

Decommissioning Remarks
USCGC BOUTWELL (WHEC 719)
Captain Edward A. Westfall
San Diego, CA
March 16, 2016

“I feel that the...BOUTWELL will have a proud history and eventually earn some claim to fame, at least within the Coast Guard. This of course remains to be borne out of future events and how you handle them”

BOUTWELL’s third Commanding Officer, Captain Lessing, wrote this in 1973.

Admiral Ray; Captains Krumm, Trainor, Allison, Newell, Bardo, Crabbs, and Gimple (all prior BOUTWELL Commanding Officers); CAPT Stanclik; Master Chief Petty Officer Vanderhaden; other senior officer’s; BOUTWELL crew; family and friends; Happy Coast Guard Cutter BOUTWELL day, a proclamation that has been made by the City of San Diego.

Already introduced, three BOUTWELL plankowners join us today: retired Coast Guard Chief Warrant Officers Joseph Amato and Louie Jones, and Mr. George Smart. I suspect that being present at the BOUTWELL decommissioning ceremony did not cross your mind that June day in 1968. That day, you set in motion the remarkable story we celebrate here. Thank you being with us (applause).

I have also recently spoken with three other prior BOUTWELL Commanding Officers, Rear Admiral Brown, and retired Captains Joseph and Munro, who was my predecessor. All send their best wishes and thanks to all of you for being here.

The ship, that physical hull before you, has been the one constant presence in the story that we recognize and celebrate today. But, as all sailors know, each and every BOUTWELL accomplishment was because of the work of those assigned, the work of those who are the other essential element, the crew. During the course of her career, more than three thousand two hundred Coast Guard men and women have served in BOUTWELL. Soon, you will see the last of those crews step from ship to shore, and the ship become an empty vessel, the former Coast Guard Cutter BOUTWELL.

We lose a good ship with BOUTWELL’s decommissioning, but I am heartened that she is not simply being laid up or scrapped. This ship has plenty of life in her still, and will embark upon a new career serving under the flag of one of our allies.

BOUTWELL has stood the test of time in her service to the United States. Designed and built in the 1960’s, she has shown the strength to face the daunting challenges and missions of a 21st century world. BOUTWELL served in both domestic and international theatres, flexing her might in dynamic and austere environments such as the Eastern and Northern Pacific, North Atlantic, and Arctic Oceans; the Caribbean, Mediterranean, and Bering Seas; and the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Alaska. BOUTWELL has been a fierce combatant of transnational organized crime, protector of living marine resources, safe haven for those in distress, and an

ambassador for global maritime cooperation. Admiral Zukunft, the Coast Guard Commandant, said much of the same this morning in a Coast Guard-wide message recognizing this event.

In your invitations, I gave each of you a reading assignment: The BOUTWELL History Project. I won't repeat what I am sure you have all memorized, but I will highlight some key points.

BOUTWELL started her career based in Boston. Subsequently, she has called Seattle, Alameda, and San Diego home. Please note the trend toward warmer climates!

BOUTWELL's best-known success was in leading the international response to the burning cruise ship PRINSENDAM. This case was, and still is, the Coast Guard's largest at-sea rescue. BOUTWELL and her fellow responders removed 520 people from the ship and her lifeboats, in treacherous Gulf of Alaska waters, without a single death or serious injury. Recently, the current crew and I had the honor of bringing BOUTWELL to Seattle to recognize the 35th anniversary of this rescue. Captain Krumm, it was a pleasure meeting you and many of your crew, other responders, and PRINSENDAM survivors.

BOUTWELL has been around the world twice, first in 2003 supporting combat operations in the Persian Gulf, and once again in 2009 as part of the USS BOXER Expeditionary Strike Group. In that deployment, BOUTWELL disrupted piracy offshore East Africa and was the first US naval vessel to call on a Libyan port in nearly 40 years. Under Captain Newell, she deployed to Haiti in support of Operation UPHOLD DEMOCRACY. Early in her career, she distinguished herself by responding and standing by a damaged Soviet submarine in storm-tossed seas off of Newfoundland. BOUTWELL made a record setting 72 ton marijuana seizure back in 1988, while in 1998 she made a high seas drift net seizure that was the largest such seizure by the US Coast Guard at that time.

Malta, Russia, Japan, China, the Philippines, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan, Jordan, Greece, and Italy, these are not your typical U.S. Coast Guard port calls, but BOUTWELL has made them. Of course, she has had more than a few stops at more typical Coast Guard ports of call along the Pacific Rim stretching from the Aleutian Islands to South America.

Staying strong to the end, BOUTWELL recently deployed to the waters offshore Central America, supporting the Coast Guard Western Hemisphere Strategy and Operation MARTILLO, and to Alaska, conducting Bering Sea Patrols and supporting the Coast Guard Arctic Strategy and Operation ARCTIC SHIELD. All of this led to this geographical fun fact: in 2015, BOUTWELL operated in waters from the Gulf of Panama to offshore Northwest Alaska, a spread of over 70 degrees of latitude.

All of these accomplishments, both recent and long past, were made by the people assigned. No matter the age or quality of the equipment, the people make the difference. People are the bridge between an impressive machine and a successful military unit. History is made by people...by the crew

A ship's personality evolves as people come and go and I thank all who have served aboard for building and maintaining such a fine legacy. She has had a fine 48 years and I wish her many more in the service of her new country.

I have been responsible to Vice Admiral Ray for ensuring BOUTWELL's success during these final two years with a straightforward task: Ensure that this group of talented, dedicated people comes together with this wonderful machine to do our job; to execute our mission. This team, BOUTWELL's FINAL crew, has had the much more difficult task of meeting that commitment. They have maintained BOUTWELL's solid reputation for performance, innovation, and professionalism. This crew has made up the pursuit and boarding teams, engineering, combat and navigation watch teams, engineering force and deck force maintaining equipment and preserving a nearly half-century old hull. They also feed and care for all onboard.

My watchwords to all of them have been straightforward as well: Mission, Risk, and Resilience. We execute the mission, we acknowledge and manage risk, and we develop and strengthen our resilience. Over the past few years, I often stated that we were going to go "do our thing". Our "thing" may have varied from task to task, mission to mission, but this crew took those watchwords to heart. Life at sea in the service of our country is immensely rewarding, but also challenging, demanding and sometimes dangerous. At times we, by design or circumstance, must perform flawlessly at the edge of our capacity and capability. This is the nature of the service we are committed to, and is, quite simply, what we do. This crew has executed mission flawlessly and stayed true to BOUTWELL's history and character.

We could not "do our thing" without support. Admiral, you and your staff have been outstanding. There are trainers and maintainers ashore, Force Readiness Command units and the Long-Range Enforcer product line folks, who jump aboard when we need, that have also enabled us to meet mission.

We also receive support from the Navy League of the United States. Whether our formal sponsoring Council in Palm Springs, or our previous sponsoring councils, especially Alameda, or our other good friends such as the Marin, San Francisco, and Fresno councils, thank you for your support.

Most importantly, and on behalf of all who now serve, or have ever served, in BOUTWELL. To all of our family and friends: We are all acutely aware that we serve at a cost. The cost of time away, events missed, plans cancelled, and schedules jostled. All of you enable us to keep at our task, our mission. Thank you.

Reflecting on Captain Lessing's words: Has BOUTWELL achieved some fame? Well, no matter what else, she certainly hasn't been a wallflower! All of her crews, the over three thousand that have walked these decks, have done their best to handle what were, in 1973, future events. Well done, BOUTWELL, well done.

I will now read my orders.