

## DRIFT BOTTLE (from page 16)

A trip by Manning to the WHOI Data Library and Archive a few days later uncovered more information about drift bottles released by the ship Hydrographer during Coast and Geodetic Survey (USC&GS) surveys. Bumpus had asked other agencies, including the Coast and Geodetic Survey in late 1959, to provide him with copies of their drift bottle data.

In February 2014, Albert "Skip" Theberge at the NOAA Central Library had also contacted the NEFSC regarding another drift bottle story. After sharing news of this latest bottle find with him, the NEFSC asked Theberge about drift bottle releases by USC&GS ships. Drift bottles had been in use by the Coast and Geodetic Survey to track ocean currents since 1846. The last drift bottles used by the survey were released between 1958 and 1966.

It did not take long to locate information from the Coast and Geodetic Ship Explorer in the Pacific Ocean in the 1950s, and about Explorer cruises in the Atlantic Ocean. However, there were no images related to drift bottle releases from the Hydrographer. But there was something else of interest: An image of a postcard from drift bottle 17465, found 25 miles south of Nelson Lagoon in southwest Alaska on February 8, 2011.

The image caption read: "Perhaps the last drift bottle that will ever be found. All drift bottle records have been closed for years so the exact location and even ship that launched Drift Bottle 17465 is unknown. It is probable that it was launched from either the EXPLORER or PATHFINDER in the 1950's or 1960's. It is remarkable that the bottle survived for close to fifty years."

As for the last drift bottle from Coast and Geodetic Surveys to be found, the bottle found by Keith Moreis on Martha's Vineyard may now hold the record.

In the meantime, archive documents revealed that in September and October of 1959 the USC&GS Ship Hydrographer conducted environmental studies in three areas off the New England Coast: 16 miles northeast of Cape Cod Light, just south of Nomans Land, and 36 miles south of Gay Head on Martha's Vineyard.

A detailed hydrographic survey had been conducted in each area. In addition to collecting bottom sediment samples and biological dredge hauls, the Hydrographer had obtained 100 hours of current meter measurements made at the surface, mid-depth and near the bottom with current meters suspended from anchored buoys. Drift bottles were released at each buoy station at the rate of six per hour, all six with the same bottle number, for the 100 hours of current measurements.

The bottle releases were part of a study of ocean currents and the drift of floating objects off the New England coast. They were also part of a study to determine currents in the vicinity of proposed offshore atomic waste dumping sites.

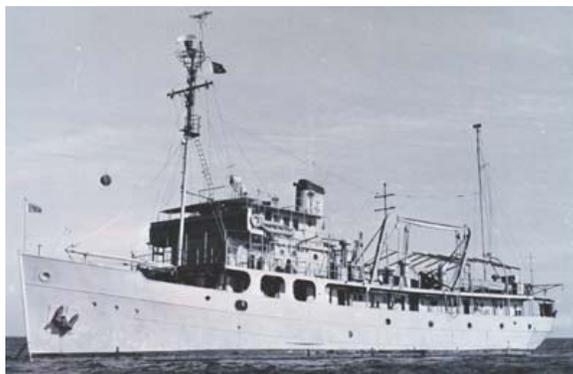
As of February 8, 1960, only two drift bottle cards had been returned from the area 36 miles south of Gay Head (now known as Aquinnah), but nearly 60 percent from the area just south of Nomans Land. Approximately 5 percent of bottle card returns came from the area 16 miles northeast of Cape Cod Light, now known as Highland Light, in Truro.

Records as of March 1960 indicate that four of the six bottles numbered 279B released south of Nomans Land were recovered within two months of their September 19, 1959 release: one after 2 days, another after 4 days, and a third after 7 days. All three were found on Martha's Vineyard. The fourth was found after 55 days on Nantucket.

The December 2013 bottle is one of the last two bottles released in that group. Like the others, it was recovered just miles away from where it began its journey, but in this case more than 54 years later.

For Keith Moreis, that December beach walk on a cold winter day yielded a treasure indeed.

"Finding the bottle was exciting," said Moreis. "Learning more about it and its history has been a rewarding experience, to say the least. I never expected to find something like this, but then again, you never know what you will find on the beach."



**The U.S. Coast & Geodetic Survey Ship Hydrographer, in service 1931 - 1967**

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