



# Whittier Soundings



Newsletter of the Whittier Flotilla 170-02-04 District 17 Alaska

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## Flotilla Commander Currents

By Mark Parmelee

This month I would like to talk about one of the items I always mention when someone asks me what the Auxiliary does. It has benefits for the public, the Auxiliary, and the active duty Coast Guard. Many of you know this program as you are one of Whittier Flotilla's 17 vessel examiners. In an ideal world, every one of us would be a certified vessel examiner and when a boater comes up to us in the harbor and asks for an exam we all could say, "It would be my pleasure."



The Auxiliary vessel exam program is most definitely appreciated by the public. Boating is inherently dangerous but it can be much safer with a properly equipped boat that appears to be in generally good condition. A boat with a current vessel exam

sticker has been shown to meet all federal and state requirements at the time of the inspection. Recreationists also appreciate inspections, as a stickered boat is less likely to be inspected by a Coast Guard boarding team. We conduct courtesy exams and there is no penalty if a boat does not pass. We are not a law enforcement branch and the exams are free of charge. There is no downside to an exam; especially when we have a captive audience waiting to go through the tunnel. Dave has once again offered his RV as a rolling office for Bear Valley inspections.

The active and auxiliary branches of the Coast Guard benefit in the opportunity to accomplish what is often called preventative search and rescue. Every boat that we can have properly equipped and visually inspected for problems is less likely to have serious problems. If a rescue is needed the search is much easier when boats have visual distress signals. When a boat is sinking it is too late to run down to your favorite chandlery to pick up life jackets. The vessel exam program has no doubt saved lives and property.

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## District 17 Conference

by Mark Parmelee

Thanks to the conference committee and all the auxiliaries that presented at and attended at the annual conference. Held at the Sheraton this year the conference was notable for many fine presentations and good fellowship. Several presenters from the lower 48 were brought in for their expertise. The dynamics of the sessions were super and presentations such as Noreen Folkerts and LTJG Ferko looking at different sides of requesting patrols were very valuable.

Time and time again at the conference, the new way of recording hours was brought up. Auxiliary volunteer work by itself is very rewarding and recording hours has never been a priority for many members. In 2010 the advent of web based reporting of hours was recognized as a major accomplishment for the auxiliary. With the new system it is much easier to record time donated to the Auxiliary. The work of the Coast Guard in funding our work is easier when the hours donated can be presented. If you have not recorded any hours for 2011 yet, please proceed to <http://webforms.cgaux.org/forms/beta/> and try it out.

At the District Conference, the Whittier Flotilla received two distinctions. We received the award for the Most Activity in Search and Rescue and the award for the Highest Percentage of Overall Activity.



This last award, the Commodore Parke Award, is what I am hoping the Flotilla will receive in 2011. As we already received it in 2010, I can only hope we will do as well this year.

Many of our Whittier Flotilla members received due recognition according to the hours they donated in 2010. Some of the names repeat time and again as we are fortunate to have some very giving individuals within our flotilla. I hope to not forget anyone's recognition received but the following individuals were recognized:

Dave Brubaker, received awards for Performing the Most Patrol Hours as Coxswain, Most Hours as Lead Instructor, and as the 2010 Division 2 Outstanding Auxiliary of the Year.



Roy Stoddard received the Auxiliary Achievement Medal.



Linda Shogren received an award for publication hours.



Tom Kane was recognized for website design and maintenance. Tom also received an Auxiliary Letter of Commendation as coxswain for Operation Yukon Coastie. Russ Lyday and Dave Brubaker were recog-



nized for public education hours. Rae De Ley, Dave Brubaker, Jim Chase, Tom Kane, and Linda Shogren received recognition in public affairs. Operation Big Lake Team included Whittier Flotilla members Cathey and Stewart Sterling, Terry and Roy Stoddard, Rae De Ley, Tom Kane and Mary Southard. Lastly, the Auxiliary Station Whittier Team of Dave



Brubaker, Rae De Ley, Russ Lyday, Mark Parmelee, Will Frost, Chris Pallister, Tom Kane, Bill Reiter, Linda Shogren, Mary Southard, Stewart Sterling, Cathey Sterling, John Hightower, Bill Holzheimer, Rick Sparenga, Bill Morris, Bob Renke, and Vincent Browne were recognized.

## Auxiliary's National Commodore Jim Vass visits Whittier, Alaska

by Tom Kane

District 17 was honored by the presence of Commodore Jim Vass, the National Commodore for the Coast Guard Auxiliary, at their District Conference which was held at the Sheraton Anchorage on Feb. 11, 12 and 13. After a demanding weekend of classes, meetings and banquets, Monday was a relax day since he wasn't flying out until 2200 that night. COMO Stoddard thought it might be nice to show him the small town of Whittier and the AuxStation which is a Caboose. This is the only Caboose utilized by the Coast Guard Auxiliary. I was asked to come along and take a few pictures.

One of the first things I did, after being asked to go, was to check the weather app on my phone. The wind was predicted to be a sustained 40 mph with gusts in excess of 70 mph. This could be interesting. The decision was made to drive down the Seward Highway and see how it went. Girdwood was a winter wonderland but we couldn't stay long because we had to make it to Portage before the tunnel opened. We arrived with only minutes to spare. The tunnel, which only opens its doors for five minutes during the winter, was just about to open when we arrived. There were only 5 cars going into Whittier. The drive along Turnagain Arm was awesome. It was acutely clear and the mountains leapt up to meet the azure blue sky. We were treated to several sightings of mountain goats on the cliffs above and an eagle soaring over the inlet.

Arriving in Whittier was a real eye opener. The wind was blowing as hard as predicted. We stopped on the road to overlook the Cliffside Marina and check Roy's boat. The canal was covered in white caps and the swells were rushing down the outside of the cruise ship dock. The western most float was covered in ice several feet thick. The wind would blow so hard that it would conjure up waterspouts. When we parked in front of the Caboose, everyone made a mad dash into the Caboose and no one dared stop for a photograph for fear of either being blown down the icy street by the wind or freezing in the cold 5-degree air. Who knows what the wind chill might have been.

Inside the caboose, it was warmer. Dave Brubaker had turned on the small ceramic heaters the day before and they had been struggling to get it to 40 degrees. In spite of being secured with hurricane straps the Caboose felt like it might be blown away by the strong gusts. A two-foot snowdrift was wedged into one corner of the Caboose where snow was driven through a small gap in the door. Before getting back into the car, I managed to snap a few pictures.



After a brief driving tour of Whittier, we landed at the Historical Museum where Dave Brubaker presented Commodore Vass with a ball cap



emblazoned with the Whittier Flotilla logo. He seemed pleased to get it and immediately swapped hats. By the way, if you haven't been to the Whittier Historical Museum, you should consider going. Someone has collected tons of historical photos and objects about Whittier and displayed it rather professionally in this venue. Later, we made our way over to the Inn at Whittier for lunch. We were the only guests in the dining room. The few people in the bar provided the only noise and activity. It was very pleasant to exchange stories and jokes in the warm room while looking out the large bay windows at the raging storm. I am sure that Commodore Vass was thinking about getting back to his home in Port O'Connor, Texas where it may be in the high seventies. I'm guessing that when he thinks about Alaska it will be the trip to Whittier that he remembers.

Photos in this article courtesy of Tom Kane

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## Public Affairs Event

by Roy Stoddard, DCO D-17

"GASS" also known as Great Alaska Sportsman Show, held Thursday, March 21, through Sunday, April 3, 2011, at the Sullivan Arena in Anchorage.

No matter what the weather conditions are outside, we know that summer ideas will abound inside the arena.

Our booth space will be in the same location as in past years. This year we will share our booth space with Sector Anchorage personnel to assist in answering any Coast Guard questions.

Please stop by and visit our booth and members while you browse through the multitude of outdoor sports related vendor booths. Our booth will not cost you any money to visit.

Sullivan Arena can get very crowded, and parking can fill to overflowing proportions. Annually this three and a half day event will host approximately 22,000 visitors. In the past, there has been a Sportsman Show shuttle from the mid-town area.

## After the Conference

By Terry Stoddard

Another District 17 Winter Conference is now in the history books. A new location with a number of visitors from the “Lower 48” helped make our conference a huge success. Or was it the Wii Olympics, the exceptional array of raffle items, or the gathering of our fellow Auxiliarists from around Alaska. Each of these events along with a wide range of training classes and our fully stocked District Materials Store helped make our District Conference a busy and productive weekend for all who attended.

