

A History of Division 24
Compiled from Listed Sources and Personal Knowledge by Past Division Captain Gary Akin
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On 27 April 1939, Virginia representative Schuyler Bland introduced Bill No. 5966, which would create a Coast Guard Reserve as a volunteer civilian force to promote small boat safety and to facilitate Coast Guard operations. The bill known as the Coast Guard Reserve Act of 1939 was signed into law on 23 June 1939. The basic unit, the flotilla, was comprised of a minimum of 10 boat owners. By the end of 1940, the Coast Guard Reserve numbered 3,000 members with 2,700 boats and organized into 150 flotillas. Today (12 April 2007) there are 28,689 members, 4,124 boats, 2,521 radio facilities, 233 airplanes, and 1,286 flotillas. On 10 February 1941, the Act was amended to create the Coast Guard Reserve as a military reserve. The civilian reserve was renamed the Coast Guard Auxiliary. It bears noting that many of the civilian reserves served as Temporary Reserves (TRs as they were called) in World War II. They were instrumental in creating MacArthur's Navy in the Pacific. More than 300 TRs patrolled the Tennessee River System during the war.

In 1942, the Auxiliary established new Divisions in response to its rapid growth. Division 6 included Flotilla 1 in Knoxville, Flotilla 2 in Nashville, Flotilla 3 in Chattanooga, Flotilla 4 in Sheffield, and Flotilla 8 in Guntersville. Division 8 included Memphis Flotilla 1. In 1967, Division 6 was divided. On 2 August 1967, Division 24 was formed. On 25 August 1967, the chartering ceremony for Division 24 was held at the Carriage Inn in Huntsville, Alabama. The charter Division Captain was Stephen B. Yonkowski and the vice-captain was Charles Rogers. Division 24 consisted of five flotillas—24-1 in Huntsville (chartered 4 June 1964) and 24-3 in Decatur, 24-4 in Florence (chartered 4 June 1964), and 24-5 in Corinth.

Although Division 24 was in its infancy, several significant events happened during its first year. Flotilla 24-1 won the attendance award at the 1968 Spring Conference and 24-1 was split in August 1968 to form Flotilla 24-6 in Huntsville, making six flotillas in the new Division. On Guntersville Lake, the Division also provided patrols for the run to establish a new world-record speed on water made by Lee Taylor of Downey, California in a jet propelled boat.

Prior to 1969, all Auxiliary units in the heartland of America were grouped in the giant Coast Guard 2nd District. This mega-district extended from Colorado to Pennsylvania and Alabama to North Dakota. With the growth in recreational boating in the 50s and 60s and the ever-expanding role of the Auxiliary, the management logistics of the mega-district became too great for a volunteer bridge and staff to handle. In 1968, the Commandant of the USCG approved four new "regional" Districts to replace the old "Big Second" District. The Tennessee Valley became part of the new Second Southern Region.

Division 24 hosted the "all district" 2nd District 1969 Spring Conference at the Carriage Inn in Huntsville. All four Auxiliary regions were present. Richard W. Hower and Louis A. Normandin were the Division Captain and Vice-Captain, respectively.

In 1970, Division 24 experienced its first setback when Flotilla 24-5 of Corinth, Mississippi was disestablished due to a lack of interest. This left five flotillas in the young Division. In 1971, the Division received a Certificate of Merit from the 2nd Southern Region, in part for maintaining its 5 flotillas.

1972 was not so good however. The Fall Conference was held at the Carriage Inn, with one of the highlights being the attendance by movie and television star Lief Ericson, who celebrated his birthday at the Conference. Unfortunately, 1972 also marked the disestablishment of Flotilla 24-2 in Decatur and 24-6 in Huntsville, leaving the Division with only three flotillas and an ultimatum to establish one new flotilla in the coming 12 months or be absorbed back into Division 6.

In 1973, the Division again patrolled a world-record speed attempt on Gunterville Lake by Jim McCormick in the unlimited hydroplane *Red Man*. On 25 August, Flotilla 24-2 in Gunterville was chartered.

