

**“Tales from the Gold and Silver Sides: The Recollections of  
Christopher T. Cohan”**

**Edited by**

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I was fortunate the Coast Guard sent me to exotic locations where my adventuresome nature gave me the opportunity to do things few people will ever experience. My first duty station out of boot-camp was Honolulu HI. I then went to mainland Japan, where I rode the bullet train and climbed Mt Fuji, in the middle of the night, to experience the spectacular sunrise over Japan. I then spent 15 months on Minami-Tori-Shima (南鳥島), where I swam with an 18' tiger-shark, climbed the 1350' LORAN tower, explored WW-II bunkers, caught pelagic tuna while standing on the edge of the reef. I then went to South Korea and had the opportunity to experience the DMZ when it was considered “*the most dangerous place on earth*”. I got to wade chest-deep while fly-fish for salmon alongside grizzly bears in AK. I helped rescue a pod of pilot whales. I competed in marathon and triathlon races and took 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in the annual 12.5 mile swim around Key West.

I did a stint as a rescue swimmer and had the opportunity to jump from a helo and dangle from a cable, before being selected for Office Candidate School (OCS). While going through OCS, I did my three-week summer training-cruise aboard the USCG Barque EAGLE, the only active square-rigger sailing-ship in military service.

I was one of three Coast Guard Officers selected to teach Life Saving Skills at the Boy Scout National Jamboree attended by over 42,000 scouts from around the world. Over the 10 day event I taught Lifesaving Skills to over 250 scouts and met thousands of scouts from a variety of nations...

I was a USCG Liaison for the FLA Keys National Marine Sanctuary, and

served as a Rescue Diver while conducting underwater archeological surveys, logging almost 150 SCUBA hours annually; While exploring the blue holes of the Bahamas with a park ranger, we found the decommissioned Coast Guard Cutter CAPE CURRENT, which had been transferred to the Bahamian Defense Force a few years earlier, sunk on a reef in 54' of water. It was still listed as an active Patrol Boat for the Bahamian Defense Force, at the time we found her sitting on the reef.

I am a "plank owner" for the USCG Cutter MOHAWK. In fact, as the independent Yeoman, I was the first crew member assigned to the cutter and I was given a desk in the TACLET (Tactical Law Enforcement Team) office in Key West, as I transferred the 100+ crewmembers to Key West, before we flew up to the Navy Yard in Newport RI to pick up the Cutter. I still remember the three-high racks in forward birthing and "strapping in" during heavy seas to avoid being tossed out of the bunk. I have many fond memories from my time aboard the "Mighty MO", from diving off the bridge-wing on the O-3 deck during swim-call, to being at the helm during a hurricane at night doing 45 degree rolls and taking green water over the fo'c's'le and spray over the 65' super structure.

The Coast Guard gave me some unique opportunities that very few have enjoyed... I have many fond memories from my 22 years of Active Duty service...

**"the most effective and valued maritime volunteer organization in the world."**

By serving on both the "gold" and "silver" sides, I have a very unique perspective to understand firsthand, that if it were not for the dedication of the 35,000 Coast Guard Auxiliary volunteering their time and resources, there is no way the Coast Guard could complete all of the duties they have been entrusted with. The Auxiliary was originally established by Congress in 1939 to promote recreational boating

safety. But today the Auxiliary is truly an essential integrated part of “Team Coast Guard”.

It was while I was a Coast Guard Operations Duty Officer and SAR Coordinator in Key West, where I learned just how valuable the Coast Guard Auxiliary can be. During Operation Able Vigil, the largest peacetime operation, where we rescued over 63,000 migrants from the Florida Straights in August and September 1994. All of our Coast Guard assets were focused on interdiction, it was the Coast Guard Auxiliary who stepped forward for search & rescue and other missions. We had Auxiliarists augmenting on our Cutters, assisting in the radio room, helping with SAR planning etc.

I know the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary is listed as the uniformed civilian volunteer component of the United States Coast Guard. But I like to think of us as a “cohesive force multiplier”. Since the original mandate of providing Recreational Boating Safety, over the decades the role of the Auxiliary has become integrated into all aspects of the Coast Guard.

Auxiliarists now have the opportunity to receive the same training offered to the active duty Coast Guard. Auxiliary members are now trained, experienced boaters and licensed aircraft pilots. With proper training, Auxiliarists can serve on any Coast Guard asset. We augment on Coast Guard vessels and aircraft, we serve in Coast Guard operations centers, administrative offices and in the classroom.

The Auxiliary conducts missions on the water, in the air, and on land. We conduct safety patrols, air operations and search & rescue missions. We teach boating safety classes, conduct recreational vessel safety checks, work with children with the Sea Partners Program, serve as ambassadors to marine dealers, as well as assist the Coast Guard with homeland security duties such as natural disaster or pollution response and many other activities. I know these high profile activities get most of the attention, but we are also seeking

those individuals who want to contribute their talents in the areas of web design, information technology, public affairs, and in many other administrative roles that support the Coast Guard mission.

Auxiliarists come from many walks of life, with diverse interests and skills. We choose to participate at a level tailored to our individual capabilities and interests.

We enjoy the camaraderie, fellowship and enjoyment of knowing we belong to a special group of people that strives to keep our neighbors safe on the waterways.

By being a visible force-multiplier, we provide the Coast Guard an increased presence on docks and waterways and help deter those who would contemplate causing harm to innocent Americans.

Annually, The Coast Guard Auxiliary provides over \$1 billion in service to the American public.

The U.S. Coast Guard is the Nation's oldest maritime agency - predating the Department of the Navy by eight years.

The Coast Guard is one of the five armed forces of the United States and the only military organization within the Department of Homeland Security.

I am proud to have served with an adaptable, responsive military force of maritime professionals whose broad legal authorities, capable assets, geographic diversity and expansive partnerships provide a persistent presence along our navigable rivers, ports, littoral regions and on the high seas. These attributes make the Coast Guard a unique instrument for maritime safety, security and environmental stewardship.

The official Coast Guard motto "***SEMPER PARATUS***", "**Always**

**Ready"**, has been the guiding light for those worthy members of this dedicated service, whose duties have been expanded and added to many times over. The greatest of these duties has always been to preserve the lives of those ***"who go down to the sea in ships"***.

Nearly a century ago the words spoken by a Coast Guard Skipper at the scene of a surfboat launching have become the unofficial battle cry of Coast Guardsmen to this day. In the teeth of an Atlantic storm, a ship had run aground off Cape Hatteras on Diamond Shoals. The Skipper gave the command to man the lifeboat. As the Coast Guard surfboat was being launched into the pounding surf, in an effort to reach the floundering ship and rescue the crew, one of the men shouted out. ***"We might make it out to the wreck, but we will never make it back."*** The grizzly old skipper looked around at the men and said, ***"The Blue Book says we've got to go out, and it doesn't say a damn thing about having to come back."*** This has become the inauspicious Coast Guard motto: ***"You have to go out. You don't have to come back."***

Most people do not realize that the US Coast Guard is worldwide. We have Ice Breakers in both arctic regions, all of the boardings of ships transiting the Persian Gulf are done by Coast Guard boarding teams, we have Tactical Law Enforcement Teams deployed to Central and South America.



Cohan stated that he “helped maintained a LORAN transmitter on a Japanese atoll for 15 months, ***Minami-Tori-Shima*** (南鳥島)”.  
View of the Coast Guard’s Administration building on Marcus Island (Minami-Tori-Shima). First Floor - Admin Building, Galley, Mess Hall, Chief's Quarters, CO Office, CO/XO Quarters Second Floor - Crews Quarters