

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Coast Guard Foundation Dinner
New York, NY
October 24, 2002

This has really been a tremendous evening!

I'd like to offer my sincere thanks to the Foundation President, Barb Richards, and the Chairman of the Board, Jim Caraway, and all our sponsors for another spectacular event to celebrate the accomplishments of a few of our everyday Coast Guard heroes.

[Recognize other dignitaries.]

It has been a real delight to be here with you. Last weekend, Nancy and I attended the Coast Guard Ball in Washington. We had a great time there, too. The theme of the Ball was "Our People Make the Difference."

It was a very appropriate theme, because nothing is more important to our success as an organization than the difference that our people make each and every day.

I know by your generous support of Coast Guard men and women everywhere that you understand just how much of a difference our people make.

There is a nautical metaphor that describes three different kinds of people in most organizations...rowboat people, sailboat people, and powerboat people.

Rowboat people row until they quickly get tired, and then they are swept along with the current.

Sailboat people sail only when a favorable wind is blowing.

Powerboat people steam on continuously through calm or storm to reach the appointed destination.

There is no substitute for power when you're trying to go somewhere or get something done in a hurry.

These young people here with us tonight are powerboat people. They are the very kind of professionals we need to get some very important things done in the Coast Guard.

You will recall that when Robert Fulton invented the steamboat, critics called it "Fulton's Folly."

On the day that he first demonstrated his new invention, the crowd that had gathered around jeered that he would never get it started. Then, when the engine finally came to life, they said he'd never get it stopped.

Figuratively speaking, of course, they were right.

Back in the nineteenth century, Robert Fulton's invention of the steamboat transformed the maritime industry. It really helped get things done better. Use of the world's oceans and our nation's waterways changed forever. And it hasn't stopped changing.

That's the power of real transformation.

It's that kind of transformation that I believe we are going to need in the Coast Guard to meet the challenges of the twenty first century.

It's Transformation with a capital "T." Our Transformation will have dimensions that are organizational, strategic, doctrinal, cultural, and procedural.

And the time is at hand to quicken the pace of transformation that will be necessary in these areas in coming years to provide the strength and security that our nation needs and deserves.

We must change how we do things without changing the nature of who we are, however. Amidst the needed transformation that must come, the Coast Guard's essential character will remain unchanged. We will remain a maritime, military, multi-mission service.

The capability to make these changes will come not just from more money and more equipment. Don't get me wrong...we need those, too! But, it will come mainly from our people. Our people are the power of our organization.

We have honored some of those people tonight for their exemplary—and even heroic—performance of duty.

The deeds that we have celebrated here are just a few examples of countless acts of selfless sacrifice that happen every day in the Coast Guard.

They represent the kind of sacrifice that will be necessary to ensure the safety and security of the people of the United States in the coming years—whatever the particular mission might be. It is the kind of sacrifice that it will take for us to get many things done.

I could not be more proud of these men and women, the units they represent, or the units just like theirs all around the country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, throughout the years it has been a source of inspiration and strength to me and to Coast Guard men and women everywhere to be reminded of the Coast Guard Foundation's continuous support to our service.

Your constant generosity, expressed through the many good works that benefit our service members on a daily basis, is a welcome affirmation of our service the nation. The stalwart support of the Coast Guard Foundation will aid us in maintaining continuity in the midst of change.

You see, you are making a difference, too! In fact, I think we have a lot of powerboat people here, tonight—even among those who consider themselves diehard sail-boaters!

This has been an especially challenging year in many ways. As our nation grows and prospers, the demands placed on our service have grown, too. The attacks against our nation last year have demonstrated the urgency and importance of our roles and missions as never before.

Through it all, the Foundation has acknowledged our efforts, supported our needs, and encouraged our members to continue the difficult and often dangerous work to which we are called. By the end of this year, the Foundation will have funded more than \$2 million in projects and programs for Coast Guard men and women around the country.

As Jim Caraway mentioned earlier, those projects include scholarships for dependents, and recreation equipment to improve the quality of life for the people of our service.

Thanks to you, Air Station Cape Cod now has a new swimming pool.

Earlier this month in Valdez it was a real joy to dedicate a new 3,000 square foot, two-story Community Center, which was also a gift of the Foundation.

I'm delighted to assure you tonight that, with your generous help, so many things in the Coast Guard are going the way we want them to go. Our future stands to be as strong and as vital as our past.

That strength will come from the people whom you have supported so well... people like these here with us this evening. People whose timeless, unchanging devotion to duty provides the power by which we are able to sail through even the most dangerous and treacherous times to get the job done.

That's your Coast Guard. That's the calling of men and women in Coast Guard Blue—all heroes, wherever they might be tonight.

Semper Paratus! And thank you.