the sea state. Cupit, Liebe, and Miller confidently coaxed the passengers from the foredeck, guiding them along the narrow foam collar along the port and starboard side and through the side doors to the safety of the cabin and aft deck of their 27-foot vessel.

As soon as the passengers were inside the cabin, Coxswain Taylor circled the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR as his crew was moving the passengers inside. He approached by way of her keel and swiftly conducted a bow-to-bow approach while his crew pulled the last two persons from the bow of

the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR. Seconds later, at 1641, the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR righted herself and sank.

Cupit and Liebe immediately began monitoring the passengers for signs of physical distress. One passenger was visibly shaking. Cupit conducted a quick assessment of the passenger and reported to the coxswain that he was possibly in shock or hypothermic. Liebe confirmed the total number of persons who had been onboard the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR and verified that all passengers were accounted for.

CGC ROANOKE ISLAND arrived on scene as the HALIBUT ENDEAVOR sank. The two Coast Guard vessels made arrangements for safe transfer of all passengers to the larger cutter utilizing the CGC ROANOKE ISLAND's small boat. CGC ROANOKE ISLAND then brought the 13 survivors safely back to Homer.

The quick actions of the crew of CG 275594 were instrumental in saving the lives of 13 persons and preventing these survivors from entering the cold Alaskan waters.

CGC BONITO TO THE RESCUE (cont. from page 6)

Mr. Cooley explained that while they were fishing, water was coming in over the stern of the boat. The aft inspection plate was missing, and the water had been flowing directly into the bilge. After awhile, the vessel's bilge pump stopped working. His electronics began to cut out as his batteries became disabled. He was able to get one call out and pass his position to the vessel RED EYE before his batteries were disabled due to the flooding. The water came washing over the transom, and within minutes they were all in the water. Once in the water they had numerous lightning and thunderstorms pass over them, bringing high winds and rough seas. They could not stay together due to the weather and were not going to stay afloat much longer. They did not have any signaling devices (flares) when they entered the water, which would have made searching even harder as darkness fell. The crew of BONITO is credited with saving the lives of these five very lucky people.

*Bernard C. Webber, (USCG, ret.)
1928-2009*



BM1 Bernard C. Webber, 1952

The Coast Guard lost an honored veteran on January 24th, 2009. Bernard C. Webber was 80 years of age and the recipient of one of the Coast Guard's highest honors, the Gold Lifesaving Medal, for his involvement in one of the most dramatic Coast Guard rescues of the 20th century. Bernard Webber retired from the Coast Guard as a Senior Chief Petty Officer.

Born on May 9th, 1928, Mr. Webber was sworn into the Coast Guard in 1946. As a designated Boatswain's Mate First Class and Coxswain, he was assigned to Coast Guard Station Chatham. On the night of February 18, 1952, the PENDLETON, a 503-foot tanker, broke in two with 33 men on board. BM1 Webber was the Coxswain of CG 36500 and was called upon to rescue the survivors. The seas were 60-feet high and the winds were 70 knots. While en route to the scene, the windshield and compass of the CG 36500 was shattered due to the heavy weather.

Of the 33 men onboard the PENDLETON, 32 were plucked from the tossing stern after climbing down a Jacob's ladder and jumping over the sheared hull and onto the deck of the CG 36500. Only one of the men was lost in the attempt to abandon ship.

BM1 Webber timed the rise and fall of the waves and one at a time rescued the men from certain death. With no radar or compass to guide them home, it was true seamanship that allowed BM1 Webber to navigate the CG 36500 back safely to its mooring with the 32 rescued men huddled together on board.

Bernard Webber's actions were heroic. The bravery and seamanship he exhibited were an inspiration for all Guardians. He will forever remain a valued part of our Coast Guard history. His passing is a great loss for us all.

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SAR Publications:

SAR publications currently available via the SAR Program's web site include:

U.S. National SAR Plan (NSP) - The federal plan for coordinating civil search and rescue services to meet domestic needs and international commitments.

U.S. National Search and Rescue Supplement (NSS) to the International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue (IAMSAR) Manual - Provides guidance to federal agencies concerning implementation of the NSP and builds on the baseline established by the IAMSAR Manual. The NSS provides guidance to all federal forces, military and civilian, that support civil search and rescue operations.

U.S. Coast Guard Addendum (CGADD) to the U.S. National SAR Supplement - Establishes policy, guidelines, procedures and general information for Coast Guard use in search and rescue operations. The CGADD both compliments and supplements the NSS and IAMSAR.

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