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# Alaska Bear

TERROR IN THE SURF

EASY RIDING

BORDER RELATIONS

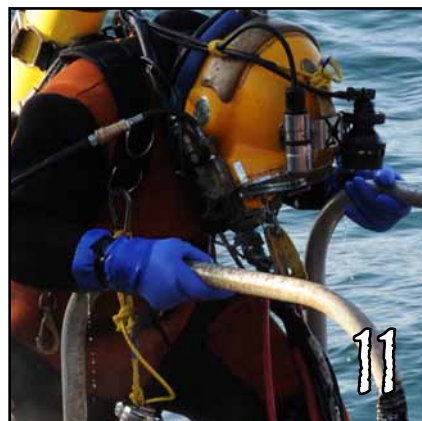
WARM EMBRACE

# Silent Success

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## Alaska Bear Staff

- District Commander -  
Rear Adm. Christopher Colvin

- External Affairs Officer -  
Lt. Eric Eggen

- Deputy External Affairs Officer-  
Chief Dana Warr

- Editor / Layout -  
PA1 David Mosley

- Staff Writers / Photographers -  
PA1 Sara Francis  
PA3 Charly Hengen  
PA3 Jon-Paul Rios  
PA3 Walter Shinn  
PA3 Jonathan Lally

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All queries concerning news and editorial content should be directed to Coast Guard external affairs, 709 W. 9th St., Juneau, AK 99801. (907) 463-2065. [www.uscgalaska.com](http://www.uscgalaska.com)

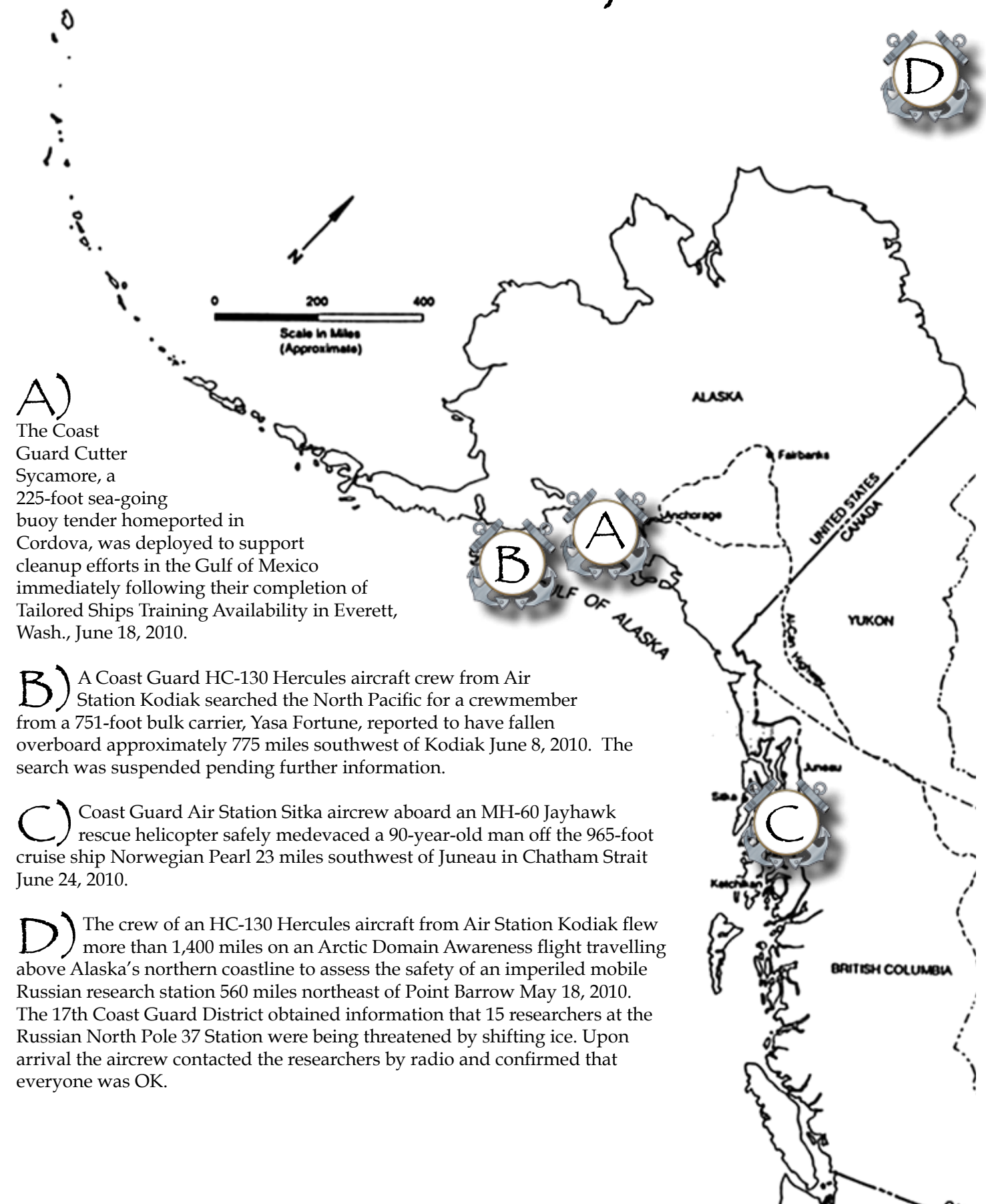
Is there an event you want covered for the Alaska Bear? Do you have an opinion to be heard? Does your unit have anything newsworthy to report? If so, we want to hear from you, call 907-463-2065.

Coast Guard external affairs  
709 W. 9th St.  
Juneau, AK 99801

### On The Cover

The 369-foot Princess Kathleen, a Canadian Pacific Railroad vessel built in 1925, grounded then later sank near Lena Point in 1952 carrying an estimated 155,000 gallons of fuel. Photo courtesy of the Alaska State Library

# Around the 17th District



A) The Coast Guard Cutter Sycamore, a 225-foot sea-going buoy tender homeported in Cordova, was deployed to support cleanup efforts in the Gulf of Mexico immediately following their completion of Tailored Ships Training Availability in Everett, Wash., June 18, 2010.

B) A Coast Guard HC-130 Hercules aircraft crew from Air Station Kodiak searched the North Pacific for a crewmember from a 751-foot bulk carrier, Yasa Fortune, reported to have fallen overboard approximately 775 miles southwest of Kodiak June 8, 2010. The search was suspended pending further information.

C) Coast Guard Air Station Sitka aircrew aboard an MH-60 Jayhawk rescue helicopter safely medevaced a 90-year-old man off the 965-foot cruise ship Norwegian Pearl 23 miles southwest of Juneau in Chatham Strait June 24, 2010.

