



Riverside Flotilla Monthly Newsletter
District 8W Division 31 Flotilla 06 Wichita, Kansas

SPLASH

Volume 33
Issue 2
March, 2005



Homeland
Security

United States Coast Guard Auxiliary
America's Volunteer Lifesavers™

The Storm Warriors of the Northwest

By PA3 Jeff Pollinger

ILWACO, Wash. -- The calm-voiced Captain of a disabled 86-footer radioed the Coast Guard to request assistance. A motor lifeboat crew from the station responded, expecting simply to tow the fisherman and his boat safely into port. However, search and rescue cases, like the sea they are played out on, are unpredictable and often deadly.

In this case the challenge came when the vessel's net entangled and fouled the 52-foot motor lifeboat's twin 36-inch brass propellers.

Quickly, the Coast Guard crew released the motor lifeboat's anchor. The swift currents of the North Pacific paused only momentarily before snapping the 3-inch nylon line leaving the anchor useless on the bottom. Now, the worst possible scenario for any coxswain was playing out; the motor lifeboat had lost its ability to maneuver in those intended to be rescued close to running into the pilings and smashing the 1960's-era res-

Both the rescuer and were dangerously of a nearby bridge cue boat.

The imperiled parties needed help.

Enter Petty Officer 1st Class Beth Slade, a seasoned Surfman from Station Cape Disappointment. Capably responding to single vessel marine emergencies has been a career in the making,

but rescuing two stricken vessels simultaneously would test her skills - capabilities developed over a life-long journey of self discovery and professional development.

For Slade, a Spokane, Wash. native, the satisfaction of saving lives far outweighs the inherent risk of doing so. And risk was a primary concern to her as she approached the now-critical situation. One of the biggest problems facing Slade was the combined weight of the two vessels in need of quick help as they exceeded the towing limitations of the gray-hulled, 47-foot motor lifeboat.

At risk of losing both life and property, she maneuvered into position and took both vessels in tow and out of harm's way. Taking this action was a tough, but measured decision based on years of boat handling that began as a youth.

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Ilwaco, Wash – Petty Officer 1st Class Beth Slade operates a 47-ft motor lifeboat near Peacock Spit. Slade is the only active female surfman in the entire Coast Guard. Official USCG photo

Riverside Flotilla 31-06
Henry Jennings FC

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The SPLASH will be published bi-monthly in January, March, May, July, September, and November. Submit all articles and pictures no later than 14 days prior to the first day of the month of publication for inclusion. Articles may be hand written, typed, or in Microsoft Word or text format. Pictures may be digital (jpg or tif) or photographs. Please submit all articles, comments and suggestions to:

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CALENDAR of EVENTS

March 4 - 5	8WR Spring
Conference @ Tulsa, OK	
March 15, 2005	Flotilla Meeting
March 18 - 20, 2005	CAP SAREX @
Eldorado Airport	
March 19, 2005	ABC Class Great Plains
Nature Center	
March 31, 2005	Facility Inspections due
April 9, 2005	Spring Board/31-9 host
April 16, 2005	ABC Class Great Plains
Nature Center	
April 19, 2005	Flotilla Meeting
Fairmont Church	
April 29 - May 1, 2005	Kansas Emergency Ser-
vices Academy	

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Slade loves being on the water. Some of her fondest childhood memories include operating boats on Lake Coeur d'Alene, while at her father's Idaho cabin. This love eventually manifested itself into a career where small boat operations in the Coast Guard became the pinnacle of a career progression that started just after high school.

Slade's first assignment was aboard the 378-foot, Seattle-based, Coast Guard Cutter Mellon. Although the cutter provided her a chance to experience life aboard a large vessel, her true desire was to operate a small boat. The small boat experience came upon transfer to Coast Guard Station Woods Hole, Mass and then swapped billets bringing her back to her home state to face the tempestuous Pacific at Station Cape Disappointment.

Slade began surf training in 2000 in some of the most severe sea conditions anywhere. The Coast Guard's Heavy Weather Training School offers a demanding two-week course at the National Motor Lifeboat School, co-located with the station.

Slade said that although some students in the class at times felt like they were in over their heads, the instructors ensured that everyone completed the training requirements to graduate. However, completion of the heavy weather course was just the beginning of the journey to becoming a Coast Guard Surfman.

As a small boat coxswain, Slade completed hundreds of hours of training operating small boats and, while training, was fortunate enough to participate in several rescues.

In doing so, she quickly learned that conditions on the this craggy, wind swept, and desolate coast give pause to even the best trained and equipped mariners.

These waters are known as the graveyard of the Pacific; earning this reputation for claiming hundreds of lives and vessels during the last century. It is no easy task to confront such a relentless adversary on a daily routine.

Surfmen who live and work on arguably the most dan-

gerous river bar in the country regularly risk their lives to ensure the safety of mariners. For Slade and her fellow Surfmen, this is a task bestowed only on the strong willed and courageous, it is reserved for them.

Slade recalls, with some trepidation, transiting through the river's Clatsop Spit, near the station, when a 16-foot wave caught her in a vulnerable position and pushed her boat onto its side.

Calling on the training given by sage surf instructors, Slade called upon the boat's full power to break the grips of the frigid monster. Uneasy at first, the 47-footer lumbered ahead of the enveloping wave and eventually righted itself.

