The Development and Implementation of the Training Cruise aboard Schooner Bowdoin for the Assessment of STCW Competencies of USCG Mate 500-GT (1600-ton ITC) Deck License Candidates

**HISTORY**

Traditional sail vessels enjoy a long history of training seamen to go to sea. Many countries continue to recognize the value of this type of experience by training seamen on sailing vessels as part of their vocational training. Regardless of the vessels these men and women will eventually command, MMA’s first training cruise vessel, Bowdoin, was a schooner. She was built in 1821 by the Hodgdon Brothers yard in East Boothbay, Maine for Admiral Donald McMillan with the expressed purpose of Arctic exploration. McMillan, with the Bowdoin, would make 21 trips to the Arctic carrying both scientists and college students. He believed in the inherent value of this type of training experience and he felt the students onboard always played an integral part of the operation of the vessel.

In 1988 MMA acquired the 98’ two-masted wooden schooner Bowdoin. She was built in 1821 by the Hodgdon Brothers yard in East Boothbay, Maine for Admiral Donald McMillan with the expressed purpose of Arctic exploration. McMillan, with the Bowdoin, would make 21 trips to the Arctic carrying both scientists and college students. He believed in the inherent value of this type of training experience and he felt the students onboard always played an integral part of the operation of the vessel.

**TRAINING CRUISE PHASES**

**Phase I: Crewroom:**
The first two days concentrate on sailing the vessel along the coast of Maine, allowing the student the opportunity to become familiar with the process of sailing the Bowdoin. Emergency drills for fire, person overboard and abandon ship are all practiced. Weather issues are organized. Events are spent at anchor with passage planning, gathering weather information and looking at routing options.

**Phase II: Offshore:**
With a clear passage plan and an acceptable weather window the Bowdoin and her crew will set sail across the Gulf of Maine and then northeast parallelizing the Nova Scotia coast. The objective is to sail efficiently getting into the north-west current and maximizing celestial navigation skills. Sun lines and advancing a line of position are addressed first.

**Phase III: Entering a Foreign Port:**
After several days at sea, and depending on wind and weather, landfall is typically made in Halifax, Nova Scotia. As the port is approached, the challenge of interior commercial traffic is encountered. Students are taught to communicate with Vessel Traffic Service (VTS) and deal with the issues of VTS separation schemes. The process of entering and clearing of customs and immigration is addressed.

**Phase IV: Return Passage:**
The return passage allows the students to demonstrate their skills while the licensed officers step back and observe the students. Along with STCW competency assessment the officers are able to directly address students about any individual shortcomings. Celestial navigation, collision avoidance, and watch standing become more complex. Closing on the USA brings increased trafffic and heightened awareness of navigation, since fog seems to always be present.

**TRAINING OBJECTIVES**

- Plan and Conduct A Passage and Determine Position
  - Use celestial bodies to determine ship’s position
  - Determine compass error using celestial and terrestrial means
  - Use and interpret information from meteorological instruments
  - General provisions for skipper

- Maintain a Safe Navigational Watch
  - Principles to be observed in keeping a navigational watch
  - The keeping of a watch
  - Respond to Emergencies
  - Emergency procedures for the protection and safety of passengers
  - Initial action to be taken following a fire, collision or grounding

- Maneuvering a Ship
  - Procedures to be followed for rescuing persons from sea

- Determining Responsibility and Leadership
  - Competence of an Officer in Charge of a Navigational Watch

- Effective Communication
  - Among ships, between vessels and with shore-side facilities

**WORLDWIDE EXPERIENCE**

- Bowdoin has sailed to many parts of the world, including the Arctic, Atlantic, Pacific, and Caribbean.

**REFERENCE**