D) The crew of an HC-130 Hercules aircraft from Air Station Kodiak flew more than 1,400 miles on an Arctic Domain Awareness flight travelling above Alaska's northern coastline to assess the safety of an imperiled mobile Russian research station 560 miles northeast of Point Barrow May 18, 2010. The 17th Coast Guard District obtained information that 15 researchers at the Russian North Pole 37 Station were being threatened by shifting ice. Upon arrival the aircrew contacted the researchers by radio and confirmed that everyone was OK.



## Hot Shots

KODIAK, Alaska – Coast Guard base Kodiak firefighters conduct training at the base May 4, 2010, to stay current on training qualifications and proficiencies in order to be efficient and effective in any type of emergency situation. The 32 firefighters stationed in Kodiak are in such close proximity to the base, they are the primary unit for aircraft response. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Charly Hengen.







## Flying High

KODIAK, Alaska – A Coast Guard Air Station Kodiak HC-130 Hercules aircrew flies over the Pacific Ocean April 4, 2010, heading to Kodiak from Sacramento, Calif., after completing an aircraft transfer with an aircrew from Aviation Logistics Center located in Elizabeth City, N.C. Aircraft transfers occur between Air Station Kodiak and ALC on a routine basis for aircraft upgrades and heavy maintenance due to the lack of local resources. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Andrew Keenan.



## Sun Splash

PERDIDO KEY, Fla. – O'Grady and Morris family members enjoy riding the waves on a raft in the Gulf of Mexico May 13, 2010, during a family reunion. The family members didn't know at the time a strong rip current was brewing beneath them waiting to tow them out to sea. Photo courtesy of Jackie Morris.

# Terror in the surf: Kodiak-based Coast Guardsman risks life to save family

Story Petty Officer 3rd Class Charly Hengen, PADET Kodiak

### A family tradition

The sun beat down in Perdido Key, Fla. It was May 13, 2010, and the wind kicked up the sand. It was a hot afternoon and five family members wanted to play in the surf during their family reunion.

On the surface, the surf seemed to be just right that day so the family threw a light blue raft into the water and hopped on. They were body surfing and boogie boarding, so the raft

seemed ideal.

Shaun, Leah and Allison O'Grady, all siblings between the ages of 24 and 32, along with Matt and Ashley Morris, also siblings ages 24 and 26, jumped atop the raft, placed their backs together and pointed their feet off the side of the raft.

"We've been doing this family tradition for about three or four years," said Shaun. "The raft I have is huge and to my family's dismay, it takes up half of the car! We were just having

fun, floating around in the ocean. It's really a good time for all."

All of them would get washed back to shore each time they took the raft into the surf, laughing while spinning around in the ocean.

"I'm usually the one in charge of the raft," said Shaun, the oldest of his sisters. "Since I'm the tallest, I can take the raft out farther, about 40 or 50 yards out from the beach."

However, as the five family members kept

taking the raft into the surf, time and time again Leah said to the others they were getting farther and farther away from the shore. Plus, they would get knocked off the raft by waves but continued to enjoy their time in the surf.

When one of the waves knocked them off, Shaun and Ashley bumped their heads together. She decided to head to shore which was probably the best decision by Ashley since she is not a strong swimmer.



"I didn't think anything of what Leah said," said Shaun. "I just figured we'd have more time in the surf and everyone would get to ride longer. I told everyone to start kicking so we can try to make it back to the beach."

But as the four family members began to kick, they didn't get very far. It was like they were frozen in time and stuck in one place.

They had to continually kick to try to make it to shore. Little did they know that a strong rip current was brewing underneath their raft waiting to carry them out to sea.

The next thing they knew, a wave hit them.

## In the Surf

"We were all knocked off the raft and as soon

as I got above the water, I didn't see the raft," said Shaun. "I didn't see my cousin Matt, but thankfully I did see my two sisters."

Once Shaun and his sisters made it back to the surface, a big flurry of waves began to pummel them, one right after another.

"Those waves were big the whole time," said Shaun. "Every time we would get hit by a wave, we'd come to the surface, catch a breath and then another wave would hit us. We had floated out pretty far too, maybe 75 to 100 yards."

Shaun didn't realize how serious the situation was until he looked at his sister Leah and she had a look of concern on her face.

"She's always been a very confident and

stable person," said Shaun. "When I saw that look of panic in her face and it grew worse as the seconds went away, I started to get worried too."

As Shaun could feel the pull of the undertow upon him, he told his sisters to get on their backs to try and conserve energy. Plus it seemed to be the easiest way to get in strokes against the strong waves.

As the three siblings were trying to swim toward the beach and keep from getting pushed under by the waves, they kept looking for their cousin Matt.

## Rescue on the way

Even though Matt was also knocked off the raft, he was able to stay with it...somehow.

"It seemed like after I got back on it, 10 minutes had gone by," said Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Matt Morris, aviation maintenance technician with Air Station Kodiak. "As I searched for them, I kept getting knocked off but managed to stay with the raft. Finally, I spotted them between waves about 50 yards further out than I was."

Matt's cousins were waving frantically and he realized he had to help as they were getting pulled out by the rip tide. If he didn't help the outcome could be fatal.

"I began to paddle out and it took me about five minutes," said Matt. "As soon as I got to them, they grabbed a hold of the raft. My one cousin, Leah, was panicking while the other had to shed some clothes just so she could tread water better."

Matt stayed level-headed and calm. He told them, they weren't out of this yet and they all needed to kick and head toward shore. His Coast Guard training kicked in and he calmed them down. The four family members joined forces and paddled the raft parallel to the shore with the current.

"As we got closer to the shore, we entered deep water again between the sand bar and shore getting pounded by waves and struggling to keep a hold of the raft while trying to keep everyone together," said Matt. "Eventually we made it to shore with over a half hours worth of

struggle to get back to land."

## Thankfulness

Exhausted and safe on the beach, it hit them how bad the situation was and how fatal it could have been.

"I kept thinking as I was out there with my sisters, this is not how I'm going to die," said Shaun. "This is not how I'm going to go."

The family later learned the beach had a double red flag rip tide warning. However, the condominium they were staying in did not have any flags along the beach and they were not watching the news that day to hear the warnings.

"We later learned when watching the news that evening that a 22-year-old male had drowned the same day just further down the beach" said Shaun. "That put it into perspective how lucky we were."

Shaun credits his cousin Matt with his and his sister's survival in the surf that hot and windy May afternoon.

