

Second Time's a Charm

Coast Guard Auxiliary Division Seven Holds "Blessing of the Fleet" for a second attempt this year.

Story by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen, PADET St. Petersburg, Fla.

ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. -- Two elderly fishermen sitting on upside down buckets, stood up, reeled in their lines and set their poles at ease while they took a few moments to watch. A young woman took a rest from jogging, wiped the sweat from her forehead and turned off her MP3 player to observe. Crewmembers from Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg gathered at the St. Petersburg Pier Sept. 8, to view the time-honored tradition of the "Blessing of the Fleet."



ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. – Capt. Joseph A. Servidio, Commander, Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, along with Senior Chief Petty Officer, Daniel M. Harris, Officer in Charge at Station St. Petersburg, stood with their shoulders back and eyes forward as they returned salutes rendered by crewmembers aboard passing boats during the "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony held Sept. 8, at the St. Petersburg Pier. Coast Guard photograph by PA3 Rob Simpson.

The "Blessing of the Fleet" is thought to have originated in seafaring communities where the blessing of each vessel by a local priest was meant to ensure success and a safe return from sea.

Eighteen Coast Guard Auxiliary vessels, four Coast Guard Station St. Petersburg 25-foot rescue boats, a Pinellas County Sheriff's Office vessel, a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office vessel and a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission vessel participated in the "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony for a second attempt this year.

Kay Lori, Public Affairs Officer for Coast Guard Auxiliary Division Seven in St. Petersburg, organized the September event

after a cancellation of the ceremony in May. Choppy seas with three-foot swells, engine problems and a very late-arriving priest put a hold on the original date of the "Blessing of the Fleet."

"We here at 'Team Coast Guard' recognize the importance of safety at all times and the weather definitely did not make for a safe ceremony earlier in the year," said Lori. "The 'Blessing of the Fleet' instead, took place in September and went very well."

Capt. Joseph A. Servidio, Commander, Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg, along with Senior Chief Petty Officer Daniel M. Harris, Officer in Charge at Station St. Petersburg, stood with their shoulders back and eyes forward as they returned salutes rendered by crewmembers aboard passing boats. Father Cletus Watson, of St. Mary Our Lady of Grace Parish in St. Petersburg, blessed each vessel with holy water as they approached the dock.



ST. PETERSBURG, Fla. - Father Cletus Watson, of St. Mary Our Lady of Grace Parish in St. Petersburg, blessed each vessel with holy water as they approached the dock during the "Blessing of the Fleet" ceremony held Sept. 8, at The St. Petersburg Pier, in St. Petersburg, Fla. Eighteen Coast Guard auxiliary vessels, four Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg 25-foot rescue boats, a Pinellas County Sheriff's Office vessel, a Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office vessel, and a Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission vessel participated in the ceremony. Coast Guard photograph by PA3 Sondra-Kay Kneen.

"It was a successful event and we were very pleased by the Auxiliary's turnout," said Ensign Derek Wilson, Auxiliary Liaison Officer for Coast Guard Sector St. Petersburg. "The weather was favorable and the event went smoothly."

Coast Guard Auxiliary Division Seven holds the "Blessing of the Fleet" annually in conjunction with Sector St. Petersburg and several local agencies.

USCG