

Topside



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Leadership of 5NR

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CDR

Operations Training Officer (OTO)
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District Chief Of Staff (DCOS)
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District Captain Central (DCAPT-C)
Joseph R. Mathews

District Captain East (DCAPT-E)
Thomas H. Brouillard

District Captain West (DCAPT-W)
Walter Conway

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President Past Captains Association
William R. Turner

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DCDR 07 Lawrence J. Nolan
DCDR 08 Robert Emmit Ward
DCDR 12 Roy L. Zimmerman
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DCDR 17 Kenneth J. Sylvester
DCDR 18 Robert M. Dimarco
DCDR 19 Elizabeth A. Pittinger
DCDR 20 Stephen J. Bugaj

D-AD-EA KC Murphy

D-AD-SP Thomas J. Don

D-AD-CC Jason C. Flynn

ASC Michael McShane

DFSO Gary S. Goldberg

DSO-FN Mark F. Letavish

DLO Francis P. Bigley

DSO-SL Harry W. Otto

DDC-Logistics Robert G. Vanderhook

DSO-CS Douglas R. Hoffman Sr.

DSO-CA Andrew C. Crowley

DSO-HR Ruth A. Bearce

DSO-IS Terry F. Bearce

DSO-MA James C. Sheridan

DSO-PB Timothy P Marks

DSO-SR J. Douglas Willwerth

DDC-Prevention Alfred O. Grimminger

DSO-AS James Robert White

DSO-MS Gregg R. Bollinger

DSO-MT Terry F. Bearce

DSO-NS Lorraine Bianco

DSO-PA COMO Kevin C. Murphy

DSO-PE Pamela L. Thompson

DSO-PV Russell M. Galson

DSO-VE Edwin W. Seda

DDC-Response Vacant

DSO-EM Pamela L. Thompson

DSO-CM Richard B. Taylor II

DSO-AV Carl S. Longenecker

DSO-OP COMO Kurt P. Sarac Sr.

Front Cover:

The district Newsletter's name, Topside, written in the Maritime Flag Alphabet, Flag Signaling System, Morse Code, and the Military Phonetic Alphabet.

Cover Designed by COMO GIannattasio

From the Desk of the Commodore

"There's nothing stronger than the heart of a volunteer", to quote General Jimmy Doolittle.

As members of the USCG Auxiliary, we stand as beacons of safety on the waters, promoting responsible boating practices and ensuring maritime security. As an all-volunteer organization, the Auxiliary plays a vital role in educating boaters and assisting the Coast Guard in various missions. At the core of our efforts lies the commitment to safe boating, an endeavor crucial for preserving lives and protecting the marine environment.

One of our primary missions is to educate boaters on safe practices. Through comprehensive boating safety courses, seminars, and workshops, the Auxiliary equips both novice and experienced boaters with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the waters safely. These educational initiatives cover a wide range of topics, including navigation rules, emergency procedures, and the importance of proper vessel maintenance.

To further promote safety on the water, we conduct voluntary vessel safety checks (VSC). Trained Auxiliary personnel perform thorough inspections of recreational boats to ensure they meet federal and state safety requirements. This includes examining life jackets, fire extinguishers, navigation lights, and other essential equipment. By identifying potential hazards and offering recommendations for improvement, VSCs contribute significantly to accident prevention.

In addition to its educational efforts, we provide vital support in search and rescue operations. Auxiliarists undergo rigorous training in seamanship, navigation, and rescue techniques to assist the Coast Guard during emergencies. Whether responding to distress calls, conducting patrols, or assisting boaters in distress, these dedicated volunteers serve as force multipliers, enhancing the Coast Guard's capabilities and improving response times.

Beyond safeguarding lives, the USCG Auxiliary is committed to protecting the marine environment. Through initiatives like the "Operation Paddle Smart" program, which focuses on kayak and canoe safety, and the "Responsible Boater Program," which promotes environmentally friendly boating practices, the Auxiliary fosters a culture of environmental stewardship among boaters. By minimizing pollution, preventing oil spills, and preserving natural habitats, boaters can enjoy the beauty of the waterways while minimizing their ecological footprint.

The USCG Auxiliary actively engages with communities across the nation to promote safe boating practices. Through partnerships with local organizations, schools, and recreational boating clubs, Auxiliarists organize outreach events, safety demonstrations, and public awareness campaigns.

The USCG Auxiliary plays a pivotal role in promoting safe boating practices and ensuring maritime security. Through education, vessel safety checks, search and rescue support, environmental stewardship, and community outreach, Auxiliarists work tirelessly to protect lives, property, and the marine environment. As recreational boating continues to grow in popularity, the efforts of the USCG Auxiliary remain essential in keeping our waterways safe.



Commodore Noreen Schifini
District Commodore
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
5th District-Northern Region

From the Desk of the Chief of Staff

Shipmates,

I hope this message finds you well and in good spirits.

As your Chief of Staff for D5NR, I want to extend my sincere gratitude to each of you for your continued dedication and service to the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Your efforts across operations, public affairs, marine safety, training, and continued support to Coast Guard stations in our District makes a real difference.

We are navigating a time of renewed focus on readiness, engagement, and leadership development. Each of you plays a critical role in helping us meet the Commodore's strategic plan and in reinforcing the strength and professionalism of our Auxiliary.

I encourage all members to stay engaged, participate in upcoming training and missions, and support one another as we work toward our shared goals. Communication, collaboration, and respect for each other's contributions are essential to our success.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment.