"He definitely saved us," said Shaun. "I don't even know how he got the raft. He realized how important it was to get the raft and if he didn't have it, there's no way he would have rescued us."

Matt has been enlisted in the Coast Guard for three years and has been in aviation for two. He is a loadmaster aboard the HC-130 Hercules aircraft and performs training flights on a regular basis. Matt has trained for in-air emergency situations and the emergency situation in the surf was no different.

"I think my training with the aircraft helped me keep my head together," said Matt. "I realized the task at hand and also had to keep everyone else calm so we could work together to achieve the desired outcome."

The O'Grady siblings and Matt's sister are alive today because of the actions of their cousin Matt.

"It gave my sisters more comfort knowing he works for the Coast Guard," said Shaun. "We are all alive today because of him. We're so thankful." 🐾

## Big Surf

PERDIDO KEY, Fla. – Five family members play on a raft in the Gulf of Mexico May 13, 2010, during a family reunion off the shores near Perdido Key, Fla. Coast Guard Petty Officer 3rd Class Matt Morris rescued his cousins after a wave knocked them from the raft and a strong rip tide was pulling them out to sea. Photo courtesy of Jackie Morris.





# Silent Success

## Oil removed from historic shipwreck

Story and photos by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jon-Paul Rios, DT

### Side Scan

JUNEAU, Alaska - A sonar view of Princess Kathleen as it rests on its portside with promenade windows, upper deck and main deck portholes, and cargo door visible, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010. The Princess Kathleen sank in 1952 and recent reports of sheens in vicinity of the wreck prompted the Coast Guard to conduct a thorough survey of the vessel. Coast Guard photo

**F**or more than 50 years lurking below the surface of the frigid Alaska waters lies the Canadian Pacific Railway ship Princess Kathleen, resting at an angle on its port side, reminding Alaskans of its presence by releasing fuel periodically tainting the surface with its sheen.

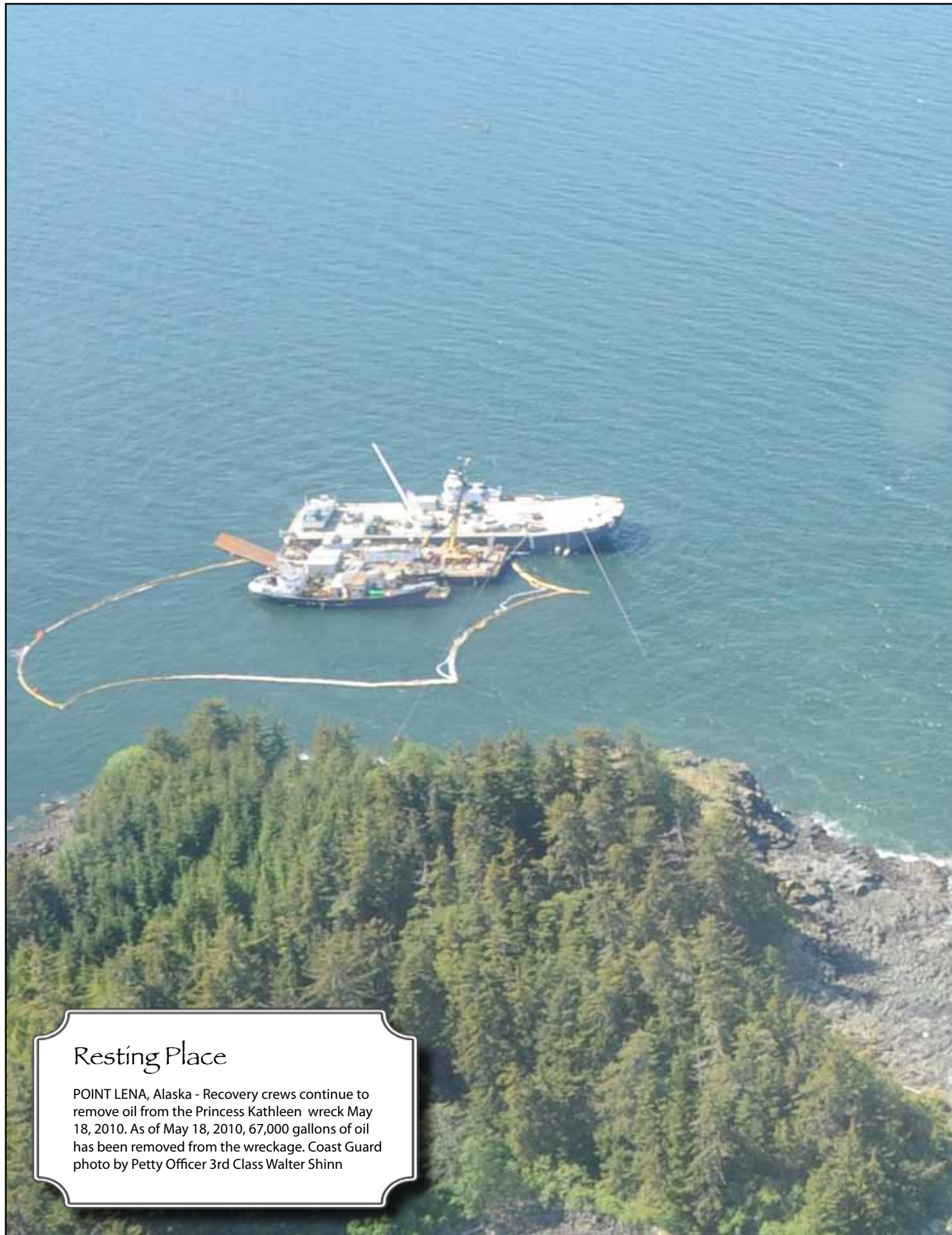
During foul weather September 7, 1952, the cruise ship previously used as a transport vessel during World War II, ran aground and eventually sank in the vicinity off Lena Point, Alaska, near

Juneau with an unknown amount of bunker oil and other petroleum products remaining in its tanks.

An attempt to recover the oil was made years ago but due to the lack of technology, the attempt was unsuccessful.

During the early months of 2010, Capt. Melissa Bert, commander Coast Guard Sector Juneau, decided to establish a unified command with Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation after receiving an increase in reports





### Resting Place

POINT LENA, Alaska - Recovery crews continue to remove oil from the Princess Kathleen wreck May 18, 2010. As of May 18, 2010, 67,000 gallons of oil has been removed from the wreckage. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Walter Shinn

of sheening coming from the Princess Kathleen wreck site.

The unified command came together in an attempt to remove the oil from the aged and presumably fragile tanks of the Princess Kathleen.

