

New Auxiliary commander is Lake Murray veteran

By **Ollie T. Moyer**

Editor In Chief

Joe M. Richbourg, a native of Camden who grew up in Columbia and first began boating on Lake Murray 40 years ago, has been sworn in as Commander of the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary for the year 2000.

Richbourg, who held the position of vice commander in 1999, was elected at the October meeting of the Auxiliary and was administered the oath of office by Ellen Kreiling, division vice captain of Division 12. Bill Turner, a previous commander, was sworn in as vice commander. Richbourg succeeds Al Morgan as commander.

An avid and experienced boater, Richbourg was first introduced to Lake Murray in 1960.

"I thought that was a huge boat at that

time," Richbourg said of the 18-foot outboard boat he and his father built together. "It was powered by a 50 hp Evinrude V4 that was almost as big as the 225 hp I have now."

The first boat he considered his own, however, was a 12 foot Sears aluminum boat powered by a six hp Evinrude that carried him all over the lake during his youth.

As a youngster, he spent many days fishing and skiing on the lake. His lake activity increased when his parents purchased a weekend cabin near Lake Murray Marina. He spent most of his weekends and summers there until 1974.

In 1970 Richbourg married the former Janet Baker, whose family had a weekend house on the Lexington side of the lake. They boated a lot in that area as well.

■See **Commander** on **Page 4**



Division 12 Vice Captain Ellen Kreiling (left) administers the oath of office to Joe M. Richbourg (center), newly elected Commander of the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary for the year 2000, and Bill Turner, vice commander.

—Photo by Ollie T. Moyer.

Commander

Continued from Page 1

"In the early 70s, my wife and I bought our first new boat, a 15-foot trihull bowrider," recalls Richbourg. "At that time, most of the boats on the lake were outboards in the 14 feet to 15 feet range, or pontoon boats. There were a few inboards and stern drives, and a 25-foot cabin cruiser was considered a yacht."

In the mid-70s, the Richbourg's began replacing their boating with "other recreational activities", such as raising a family (they have two children—Andrew, now 22, and Emily, now 20).

"For most of the next two decades, while I considered myself a boater at heart, I did not own a boat," said Richbourg. "But all that changed about four years ago and I have been making up for the lost time every chance I get."

Richbourg boats every weekend, in just about any weather, year 'round, and most summer evenings. Ms. Richbourg's favorite time on the lake is sunset on a summer evening in the middle of the week.

"There are rarely any boats out then," said Richbourg, "and the lake looks almost like it did 30 years ago. She leaves the busy weekend days to me and the rest of the crowd."

Even when the lake was drawn down to 345 feet three years ago, Richbourg boated all winter. "It was really interesting to see so much of the area normally covered by water," he said.

It was when he returned to boating four years ago that Richbourg realized he needed to enrich his knowl-

edge about boating.

"When I returned to boating, there was a tremendous increase in the number, size and speed of the boats on Lake Murray on a busy weekend," he said. "I also realized that even though I considered myself an experienced boater, my experience was gained a long time ago, under a totally different environment. What I found in 1995 was not the Lake Murray of my youth, with the small outboard fishing boats."

In the spring of 1997, Richbourg enrolled in both the Coast Guard Auxiliary boating course and the Power Squadron boating course at the same time.

"I was so impressed by both organizations and their educational programs, that I joined both in June of 1997," he said. Since, he has continued his boating education by taking the Power Squadron's Seamanship, Piloting and Advanced Piloting courses. He also has completed the Coast Guard Auxiliary's Navigation, Vessel Examination and Communications Courses, qualified as a Vessel Examiner, completed Crew training, and qualified as a Coxswain, the highest boat operational level one of a dozen in Flotilla 12-3. The Coxswain qualification requires a year of work, including learning search and rescue procedures, first aid, weather, charting and navigation.

After two years as a member of Power Squadron, he felt he could not devote adequate time to both organizations.

"While I enjoyed the education and fellowship of the Power Squadron, my real interest lies in the search and rescue, and op-

erational programs of the Coast Guard Auxiliary," he explained. "I have a tremendous amount of respect for the Coast Guard, and the Auxiliary gives me the opportunity to work with the regulars, both in Charleston and on Lake Murray. We train from the same manuals and have the opportunity to train and participate with the Coast Guard in all activities, except direct law enforcement and military operations."

Richbourg considers one of the best boating experiences in his long career on the water occurred while working for the Coast Guard during the start of the Around Alone sailing event in Charleston last year. This event allowed him to use his boat and boating skills, along with other members of the Auxiliary and regulars, to assist in vessel traffic control in the harbor and race starting area out to about six miles offshore.

"It was a very exciting event, with several hundred boats of all sizes, ranging from jet skies to ocean going vessels of over 100 feet," he recalled. "Seas were four to six feet, and boats were everywhere. While most of our other boating experiences are not as exciting as that, they can be very rewarding. Most of our safety patrols are pretty routine, towing in stranded boaters or helping lost boaters find their way back to the marina. Sometimes we are able to assist boaters over the radio, without ever moving a boat. We occasionally get a call at night to search for someone, as we did in September when we retrieved four people including two small children, from an is-

land where they ran aground late at night. Our boating safety classes and courtesy marine examinations also are a great way to help make boating safer and prevent many of the problems that can occur on the water."

Richbourg sees his membership in the Coast Guard Auxiliary as "a great way to use our boats and boating knowledge to assist others. I have made some great friends and have had many great experiences. We are part of Team Coast Guard, with more than 30,000 members nationwide."

In his position as Commander of Lake Murray Flotilla 12-3 for 2000, Richbourg is looking forward to "leading our flotilla as we continue to help make boating the fun and safe sport it should be."

Richbourg has been employed by the S.C. Forestry Commission since 1977 and currently serves as Division Director, Administration. The Richbourgs reside in the Irmo area, near Lake Murray.