Now, we start planning for the 2012 conference. When, where, and what training do we offer our members? These are big questions that need answered.

Less than one year remains until our biggest fellowship of the year!

Volunteers wishing to share their ideas, attend numerous phone conferences, and meet the challenges of helping plan the 2012 conference, please consider getting onboard this rollercoaster for a fast and exciting ride.

If you want to be a member of our dedicated, fun-loving group of planners, please email Terry Stoddard at [TerryStoddard@gci.net](mailto:TerryStoddard@gci.net)

## Spring Member Training

By Scott Thorsell

The AUXSEA class concluded on February 24 with a number of auxiliaries taking the qualifying exam. Many thanks to Dean Terencio for his engaging and thorough instruction on Chapter 8 Navigation Rules. The AUXSEA class is a core requirement for qualification as an Operational Auxiliary.

An 8-hour Team Coordination Training (TCT) class is scheduled to begin March 22nd at 6pm in the BP Energy Center. The class will occur over three evenings including March 24th and 31st. This is a required course for auxiliaries interested in Operations. The full 8-hour class must be taken every 5 years. The shorter refresher TCT course and OPS workshop are scheduled for April 21st. Location is the BP Energy Center at 6pm.

This year the Vessel Examination workshop is scheduled for March 19 at 2pm. The location will be Scott Thorsell’s boathouse in south Anchorage. Navigational instructions will be provided to those registered for the workshop.

Please always check the flotilla website under “Member Training Calendar” for information and updates on scheduled training. Notify Scott Thorsell by email at [pwsxplr@gci.net](mailto:pwsxplr@gci.net) or by phone at 344-4843 if interested in any of the training listed.



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Auxiliary benefits include making a connection with the boating public. Our comments that the weather is rough and we personally are not going out could be just the encouragement to have a boat trailering into Whittier think twice about going out in 20 knot winds and 4 foot seas. During an exam it is also a perfect time to put in a plug for our winter boating classes. I have business cards at every flotilla meeting and you are welcome to use them as contact cards if boaters want to know more about the flotilla. The back side of the card has our website and other useful information.

There are four steps to becoming a Vessel Examiner:

1. Read the Auxiliary Vessel Examiner Manual. The current version from 1996 is M16796.2E. You can access the manual at

[http://www.uscg.mil/directives/cim/16000-16999/CIM\\_16796\\_2E.pdf](http://www.uscg.mil/directives/cim/16000-16999/CIM_16796_2E.pdf)

2. Take the open book Vessel Examiner Exam. You have three hours to complete the test and need to get a 90% or better score to pass. When you are ready you can take the test online by going to

<http://ntc.cgaux.org/>. Enter your Auxiliary number and password and scroll down to VE and take the test. Don't worry if you don't have a password. There is a tab at the site to get one. I apologize in advance if you get logged out, disconnected or some other thing comes up to prevent you from successfully taking the test. I can assure you the testing does work most of the time. I've successfully taken a number of courses on line.

3. Come to our flotilla's annual vessel exam workshop on March 19th. Scott Thorsell is hosting this at his boat garage. Contact Scott for details on getting to his boat garage.

4. Lastly conduct 5 Courtesy Marine Exams, Personal Watercraft Safety Checks, or Auxiliary facility examinations with a currently qualified Vessel Examiner.

Once certified you will be issued the water resistant clipboard and you will be entitled to request appropriate personal protective equipment to be identifiable on the docks. Ross Blaker is heading up the Vessel Examiner program this year and he already has some stickers for 2011. Most years the flotilla conducts over 170 inspections. Although in 2007 the flotilla completed 250 exams with Roy doing an even 100 of them himself. I'm game for any number of exams for the flotilla this year but it will be difficult for anyone

person to beat Roy's record. (Although for those interested, Roy lately he has been busy doing other things.)



Admiral Colvin receiving 2010 Yukon Coastie Paddle from COMO Stoddard



<http://cgauxalaska.org/>

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

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All photos other than the National Commodore article photos are courtesy of Stewart Sterling.