The Princess Kathleen was already deemed a risk of pollution prior to witnessing significant environmental impact. The unified command took proactive actions to proceed with a lightering operation before shorelines or wildlife became covered in 50-year-old bunker oil.

"Upon coming up with a solid plan we decided to take time into our own hands and removal of the oil seemed to be the most logical action," said Bert. "Tackling a potential threat prior to it coming to fruition eliminates the possibility of a major disaster, is cost effective and protects both people and the environment."

The Coast Guard along with ADEC, Global Diving and Salvage and other contracted agencies worked tirelessly for four months putting in 24-hour days with the intentions to finish the removal of oil in the safest and most effective manner.

However, as no good plan goes without a hitch, there were obstacles that the unified command and on-scene contracted workers had to battle through.

In Alaska the weather is often unpredictable and thus challenging. With the vast distance between Alaska and the Continental U.S., it becomes a daunting task when mission essential equipment from Seattle is delayed by inconvenient weather impeding barge transit.

"Due to the inclement weather we probably lost about 20 days of work that would have otherwise expedited the oil removal process," said Cmdr. Kurt Clarke, Coast Guard Sector Juneau chief of response.

The unified command was able to lapse all obstacles and with the bad also came the good.

Advanced technology allowed the unified command to address the historic problem that had been plaguing the community of Juneau for so long.

The use of technologies such as remote operated vehicles permitted the unified command the luxury of being able to complete a visual

inspection of the hull, structural integrity and underwater environment without putting divers at risk.

"The remote operated vehicles allowed for us to get a visual of the deteriorating tanks and pipes to better strategize how we were going to remove the oil without taking the risk of sending our divers into unknown spaces," said Kerry Walsh, casualty response project manager for Global Diving and Salvage. "The importance for the removal of oil was extremely high due to the condition of the tanks, anything from a recreational diver to an earthquake could have caused the imbalance needed to rupture the pipes resulting in a major oil release."

Based on the condition of the vessel upon initial survey, there was a significant amount of oil that was released from the tanks, but still contained within the vessel's hull. From this finding along with the rivets quickly deteriorating, it was determined that it was only a matter of time before considerable releases of oil would suffocate the pristine coastline.

"We caught this just in time," said Scot Tiernan, state on-scene coordinator.

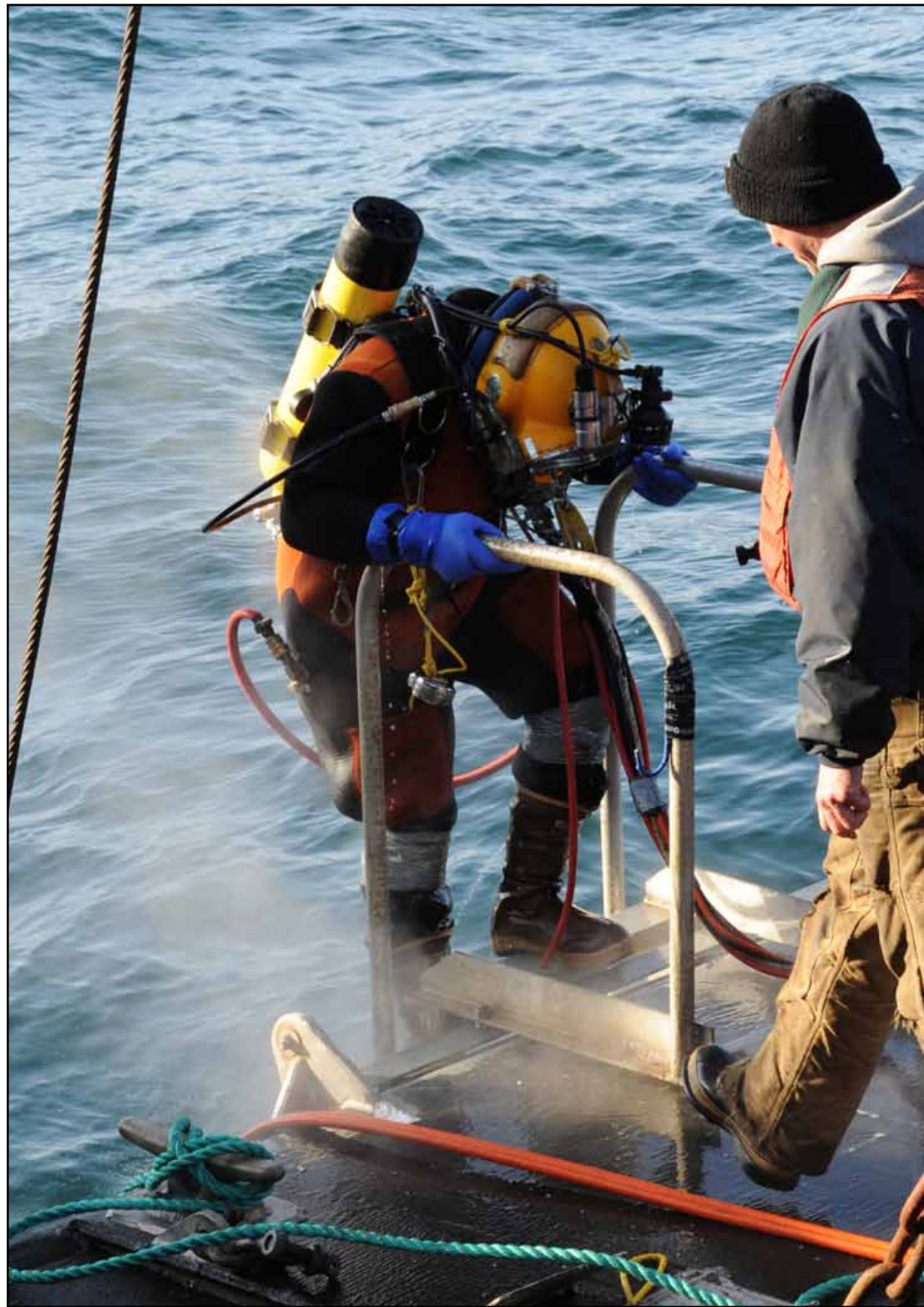
The unified command was able to access each tank of the Princess Kathleen and pump the contents into a tank barge floating above the Princess Kathleen. In this topside tank, the product and waste water were heated and re-circulated back to the Princess Kathleen's tank. This process allowed an even and gradual heating of the product and permitted for a higher pumping rate once heated.

Once the closed system was properly heated to approximately 120 degrees, the use of a skimmer was employed in the topside tank. This allowed for the recovery of nearly pure oil from the tank and significantly reduced the amount of wasted water generated.

After approximately four months of round the clock work, the Coast Guard and State of Alaska's proactive approach eliminated the inevitable pollution risk of an estimated 110,000 gallons of extremely toxic and environmentally destructive bunker C, heavy oil. This was all accomplished without a significant release or negative impact to the environment or wildlife.

Additionally, the wreck was returned to a





### Diver Down

JUNEAU, Alaska - A diver from Global Offshore Diving and Salvage Inc., steps into the waters near Point Lena to begin the third day of dive assessment of the Princess Kathleen shipwreck March 16, 2010. The divers will continue the assessment of the vessel to locate the fuel tanks and the amount of fuel still aboard. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Jonathan Lally.

### Oil Hunting

JUNEAU, Alaska - A remote operating vehicle operated by Global Offshore Divers examines a porthole along the starboard side of the Princess Kathleen on Thursday, Feb. 18, 2010. The Princess Kathleen sank in 1952 and recent reports of sheens in vicinity of the wreck prompted the Coast Guard to conduct a thorough survey of the vessel. Coast Guard photo

condition that closely matches the original condition of the wreck upon the start of the project and is available for continued use by recreational divers and historians alike.

Overall the monetary cost for removing the oil from the Princess Kathleen was approximately \$12 million but with major oil cases such as the Cosco Busan in San Francisco Bay looming in our history, it proves how economical it is to take care of the oil problem prior to a release.

On November 7, 2007, the cargo vessel Cosco Busan hit the San Francisco Bay Bridge spilling approximately 58,000 gallons of medium grade fuel oil seriously impacting wildlife by killing thousands of birds, polluting the Pacific shore and costing more than \$100 million to clean up.

With the oil removed from the Princess Kathleen reaching almost three times the amount spilled by the Cosco Busan, it's unimaginable what kind of impact a spill would have had on the pristine and environmentally sound Alaskan waters not to mention the cost.

"The preventative cost of cleaning the Princess Kathleen was less than 10 percent of what it would have been if a catastrophic release

had occurred," said Rear Adm. Christopher Colvin, Coast Guard 17th District commander. "Considering the alternatives, the cleanup of the Princess Kathleen was remarkable and an extremely cost-effective success."

The team work amongst all involved was pertinent to the mission.

"The unified command worked well together ensuring everyone was engaged and on the same page further validating the success of the mission," said Walsh.

The Princess Kathleen now lays dormant still more than 50-feet below the surface and still at an angle on its port side, only now safer.

"The unified command's hard work and proactive approach in removing the oil from the Princess Kathleen serves as a model for future salvage plans and should encourage others to take preventative measures," said Bert.

With more than 7,000 sunken vessels barricading the United States coastal waters boasting approximately 180 million gallons of oil still intact within their corroded hulls the community of Juneau can rest assured the Princess Kathleen no longer serves the threat of a potential hazard caused by an oil release. 🐾





# Easy Riding

Story and photos by Petty Officer 1st Class David Mosley, PADET Anchorage

Over the years Hollywood has focused on one unique form of transportation to carry their heroes across the silver screen. Famous actors like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Tom Cruise, Elvis Presley and Steve McQueen have been featured riding motorcycles throughout movies.

Motorcycles have become a symbol of individual freedom with a little rebelliousness thrown in for good measure. Hollywood has capitalized upon these alluring qualities.

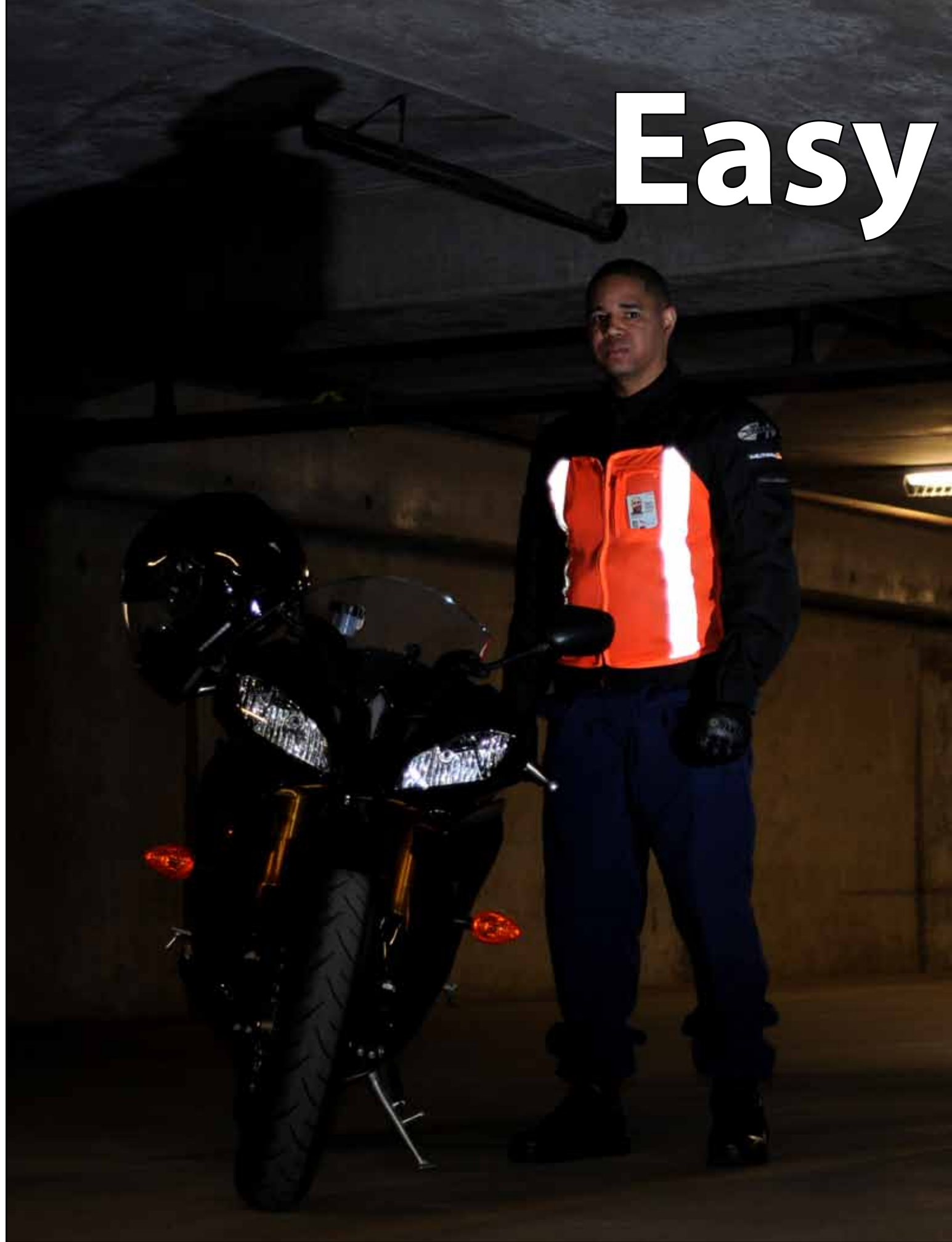
"I live my life a quarter-mile at a time," said actor Martin Henderson as Cary Ford in the 2004 motorcycle movie "Torque." This careless and foolhardy street racing statement was wisely retorted to by actress Monet Mazer playing her character Shane saying, "That is the dumbest thing I have ever heard!"

While most people will contest there is a vast difference between Hollywood's silver screen and reality, the sense of freedom and rebelliousness portrayed by these fictional motorcycle riders often transcends from the movie screen and onto the road.

"I ride for the excitement, the freedom and the challenge," said Petty Officer 1st Class Sheldon

## All Dressed Up

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - Petty Officer 1st Class Sheldon Cunningham, a motorcycle rider of four years stands ready to brave Alaska's highways, June 24, 2010, after donning his safety gear that may just save his life were he ever to experience a crash. All military motorcycle riders are required to wear specific safety gear while on and off base, including long pants, long sleeved shirt, boots, gloves and a helmet.







### Cruising Along

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Petty Officer 1st Class Sheldon Cunningham, a motorcycle rider of four years, safely navigates a corner along one of Alaska's many scenic roadways, June 24, 2010. Military motorcycle riders are required to wear proper safety gear while riding any motorcycle, and are required to attend and pass a motorcycle safety course to qualify to ride a bike on any military base.

Cunningham, a motorcycle rider of four years. "I started riding because my friends were riding and I wanted to be part of that. From there I fell in love with it."

Cunningham's experience is a similar thread across the military, where new members are for the first time introduced to the thrill of owning and riding a motorcycle.

As with any new experience, this newly found avenue of transportation requires a new rider to receive proper training due to the complexities motorcycle riding demands.

During the fiscal year of 2008, the Department

of Defense reported 124 motorcycle riders killed. Both the Navy and the Marine Corps had more motorcyclists killed than they did drivers of automobiles or in combat.

While 124 deaths may seem small out of a military population of more than 1.4 million, in 2008 it was estimated that at least 10 percent of military personnel owned a motorcycle.

With these types of numbers, motorcycle safety has become a paramount concern across the military. Coast Guard motorcycle riders regardless of their location are required to meet certain qualifications and are required to wear

specific safety gear.

To operate a motorcycle on a Coast Guard or DOD facility, all Coast Guard motorcyclists must complete an approved safety-training course.

"I have taken both the basic and the advanced safety courses," said Cunningham. "The courses are very important with the basic course being mandatory for on-base riding."

Safety courses cover everything from the basic controls on the bike to low and high speed maneuvering, said Cunningham.

A rider's safety can be boiled down to a few key elements including safety courses,

safety gear, speed, control and possibly most importantly the comfort and confidence derived from the proper fit of a rider to their bike.

"I sat on a good dozen bikes before I chose the bike that I bought," said Petty Officer 3rd Class Peter Seamons, who recently purchased his first motorcycle. "As I have begun riding my bike more and more I have become increasingly more comfortable and confident."

Coast Guard active duty and reserve motorcycle operators must wear the following safety equipment at all times regardless of local or state laws.





**The required safety gear is:**

- **A Department of Transportation or Snell-approved helmet worn with chinstrap properly fastened.**
- **Proper eye protection must be worn at all times. The eye protection must be impact or shatter resistant and in the form of glasses, goggles or full-face shield attached to the helmet.**
- **Over the ankle sturdy boots**
- **Full-fingered gloves**
- **Long-legged pants**
- **Long-sleeved shirt or jacket**
- **Brightly colored or white upper garments during the day and high visibility reflective or retro-reflective vests, harnesses or strips on clothing at night or in periods of low visibility. DOD installations require retro-reflective vests or harnesses at all times.**

### Riding Easy

ANCHORAGE, Alaska – Petty Officer 1st Class Sheldon Cunningham, a motorcycle rider of four years, safely navigates a corner along one of Alaska's many scenic roadways, June 24, 2010. All military motorcycle riders are required to wear specific safety gear while on and off base, including long pants, long sleeved shirt, boots, gloves and a helmet.

Despite required safety gear, speed and control while riding a motorcycle can save a rider or quickly get that rider into trouble.

"I ride a 600cc motorcycle and would encourage a beginning rider to go no higher in power," said Cunningham. "A person can buy a 1,000cc motorcycle, but unless they are taking it to the track, in my opinion there is no need for that type of power. A 600cc bike is powerful enough."

Even a 600cc bike can reach incredible speeds and using speed control is paramount to a riders safety, said Cunningham. "A rider can let speed get quickly out of control."

Beyond the safety concerns of riding, owning a motorcycle can be a fun and enjoyable experience.

"Ever since I joined the Coast Guard, it was something I wanted to do," said Seamons. "I saw a lot of riders and thought that was something I wanted to do one of these days."

"I enjoy the freedom of riding," states Cunningham. "No boundaries, fresh air, soaking up my surroundings and becoming one with the environment, just the smell of fresh flowers while riding makes it worthwhile."

Motorcycle riders, like all vehicle users, need to become familiar with their chosen mode of transportation. They should always keep safety in mind and by doing this, their motorcycle can become their great escape. 🐾



Story and photos by Petty Officer 1st Class David Mosley, PADET Anchorage

# Border Relations

## Strengthening Relations

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - Rear Adm. Christopher Colvin, commander 17th Coast Guard District, Rear Adm. Sergey Surin, first deputy Northeast Border Directorate of the Russian Federal Security Service, meet together to sign letters of understanding towards continued communication and cooperation in combating illegal fishing in the Northern Pacific and the Bering Sea, Apr. 14, 2010. The Coast Guard hosted the annual visit from the NRBD to strengthen relations and discuss best practices for fisheries enforcement and search and rescue on the high seas. U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st Class David Mosley



**M**ost of the 20th century found the military and security forces of the United States and the Soviet Union working against each other.

When the Cold War came to an abrupt end in 1991, a new era of joint operations in the North Pacific grew between these former antagonists.

As early as 1992, a joint search and rescue exercise in the Bering Sea was held between the United States and Russia. Russian military and security personnel visited Alaska and U.S. military leaders also visited Russia to plan and coordinate the joint operation.

The North Pacific and the Bering Sea are unique because the responsibility for fisheries enforcement and the safety of mariners falls upon the two nations.

For years, a working relationship has been nurtured between the agencies that patrol their sides of the Maritime Boundary Line. The U.S. Coast Guard and the Northeast Region Border Directorate of the Russian Federal Security Service have met regularly in both Russia and the U.S. to discuss ongoing border enforcement operations and foster a relationship that has become a bright spot of joint cooperation in an often-difficult international climate.

This year finds these relationships continuing to be bolstered between these nations as Russian Rear Adm. Sergey Surin, first deputy of the Northeast Border Directorate, and several of his

officers visited Anchorage, Alaska.

As part of Surin's first visit to Alaska, Coast Guard Rear Adm. Christopher Colvin, commander 17th Coast Guard District, greeted the Russian admiral as he arrived at the Anchorage International Airport.

"We share a common sea and are respectively obligated to protect and sustain the extraordinary maritime resources in the Bering Sea and the Northern Pacific," said Colvin.

The Russian's arrival on April 11 sparked off a busy handful of days including Colvin and Surin taking a day-long trip to Kodiak. Officers from both agencies also met together daily to discuss ongoing border enforcement concerns and worked together to draft a letter of understanding toward continued communication and cooperation.

"We are much more effective working together than working independently when addressing maritime safety and security, search and rescue and fisheries in this vast region," said Colvin.

With a history of meetings having taken place since the early '90s, and a visit by Colvin, his staff and the crew of the Kodiak-based Coast Guard Cutter Acushnet to Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Russia, this fall, the two agencies, and the two nations look forward to continued cooperation in the Northern Pacific, the Bering Sea and the Arctic Ocean. 🐾





# Kodiak Coast Guard families provide warm embrace to community

Story by Petty Officer 3rd Class Charly Hengen, PADET Kodiak

The Brother Francis shelter in Kodiak has been assisting people by providing free nightly meals and a place to rest for about 20 years. It relies heavily on donated food and clothing items from organizations and community members.

The Coast Guard Spouse's Association of Kodiak is one such organization that donates clothes, food, toiletries and other household items monthly to Brother Francis.

"For now, I am the committee chairperson for Brother Francis," said Angela Padgett, Spouse's Association member. "I and a few others pick up the donated items around the 15th of every month and drop them off at the shelter. The only month we do not pick up is December."

As the volunteers stop at each pick-up location around Kodiak's Coast Guard housing, the sport utility vehicle continues to fill with clothing, sheets, towels and grocery bags full of food.

"There is a big push for food donations in this tough economy," said Padgett. "Even the local food bank is having trouble and the shelter will take about any type of food. They will take opened foods, spices and even prepared foods."

A plate of homemade cookies was picked up at one location and the ladies joked about how the

cookies might not make it to the shelter. Scripter and Skvaril sat in the backseat of the SUV were sandwiched between boxes loaded with pancake mix, flour and fresh vegetables. Behind them,

garbage bags full of donations almost toppled onto their heads.

"There is incredible generosity in this community," said Padgett. "Even though Kodiak is such a small community and it's so isolated, the people are willing to give more of themselves to others in need."

This generosity is especially noticed at Thanksgiving and Christmas as those are big days for Brother Francis personnel and Coast Guardsmen.

"Many junior officers

volunteer to help out with the holiday meal," said Scripter. "There's tons of food donated, usually two turkeys, a ham and all the sides. Plus the cutter personnel conduct clothes drives for the shelter."

Once they arrived at the shelter, they were greeted by Scott Hoy; one of Brother Francis's cooks and monitors, along with Darcy Steilstra and Dana Myers, both co-interim directors.

"Every donation from the Coast Guard is immensely helpful," said Myers. "The clothes

**"Every donation from the Coast Guard is immensely helpful,"**

Dana Myers, Brother Francis shelter co-interim director



are widely used because there's always a want and a need. Around winter time, we try to ask for extra socks, gloves, coats and long-sleeved shirts."

Brother Francis opens its doors at 8:30 p.m. seven nights a week and provides a hot meal and mats for those who desire to spend the night.

"We feed about 30 to 35 people and around 20 to 25 stay overnight," said Steilstra. "We have a laundry room, showers and many other resources for the people who come in."

Many of the individuals who come to Brother Francis are usually going from job to job. Men from every state have stayed and most only stay for a few days. The doors lock at 10 p.m., there's a 6:30 a.m. wake up and the tenants must leave at 7:15 a.m. However, if someone has a chore, he can stay till 7:30 a.m., said Myers.

A chore consists of cleaning the sleeping area or taking out the trash. These chores are assigned to a patron when he signs in before the

## Food Drop

KODIAK, Alaska - Angela Padgett, Brother Francis committee chairperson with the Spouse's Association of Kodiak, places a bag of food items into a sport utility vehicle May 20, 2010, to be delivered to the Brother Francis shelter in the City of Kodiak. Volunteers pick up the donations monthly in an on-going effort to assist those in the community in need.



evening meal.

"In April, more than 2,000 meals were served," said Myers. "We are getting more local people in and we've had roughly 28 new individuals since January."

As more and more people come to Brother Francis for food and shelter, the donations from Coast Guard families are widely used and appreciated. The outpouring of generosity will continue to clothe and feed Kodiak residents and those passing through. 🐾

## Saving Supplies

KODIAK, Alaska - Darcy Steilstra, co-interim director at Brother Francis shelter, carries in bags of food items donated to Brother Francis May 20, 2010, by Coast Guard families in Kodiak. The Spouse's Association of Kodiak collects donated items monthly to support the shelter.

**Editors Note: For more information on donating to Brother Francis, please contact Brother Francis Spouses' Association of Kodiak at [contact@kodiakosa.org](mailto:contact@kodiakosa.org).**



This following article ran in Issue 3, 2010 of the Reservist Magazine and has been reprinted with permission. While specifically focused at Coast Guard Reservists, all Coast Guard members can benefit from adhering to the simple rules/advice given here.

## Coast Guard Knowledge

Evaluation and  
Rating Forms

### Avoiding Common Evaluation Errors and Pitfalls

Lt. Cmdr. Steven Douglas,  
Senior Reserve Officer,  
MSD Nashville

#### 1. Introduction

If you are a Coast Guard Petty Officer, Warrant Officer or Commissioned Officer, there is a good chance you are responsible for evaluating your shipmates. You may also be the person responsible for determining whether the evaluations completed in your department or division are fair and accurate. In either situation, recognizing some common personnel evaluation errors is essential to protecting the fairness and integrity of the evaluation process. This article presents some of the more common errors that I have observed throughout my Coast Guard career.