Semper Paratus,

Very Respectfully,
Michael McElwee
Chief of Staff
Fifth Northern District
United States Coast Guard Auxiliary



Michael B. McElwee
Chief of Staff
U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary
5th District-Northern Region



5NR Help Needed



5NR Job Board

To get to the 5NR job board:

- First, get on the 5NR website: <https://5nr.org>
- Next, hover over “Job Board” on the top right (see below):
- Then, in the dropdown, click on “AUX Help Wanted - For AUX Member”

USCG AUXILIARY FIFTH
DISTRICT - NORTH (D5NR)

Home Who We Are Member Links Announcements Job Board



e Who We Are Member Information Join USCG Auxiliary Job Board

Auxiliarists Help Wanted

5NR Aux Support Request - For
CG Unit Use

Information from Around the District



Coast Guard Auxiliarist Becomes Cutterman *Auxiliarist Dr. Sandy Dalton of Flotilla 08-02, Cape May, New Jersey* *received the rare Cutterman Designation*

Article and Photographs by Leon C. DeFulgentis, AuxPA2

Auxiliarist Dr. Sandy Dalton of Cape May Flotilla 82, New Jersey, has earned one of the most respected qualifications available to an Auxiliarist: the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary Cutterman Insignia. The designation, awarded to only 26 Auxiliarists nationwide, recognizes sustained service, advanced qualifications, and operational excellence aboard Coast Guard cutters.

A "cutter" is a Coast Guard vessel 65 feet or longer, built for extended missions at sea. These ships perform a wide range of critical duties, including search and rescue, law enforcement, and homeland security. The term "cutterman" refers to those who serve aboard these vessels with professionalism, dedication, and demonstrated expertise—qualities that are required not only of active-duty personnel but also of Auxiliarists seeking this rare qualification.



Cutterman pin displayed in advance of the Cutterman Ceremony



Auxiliarist Dr. Dalton onboard the USCG cutter Heron at Station Cape May

The Auxiliary Cutterman Insignia symbolizes an Auxiliarist's deep commitment to the cutter fleet. To earn it, a candidate must serve a minimum of two years, spending at least 52 days per year aboard a cutter, including at least 24 days underway. Candidates must also complete rigorous Personal Qualification Standards (PQS) for damage control and watchstanding. This includes gaining in-depth knowledge of a cutter's systems and emergency protocols, then passing an oral board and obtaining command approval to stand duty, often taking the place of a regular Coast Guard crew member.

Dr. Dalton's service aboard the 87-foot coastal patrol boats USCGC Heron and USCGC Mako reflects this high level of commitment. She qualified as an In-Port Watchstander and served in support roles, including as an Auxiliary Culinary Assistant Specialist. Based at Station Cape May, Heron features modern navigation and propulsion systems and accommodates a crew of up to twelve.

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Coast Guard Auxiliarist Becomes Cutterman

Continued



OTO Price making remarks at the Cutterman Ceremony.



Cutterman Ceremony underway at the Harborview & Chiefs' Club.

The Gutterman Insignia was presented to Dalton in a formal ceremony on 22 May, 2025, at the Chief's Club at USCG Training Center Cape May. The event was attended by active-duty personnel, fellow Auxiliarists, and Coast Guard Auxiliary leadership from USCG East District Northern Region. The certificate was signed by Commander Laura M. Moose, Director of Auxiliary for CGD-E-NR.

"Sandy exemplifies what it means to be an Auxiliarist," said Executive Officer Sldoran of the Heron. "She's always ready to learn and take on new responsibilities supporting the cutter community." Commodore Noreen Schifini, District Commodore, CGD-E-NR added, "We are proud to have her in our district. Her dedication to the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary is outstanding."

The Auxiliary Gutterman designation is a testament to the skill, sacrifice, and perseverance of those supporting the Coast Guard's maritime mission. For an Auxiliarist to earn it is not only rare—it is a reflection of unwavering service to country and crew.



Auxiliarist Dr. Dalton along with the crew onboard the USCG cutter Heron at Station Cape May

Crossing Boundaries: A Case with Many Benefits

*By Rick Young, SO-PE, PA-1
Susquehanna Valley – Div 19
District 5 Northern Region*

How often might a flotilla not perform a mission because it does not have enough qualified Auxiliarists available? While working across flotilla lines within a division might be a common practice, how often do they work across districts? The following is actual case study that details not only about cross-flotilla collaboration, but cross-division as well as cross-district.

Background

For several years it was well-known that New York State would begin to require a boating safety card for everyone beginning on 01 January 2025. That deadline was drawing near when Joe Colucci of the Wallis Gap Rod and Gun Club attended a boat show in Rochester, NY during summer 2024 and engaged Auxiliarist Holger Stave, flotilla commander of 092-04-07 (Canandaigua Lake). Colucci explained that his members were from Pennsylvania, but many were frequent sportsmen north of the Pennsylvania - New York border. Stave, while familiar with New York requirements was not well-versed with Pennsylvania's and referred Colucci to District 5NR. After that single phone call the wheels of collaboration were set in motion.



Reaching Out to Others

Stave made a contact with the Lancaster Flotilla, a unit of the Susquehanna Valley Division (Division 19) meaning that Colucci's organization, residing near Williamsport, was over 100 miles outside of the AOR. The first call was to Bill Turner, DCDR of Division 21 that includes Williamsport in its AOR. After hearing the opportunity Turner admitted that any boating course would be held at the far reaches of his division and it was doubtful that it could provide instructional assets but suggested several others who might be able to assist.

