



The Public Affairs UPDATE

January 1998

Como.Ted Neale Jr., DC-A

VOL V No. 1

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A NEW BEGINNING

January 1, 1998 gives us all a new start. The slate has been wiped clean and our future lies ahead of us. Most of us started out last year with the best of intentions and goals. Not all of us achieved that which we had set out to accomplish. Some of us did. Last year is over, like a major league sports team we all know where we finished 1997. We can do better in 1998. In fact, we are expected to do better in 1998 as we approach the 60th anniversary of the The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to be celebrated in 1999.

Our Public Education Courses have barely kept pace with the rate of increase in recreational boat registrations. Our Vessel Safety Check program has not grown at the same rate with boat registrations, and our safety patrols might be able to do more to help promote better safety on the water.

As states move towards increased boating safety programs, there is a growing concern that the traditional boating safety organizations have not been as effective as they could have been in keeping the number of injured and killed boaters at a reducing rate.

It is crystal clear that it is now time for the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary to exercise its leadership skills and take the lead it claims as the World's Premier Safe Boating Organization to make recreational boating safety one of its major priorities. Changes in our structure and methods of establishing goals places greater responsi-

bility on individual members rather than just the elected and appointed officers. The changes mean we must all do our fair share in achieving objectives.

It is no longer enough that only some PA officers produce. PA officers can no longer work in isolation of other key staff people. To be a success, the PA Officer must work closely with the Public Education Staff Officer, The Vessel Examination Staff Officer, The Operations Staff Officer, the Publications Staff Officer, The Career Candidate Officer, and the Personnel Services Staff Officer. **We all need each other to make the TEAM work as a team.**

Last year is dead and gone. We can neither rest on last year's laurels nor give up in desperation that 1998 is going to be a repeat of 1997's unsatisfactory record. If we take either approach, we dedicate ourselves, at best, to mediocrity. **Our goal and our objective must be to rise above, way above mediocrity and to communicate our mission, our goals and objectives to the MEMBERS of the Auxiliary as well as to the boating public.**

As your unit PA officer, take the pledge that in 1998 you will surpass your efforts of 1997 and that you will provide the necessary leadership to help put your Unit over the top in achievement. •

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER

You can be a contributor to our monthly publication, The Public Affairs Update. WE have provided you with our names, snail mail address, telephone and FAX numbers as well as our email address. While we can't guarantee that everything that is submitted will be used, it's a sure bet that no submissions will result in nothing being used.

Our purpose and objective is to contribute to making the PA Update a useful tool for elected and appointed staff officers to improve their communications skills, Public Affairs is a definite communications skill. This coming year, it would be most helpful if we had at least one article or useful information from our many associate editors at the District, Division and Flotilla levels.

Remember, Public Affairs work is not limited to those people outside of our usual and customary membership. We have a responsibility to improve and promote the esprit de corps of our membership as much as we have to promote our missions with the public at large. A large general membership that is largely uninformed or which is poorly informed is not a membership that is working to promote its own growth and an improved public perception of its missions. Now is the time to renew your oath and commitment to the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary.

PUBLIC OFFICIALS NEED TO KNOW TOO!

By and large, members of the Auxiliary are prohibited from engaging in lobbying of elected officials advocating the defeat or enactment of legislation of regulations. The reason for such a prohibition is to avoid the creation of serious conflicts or the dissemination of information that is not consistent with Coast Guard Auxiliary Policy.

Nothing in the policy prohibiting lobbying activity by Auxiliarists prohibits members of the organization from contacting their elected or appointed officials and sharing their personal views with those officials regarding boating safety matters.

Also, nothing in the policy prohibiting lobbying prevents us from keeping our public officials informed about what is happening in the world of watercraft safety. We can do much to improve our public affairs with elected and appointed officials by contacting them and giving them information about the Auxiliary.

There are basically two ways of achieving this objective and neither requires the wearing of latex gloves or face masks.

First, invite local (State, Federal and Local) elected and appointed officials to attend your District and Division meetings and possibly even your flotilla unit meetings. Make certain you have some current and useful information to provide them.

Second, add these important public officials to your unit's newsletter or periodical publication. So long as you are giving appropriate information regarding the nature of our activities and **not** advocating the passage or defeat of legislation or regulations, we are not in violation of any policy of

the Auxiliary.

Joseph Pulitzer, the famed newsman of the late 1800's told his editors at the **New York World**, "Publicity, *publicity*, **PUBLICITY**, is the greatest moral factor and force in our public life." and **Jerome D. Barnum** in an address to the 1936 convention of the **American Newspaper Publishers Association** said, "*The daily press has more power in the shaping of public opinion than than any other force in America.*" We know that in 1998, the term daily press is no longer limited to the print media, but, by necessity, includes the electronics and broadcast media.

Publicity, the art and science of public affairs, the communication of first hand information to members of the public by informed persons who have the ability to write and speak effectively, is indeed a potent tool in crafting **PUBLIC OPINION**. It towers over our elected and appointed local, state and federal officials and influences their legislative and regulatory activities.

It is precisely for that reason that we, as *public affairs specialists* for the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary, exist. Popular public prejudice or ignorance of the facts can adversely impact on the public and those elected officials from grasping the truth and acting in the best public interest. The very magnitude or size of our population assures our public and members they can no longer rely upon their personal acquaintance with fellow members and citizens who may have any first hand knowledge of important matters or policies.

As a Public Affairs Officer, you now know your mission. All that remains is for you to devise effective means of achieving it in a way that promotes our acceptance by the public.

Plan Now for 1998

We know you have heard it all before, **Now** really is the time to start planning for the 1998 boating season and National Safe Boating Week (**NSBW**). You don't need to wait until the National Safe Boating Council or others send you a planning kit. You probably have last year's kit on hand and can use it as "boiler plate" to get 1998 planning underway. If you have had no prior experience get in touch with **Harriet Howard**, our National Staff Liaison person for NSBW. She is waiting to hear from you. Her address is 15323 Hayford Street, La Mirada, CA 90638.

Try to avoid the pitfall of making your planned observation of boating safety to one or two weeks. Try to plan it as a continuing event or series of events for the duration of the boating season within your geographical area.

Now is also the time for you to share that information with us so we can pass it on through the **PA UPDATE** to help members who may not have had your experience. Boating Safely, using a PFD and not boating while under the influence of alcohol or a controlled substance is the 1998 safe boating theme. Be prepared to use it effectively.

Don't forget, photos and video shots can go a long way in getting your message across. See **Herb Bisulk's** Handbook on Photography. Use all the tools available to you to promote safe boating.

Because this is your newsletter, we want you to share with us your thoughts, successes and human interest stories. Your experiences may be just the thing we need to help motivate another member to move ahead.

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