I hope you find this information helpful when you sit down to enter or review a shipmate's evaluation. Being fair and accurate isn't always easy, but it is part of the responsibility you have been entrusted with as a supervisor, RO, or AO. If you train yourself to make a conscious effort at avoiding these rating errors, you will find that it becomes second nature. Moreover, you will find that you can quickly recognize when others are making these mistakes.



#### 2. The Halo Effect

The Halo Effect is the tendency to apply inappropriate generalizations to every aspect of a person's performance based on only one or two aspects of a their performance. For example, MK3 Wrench-Turner is a good mechanic but always looks (and smells) like she spent the night in an oil pit. Her supervisor is tired of hearing complaints about her appearance and assigns all 2s and 3s on her evaluation.

This is probably the most common type of review error, and for good reason. Wrench-Turner might be a great mechanic but her appearance overshadows every aspect of her performance. We've all heard the expression that it takes a hundred "atta-boys" to make up for one "oh, sh--!" We tend to have a longer mental retention period for bad things, especially when we are

constantly reminded of them. It is also important to consider the fact that the Reporting Official (RO) and Approving Official (AO) probably do not see the person being evaluated on a daily basis, so they have to rely on the accuracy of the supervisor's marks. A series of exceptionally high or low marks without any specific examples in the comments section is a good indication that the evaluation could be biased by halo effect. A good way to avoid the halo effect is to get feedback from co-workers, also known as a 360 review, because it includes input from every part of the organization. If the 360 feedback and marks assigned are far apart, that is an indication that the review may be biased.

#### 3. Recency

Recency is the tendency to assign marks based only on recent performance and not on performance across the entire evaluation period. For example, YN2 Files is typically a star performer and a squared-away sailor. Unfortunately, he is having a hard time figuring out a new accounting database that was installed a couple weeks ago. Files' co-workers have been picking up some of his workload while he comes up to speed on the new program and they are letting everyone, including his supervisor, know about it. The next month, Files' supervisor assigns him low marks in the job performance categories citing the fact that his co-workers have had to cover some of his workload.

Recency is one of the biggest reasons behind my being a proponent of self-evaluations. A supervisor may not be able to remember what the person they are evaluating did last week, much less everything that person did over the span of an entire year. I require every one of my direct reports to do a self-evaluation. I also tell them to set up an e-mail folder in their Outlook tree for copies of positive feedback they've gotten from customers and supervisors, discussions about events they participated in and other items that provide specific examples of their performance during the evaluation period. It is easy to justify high marks when the documentation is right in front of you.

#### 4. Central Tendency

Central Tendency means assigning average marks to a person simply to avoid the documentation that would be needed to justify the marks the person truly deserved. For example, BM1 Outboard is scheduled to start leave on Monday. Friday afternoon, the OINC asks about the status of the marks that are due that month. The he has not yet started them, Outboard replies that they are nearly done and quickly cranks out evaluations for his 6 direct reports. To make sure that he can get on the road by 1600, he assigns every one of his direct reports the same set of marks. He also makes a point to ensure that none of the marks are high enough or low enough to require documentation.

I've been the victim of central tendency errors twice in my career, both as a civilian and in the Coast Guard. In both cases I really did some exceptional things dur-

ing the evaluation period but was given an average set of marks on my annual evaluation. In each case, the person who assigned me those marks justified it by saying that they expected exceptional performance out of everyone all the time. Needless to say, the memory of those events stuck with me for a long time. Evaluations should never be done at the last possible minute, nor should they be done when there are constant distractions that would shift your focus from fair and accurate writing. As I mentioned previously, a self-evaluation goes a long way toward providing the justification for a higher mark. However, the evaluator needs to be willing to assign the mark that the person has earned, high or low. If everyone was truly an average performer, there would be no need for awards or NJP.

#### 5. Sunflower Effect

The Sunflower Effect is essentially the act of assigning everyone high marks to make you look good. For example, Lt. j.g. Silverbar is a new department head at a MSU and really wants to make a good impression on the command and her subordinates. When she reported aboard, the XO told her that there had been some recent performance problems with a few individuals in her department and morale was declining. After a few months go by, Silverbar is concerned because performance hasn't really improved and her crew is still grumbling. After receiving the annual evaluations from the Chief, Silverbar raises several of them and tells the XO that, as the high marks show, things have really improved in her department.

The sunflower effect is a large contributor to the

phenomenon known as marks inflation, a situation where high marks are routinely given for average performance. The biggest problem with the sunflower effect is that it is very difficult to correct because it typically means that individual marks will be lower during the next evaluation period. The documentation for a high mark needs to meet all the criteria that are listed for that mark. If the person being marked meets some, but not all of the listed criteria, they should be assigned the next lower mark. You are not doing the member or the Coast Guard any favors by making a poor or average performer look good on paper.

#### 6. Contrast Effect

The Contrast Effect occurs when high and low marks in a group of evaluations influence the marks that are assigned to other evaluations in that group. For example, Lt. Twobar is reviewing the evaluations for his department and comes to BM2 Cleat's marks. Cleat was SOQ twice this year and is the unit's shining star. After approving Cleat's stellar marks, Twobar lowers the marks of YN2 Persman and OS2 Scope-dope because even though they met all the requirements for the marks they were assigned, they just aren't Cleat.

The contrast effect finds greatest opportunity in large departments where one person might be inputting or approving a large number of evaluations in a short period of time. I try to make it a habit of not reviewing more than two sets of marks in one day. That ensures that I am not bored or fatigued from having to work through a large number of evaluations. If I have to do more than two in a day, I space them out so that I'm not reviewing any evaluations back-to-back. Would you want to be the last person who was reviewed in a stack of 10 evaluations that day?

This Reservist Magazine is a monthly publication that is focused on the Coast Guard reserves. For more information about the Reservist Magazine visit <http://www.uscg.mil/reservist>







## Smiling Strength

KODIAK, Alaska - Madisyn Sickafoose, Kodiak resident, smiles as she sees family and friends at the Kodiak airport June 15, 2010, upon her return to Kodiak from Seattle after spending eight months in and out of a hospital and Ronald McDonald House there.

An Air Station Kodiak HC-130 Hercules aircrew medevaced Sickafoose October 2009 from Kodiak to Anchorage so her and her mother, Jessica, could catch a

connecting flight to Seattle.

Madisyn was diagnosed with Ewing's Sarcoma, a rare form of cancer. Even though Madisyn has two chemotherapy treatments remaining, her mother declared victory over the cancer in Madisyn's left arm after many chemotherapy treatments.

U.S. Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Charly Hengen, PADET Kodiak