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AUXAIR AT AIRVENTURE 06

by Robert Shafer, DVC-OA

AirVenture is the name the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) gives to its annual convention and exhibits, held in Oshkosh, WI. In mid summer of each year, sure as swallows returning to Capistrano, pilots and aviation enthusiasts from all over the country (indeed, from all over the world) make the pilgrimage to Oshkosh.

The EAA AirVenture show is the largest aviation event in the world. This year, nearly 700 thousand people attended the week long event, even though high gas prices held attendance below the show's all time peak attendance of

nearly 900 thousand. Over 10,000 aircraft came to the Oshkosh area for the event. There were over 2,300 show planes on display.

AirVenture is a big deal and the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary are in the thick of it. This year, as in past years, the Auxiliary had a display booth in the commercial display area and operated surface patrols on Lake Winnebago in support of the show's seaplane base operations. The Auxiliary assisted the active duty CG by helping to arrange space to display an active duty HH-60 "front and center" on the main display ramp. Both the active duty and Auxiliary took to the stage to give presentations during the event. This Special Edition of Up Top in Operations will highlight some of the activities at AirVenture 06.

SPECIAL EDITION

THE COAST GUARD AUXILIARY AT AIRVENTURE 2006



A former Coast Guard HU-16 Albatross parked in the war bird area at sunset. Photo by Bob Shafer



Aerial view of AirVenture 06 EAA Photo

**SURFACE
OPERATIONS
SUPPORT THE SEA
PLANE BASE**

*by Bob Shafer, DVC-OA and
Mike Hopfensperger, BA-OAR*

Throughout each AirVenture, the Coast Guard Auxiliary conducts surface safety patrols on Lake Winnebago in support of the EAA Sea plane base operations. Although seaplanes are airplanes they are also boats when they are on the water; and they frequently make better planes than boats.



Seaplanes taxi past an Auxiliary OPFAC at the seaplane base. Photo by Bob Shafer

Seaplanes often have a high center of gravity and are more limited in their ability to maneuver than other watercraft. Wind affects them more than most other boats, and they are limited in their ability to handle rough water or even the wake from another vessel. Add to this the requirement to move at high

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speed on the water, and it's clear that when seaplanes transition between airplane and boat (and vice versa) they face some interesting challenges.

This year, there were about seventy five sea planes using the base. These ranged in size from small homebuilt planes, which look to the casual observer like little more than a life raft with wings and an engine, to a large multi engine HU-16 Albatross, which takes more than a mile of water to get airborne.

The AirVenture seaplane base operations benefit greatly from the safety patrols conducted by the Auxiliary. With scores of seaplanes taxiing, landing and taking off all week long, these patrols help separate the seaplanes from other marine traffic, and provide other essential guidance and assistance to the floating planes. They also provide swift, critical SAR response when needed.

The Auxiliary surface patrols are provided from 0900 through 2000 on the Monday

through the following Sunday of the AirVenture event. There are normally at least three Auxiliary OPFACs on patrol during those hours. The usual boater contacts are with fisherman, PWC operators, or just curious boaters wanting to get a closer look at the planes. This year there were only two SAR cases reported and no aircraft accidents, making it a good, quiet year.

The waters just off shore of the Pioneer Marina are also patrolled by the Auxiliary surface facilities. From there, boaters can get a great view of the daily air show, which is a featured part of AirVenture. Each day several hundred boaters gathered in this area to watch the air show. When they have problems or present a safety concern, Auxiliary facilities are there to assist.

This year, nine surface facilities worked the patrols during the week long convention. This operation is the only known Auxiliary operation the goes almost 12 hours a day for seven days in a row. There are many dedicated Auxiliarists who come to work at AirVenture each year, and many of them keep coming back year after year.

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**E. CITY SENDS AN
HH-60 TO
AEROSHELL SQUARE**

by Bob Shafer, DVC-OA

The center stage of the EAA AirVenture is AeroShell Square. That's where the featured aircraft stars of the show are parked for the public to view up close. This year AeroShell Square was host to some pretty heavy iron, including a B-1B bomber, a C-17 transport, and several historic WW2 bombers. Right in the middle of this airplane party was an orange and white Coast Guard HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter, flown in from Air Station Elizabeth City.



HH-60 Jayhawk helicopter Photo by EAA

Even in the midst of those impressive planes, the Jayhawk didn't lack for admirers. A crowd gathered around it as soon as it was parked, and only subsided when the show closed each evening. The crew of the HH-60, LT Jason Dorual, LT Matt

Furlong, AMT2 Matt Talton, AET2 Brendan Hughes and AST2 Matthew O'Dell proudly showed off their aircraft, answered countless questions, and handed out scores of baseball card style "helo info" cards to the kids.

While the youngsters sat in the cockpit and made "thump-thumpa" noises, the older folks examined every detail of the helo. Just sight of the Coast Guard Jayhawk brought tears to one man's eyes. "Thank God for the Coast Guard", he exclaimed as he shook the hands of the crew members. "I'm from New Orleans, and after Katrina, you and your helicopters saved our lives! Thank you Coast Guard, thank you!" Comments like that made the long days standing next to the helicopter well worth it to its crew.