The Division was finally able to establish the new flotilla it needed with the chartering of Whitesburg Flotilla 24-5 in Huntsville on 9 June 1975. Sadly, disappointment struck again in late 1975 when Decatur Flotilla 24-3 was disestablished. In late 1976, Flotilla 24-4 sponsored the “Parade of Lights” at Joe Wheeler State Park Resort with District Commodore Charles A. Agan and 2nd District Director of Auxiliary CDR R. M. Conner in attendance. In 1975, the Division elected Harold Perkins and Verna Mae Hasty as Division Captain and Vice-Captain, respectively. Perkins resigned later in the year and Hasty became Division Captain.

Verna Mae Hasty was elected Division Captain in 1976 with John Robb as the Vice-Captain, thus making Hasty the first woman elected as Division Captain in Division 24. During 1976, the Division located a 24-foot travel trailer for use as the Division office and material storage site. The Division hosted the 2nd Southern Region Fall Conference in 1976 at the Hilton Inn in Huntsville.

On 5 May 1977, a new Flotilla 24-3 was chartered at Joe Wheeler State Park Resort Marina, bringing the Division back up to strength again with five flotillas—24-1 (Huntsville), 24-2 (Gunterville), 24-3 (Joe Wheeler), 24-4 (Florence), and 24-5 (Whitesburg).

District Commodore George and Shirley Bolus attended a Division patio meal at Joe Wheeler State Park resort on 22 July 1978. Just prior to the meal, a station wagon exploded and burned completely. The cause was an outboard motor and gasoline can that had been locked in the vehicle all day. When the owner opened the car, apparently a spark was generated that ignited the trapped vapors causing the explosion and fire.

On 18 August 1979, a Division picnic was held at the home of Clint and Marge Brown on Elk River. Rear Commodore Ray and Pat Stevens joined in the fun, as did the newly appointed BOSDET Officer-in-Charge Chief Petty Officer Tabor, his family and crew.

There are voids in the narrative history of the Division from 1980 on. There are undoubtedly members still on board who could provide information to help fill in the significant or memorable things that occurred.

Flotilla 24-6 in Huntsville (Redstone Arsenal) was chartered on 1 June 1986. Division Captain Dewey Rhodes was instrumental in establishing 24-6, which obtained many of its charter members from Flotilla 24-1.

In 1987 or 1988, Flotilla 24-8 was chartered in Decatur. Past Division Captain Rhodes played an important role in their development.

Robert Brazil of 24-2 served as Vice-Commodore in 1990 and District Commodore in 1991 and 1992 of the 2nd Southern Region.

Scottsboro Flotilla 24-7 was chartered on 20 November 1993.

William Benson of 24-2 served as Rear Commodore of the 2nd Southern Region in 1995.

In 1996, the Coast Guard 2nd District was absorbed into the 8th District. Division 24 hosted the first and only Auxiliary 8th Southern Region and last Southern Region Conference in Huntsville on 31 October – 2 November 1996. The Auxiliary Second Southern Region merged with the Second Eastern Region to create the new Auxiliary Eighth Eastern Region.

Decatur Flotilla 24-8 was disestablished in 1996. The surviving Flotilla 24-8 members were transferred to Flotilla 24-3.

James Penny of 24-7 served as Rear Commodore-South in 2000 and 2001 and Vice-Commodore in 2002 and 2003 of the 8th Eastern Region.

In 2004, the Division hosted the 8th Eastern Fall Conference at the Hilton Inn in Huntsville.

On 24 June 2006, Flotilla 24-2 hosted a dinner in honor of the USCG Auxiliary's 67th Anniversary at La Restaurant LaStrada in Guntersville, AL. Members from 24-1, 24-2, 24-4, 24-5, 24-6, and 24-7 attended. LT Ken Hines from Marine safety Unit Paducah attended representing the USCG. Also in attendance were past Rear Commodore Bill Benson, Division Captain Gary Akin and his wife Sally, and Vice-Captain Sandra and Immediate Past Division Captain Terence Merlo.

