

CAPT'N KEVO'S

Boating Tips



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

Station Golden Gate

arrived at United States Coast Guard Station Golden Gate at 0615 hours in the dead of winter. It was still dark, but dawn was approaching... My mission was to accompany the boat crew on a training mission across the Potato Patch and the San Francisco Bar in front of Ocean Beach in order to report back to base the current conditions in terms of wave height, wind direction and swell direction/interval. Along the way, we were us-

ing this time as a training mission for future Surfmen.

The station's crew operates and maintains four state-of-the-art boats: two 47-foot Motor Lifeboats (MLB) and two 25-foot Response Boats-Small (RB-S). The unit has an exceptionally large area of responsibility, which extends offshore 50 nautical miles from Point Reyes to Point Año Nuevo, including the Farallon islands, and inside the Bay from Bluff Point to Pier 39 at the San Francisco waterfront.

The ready crew is made up of two fully qualified sections that stand duty opposite each other on a "port and starboard" duty rotation. That is, each section stands two days on, two days off, three days on, two days off. Support personnel and the command cadre work Monday through Friday and stand duty as needed.



Regardless of its high operation tempo, U.S. Coast Guard Station Golden Gate operates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, and never closes.

Modern History Of Station Golden Gate

In 1914, the Life Saving Service merged with the Revenue-Cutter Service and the new organization became the United States Coast Guard, resulting in the renaming of the station at the Presidio as Fort Point Coast Guard Station No. 323.

With the introduction of the motor lifeboat and the gradual phasing out of oar-powered lifeboats, the stations at Golden Gate Park, Point Bonita and Ocean Beach were closed and consolidated into Station Fort Point, leaving it the only operating facility in the Bay Area.

For almost 100 years, Station 323 protected those who traveled on the seas, rescuing them from danger, and protected the port from crime and attack. A need for expansion brought the U.S. Army, National Park Service and U.S. Coast Guard to negotiations in June 1987 and a decision was reached to move the station to East Fort Baker in Marin County. In 1990, Station Fort Point was decommissioned and its lifeboats and crew moved across the Bay to a new location at Fort Baker in the Marin Headlands.

Station Golden Gate is one of the Coast Guard's 19 designated surf stations.

Meet The Crew

BM1 Jessica Shafer:

Born and Raised: Indiana. Graduated from Purdue University. Joined CG in December 2002. First Duty Station was National Motor Lifeboat School (NMLBS), Cape Disappointment, WA (on the Columbia River Bar).



From left, Petty Officer First Class Jessica Shafer, Fireman Eric Picciolo, Petty Officer Third Class David Jones, Petty Officer Second Class Cody Massey and Kevo.

While at the NMLBS, certified as Heavy Weather Coxswain on the 47-foot MLB and Certified as Tactical Coxswain on the 25-foot RB-S. Also, stood duty during that tour at Station Cape Disappointment and Station Tillamook Bay, OR. Transferred to Station Golden Gate in June 2006 and was certified Surfman the following winter.

FM Eric Picciolo:

Born and Raised: Texas. Attended Texas State University. Joined the CG in January 2009. Station Golden Gate is First Duty Station. Has certified as a crewmember on both the 47-foot MLB and the 25-foot RB-S, boarding team member, and Engineer for the MLB.

BM3 David Jones:

Born and Raised: Peoria, AZ. Graduated from Centennial High School. Joined the CG in 2008. First Duty Station was Coast Guard Cutter *Shamal*, a WPC13 out of Pascagoula, MS, 179-foot Coastal Patrol Boat. While on the CGC *Shamal*, qualified

as Quartermaster of the watch, cutter swimmer, boat crew, and Damage Control Performance Qualification Standard. Transferred to Station Golden Gate in January 2010; qualified in boat crew, Boarding Team Member, and watchstander. Will be breaking in MLB and RBS Coxswain this summer.

BM2 Cody Massey:

Born Lakewood, CO., grew up in Huntington Beach area of Southern California. Joined Coast Guard in 2001. Served as a Fireman onboard CGC *Sherman* in Alameda, 378-foot W High Endurance Cutter 720 as First Duty Station. Graduated from Electricians Mate "A" school in June 2003, received orders to Air Station Miami. Changed rates from Electricians Mate to Boatswains Mate in January 2008 to pursue becoming a Surfman. Received orders to Station Golden Gate July 2008; certified as Officer Of The Day, 47-foot MLB Coxswain, RB-S Coxswain, Tactical Coxswain, Boarding Officer.

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Currently pursuing Heavy Weather Coxswain and Surfman.

47-ft. Motor Lifeboat (MLB)

Specifications:

- Max HP:870 @ 2,100 RPM
- Max speed:.....25+ knots
- Max range:..... 200 nautical miles
- Max seas: 30 feet
- Max surf:.....20 feet
- Max wind:50 knots
- Towing capacity:..... 150 tons
- Draft: 4 ft. 6 in.
- Number built: 117
- Start production: 1997
- Cost per boat:..... \$1.1 million

The 47-foot MLB was built to replace the aging 44-foot MLB fleet. It is primarily designed as a fast-response, rescue resource in high seas, surf and heavy weather environments. With safety in mind, 13 watertight compartments were constructed. The 47-foot MLB can right itself in less than 30 seconds.



The 47-foot Motor Lifeboat (MLB) in action.

With state-of-the-art electronically controlled engines, fuel management systems and integrated electronics suite, including four coxswain control stations, the 47-foot MLB has become the ideal platform for operations in extreme sea conditions.

With construction completed, 117 47-foot MLBs were delivered and are now in service to the public throughout the Coast Guard Rescue Station community.

After being introduced to the commander of the vessel, BM1 Jessica Shafer, I was escorted to the men's locker room and asked to put on an "emersion suit." Putting it on felt like a cross between wrestling an 1,800-lb. alligator and dealing with a "straight suit" at the same time. HA!

After some help from one of the crew, I finally got properly suited up for my adventure with the Surfmen. I got briefed on our mission on the way out to the boat. I was introduced to the crew and we departed for the Golden Gate.

Right off, the seas were a choppy mess even in the harbor. No sooner had we left the harbor than it started hailing on us! I thought if I were



Station Golden Gate headquarters, Fort Baker.

in a recreational powerboat at this time I'd turn around. WHAT WAS I THINKING?

Next we went under the Golden Gate Bridge and out toward the Potato Patch. The seas were roiling up to 10 feet. After getting thrown all over the place by the conditions, they slapped a helmet on my head to prevent any damage.

Then we headed over to the SF Bar, which was a bit calmer than the Potato Patch. After that we headed in to fuel up at Pier 45 and then back to base. A very exciting voyage!

Kevo's Tip:

If you find yourself in trouble outside (or just inside) the Golden Gate, these are the folks who are probably going to come to your rescue. You never know what the conditions are going to be like or change to out in the ocean.

Tune your VHF radio to the WX feature to get the updated National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) marine forecast every time before venturing outside the Gate.

Be safe & happy boating!

As always, feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com or 925/890-8428. 📧