Scheduling the Opportunity

While the challenges of obtaining instructors were being addressed, Colucci set out to identify an acceptable date and venue. Nobody was going to ignore the opportunity to advance boating safety for the 20 members of Wallis Gap, hence the date of 15 March was agreed upon and Hall's Marine in Muncy agreed to the use of their space.

After considerable discussion Ed Hilscher, commander of the Towanda Flotilla, and Bob Vanderhook, DSO-Member Training, agreed to assist instructing. With the three instructors covering the chapters of America's Boat-ing Course there was remained one more challenge: finding enough books for attendees. The Lancaster flotilla had 13 in inventory, but the Auxiliary National Supply Center was out of stock. Fortunately, Hilscher could make up the difference. To resolve the issue of revenue sharing the net after the cost of the books was divided equally among the three flotillas.

Continued on the Next Page...

Crossing Boundaries: A Case with Many Benefits

Continued

Public Education Can Be More Than Meets the Eye

On the day of the course all of the elements came together flawlessly: the Rod and Gun Club was pleased and the instructors provided a seamless experience, yet there was one more element that was not planned for. Tim Wah, commander of the Stroudsburg Flotilla had expressed interest in seeing how a course is planned and executed, hence he was invited to attend where he not only was able to observe but assisted in grading the final exams. In answering the question of what was accomplished, it goes far beyond just providing recreational boating safety education to a local audience. Consider the following:

- At least two participants asked about getting vessel safety checks
- Hall's Marine now had a better face-to-face contact with Auxiliarists
- The Rod and Gun Club knows where it can go for further RBS support
- The Stroudsburg Flotilla now has a better understanding of how to conduct a boating safety class
- The potential for further collaboration between flotillas, divisions, and districts was enhanced

Collaboration is far easier when each of the participants knows one another. While the Auxiliary may be a complex organization there are abundant opportunities that can make the task easier. For one, taking advantage of the networking opportunities at D-Train as over the longer term that cup of coffee enjoyed with a shipmate may prove mutually beneficial. Second, don't hesitate to volunteer to participate in new activities with unfamiliar shipmates whether of a flotilla, division, district, or national staff nature. Third, when taking a class, whether online or in-person, become familiar with the other students – in my own case years ago I attended AUXLAMs where a fellow student, Walt Conway, is now our DCAPT.

Bottom line is that cross-unit collaborations can pay huge benefits to both the Auxiliary as well as to the public at large. You don't really have to look very far, so try it!



Acknowledging the Past and Looking to the Future

Article by Walter Conway, DCAPT-W D5NR

When we say “Semper Paratus”, it is an unequivocal necessity. Being always ready includes adapting to changing conditions or environments. This past year (2024) was a very productive year for Division 21 – The East Piedmont Division of the Fifth District Northern Region. Copious hours were applied to missions of all kinds by the shipmates of Division 21 including surface operations, radio watch standing, culinary assistance, vessel examinations, program visits, public education and public affairs. Division 21 consisted of three flotillas: Allentown, Lansdale and Reading. Membership talents and skills within those flotillas are vast. The talent pool transcends the units and administrative structures. We were reminded often that “one team, one fight” fit well with our core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty. This year (2025) there is a realignment of the units and Division 21 no longer exists in that structure but the men and women who were once a part of it are still doing missions, training and developing themselves within their new divisions to make them even more effective. We are auxiliarists and we remember our pledge “to support the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, and its purposes, and to abide by the governing policies, established by the Commandant, of the United States Coast Guard.”

I had the honor of being the last Division Commander of the East Piedmont Division. As indicated, it was a very productive division. There are always ebbs and flows throughout any year, as well as ups and downs, that take place administratively and operationally in any unit, but the missions remain the focus and the guiding lights for our shipmates as we look to the future.

Here are photographs from some of the missions, tasks and activities that took place in Division 21 in 2024 as a final tribute to the membership and a reminder of the positive interactions that will happen going forward within the realigned structure.



Matt Arner (VFC, 21-01), Esther Morroney (VFC, 21-04) and Robin Rosenberg (FC, 21-04) make their pledges as incoming VFCs and FC for their flotilla elected officer positions at the Division 21 Change of Watch in 2024.



Jon Geirsson (21-04) instructed during the Reading Flotilla's Spring 2024 boating course.

Acknowledging the Past and Looking to the Future

Continued



Pat Morroney (21-04) gaining more experience at the helm during a patrol in 2024.



Mike McElwee (21-04) on surface patrol, informing and responding to questions in 2024.



Carl Wischner (21-01) getting ready to get back underway at the helm in 2024.



Peter Overcast (21-04) gives the “thumbs up” that he is ready to take watch at the bow.

Acknowledging the Past and Looking to the Future *continued*



CWO4 Price (OTO) (right) and Carl Wischner (21-01) are debriefing a training evolution in 2024.



Mike McElwee (21-04) current DCOS, is flanked by his parents, Carolyn McElwee (21-04) and Barry McElwee (21-04) at the Commodore's Banquet in Fall 2024.



Deeper shoreline from water level drops in 2024 exposed hazards that were normally hidden under the surface.



Joe Shambo (21-01) scanning the horizon before the patrol continues.