In 2006, Flotilla 24-3 voted to disestablish itself and its 19 members chose to transfer to the following flotillas: 24-1, 24-4, 24-5, 24-6, and 24-7.

In November 2006, Sandra Merlo of 24-2 and Derene Watt of 24-1, were elected Division Captain and Vice-Captain for 2007, respectively, marking the Division's first all female Bridge.

On 12 November 2006, Betty Jackson, Flotilla Commander of 24-4, requested authorization to establish a detachment on lower Pickwick Lake. District Commodore Dolores 'Dottie' Kearnton authorized the Pickwick Detachment on 16 November. On 2 December, Flotilla Commander Jackson and Division Captain Gary Akin established Pickwick Detachment. E. A. 'Del' Horton of 24-4 was appointed as the Pickwick Detachment Leader. The 24-4 members initially affiliated with the Pickwick Detachment were H.L. Brinkley, David L. Delich, W. D. 'Sonny' Holman, E. A. 'Del' Horton, and Lawrence 'Larry' B. Scot

On 30 January 2007, Gary Akin, Flotilla Commander of 24-4, requested authorization to establish a detachment at Rogersville. District Commodore Thomas Mallison authorized the detachment on 15 February. The Rogersville Detachment held its first meeting at Joe Wheeler State Park resort Marina on 10 March. Sue Henry was appointed the Detachment Leader. The 24-4 members initially affiliated with the Rogersville Detachment were Elizabeth and Larry Griffin, Johnny and Sue Henry, and Bill and Carlyne Yancey.

On 14 April, Immediate Past Flotilla Commander Betty Jackson and Immediate Past Division Captain presented the Certificate of Establishment to Detachment Leader Horton in a brief ceremony at Aqua Yacht Harbor near Iuka, Mississippi during the annual Jim Bennett In-Water Boat Show and Aqua Yacht Harbor Open House formally establishing the Pickwick Detachment.

Flotilla 24-4 Flotilla Commander Akin and Division Captain Sandra Merlo formally established the Rogersville Detachment at a ceremony on (date to be determined).

The chronological listing of Division 24's Division Captains follows:

1967	Stephen B. Yonkowski	1976	Verna Mae Hasty
1968	Stephen B. Yonkowski	1977	John Robb
1969	Richard A. Hewer	1978	Marion 'Mike' Hardee, 24-2
1970	Richard A. Hewer	1979	Marion 'Mike' Hardee, 24-2
1971	Robert Cornelius	1980	Peter Horne, 24-2
1972	Robert Cornelius	1981	Peter Horne, 24-2
1973	George Hasty	1982	Walt Cowart, 24-1
1974	George Hasty	1983	Walt Cowart, 24-1
1975	Harold Perkins/Verna Mae Hasty	1984	Preston Barclift, 24-4

1985	Preston Barclift, 24-4	1999	James Penny, 24-7
1986	Dewey Rhodes, 24-1	2000	Thomas Kunhart, 24-6
1987	Robert Brazil, 24-2	2001	Thomas Kunhart, 24-6
1988	Robert Brazil, 24-2	2002	Chris Whitacre, 24-5
1989	Oscar Thornton, 24-3	2003	Chris Whitacre, 24-5
1990	Oscar Thornton, 24-3	2004	Terence Merlo, 24-2
1991	Walter Whitacre, 24-5	2005	Gary Akin, 24-4
1992	Walter Whitacre, 24-5	2006	Gary Akin, 24-4
1993	William Benson, 24-1	2007	Sandra Merlo, 24-2
1994	William Benson, 24-1	2008	
1995	Duncan Wilkinson, 24-7	2009	
1996	Duncan Wilkinson, 24-7	2010	
1997	David Howard, 24-2	2011	
1998	David Howard, 24-2	2012	

Sources:

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Personal correspondence/conversations with the following Auxiliary members: Preston Barclift, Ben Barth, Loretta and Robert Brazil, Paul Gillon, Richard Walthall, Duncan Wilkinson,

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