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**United States Coast Guard**  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

*U.S. Coast Guard Oral History Program*

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## **Interview of Richard “Dick” Schall, USCGAUX**

U. S. Coast Guard Auxiliarist

11<sup>th</sup> District, Inland (Mid-1960s Service)

Conducted by C. Douglas Kroll, Ph. D., U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary

3 March 2013

North Shore, California

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**Dick Schall, USCGAUX & C. Douglas Kroll, USCGAUX**

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### **Biographical Summary**

Born in Loma Linda, California in 1931, Richard “Dick” Schall grew up there and graduated from Redlands High School. Following graduation he worked as a truck driver and later in the engineering department of the U. S. Forest Service out of San Bernardino, California. In 1950 he married Joan and they had three children. While working for the Forest Service he often spent weekends with his family at Desert Shores and boated on the Salton Sea. In the mid 1960s he became very involved with the Coast

Guard Auxiliary on inland waters. He served as the District Staff Office – Inland Operations and headed up the Coast Guard Auxiliary Safety Patrol for the “Salton Sea 500” boat race for several years, as well as events on the Colorado River. In the late 1970s he left the Forest Service and moved to North Shore, working as a truck driver and also for a local contractor. After the death of his first wife he remarried in 1993. He now lives in Beaumont, California.

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**INTERVIEWER:** Can you tell me briefly about your childhood?

**SCHALL:** I was born in Loma Linda, California in 1931, grew up there but graduated from Redlands High School.

**INTERVIEWER:** What jobs did you have after high school?

**SCHALL:** Truck driver, and then worked for the U.S. Forest Service. I was working for the Forest Service when I belonged to the [Coast Guard] Auxiliary.

**INTERVIEWER:** After you worked for the Forest Service what did you do?

**SCHALL:** I came to the desert as a truck driver and did that until I retired.

**INTERVIEWER:** What year did you get married?

**SCHALL:** 1950 to Joanne with three children. After her death, [I] remarried in 1993.

**INTERVIEWER:** You said you were working for the U.S. Forest Service when you joined the Auxiliary. What caused you to join it?

**SCHALL:** We were living in San Bernardino and we came to Desert Shores on the Salton Sea every weekend we could, to boat.

**INTERVIEWER:** While you were here, did someone contact you or invite you to join?

**SCHALL:** We had a club house at “Sun Dial”, where the Auxiliary met. Max Mather (?); (“Pat” Patterson?) was the flotilla commander and he asked me to join, which I did. Then they immediately realized that I was fairly well trained in this kind of stuff, being a Forest Service employee [supervisor] and so they made me the Operations Officer. So I started running the [Salton Sea] 500 and all the races on the Colorado River. I came with some pretty good talent, because my Forest people came with me. They maybe didn’t boat but they were very well versed in how to handle situations.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember what year that was?

**SCHALL:** No.

**INTERVIEWER:** Probably the early 1960s?

**SCHALL:** Something like that.

**INTERVIEWER:** Besides the Flotilla Operations Officer, were you also the Division 8 Operations Officer?

**SCHALL:** Yes, and they also made the District Operations Officer-Inland. They always had a District Operations Officer for the coast area, but they needed one for the inland area. I was that one. We had two District Operations Officers, one for the coast and I was the inland.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did Division 8 hold their meetings?

**SCHALL:** At different flotillas. They rotated among them. But they didn’t have them every month.

**INTERVIEWER:** Besides a trailer at Desert Shores, did you also keep a boat there?

**SCHALL:** Yes, I had a boat I kept there.

**INTERVIEWER:** What kind of a boat was it?

**SCHALL:** A 15-foot Dorset. The first year I ran "The 500" I was in my boat, but then I got smart and ran it from the shore in the following years!

**INTERVIEWER:** Where did the flotilla meetings take place?

**SCHALL:** At the Desert Shores Yacht Club.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you drive from you home in San Bernardino for the monthly meetings?

**SCHALL:** No, they had them on the weekends. If I wasn't on a fire I'd be here all the weekends.

**INTERVIEWER:** What did they do at their monthly [flotilla] meetings?

**SCHALL:** Usually we had a training session and then a meeting. We had very good training sessions. Than after the meeting we had some good parties. I lot of people joined because of the parties.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you ever have them at a nearby restaurant?

**SCHALL:** They had Tiki's and Helen's, we had parties at all of them, but we mainly did potlucks.

**INTERVIEWER:** In 1966 the records indicate that your flotilla had a cruise for the crippled children's society. Was that on the Salton Sea?

