



United States Coast Guard
Seventeenth District

Semper Paratus



After 27 Years Shipmates Set Sail for the Last Time

By Petty Officer Sara Francis

ANCHORAGE, Alaska -- The crew of the Coast Guard Cutter Mustang make preparations to get underway as the final guests arrive and board the ship. Under a gray sky with patches of golden sun the ship transits out of the Seward small boat harbor and into Resurrection Bay. This is the final voyage of Chief Warrant Officer Jay Brudzinski. He has served 27 years with the U.S. Coast Guard and today he is retiring in the company of colleagues, family and friends.

Lt. James Stoffer is currently the commanding officer of the Mustang. He and Brudzinski served together in the mid-1980s aboard the Coast Guard Cutter Fir (WLM 212), a 175-foot Lighthouse Tender out of Long Beach, Calif. After California the Fir served out of Seattle for many years and has since been decommissioned and replaced by a 225-foot Seagoing Buoy Tender bearing the same name. Aboard the Fir Stoffer and Brudzinski became friends. Both had attended boot camp at Alameda, Calif. Brudzinski was assigned to the Fir as a hospital corpsman second class now referred to as health services technician. Stoffer was a quartermaster.

Stoffer fondly remembers Brudzinski qualifying as quartermaster of the watch, helmsman and as a sextant angle taker aboard the Fir. Duties that were not required of a ship's doctor. Stoffer recalls he fit right in with the crew.

"I'll always remember when he first qualified as quartermaster of the watch," recalls Stoffer. "He grabbed the 1MC handset; he thought he was grabbing the radio mic to call Coast Guard Group San Diego. 'Coast Guard Group San Diego, Coast Guard Group San Diego this is Coast Guard Cutter Fir' and this went throughout the ship. Everyone was sitting down for chow and it was his first watch. It was good laugh for everyone."

During his service Brudzinski earned his flight wings as a medevac corpsman, served as an instructor at the Coast Guard HS "A" school and earned his bachelor of science degree. He has served on both coasts and the Great Lakes. Brudzinski is the first in his family to serve in the military and in medicine. In 1981, at 19, he married Melissa. She completed a bachelor degree in psychology and has picked up a new job at each post.

Together they have raised three children. Mike, 22, is completing a graduate study in English. Laura, 19, is a sophomore at the University of Northern Colorado working on dual majors in music and German. Lindsay, 17, is a senior at Eagle River High School.



"I'm trying to talk her into joining the Coast Guard," said Brudzinski. "No luck so far."

More recently Brudzinski served as the Maintenance and Logistics Pacific Area Command (MLCPAC) detached managed care officer in the TRICARE regional office Alaska stationed at Elmendorf Air Force Base to coordinate with DOD counterparts. During his tour Brudzinski championed telemedicine allowing more services to smoothly reach personnel in remote areas of Alaska. It greatly reduced travel costs by over \$10,000 annually. He chaired the Alaska Federal Health Care Partnership Access Network Health Conference in Anchorage and educated many remote pharmacies and clinics regarding TRICARE policies and practices. He was also a guest speaker at the 2004 International Tele-health Conference.

Following a cruise in the bay the formal ceremony was conducted on the stern deck of the Mustang in port. Along with a retirement certificate from the president, Lt. Cmdr. Harry Caulton of MLCPAC presented Brudzinski with a Coast Guard Commendation Medal and several letters of thanks for his dedicated service.



Brudzinski and his family will be remaining in Anchorage where he will continue work on a telemedicine project with the Alaska Native Health Consortium. Fair winds and following seas to a dedicated shipmate.

The Coast Guard Cutter Mustang (WPB 1310) is a 110-foot patrol boat stationed in Seward since 1986 when it replaced the Cutter Cape Jellison (WPB 95317).