

**Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Coast Guard Foundation Dinner
New York, NY
21 October 2004**

What a terrific, thoroughly enjoyable evening this has been!

[Recognize VIPs]

It has been a real delight to be here with you this evening. I always enjoy my trips to visit the Foundation here in New York – even though it's home to the Yankees. And given that I'm a huge Red Sox fan, you know it's high praise to the Foundation that I enjoy coming to visit you in New York.

Many, many thanks to the Coast Guard Foundation for hosting this celebration of Coast Guard men and women and many thanks to all of you attending and showing this wonderful outpouring of support for the Coast Guard. Thanks to Frank Lanza and L3 for their chairmanship of this terrific dinner. Peter, another great job as MC – thank you.

Tonight, we honor these crews for their heroism, their bravery, and their actions in performing Coast Guard missions, both at home and abroad. Coast Guard men and women are heroes in everyday kinds of ways as well. Their efforts have added up to a banner year for us. Thanks to their efforts, the past 12 months have been very productive:

- We had a record year in counter-drug operations, seizing over 240,000 pounds of cocaine last year, shattering the previous record by over 72% and 100,000 pounds. Keeping these drugs off our streets helps save innumerable lives which will now not be impacted by the tragedies of illegal drug use.
- On July 1, we began enforcing the Maritime Transportation Safety Act, one of the most important pieces of legislation in Coast Guard history and critical to increasing the security of our Nation's ports.
- We accomplished all this while meeting our increased homeland security responsibilities, preventing a possible mass migration from Haiti when that government collapsed, handling multiple hurricanes,

and fighting the war on terror both at home and abroad. I'm very proud of all Coast Guard men and women.

So in their everyday ways – doing the job this country asks them to do -- all Coast Guard men and women are heroes. They stand long watches, away from the comforts of home and family, to ensure the safety and security of the people of the United States. They train together relentlessly, so when conditions are tough, they're able to go save the lives of those in danger. They stand always ready to perform the many missions America has entrusted to them. I could not be more proud of these crews, honored here tonight, and of all Coast Guard men and women.

One of the great things about Coast Guard men and women – when called upon, they achieve heroic results, as you heard tonight in the award citations. But these individuals join the Coast Guard from all across America – they are your next-door neighbors, your kids' coach, the Neighborhood Watch volunteer. They're real people who go out and do really tough things ... really, really well. Tonight's events help put a face on the great work of Coast Guard men and women.

Nate Bruckenthal, the Damage Controlman killed in action in Iraq as part of LEDET 403, was 24 years old, and pretty well known around town back here in the states – you could see him on the sidelines coaching football, or if you needed help, you might see him in his role as a reserve police officer, firefighter, or emergency-services responder.

And the next time you're up on the Cape, if you need to go to the Emergency Room for some reason, you might just have Aviation Survivalman Brian Laubenstein taking care of you – and if he's not there, you'll probably find him out on the diamond, coaching both little league softball and T-ball.

And if you lived down in Elizabeth City, you'd be fortunate to have Petty Officer Pulliam as a neighbor – he's known both at home and at work as the best friend anybody could have and he's an outstanding father to his 3 daughters, all under the age of 10 – as a single parent. He's a great basketball player too – watch out for his 3-point shot.

These men represent all Coasties -- heroes both in uniform and off-duty, in big ways and in everyday ways.

These crews honored here are aviators and boatswain's mates, damage controlmen and machinery technicians, officer and enlisted. In all their varied training and education, "heroism" isn't taught – but necessary skills and teamwork most certainly are. And when called upon, using their skills and relying on their teammates nets some very impressive results ... heroism.

It takes the support and dedication of many people to make the Coast Guard what it is – [gesture to table with honorees] obviously those who wear Coast Guard blue and their immediate family and friends. [To honorees' guests:] I'm glad to see so many family and friends of those we honored tonight were able to join us. Thank you for your daily support of these extraordinary Coast Guard men.

But I want to close with a heartfelt thank you to another group of supporters – the Coast Guard Foundation.

Our Service members benefit every day from the generosity of the Coast Guard Foundation. Your many good works touch the lives of Coast Guard men and women throughout our Service.

This past year, the Foundation has contributed well over \$600,000 to better the lives of those serving their country in the Coast Guard, a 20% increase over the year before. 600,000 is just a number – granted, a very large number -- but that number has greater impact when you break it down into what it really means for that Seaman far from home for the first time or that young Lieutenant serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The Foundation's generosity means that, among other things:

- Sectors Miami and Saint Pete now have distance learning centers.
- Cutter ORCAS now has a library of educational DVDs, Group Grand Haven has a library of leadership books, and Group North Bend has a library of professional books.

As delivered

- The children at Air Station Astoria, Group North Bend, and Station Lake Worth all have new playground equipment.
- New bikes, weight equipment, treadmills, basketball hoops, softball gloves, volleyball gear, and – my personal favorite – golf clubs, will help thousands of Coasties around the country keep fit, especially now that we've launched our new fitness program.
- And the list could go on and on!

I've said it many times before and I'll continue to say it: the greatest asset of any organization is its people. And by their support of Coast Guard people around the world, the Foundation, its benefactors, and its sponsors contribute to our successes. And with your help tonight, we've honored some of those successes – these Coast Guard heroes.

Thank you for coming tonight and thank you for your constant support. Semper Paratus!