**SCHALL:** Yes. I remember it, but I didn't participate in it.

**INTERVIEWER:** Where was the crippled children's society from?

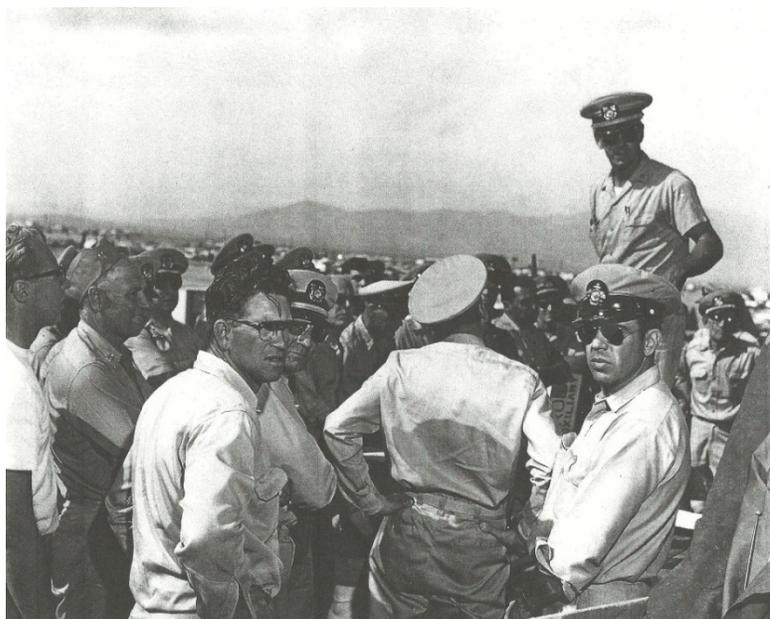
**SCHALL:** The Coachella Valley.

**INTERVIEWER:** You were the Race Captain for "The Salton Sea 500". What was "The 500" like?

**SCHALL:** It involved high-powered speed boats, and paid, professional drivers. They were getting big bucks to crawl into the boats and drive them. It was like the Indianapolis 500 for speed boats. It was sponsored and they had money.

**INTERVIEWER:** How did you prepare Auxiliarists for patrolling these races? **(Photo, right).**

**SCHALL:** We had the pre-race meetings at Desert Shores and at Salton City. In those days Salton City had a nice yacht club. We had a lot of boats participating so we did a lot of training.



**INTERVIEWER:** Do you remember about how many Auxiliary boats were involved?

**SCHALL:** More than 20. I haven't found my records yet. They would have the exact number. Some even came from the coast, if they were trailerable. Everybody wanted to get in on the 500 race patrol, because it made "Wild World of Sports". They had a helicopter with a camera man in it. I think the race committee might have paid for the helicopter.

**INTERVIEWER:** Since the Coast Guard has no jurisdiction on the Salton Sea, did the state officials here for law enforcement on the water?

**SCHALL:** The Sheriff from Imperial County. He was the law enforcement for the races, but we all worked for him. The Sheriff's office was in on the training and they sent deputies up to help. The doctors from down there came up and put on classes on how to get injured people out of the water without hurting them anymore.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did the sheriff have his own boats or did the deputies ride in the Auxiliary boats?

**SCHALL:** They handled what went on the beach and highway patrol handled the traffic on the highways, and the Auxiliary handled what took place on the water.

**INTERVIEWER:** During the races you had a Dr. Durante, an Auxiliarist who was also an Indio physician. Did he belong to your flotilla or to the Indio flotilla?

**SCHALL:** I believe he belonged to 8-6 [Indio]. He helped with the medical training and was also present for the races.

**INTERVIEWER:** I know that Fred Brown operated the chase boat using a former Catalina speedboat. What were the duties of the chase boat?

**SCHALL:** I can't tell you. We had boats at each corner of the race. They were assigned spectator control. We had boats that would pull the race boats off the bottom if they sank and then we had emergency boats with stretchers and other equipment so if somebody got hurt they were the rescue boat. We had it planned out pretty good.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you know how many Auxiliarists were involved?

**SCHALL:** I can't even estimate. A lot came from the coast, even if they didn't have a boat.

**INTERVIEWER:** How many years were you a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary?

**SCHALL:** About four.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do you think it was the early 60s or the mid 60s?

**SCHALL:** Mid 60s.

**INTERVIEWER:** In your four years, what was your most memorable experience? The things that stand out, either funny, scary, or important?

**SCHALL:** It was all a lot of fun, nothing really stands out.

**INTERVIEWER:** After those four years you dropped out of the Auxiliary, correct?

**SCHALL:** The Auxiliary as you know, is all volunteer. They started thinking that I should be a full-time employee, and I had another job.

**INTERVIEWER:** It was getting to be too much?

**SCHALL:** Well, for instance, we had a deal on the river.

**INTERVIEWER:** You also covered boat races on the Colorado River?

**SCHALL:** Yes, we were under cut orders there. Anything on the river the Coast Guard gave us cut orders. And usually they sent a boarding team, sometimes two. They handled the law enforcement and we handled the safety. The boarding team guys were great guys. No matter what you needed, they were highly skilled at their operations. I can't say a bad word about that bunch. The Coast Guard would also furnish a helicopter down there, a big one.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were these mainly at Lake Havasu or south of Lake Havasu?

**SCHALL:** Some of them were at Havasu and we had some at what they called "the strip" out of Parker.

**INTERVIEWER:** Was that south of Parker?

**SCHALL:** Strip goes from the [Parker] dam all the way up to the other dam [Davis]. That's called "the strip."

**INTERVIEWER:** It goes the length of Lake Havasu, all the way up to the dam for Lake Mojave?

**SCHALL:** We had boat races there and the Coast Guard would actually close that body of water to anybody being on it. Even though it was navigable waters, they put it in the *Notice to Mariners*. The sheriff's office from each side okayed it and their guys took care of the people on the shore.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did they have these boat races every year on the river?

**SCHALL:** Yes, but it was smaller boats, more like outboard motors, and many were amateur racers.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were there boat races south of Lake Havasu?

**SCHALL:** Now in Blythe it was a cruise. They could go from Blythe to Lake Martinez in Yuma and they would have a big barbeque down there. We patrolled it because there is a lot of bad water down there. And that was one of the reasons that I got out [of the Auxiliary]. I did this for three years. I had set up different boats to be at different places where there were sandbars. I set up a guy and his wife, and they had a crippled kid, at the Cibola [Farmers] Bridge. I figured that would be convenient if they needed to go to shore. There were restrooms there. Well anyway, the boat hit one of the pilings and did some damage. At the time I was on a fire in Santa Barbara. I am not even there. When I got back all the red tape started in and I got, not from the Coast Guard, but from the Auxiliary, and got criticized for putting them by that bridge. The Coast Guard always agreed that if there was any damage they would pay for it. There got to be a little confusion on that and I'm not a very good "fall in liner". I let them know what they were going to do.

**INTERVIEWER:** The Coast Guard?

**SCHALL:** I let them know real quick and then I got out.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did they end up paying for the damage?

**SCHALL:** Yes. [Asked me to briefly turn off recording machine for explanation].

**INTERVIEWER:** The cruise down the river from Blythe. Was that sponsored by a yacht club?

**SCHALL:** The Chamber of Commerce in Yuma. Lots of boats participated and they would have a big barbeque down there at Senator's Wash.

**INTERVIEWER:** Do remember if Ray Beisel was the Division 8 Commander?

**SCHALL:** Yes.

**INTERVIEWER:** Were you in the Auxiliary when they dedicated Senator's Wash Reservoir?

**SCHALL:** I believe I was in the Auxiliary then, but I wasn't there for the dedication.

**INTERVIEWER:** I remember that Ray Beisel represented the Auxiliary at that dedication.

**SCHALL:** I didn't leave with any hard feelings, but it was just too much to handle when I was still working full time. I couldn't tell the Forest Service that I couldn't be there because of my Auxiliary responsibilities.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did you ever visit any of the other flotillas? Do you remember where the Indio Flotilla 8-6 met?

**SCHALL:** County Fair Grounds. They used to have a booth at the County Fair every year. I didn't get to the other flotilla's meetings, but all the flotillas had a lot of talent that could be of great value if you could learn to work it. You have doctors, lawyers, and businessmen. For example the Indio flotilla had one of the largest growers down here, he and his wife. They were people who knew how to get things done. If the right person is running it, you can get them to work with you. It's like a volunteer fire department. When I was with the Forest Service my boss would say when you have to send a Captain out to a volunteer fire station, you need to send a different caliber than you would send to a paid fire station. They have to know enough to let them run and have their fun and do their thing. You don't send someone who is going to go out there gung-ho and say "I know how to do this."

**INTERVIEWER:** You have to handle volunteers differently than you handle employees.

**SCHALL:** These people come with their own boats, their own airplanes. You handle them with kid gloves if you want to get things done.

**INTERVIEWER:** When did you move to North Shore?

**SCHALL:** When I left the Forest Service I settled here in North Shore. About 42 years. I went to work for a contractor down here. I was with the engineering service with the Forest Service.

**INTERVIEWER:** Did RADM Ned W. Sprow come to every Salton Sea Race?

**SCHALL:** I believe just the one year. But he did go to the races at Sight Six a couple of times.

**INTERVIEWER:** What is Sight Six? Is that Lake Havasu?

**SCHALL:** Yes. And CAPT Kerwen (sp?) would come too. He was the second in command. Whoever was the Director of Auxiliary came as well.

**INTERVIEWER:** Is there anything I didn't ask you about, that I should have asked you about? Anything you wanted to say about the Auxiliary that I didn't ask you about?

**SCHALL:** Only that I enjoyed the Auxiliary the whole time I was in it. I have no regrets for being a member. It is a great organization. The people that I met there are still some of my friends that I still talk to.

**INTERVIEWER:** Thank you.

**END OF INTERVIEW**