Indeed, it is just this type of world-class training and use of nimble boats that continue to allow Coast Guard coxswains to survive and service a marine community in an arena where blankets of fog work with rain and a constant numbing cold to maintain a constant threat on the community and livelihood of those who ply these blue green waters.

"You are not in an ideal situation when you're looking up at a 14-to-16 foot wave," the surfman explained in an understated tone. She claims wholeheartedly that the experience gained while at school contributed significantly to her confidence and skills necessary to navigate through a day's work.

Because of her proven capabilities, character, and earned trust, she was awarded the coveted Surfman qualification in April 2002.

Although Slade is the only actively assigned female Surfman to hold the qualification, she doesn't dwell on this fact. In addition, as far as gender is concerned, it is not a determining factor when the ocean unleashes its fury. Skill, she claims, is what will keep mariners alive. When she qualified as a Surfman, she wasn't even aware that she was about among the vanguard of women Surfmen until someone told her. "It's something that I really didn't care about," she said.

Slade is proud of her accomplishments. The road to becoming a Surfman was long and difficult. On average a candidate must complete hundreds of hours of training in heavy weather under the supervision of seasoned Surfman to gain the experience necessary to become a surfman.

"It takes approximately two to four years of training and experience for most people to become a surfman., said Chief Kevin Clark, the executive petty officer at the National Motor Lifeboat School in Ilwaco, Wash. Like other elite qualifications, many Coast Guardsmen will attempt to qualify but won't succeed he explained.

Even away from the job Slade spends much of her free time with another Surfman - her husband. Scott Slade is an NMLS instructor, and also shares the same hometown of Spokane, Wash. The two met while at Station Cape Disappointment.

The stresses of saving lives and raising an infant daughter (Sarah) may seem like a daunting task for any single person but in this case the challenges seem to be the

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Uniform Tidbits

Members in uniform may wear personal display items such as bracelets, necklaces, wrist-watches, ID bracelets and rings. If visible while in uniform, these items must be conservative, non-controversial, and in good taste. There shall be no more than two rings on each hand. Eccentricities in color and manner of wear (for example, rings on every finger) shall not be worn when in uniform.

In uniform, men are prohibited from wearing earrings. Women may wear one pair of gold, silver, or pearl earrings which should be small (maximum ¼ inch) and of the round ball style. Women may wear diamond stud earrings (maximum ¼ inch) with the Dinner Dress uniforms. Dangling and hoop earrings are prohibited while in uniform. No articles, jewelry, or studs other than those specified for women shall be through or attached to the ear, nose, tongue, or any other visible body part while in uniform.

Women's cosmetics shall be of conservative color and worn in good taste. Eccentricities in color and manner of wear shall not be worn while in uniform. Men and women shall keep their nails clean. Women may wear nail polish, but the color shall be conservative and neutral in color. Decorative nail art is not authorized while in uniform

From: COMDTINST M16790.1F MAY 18, 2004
Chapter 10 - Uniforms C.3.ghi



Factoids of Customs and Courtisies

Officer's Country

Officer's country is a semi-restricted area where officers work, eat, and berth. This area is normally off limits unless invited by the host. The wardroom is located within officer's country.

Chief Petty Officer's Mess

On larger vessels, the chief petty officers (CPOs or simply chiefs) have their own mess. This is a privileged area and guests do not enter at any time unless specifically invited by a CPO of the chief's mess. The same is true of the captain's quarters (also known as "the cabin"). It is customary not to enter the crew's quarters unless invited to do so, or if it is necessary, to pass through that area in your movement from one part of the ship to another.

From: COMDTINST M16790.1F MAY 18, 2004 Chapter 12 - Uniforms D.2



Safety Corner SafeTips Lockout and Tagout

1. Always lock or tag the energy sources to gear and equipment before you start to do maintenance or repairs on them. You may need to lockout or tagout something during construction, installation, adjustments, inspections, and modifications.

2. Energy sources include electrical, hydraulic, and pneumatic. Some energy is potential, such as the energy stored in capacitors, compressed air or springs.

3. Never remove or ignore locks or tags on machinery or circuits.

4. Don't try to bypass lockouts or tagouts.

5. Remember that tagouts are warnings only.

6. Before you start to tag or lock something out, make sure that everyone affected knows what is going on.

7. Locks and tags must be durable; readable if exposed to water or chemicals; easy to identify; standardized in shape and color; marked to identify who is using it.

8. Know the six steps to de-energizing something and applying a lockout or tagout.

* Understand the equipment and its energy source. Is there a checklist or written procedure?

* Turn off the equipment.

* Isolate all the sources of energy.

* Apply the lock or tag.

* Control any residual energy.

* Verify your work.

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mortar that keeps them strong. The couple would not have it any other way.

Slade envisions passing along her years of lessons learned while working in surf. Simply put, she says she wants to stay in operations and learn her trade as long as possible. But she also knows that a promotion to a higher pay grade might land her behind a desk, something that weighs on her mind when she considers her love of being an active surfer. One way for her to do both is to follow in the footsteps of her husband.

“Ultimately,” Slade said with a hopeful smile, “I would like to be an instructor at the National Motor Lifeboat School,”



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