Acknowledging the Past and Looking to the Future

Continued



World War II Weekend in June 2024 at the Reading Regional Airport by the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum was a large event attended by thousands with public affairs booths supported by many including Frank Scudner (left), Vickie Remo (right) and Mike McElwee (center) from Flotilla 21-04. (Please Note: Uniforms were purposely varied to provide additional conversation topics with the attendees of the event from the general public.)



Walt Conway (21-04) responds to a question prior to taking the bow watch in the summer of 2024.



AUXDATA II Needs YOU!

By Harry Dyer, Past DVC-UM, Past DSO-IS

AUXDATA II the “Auxiliary’s Information System of Record,” depends on you to record your missions/activities in a timely manner. Without your input, it cannot provide the statistics that are required to provide funding, from the Coast Guard, for Auxiliary activities and cannot provide the proper statistics required for reporting Auxiliary activities. Your skills and occupation are also a very important part of your personal information in your member record. Today, more than ever, the Coast Guard depends on Auxiliary members to augment its services in many diverse areas. Currently, the focus is not about gender, ethnicity, religion, etc., but on personal skills. In 5NR, many members provide important assistance to the Coast Guard in many different areas and if your skills are recorded in your member record, that will assist the Coast Guard in contacting you for help when needed.

It is also important for you to record your missions with the correct Mission Code that corresponds with your Summary of Activities. The combination of the two is then verified by your Information Services Officer. Although all “99” mission codes are “lumped” together for budget purposes, by the Coast Guard, the Auxiliary keeps them separate for reporting statistics. Also, your Miles and Costs for non-reimbursable expenses, reported under “99” entries, along with all the other Mission Codes, are important as they are included when the Coast Guard prepares their budget for the Auxiliary.

Excellent instructions for entering your information in AUXDATA II, are posted on the National website - www.cgaux.org. On the left side of the home page screen, click on AUX Data II. Next, click on “Member How To” (you will need to Sign In with your Member ID and Member Zone password). There you will see AUXDATA II How To Guides and Instructions for Members” that includes information about 29 different AUXDATA II subjects. If you are not familiar with AUXDATA II terminology and features, check out “AUXDATA II How to Understand the Basics,” it should alleviate any anxiety that you may have.

And always remember – “Communication – the thread that binds and keeps an organization from unraveling at the seams.” AUXDATA II is an important tool for communicating information and it NEEDS YOU!

Also remember: If it’s not in AUXDATA, it didn’t happen!



2025 Polar Bear Plunge

Article and Photographs by Donna Doyle, ADSO-PB

REHOBOTH BEACH, DE - Auxiliarists from across Delaware & Pennsylvania offered support to the 2025 34th Annual Polar Bear Plunge in Sussex County on Sunday, February 2, 2025.

The yearly festival benefits Special Olympics Delaware and the plunge is the final event in the 3-day weekend festival. The most notable event of the weekend, the Polar Bear Plunge, had a record number of 4416 people running into the Atlantic Ocean this year. Festival organizers say the water was a chilly 37 degrees, it was just about 41 degrees outside and the Plunge raised over \$1.2 million to benefit athletes in Special Olympics Delaware.

Flotillas represented: 12-02, 12-03, 12-05, 12-09, 4-07. CMDR Moose and CWO Mickey Price also provided support.



Mr. Coastie, with handlers Auxiliarists Straneva and Pettigrew, interacted with many on the boardwalk.



Auxiliarists Chaimowitz and Cebula posed with members of the New Castle County Volunteer Dive Team, Nick Dolan and Zakey Trusty.



Bears anxiously waiting on the beach for the count-down to be 0-GO!

2025 Polar Bear Plunge

Continued

It's GO time!



BRRRR...Where's my towel?



Long-time plunge volunteer, Auxiliarist Grimminger, giving advice to new volunteer Lemire.



Auxiliarists Golden and Weissman

AUXCOM/TCO Operators Celebrate the Auxiliary's Birthday With a Slice of HAM

By Mike Slepian, SO-PA Division 18

If you wanted to cook up a way to combine Auxiliary Communications training with Amateur (HAM) Radio skills to celebrate the 85th birthday of the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, how would you slice it? Continue the tradition begun by AUXCOM/TCO Radio Inspector, Auxiliarist Daniel Amoroso. Hold a special, radio event on the HAM Radio bands and contact other HAMS throughout the United States and beyond. That's exactly what we did in Southern New Jersey along with approximately 200 other Hams across the United States who also happen to be trained, United States Coast Guard Auxiliary Communications operators. While the actual Auxiliary birthday was June 23, 1939, many Auxiliarists are busy with on-water patrols and other seasonal activities, so we selected September 14-15 for our radio operations.

And what better place to stage our on-air celebration than from one of the original Coast Guard Auxiliary buildings, right in Cape May, New Jersey, an official Coast Guard Community and home of the United States Coast Guard Basic Training Center. First, we brought in our personal, HAM Radio equipment. Antenna set up came next, erecting a portable, vertical antenna on the floating dock behind the building. We added a horizontal, tuned, long wire antenna to give us the best opportunity to get our 100 watt signal out.

We filled the airwaves from the historic "Shack" built in 1890 as a boathouse for the United States Lifesaving Service, eventually becoming a U.S. Coast Guard boathouse. Since 1947 the building has been assigned to the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Our historic setting provided an excellent backdrop for media coverage.

