

As delivered.

Admiral James M. Loy
Change of Command Ceremony
May 30, 2002

Amenities:

Ladies and Gentlemen, Kay and I—and if I may momentarily speak for Tom and Nancy Collins—together we four, our families, and our Coast Guard are deeply honored by your presence here today.

[Acknowledgement of Secretary Mineta, Secretary Chao, Chairman Young, General Myers, Admiral Clark, General Jones, General Keane (USAVCS), former Commandants, and other dignitaries.]

Where does one start? I am indeed blessed.

On June 3, 1964 the Coast Guard academy graduated 109 new ensigns. Sixty-one of those officers are here today. Some would say they'd do just about anything for a good party! That will come later. In reality they are about classmate loyalty and support.

I can't begin to tell you what an anchor to windward they've been for me these past four years. They are brothers, all. Please stand and be recognized if you're a member of the great Coast Guard Academy class of 1964.

On June 13th 1964, I had very simply, the best day of my life. Kay and I were married that day for better, for worse and for 22 PCS moves!

Kelly and Mike and a parade of Shetland Sheep dogs made us an official family unit. We went everywhere together and have experienced this Coast Guard dream together.

Kay has been and remains my rock, my conscience, my partner and my best friend. Kelly and Mike have been constant sources of joy in our lives. So too now are their spouses Greg and Katy and of course Trevor and Coulson, Kelly and Greg's twin boys, who are truly God's answered prayers.

[Recognition of other family and friends.]

As I look out on this audience today I also see shipmates, colleagues and friends, all of whom have been sources of vitality and wisdom throughout my years of Coast Guard service.

I offer each of you my most heartfelt thanks for being nearby one more time.

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First, let me say thanks to two American patriots. General Dick Meyers and Secretary Norm Mineta stepped forward into the storm as boldly as any other American leaders these past 9 months.

As a nation we seem to produce the Washingtons, the Roosevelts, the Lincolns and the Grants every time we need them. Winston Churchill said at the end of WW II that he was not surprised and actually expected America's economic might to turn the tide in the Allies' favor, but that he was genuinely surprised at the seemingly limitless number of Marshalls, Bradleys, Pattons, Eisenhowers, Macarthurs, Waashes, Halseys, and Nimitzes that America seemed to be able to produce.

General Meyers and Secretary Mineta are both cut from that kind of cloth. I am humbled by their words and honored by their presence—and that of my fellow service chiefs—here with me today.

On Sunday night, Kay and I attended the National Memorial Day concert on the West lawn of the Capitol. It was a powerful and moving experience. We met survivors of the Bataan death march. We met a retired fireman from New York, who lost 2 sons on 9/11...one a fireman, the other a police officer. We met a 14-year-old girl who lost her father and wrote a tearful and very poignant letter to him as a way both to say goodbye and to stay in touch.

These people framed Memorial Day for me like it was never framed before. I wish every American could have been there.

Theodore Roosevelt once said, "The first requisite of a good citizen in this republic of ours is that he should be able and willing to pull his weight!"

"Able and willing to pull his weight"... "Able and willing" sounds exactly like the labels applied to American citizens in Coast Guard uniforms these past months. Just this past weekend we worked multiple counter-drug cases, dozens of SAR cases, several illegal migrant cases, a pier collapse in Savannah and the terrible bridge allision on the Arkansas River in Oklahoma.

All in addition to a heightened attention to port, waterway, and coastal security, redefined by 9/11.

Those, of course, are just the ones I know about. My duty officer said to me during one of our many conversations that he was sorry to bother me so much on my last weekend. Thinking better of it, he then said, "But I guess that's what our jobs are all about!" Not even you get relief until you're actually relieved!"

As we come now to the end of my watch as Commandant, it is a time for brief reflection and sober anticipation.

Memories:

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My thoughts in reflection go back well beyond the past four years to the early years of our Republic. In fact, my thoughts of the present and the future are almost always shaped by remembering the past.

Our Service was born as our nation was enduring times of significant danger. The very existence of the United States was tenuous, as thirteen original states had only recently ratified a constitution that offered the strength of a common bond.

“We the people, in order to form a more perfect union...” it began. A nation of free individuals adopted a single motto that declared, “e pluribus unum”—out of many, one.

These Americans needed a way to protect their fragile prosperity and their newly won liberties. One of the first things the new Congress decided to do was to form a maritime service, designed to patrol the coast, enforcing the will of the people.

Out of ten single ships, they formed a “system of cutters.”

Out of many, one.

Years later, after the unity of the people was severely tested in the Civil War, Commandant-Captain Ellsworth Bertholf saw the wisdom of forming a single service out of several to support the growing needs of a nation that was developing rapidly into a world power.

He argued persuasively and the Revenue Cutter Service joined with the Lifesaving Service to become the U.S. Coast Guard. “E pluribus unum.”

And then during World War II, even as our nation was fighting to free the world from the greatest evil that it had ever known, Admiral Russell Waesche completed one of the greatest transformations in the history of our service.

Not only were the law enforcement powers of the Coast Guard broadened and strengthened, but several more services were added, to include the U. S. Lighthouse Service and the Bureau of Marine Inspection and Navigation.

Out of many, one.

A Unified Service for a United Country

As a ship driver, I have had the honor to be personally immersed in a variety of the missions that belong to the modern day Coast Guard.

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In Vietnam, my patrol boat was assigned, among other missions, to provide transportation and cover to amphibious landings conducted north of the Demilitarized Zone by III MAF.

As a boarding team leader from the Cutter COURAGEOUS during the 1970's, we tested the limits of the "hovering vessel statute," against mother ships laden with marijuana.

In the early 1980's, I witnessed the birth of a child, born of a mother who was a refugee from communist Cuba. The child was born on the flight deck of the Cutter VALIANT during the Mariel Boat Lift in the Straits of Florida. