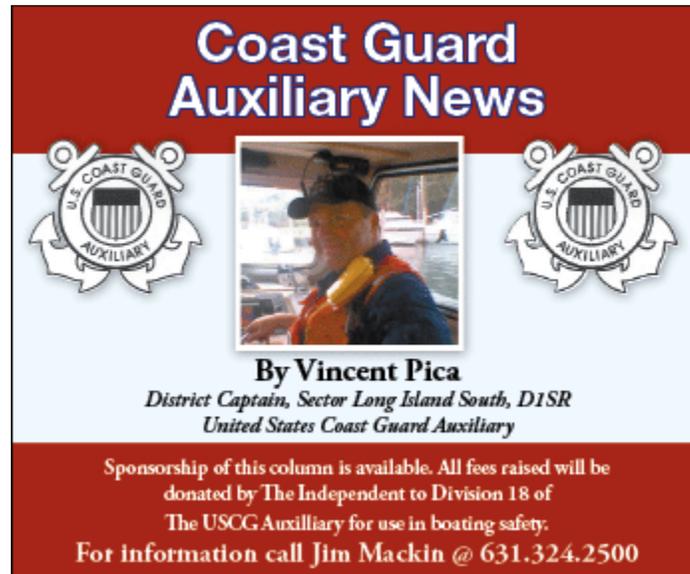


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**Coast Guard
Auxiliary News**

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"Sabby the Lingo?" Maritime Language Part II

As noted last week, each discipline has a language and that language conveys competency to the listener. This column, like its predecessor, is about making sure we come off competently and correctly... and tracks how our everyday language is anchored in the sea...

From the Sea to the Land

Continuing the examination of words that were carried into everyday language due to its colorfulness or its "economy of expression" – maximum information in the minimum amount of words.

Admiral – Crusaders brought this term back from the wars in the Holy Land... An Arabic naval commander was called the "emir-el-bahr" – Lord of the Sea corrupted into several European languages as "admiral".

Bigwig – Used to signify someone of importance today – as it did 300 years ago! Anyone of any importance in Europe those days wore a wig as a indication of his or her position in society. The

bigger, the more important... such as a sea captain with respect to his lower deck officers...

Blazer – Before nations organized their navies into what we take for granted today, sea captains would set the standard for their crews... Captain J. Washington of HMS Blazer decided that his crew would wear what we call today a "sports jacket" or a "blazer"...

To "Fudge" something – No, it isn't to smear chocolate sauce over something to cover up the truth... As is often the case, the reality is stranger than fiction! There once was a Captain Fudge back in the 1600's – and the man was an inveterate liar and, being a poor seaman (some think just too drunk to be good at anything), often did lie! The lies varied from what happened to the cargo to what happened to the crew or passengers but to fudge something as a form of lie or cover-up goes back over 400 years!

Not Enough Room To Swing A Cat – No, this doesn't mean a room too small to swing a member of the feline family by its tail... The "cat" in this case was the cat-of-nine-tails, which was a device of severe corporal punishment aboard naval vessels for centuries. Called "flogging", the US Navy outlawed it in 1850 and the Royal Navy followed suit in 1879. Any space (usually below decks) where there were cramped quarters was described as there "not being enough room to swing a cat..."

Piping Hot – No, not food that has been laid along hot steam pipes for cooking or keeping warm... When the food (mess) was ready for serving to a particular watch of sailors, the boatswain would blow a high pitched signal on his pipe which could generally be heard above most ship noises... The food was "piping hot"...

Ring Out The Old, Ring In The New – With New Year's Eve just ahead, we'll be hearing this soon. Where does the tradition lie? At sea... For generations, it was naval tradition to ring out the old year at midnight with 8-bells (the defining signal of the end of a 4-hour "watch") and ring in the new year with another 8-bells...

Sloppy – The word "slop" derives from loose pants worn by English sailors before the world's leading navy at the time instituted formal uniforms (in 1857!) These less-than-crisp pants eventually carried over into everything "sloppy" being careless and untidy, whether that is clothes or carpentry.

Scuttlebutt – "Hey, what's the scuttlebutt?" is often heard from someone wanting to know what was the latest news or gossip... The scuttlebutt was a plug placed in a hole (also called a "scuttle", hence to "scuttle the ship" or sink her) in a cask (also called a butt...) of water about half-way up (ensuring that there would always be half full.) This was where sailors would congregate and talk...

So, we'll do more of these, with an emphasis on nautical words themselves in nautical settings. But, now, when you are in a conversation and someone says, "He fudged the numbers", you can say that it has nothing to do with hot chocolate!