Operating as N2S, an FCC specially assigned call sign, using High Frequency and VHF voice and digital modes, Auxiliary operators told HAMS nationwide about Coast Guard Auxiliary patrols on the waters of Southern New Jersey, standing watch on Coast Guard ships, standing radio watch at Coast Guard stations, teaching boating safety and more. Our operating strategy was to tell the Auxiliary story, rather than run quick contacts. In addition, many of our operators included back up information on their QRZ.com, an internet website that enables HAMS to create their own, individual web pages.

Although band conditions were limited due to a massive solar flare, we contacted HAM Operators from Duluth, Minnesota, to Kentucky and even HAMS at a first responder training facility in Indiana. Our most unusual contact was with a sailboat off the coast of Denmark!



Continued on the next page...

AUXCOM/TCO Operators

Continued



Other Auxiliary members gained excellent public exposure while enjoying hundreds of QSO's. Melissa Frank, Auxiliary Commander for District 7, Division 15 in Citrus Springs, Florida, set up with her Auxiliary team at Marjorie Harris Carr Cross, State Park in Crystal River. The public enjoyed the show as Melissa's group made 244 radio contacts across 32 states and 8 countries, including 21 HAMS operating at various state and national parks throughout the US.

"Most people don't realize that radio communications play an important role for the Coast Guard Auxiliary" said Robert Bredehoft, a member of the Cape May Auxiliary Flotilla and a Coast Guard Auxiliary radio communications officer. "Specially trained and licensed Auxiliarists provide radio back up for Auxiliary patrols, and even Auxiliary aircraft." Bradehoft also serves as the radio watch stander two days each week at Coast Guard Station Cape May.

Communications officer Dave King, Flotilla Commander for 5nr Flotilla 1808 in Marlton, NJ, added, "To demonstrate our ability to provide back-up communications to the Coast Guard, this is a combined effort with our Cape May Flotilla coordinating with radio operators from the Marlton, New Jersey Flotilla and with approximately 50 additional stations around the country."

-Semper Paratus-



AUXILIARY TABLE BANNER AT TRACEN

by COMO Joseph Giannattasio

CAPE MAY, NJ - Auxiliary Culinary Assistance (AUXCA) members who regularly support USCG Training Center Cape May (TRACENCM) are excited to display their new Coast Guard Auxiliary table banner.

Local Auxiliarists have been instrumental in TRACENCM's weekly Recruit Family Dinner and Breakfast since its inception in 2007. The table banner idea not only offers insight into the Auxiliary but also acts as a catalyst, encouraging new Coast Guard family members and friends to consider joining and actively supporting their loved ones as members.

The AUXCA Program serves to support the U.S. Coast Guard and the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary for all culinary needs. It is a very rewarding program for all participants regardless of expertise or abilities. There is a place in the AUXCA program for all members.

Coast Guard Auxiliary photo by CPO Kate Vassal.



Vessel Safety Checks: Making a Difference

By Rick Young

ADSO – Marine Safety (Qualifications)

The vessel safety check (VSC) is often said to not be about the boat but about the boater because if done correctly is a teachable moment. The typical VSC is often a case of the Auxiliarist encountering a boatowner, going through the Form 7012 and awarding the decal. While that may be typical, those are not necessarily the most memorable occasions.

Sometime ago I asked a boatowner if he would like me to perform a VSC on his 20-foot center console and he agreed. The boat was at his dock and his young daughter and son were present. They were more than curious about the safety check and as a consequence I asked the dad if it was alright with him if they could assist. He readily agreed and I began going through the checklist being certain to help the kids find the items but then taking the time to explain their purpose as well as some of the key points about how they were effectively used. Afterwards one of the kids would replace it into its storage location.



This VSC probably took twice as long as usual for a similar size boat, but in the end those two kids not only understood why everyone needed to wear a lifejacket, that it needed to be in good repair, and that they had to look for the USCG approval. Then we worked our way through navigation lights, fire extinguishers, proper location of the throwable cushion, and even why battery terminals needed to be protected.

After examining all of the equipment my conversation with the kids focused on the discussion side of the Form 7012 and we spent considerable time talking about the float plan and for getting good weather information before setting out. To say that they were quick learners would have been an understatement. The boat easily passed, the decal awarded, and I observed the younger one attach it to the port side. The two of them beamed with satisfaction.

Like all good stories, however, this one also has an epilogue—actually three of them. 1) About a week later when running some errands I ran into their mom who shared with me that the kids would not stop talking about their visit from the Coast Guard and that the examination form

now resided under a magnet on their refrigerator! 2) the daughter, who was the older of the two, signed up and took the Boating Safety Course. Only later did I learn that she also earned a perfect score on the exam), and 3) I have been invited back on successive summers to do VSCs.

Continued on the next page...

Vessel Safety Checks: Making a Difference

Continued

In recounting this VSC event, in what ways was recreational boating safety advanced? There are several:

- The kids learned that while boating is a fun activity, there are responsibilities that come with it.
- They now knew about the safety equipment onboard dad's boat, where it was kept, and how it was used.
- They realized the importance of telling someone where they were going whenever the boat was to leave its dock.
- Taking a Boating Safety Course is not only legally required, but also just a good idea; and
- Maybe, just maybe, they will want to become Auxiliarists once they reach the age.

If there is a moral to this story, it is that there is value to engaging kids in the VSC process because it can pay many dividends. Just make certain that if you do so be certain to obtain parental permission.



A Coast Guard Thanksgiving Community Celebration with Auxiliary Support

Article by COMO Joseph Giannattasio

Photos by David Sedlak and Joseph Giannattasio

For the seventh consecutive year, on November 23rd, educators, local business owners, community members, and District 5NR Auxiliarists came together to express their gratitude to the families of USCG Station Cape May and the homeported cutters. They honored their sacrifices with a heartfelt Thanksgiving meal, complete with all the traditional fixings. The event, which was first organized by the late Dr. John Burns, former Auxiliary Unit Coordinator for the station and Assistant Principal at Cumberland County Technical Education Center (CCTEC), along with Chef Robert Ohlsen, CCTEC Culinary Arts Instructor, has become a cherished tradition. Over the years, it has provided a special family-style dinner for nearly 400 active duty service members and their loved ones.

More than 650 active duty, reserve, and civilian personnel work at the USCG Training Center Cape May (TRACEN) and its 15 tenant commands. Like service members stationed elsewhere, those in Cape May face the challenges of spending holidays away from home. Many are unable to return to their families for the season, and others experience the heartache of a loved one's deployment, leaving a noticeable absence at the table.

Lieutenant Anthony Gallegos, who leads the station, played a key role in ensuring that this annual gesture of community support continued. Thanks to his leadership, the Thanksgiving dinner was once again made possible, offering a warm, family-style meal for Coast Guard personnel and their families. Due to the operational needs of the Duty Section, which requires them to be ready for an emergency in less than six minutes, the dinner was held at the Oceanside Community Club within TRACEN.

The event was made even more special by the generous donation of food from Nick DiRenzo, owner of Westside Meats in Rio Grande. For the first time, the new CCTEC Food Truck was used to facilitate food preparation and service, offering a wider array of piping-hot entrees and side dishes. Chef Robert Ohlsen oversaw the meal preparation, assisted by CCTEC students and staff, including Dr. Dina Rossi, Captain Andre Lopez, and Douglas Bonner, as well as Chef Rob's wife Teresa and Chris Burns, widow of Dr. John Burns. The volunteers ensured everyone had plenty to eat and enjoyed good company.

Continued on the next page...



A Coast Guard Thanksgiving

Continued

Auxiliary members David Sedlak, Marty Sannino, Don Dobson, Brenda Landau, and Joe Giannattasio helped with the venue setup and service. The goal of the event was simple: to provide a Thanksgiving feast for Coast Guard members and their families, particularly those unable to travel home for the holiday. It's a heartfelt way of showing appreciation to those who serve, especially those separated from their families during the season of thanks.

The dinner was a resounding success. About 53 active-duty personnel and their families enjoyed a sit-down meal together, savoring the delicious offerings prepared by the community. In addition, meals were prepared for Officers of the Deck from Coast Guard cutters and the base Fire Station, who received take-out meals. The entire event was a beautiful expression of gratitude, bringing people together and capturing the true spirit of Thanksgiving. It was an unforgettable afternoon, filled with warmth, fellowship, and appreciation for the sacrifices made by our service members and their families.



History of the District and Auxiliary



Saving 5 NR History

By Tim Marks, DSO-PB

Previously ran summer of 2023 and Spring 2024:

In talking with Steve Marthouse, our 5NR Historian, he thought it would be interesting and more valuable to you, the members, if he would have your input as to what you might like him to write about, cover, or explain rather than him trying to write something that he thinks you would be interested in.

The idea is that Steve would create a column in each newsletter such as "Ask the Auxiliary Historian" or "Ever wonder why the Auxiliary _____?"

So, here is your chance! The Coast Guard Auxiliary and 5NR have a long and storied history, with the Coast Guard having a history as old as the country. Is there something you were wondering about? Is there a topic you wanted to learn more about? Is there a piece of Coast Guard or Auxiliary history that you wish you knew more about?

Feel free to ask your questions directly to Historian Marthouse. He will then address them in future issues of Topside.

Email: sjmarthouse@gmail.com



***Steve Marthouse
5NR Historian
ADSO-PB History***



The Forgotten Military Ammo Bunker of Cape May

Article by Timothy Marks, DSO-PB, Photo by COMO Joe Giannattasio

In the quiet marshlands of Cape May, New Jersey, a wartime secret has slept for over 100 years. A concrete ammo bunker—built in 1917 to prepare sailors for World War. Stories of the “lost bunker” circulated among old-timers, resurfacing now and then through grainy photos in newspapers or cryptic mentions on social media. It became a ghost story. A piece of living legend. For Coast Guard Auxiliaries Joseph Giannattasio, Donald Dobson, and Marty Sannino, that legend wasn’t just idle chatter—it was a call to action.

COMO Giannattasio was no stranger to uncovering history, he’s an experienced relic hunter and a member of the Explorers Club. So when he came across archival maps and records hinting at the bunker’s potential location, he saw an adventure. During downtime between patrols and training workshops, Giannattasio shared his findings with Dobson and Sannino. The idea was simple: follow the clues, hike into the wetlands, and find the last remnant of a long-forgotten naval training camp. The others were immediately on board. A treasure hunt was afoot.



(LEFT TO RIGHT) Auxiliaries Don Dobson and Marty Sannino beside the uncovered WWI Ammo Bunker.

In 1917, as the United States entered World War I, Cape May was transformed into a hub of military activity. The U.S. Navy quickly established Section Base 9 at Sewell’s Point—now the site of Coast Guard Training Center (TRACEN) Cape May. Nearby, across farmland leased from Henry Ford for just \$1, a second facility emerged: the Wissahickon Barracks Training Center. The center grew to include 40 buildings: barracks, a naval aviation school, mess halls, a chapel, a YMCA, ammo bunkers, and more. Over 8,000 sailors and marines trained at the site, aided by a rail spur built by the reservists themselves to connect with the Pennsylvania and Reading Railroad.

But after the war ended in 1919, the facility was dismantled, per Ford’s lease terms. His plans to build a factory on the site never materialized, and the camp’s structures vanished—except for one. The ammo bunker.

In April, armed with a topographic map, GPS devices, and determination, Giannattasio, Dobson, and Sannino ventured into Cape May’s dense woodlands. Sloshing through bogs and fighting thorny underbrush, they searched for clues buried under a century of overgrowth. Then, they found it.

Emerging between two trees, they stood before an eight-foot-tall concrete bunker. Partially buried and cloaked in vines, the structure was unmistakably military—stoic, solid, and scarred by time. The bunker was rectangular, with two doorways leading to four separate chambers. Its rounded concrete roof was still intact, though the floors were now covered in several inches of brackish water. The chambers were bare, save for the history spanning over a century. They had done what few thought possible: they had found Cape May’s lost bunker.

Continued on the next page...

The Forgotten Military Ammo Bunker of Cape May

Continued

While Coast Guard Auxiliarists are trained to support search-and-rescue missions, maritime safety, and disaster response, fellowship remains one of the cornerstones of their service. That spirit of camaraderie and shared adventure is what brought Giannattasio, Dobson, and Sannino together—and what led them into the woods in search of a forgotten chapter of local naval history. In rediscovering the bunker, they didn't just connect with the past—they reminded us all that history isn't always found in books or museums. Sometimes, it lies hidden nearby, waiting for someone curious enough to seek it out.



Sailors march in Camp Wissahickon.

Photo by the Cape May Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts & Humanities.

Commandant Ellsworth P. Bertholf

Congressional Gold Medal recipient and fourth Commandant of the United States Coast Guard

By Leon C. DeFulgentis, AUXPA3

Commandant Ellsworth P. Bertholf was a Congressional Gold Medal recipient who later served as the fourth Commandant of the United States Coast Guard. During his tenure as Commandant, Bertholf's leadership was critical to the Coast Guard's survival at a time when outside agencies wanted to take it over or split up its mission among several different agencies.

Ellsworth P. Bertholf was born in New York City on April 7, 1866. He entered the Revenue Cutter Service as a cadet on September 14, 1885. In 1887 he graduated from the Revenue Cutter School of Instruction and was assigned to the cutter Levi Woodbury. Bertholf served two years at sea before receiving his commission as a third lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service. He served through all grades, on ships stationed along parts of the coast of the United States and Alaska.

In November 1897, Bertholf received orders assigning him to the U.S. Revenue Cutter Bear homeported in Seattle, Washington. His most noted service occurred in Alaska. In 1897, Bertholf along with First Lieutenant David Jarvis and Dr. Samuel Call, made up the relief party which became known as the Alaska Overland Expedition. Two hundred seventy-five American whalers were in danger of starving when their vessels became trapped in ice. Bertholf searched Inuit villages for sled teams since there was a lack of trained dogs to be used as dog sled teams. The party reached the stranded whalers in early March 1898, enduring temperatures as low as -45 degrees Fahrenheit. In 1902, Jarvis, Call, and Bertholf were awarded Congressional Gold Medals in recognition of their heroic efforts which has been hailed as one of the most perilous rescue missions in maritime history.



Commandant Bertholf

Source: Coast Guard Historian's Office

Continued on the next page...

Commandant Ellsworth P. Bertholf

Continued

On June 19, 1911, Bertholf was appointed Captain-Commandant of the United States Revenue Cutter Service. Commandant Bertholf organized a defense against a proposal in 1911 stating that the military responsibilities of the Revenue Cutter Service should be turned over to the Navy and other civilian duties should be shared by several other agencies. Bertholf gathered facts about Revenue Cutter Service operations in order to justify its existence and met with Sumner Kimball, the head of the U.S. Life Saving Service to draft a plan to merge the two services to form the U.S. Coast Guard. President Woodrow Wilson assisted with passing legislation to create the U.S. Coast Guard and Senate Bill 2337, "An Act to Create the Coast Guard" was signed into law on January 28, 1915. Bertholf was later reappointed in 1915 to the same office when President Woodrow Wilson merged the Revenue Cutter Service with the Life-Saving Service to form the U.S. Coast Guard. This merger was made possible due to Bertholf's strong guidance and leadership. After the conclusion of WWI in 1918, the Navy lost thousands of experienced officers to civilian life and proposed to absorb the Coast Guard and its assets to solve this problem. Commandant Bertholf aggressively pushed against these efforts and in 1919, the Coast Guard was successfully transferred back to the Treasury Department.

Upon his retirement as Commandant of the Coast Guard on June 30, 1919, he became one of the vice presidents of the American Bureau of Shipping. Bertholf became an influential figure at that institution. He died of a heart attack in New York City on November 11, 1921 and was buried at Arlington National Cemetery. The U.S. Coast Guard cutter Bertholf (WMSL 750) was commissioned on August 4, 2008 and named in his honor.

Sources: USCG.mil, Noble, Dennis L. (1994). *That Others Might Live: The U.S. Life-Saving Service, 1878-1915*. Naval Institute Press. *USCGC Bertholf* commissioning, USCG.mil

USCGC Bertholf, Source: USCG.mil



5NR Obscura



Futuro Houses

These forlorn UFOs in Milford DE, and Willingboro, NJ are of only a few remaining "moveable ski chalets" of its kind.

The 'Futuro House' was conceived by Matti Suuronen in 1968 as a prefabricated "portable" ski chalet. It is an iconic piece of architecture meant to be a cheap, durable, and stylish little dwelling that could be placed in any environment. Made of fiberglass and plastic, the homes could be broken down into 16 individual pieces and bolted together wherever the owner wanted, from a snowy mountainside to a sunny beach. Unfortunately, the space age design may have been a bit too ahead of its time for most communities, which along with an oil shortage, cut the future of these bulbous vacation shacks short.

Fewer than a hundred sci-fi-inspired Futuro Houses were ever produced, and now fewer than 67 remain



Photographs by COMO Joseph Giannattasio

TOPSIDE presents the District 5NR Obscura platform as a space for members to exchange discoveries of unique, hidden, and extraordinary attractions within Auxiliary District Fifth Northern. If you're aware of a captivating, intriguing, or lesser-known spot in your area of the district, please share a couple of photos along with a concise description with our Editor. This way, fellow members can savor these gems and perhaps experience them during their own journeys.

Photos from Across the District



Division Day for Division 20

Raystown Lake Visitor Center in Pennsylvania on Saturday, 08 MAR 2025.

Article and Photos by Walter Conway, DCAPT-W

The first picture is of Mark Wirtz who was selected as the Division 20 Auxiliary of the Year for 2024. Shown alongside Mr. Wirtz is Steve Bugaj, who is the Division Commander for Division 20. The second picture is Bill Turner who was presented with a membership service award for 20 years with the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Standing alongside Mr. Turner is Steve Bugaj, who is the Division Commander for Division 20.

Please note that part of the Division Day's activities included uniform inspections (hence the ODU's in the pictures). Some members were in Trops and others in ODU's since those were all eligible uniforms of the day at the event. The Division Day included their Division meeting and core training courses as well. It was a beautiful breezy and sunny day at Raystown with plenty of preparations being made for the warmer weather activities that will follow this spring, summer and fall.



Spring 2025 D-Train
Photos by Walter Conway, DCAPT-W

Lunchtime Awards



Spring 2025 DTRAIN

Photographs taken by Donna Doyle



Spring 2025 DTRAIN

Photographs taken by Donna Doyle





USCGC Heron, Station Atlantic City, and a helo from Airsta AC.

Photograph by Leon Christopher DeFulgentis

Wear Your Life Jacket at Work Day

Photographs by Leon Christopher DeFulgentis



(Below Left) The Coast Guard Auxiliary Ensign -

Coast Guard Auxiliary members enjoy certain honors and privileges, among these is the proud tradition of wearing the Auxiliary uniform and flying the Auxiliary Ensign—a visible symbol of commitment and service.

Known as the “Blue Ensign,” the Auxiliary flag features a bold blue field crossed by a white diagonal stripe bearing the Auxiliary emblem. This ensign is more than just a flag—it is a mark of trust, professionalism, and the bond between the Auxiliary and the Coast Guard.

Auxiliarists are authorized to fly the Auxiliary Ensign on inspected surface facilities and non-operational vessels. When flown underway, an Auxiliarist must be present aboard, ensuring the flag is always representing dedicated service.

The conduct of every Coast Guard Auxiliarist reflects directly on the integrity and public image of both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary. With each action, each mission, and each display of the uniform or ensign, Auxiliarists uphold a legacy of honor, respect, and devotion to duty.

CG Auxiliary photo by COMO Joseph Giannattasio.



Bob Lesperance, 12-09, has retired with over 20 years of service to the Auxiliary.

Photograph by Donna Doyle, ADSO-PB



Auxiliarist Dr. Sandy Dalton (center) along with fellow Auxiliarists at the conclusion of the Cutterman Ceremony (See article on pages 8-9).

Photographs by Leon Christopher DeFulgentis

A Message from the Editor

Good day 5NR,

For several reasons this issue has been delayed a couple months. I do apologize for that. The goal is to get back on track quickly.

That being said, thank you for reading this latest issue of District 5NR's newsletter. If you have something going on, whether an event, a rescue, information to share, or something else, please send it to me to be included in an upcoming issue. Thank you to all who have shared for this issue or have shared previously.

As boating season begins full-swing, it is a great time for photographs and stories. Get them to me to be featured in Topside!

Be safe out there!

Semper Paratus,
Tim Marks
DSO-PB



Timothy Marks
District Staff Officer -
Publications

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
DIRECTOR OF AUXILIARY 5NR
FIFTH COAST GUARD DISTRICT
1 WASHINGTON AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19147-4393

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Newsletter Staff

Editor

Timothy Marks

District Staff Officer for Publications

U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

5th District, Northern Region

tpmarks@comcast.net

Support

Photography

Historian

Media

Leon C. DeFulgentis

Donna Doyle

Steven Marthouse

Christopher Orlando

Come Visit us on the Web

Coast Guard Auxiliary homepage:

<http://www.cgaux.org/>

5NR Website:

<http://www.5nr.org/index.php>



Parting Shot



REHOBOTH BEACH, DE - Sunday, February 2, 2025. USCG Auxiliary Point of Contact Precht gives a briefing during the 2025 Polar Bear Plunge.

Coast Guard Auxiliary Photograph by Donna Doyle, ADSO-PB

