

## The Coast Guard Started The Courtesy Motoboat Examination Program

In 1936 as Commandant, Admiral Waesche moved to solve the Coast Guard's problems one by one. In doing so, he turned to the solution of using recreational yachtsmen to assist the Coast Guard in solving the ever-growing recreational boating safety problem. In 1938 the Coast Guard provided assistance to over 14,000 cases of recreational boaters in distress. The majority of which were caused by the boaters lack of knowledge of boating fundamentals, equipment, and laws.

So the Auxiliary was formed to assist the Coast Guard "To promote efficiency in the operation of motorboats and yachts," "To promote safety of life at sea and to effect rescues on and over the high seas and upon the navigable waters," "To foster a wider knowledge of, and better compliance with the laws, rules, and regulations governing the operation of motorboats and yachts," and "To facilitate other operations of the Coast Guard."

In 1947 two of what would be the four "cornerstones" of the modern Auxiliary were established: vessel examination and education. The Courtesy Motorboat Examination (now known as the VSC) program quickly became one of the Auxiliary's most important assignments. The Coast Guard published a booklet of safety standards and regulations, and gave the Auxiliary the authority to train its own members as inspectors.

The Auxiliary developed public education programs based upon a core lesson plan that has grown to the current BS&S series and a spin off S&S. It was this PE program that generated income for Flotillas and the major source of new members. It became the money line. So as "Deep Throat" said follow the money line.

The Coast Guard, with the Auxiliary and the USPS started a major push to have mandatory boater education. The Coast Guard's accident rate figures, even understated by lax reporting, were used as bases state by state to work in getting the states to pass such laws.

As these laws were passed several things had to happen. First, if a state puts a law on the book, there has to be a way for the citizens of that state to comply. A licensing law must provide a way and means for the citizen to get that license. Public policy then required the state to provide the training material for its citizens to study for that license. (Just think about how you get your drivers license).

The Coast Guard had/has the money as the administrator of the B-W trust fund; a mandatory tax funds it each year. As more and more boaters go on the water, the more money comes into the trust. The states apply for the funding to meet the new licensing requirements, as urged by the Coast Guard to create and the B-W funds start flowing to the states.

The states now give, free no cost, training material to its citizens the training booklet necessary to get the license it requires its citizens to have. Who to teach the class? To shorten this down, well we know the CG Aux and USPS got on the list as valid locations. Also on the list were ex-Axis/USPS, and not necessary ex, with boating training companies, the state itself. The cash register stopped ring as much state by state.

And now, we entered the year with less members than when we started coupled with a two tier system of membership, either SO or DO. Also we have a cobbled together ABC course that requires Flotilla to provide additional material and additional exams by state. It a short course, which covers the requirements, but does not teach boating. The difference between ABC and BS&S is like reading state mandated drivers license book and taking a drivers Ed course.

Who do you think is a better driver? We have a National organization that brags about bulk selling of the ABC course, and marketing letters to Flotilla saying go find a retail store to sell the course too. So the food chain (follow the money) is changing, feed national. Worse, in most cases the ABC is the same course that states give out free.

If you are going to say there is a problem, then you had better have an idea on how to solve it. By pass the PSI ogre. Go back to a time in our past when there was provisional membership and create a non-member member, our Associate member. They pay dues to national and get the red polo shirt. No PSI check, no uniforms to buy, no politics to play. They are the volunteers for RBS, they can teach classes, do VSCs, MDVs, boating booths etc.

How to make it happen! CG Aux signs an MOU with CG Aux Inc for teaching, inspecting and visiting. Just as they have with the USPS. Same, no difference. Aux Inc exams and certifies these Associate members just the same way the USPS does for its members. Not only that national can sell them a new red polo shirt that has instructor and/or vessel examiner and /or visitors in script right under the Aux Inc logo.

Follow the money. National gets the dues, as it does now for the associate membership and shares with the sponsoring Flotilla. The Flotilla sponsors

the course and tracks the money, sending National the cost of the books and supplies. Follow the associate members. Recruited to do RBS, no PSI, and no uniform. The Flotilla does not have to worry about burn out and dis-enrolling, not an Aux member. Associate member gets to come to Flotilla meetings; just can not vote r play politics.

The Flotilla gets money, gets members that do not want to be in uniform or go through the PSI. If they ever do they can. Aux Inc gets a new boating course out that teaches boating and the state requirements and lets the public know (advertising) that the CG Aux Inc is the place to get boating education.

Source: <http://www.articlecircle.com>

#### About the Author

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