A couple of future pilots inspect the HH-60. Photo by Bob Shafer



An audience in the Federal Pavilion listens to one of the HH-60 crew members explain how the Coast Guard prepared for the hurricanes and how the response plan was executed. Photo by Bob Shafer

**ON STAGE AT
AIRVENTURE...**

by Bob Shafer, DVC-OA

While at AirVenture the crew of the HH-60 gave several presentations on the Coast Guard's response to hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The audiences heard and saw what it took to plan the response to the storms and move personnel and equipment around the country. They could appreciate the many difficulties overcome by Coast Guard air crews as they carried out many daring rescues under challenging conditions. They heard several first hand accounts of what some call the Coast Guard's finest hour.

Over at the FAA Safety Pavilion, Bob Shafer, DVC-OA

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UP TOP IN OPERATIONS

SURFACE OPERATIONS SUPPORT THE SEA PLANE BASE

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Mike Hopfensperger, BA-OAR showing CDR Sean Murtagh, Deputy Commander, Sector Lake Michigan and CWO Mark Stevens, OTO 9WR around the seaplane base. Photo by Bob Shafer

Coordinating these patrols is the Auxiliary Operations Center. Located in a large office trailer, it includes an Auxiliary communications center, operated through out the EAA convention. Watchstanders monitor several aviation radio frequencies, communicating on marine radios and phones.



Mike Hopfensperger, BA-OAR, watchstander George Bores and CDR Sean Murtagh, Deputy Commander, Sector Lake Michigan, in the Comms Center. Photo by Bob Shafer

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ON STAGE AT AIRVENTURE...

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gave a presentation on Ditching and Water Survival. The audience learned about the hazards presented by flying over water and how to manage those risks. They learned tips and techniques for water survival should they have to ditch, and how to plan their flights to avoid becoming Coast Guard SAR customers.



Cold water simulation Photo by Susan Shafer

AUXAIR HAS A BOOTH IN THE COMMERCIAL DISPLAY AREA

by Bob Shafer, DVC-OA

The Auxiliary has a recruiting booth in one of the commercial display areas of AirVenture. Each day, hundreds of people stop by to learn about the Coast Guard, the Auxiliary and their many missions and opportunities.



CWO Mark Stevens and CDR Sean Murtagh, Deputy Commander Sector Lake Michigan visit Jerry Heitschmidt, DSO-AV 9WR and Auxiliarist Bob Allen in the booth. Photo by Bob Shafer

Recruiting and safety information is passed out along with Coast Guard posters, drinking cups and shopping bags. This booth gives the Auxiliary and Coast Guard exposure to thousands of people from all over the country and from many corners of the world.

UP TOP IN OPERATIONS

BC-OAP CLAUDE HRIBAL HONORED

by Bob Shafer, DVC-OA

For several years, the Auxiliary has been an important participant in AirVenture, largely due to the exceptional efforts of our Branch Chief for Special Projects, Claude Hribal. Claude is a most interesting and charming character, who always has a twinkle in his eye, and a story to tell.

Claude served aboard Navy ships while on active duty in the Coast Guard during World War II. His wartime service is the source of many of those "sea stories" he tells. After being mustered out of the Coast Guard when the war ended, he joined the Navy Reserve. When the Korean War began, Claude found himself at sea again, this time as an officer in the U. S. Navy. After serving his country in two wars, Claude finally settled down to civilian life.

Eventually, Claude was moved to serve his country again by joining the Auxiliary. He also found time to volunteer as a docent at the Experimental Aircraft Association Museum in Oshkosh. Before long, Claude began to see the potential for the EAA and the Auxiliary to develop a mutually beneficial relationship. Claude spoke to the leadership of the EAA, and got to work.

Claude was instrumental in coordinating Auxiliary safety patrols on Lake Winnebago in

support of the EAA sea plane base operations. Claude also made sure that the EAA donated Auxiliary booth was staffed throughout the conventions, coordinated the necessary passes for booth personnel, and made sure that there were enough materials to hand out to the visitors. Claude arranged for display of various active duty and Auxiliary aircraft in the display area. He escorted visiting Coast Guard dignitaries, highlighting the contributions of the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary.

This year, Claude was

presented with the Auxiliary Achievement Award to recognize and thank him for his significant contributions. Claude has been confined to bed of late, so his award was presented to him at his home.



From left to right, Claude's right hand man, Mike Hopfensperger, Branch Assistant, Aviation Recruitment, Claude Hribal, CDR Sean Murtagh, Deputy Commander, Sector Lake Michigan, CWO Mark Stevens, OTO 9WR, COMO Gordon Jaworski, Jerry Heitschmidt, DSO-AV 9WR, Bob Shafer, DVC-OA, Harry Ropp, Chief of Air Operations, EAA AirVenture. Photo by Sue Shafer

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