

Memorial Service for the Crew of Coast Guard Helo 6505
Delivered by Admiral Thad Allen, Sept. 12, 2008
Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point

It is the custom of our Service and of all of the Armed Forces to mark significant events with military ceremony and honors. It affords us the opportunity to provide dignity to the event and allows us to exercise what one of my mentors called "the manners of our profession."

We are here to do that today. To exercise the manners of our profession with dignity and honor.

But this is not a change of command,
it is not a retirement,
it is not an awards ceremony.

No ceremony is as difficult as the one
in this place
at this time.

We face many challenges in our lives ...
we pursue our professions to demonstrate our talent and skill,
we become part of a larger purpose.

We grow and mature,
find friends,
learn to appreciate our families,
fall in love,
create new families.

But of all the things we face in life,
the loss of a
husband,
father,
brother,
son,
friend,
and shipmate exact the greatest toll.

This is not how it is supposed to be.

We take vows to grow old together.
We sacrifice for our children.
We are there for our friends.
We watch out for our shipmates and wingmen.
And we are there for our parents as they were there for us.

We have been denied that.

But more importantly
CDR Tom Nelson,
LCDR Andrew Wischmeier,
Petty Officer First Class David Skimin
and Petty Officer Second Class Joshua Nichols
have been denied that as well.

What are we to make of this?

How we to make sense of this when there are is no sense to make?

We try to understand the unfathomable and cannot.

We search for answers and there appear to be none.

We seek a way ahead and we are discouraged.

But even as we struggle we know where our strength lies and where we must turn ...

Our individual faiths provide an anchor, but the chain is family.

In times of crisis, stress, and anguish families come together,
they must ...
that is their purpose ...
and that is when they are needed.

Family members, friends, and loved ones, have made the difficult journey to come together today, some far from their homes.

So I say to the members of the Coast Guard Family it is our responsibility, it is our duty to make that journey with them ... to be here.

For while we cannot explain the unexplainable ...
or replace the irreplaceable ...
or undo the past,

We can be here ... we can stand with you as part of a larger family.

We can say to you that our hearts are breaking at the loss of our shipmates.

And in our loss, we know, understand, and celebrate the lives of ...

Tom Nelson,
Andrew Wischmeier,
David Skimin
and Joshua Nichols

The Chairman of our House Authorization Sub Committee, Elijah Cummings has said,
“Our children are a message we send to a world we will never see.”

The message of the crew of CG 6505 to those who follow is ...

We protected you,
We defended you,
We saved you,
... We were Guardians.

Thank you,
God Bless the crew of CG 6505