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## Radio class targets improving help response

By Ollie Moyer

Editor in Chief

A dozen members of the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary, determined to add more polish to an already glittering radio communications system on Lake Murray this summer, participated in a special three-hour radio communications class this month at Flotilla Island.

This first-ever course, spearheaded by Flotilla 12-3 operational officer George Crouch, was offered interested Auxiliary members who volunteer their time as radio watch standers, particularly on weekends, as a means of improving on a communications effort that has gained acceptance and support of the public in the past three years.

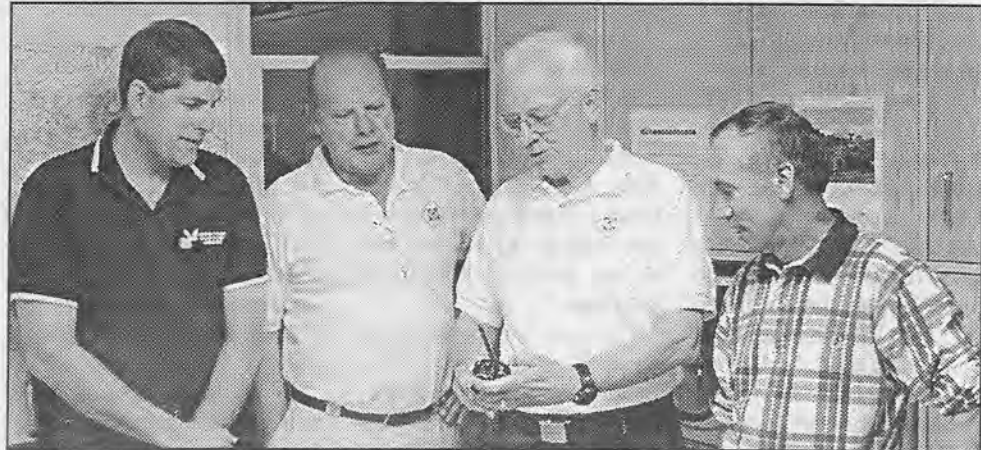
"We've come a long way in three years," acknowledged Commander Bill Turner, who also was commander three years ago

when the Flotilla placed major emphasis on improving communications on the lake.

"Basically, all we knew three years ago was how to key it up," Turner said. "We were all over it, as far as using it. Now, we've gone into a situation where we're more conscious of what we're saying, where we're saying it and how we're saying it. We're not just getting on Channel 83 and talking. We now have certain channels for certain conversations."

Turner acknowledged that proper communication techniques were in the unit's operational manuals, but "we just didn't have the equipment three years ago to implement it properly. For instance, we didn't even have a base radio station at Flotilla Island. All we had were radios in some of the boats belonging to our members."

Now, all that has changed, thanks to the



Boykin Roseborough (third, left), assistant communication officer for the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary, discusses hand-held radio with (left to right) Flotilla 12-3 operational officer George Crouch, Commander Bill Turner and communications officer Steve Davis during a special three-hour radio communications course they conducted for Lake Murray Coast Guard volunteers this month at Flotilla Island.

•See **Class** on **Page 3**

# •Class

Continued from Page 1

efforts of Turner and others, particularly the three instructors of the communications course, Crouch, communications officer Steve Davis and assistant communications officer Boykin Roseborough.

"Our communications have improved 10 fold, compared to what it was three years ago," said Turner. "And it will improve more in the future, especially as a result of the outstanding job George, Steve and Boykin did teaching our first communications class."

Crouch said he is encouraged that the boating public has now recognized that the Lake Murray Coast Guard Auxiliary is the emergency ear on Lake Murray.

"And the public has come to expect more from us now," Crouch observes. "We monitor thousands of hours now on the lake, and the public has grown to expect us to be there when we're needed for emergency response."

Volunteering their services, members of the Lake Murray Coast Guard actually monitor Channel 16, the emergency channel, virtually around the clock.

"It's not that the Department of Natural Resource officers are not also monitoring Channel 16, but we are in a better position to hear our radios," he said. "A lot of times a DNR of-

ficer may be riding down the lake in his boat and the wind and motor noise muffles the radio. On the other hand, our watch stander is operating in controlled environment and can better hear what's going on. And since we have multiple radios to monitor what's going on, it's just easier for us to monitor all channels."

Crouch identified the purpose of offering the communication class as a means of sharpening communication skills of the volunteer watch standers.

"We want to sound like we know what we're doing," he said. "We need to transmit our professionalism. After all, we're the most well-trained group in communications on the lake and we need to come across that way on the radio. How we sound effects what people think about us."

Crouch emphasized that the primary role of the radio watch stander is to assist the public and other agencies as well as the Coast Guard Auxiliary Patrols on the lake. "We're an extra set of ears," he said. "We're not the decision makers. That's the job of the coxswain. He's the man on the scene."

Davis commented favorable on the results of testing following the course. "I'm really surprised at the high scores we received on the test," he commented. "It was a particularly difficult test, considering that the course was over three hours long, and that a lot

of information was given out. They all did remarkably well, and we're going to continue on. This is not the end. All winter long, we're going to communicate. We'll be ready for the next boating season."

Rosenborough acknowledged that the purpose of the class was "to get our members more familiar with our radio communications, the capabilities we now have at Flotilla Island and in general, to better prepare them to serve the boating public and other agencies we work with during our SAR missions and other activities."

He said he was real pleased in the results. "I think it's a start," said the auxiliaryist who has spent 50 years of his life in radio communications in state government and the Civil Air Patrol. "It's an ongoing process to keep people up to date on the latest technologies and capabilities. I think we had a real good turnout for our first class in communications. There was a lot of interest shown and a lot of good questions asked."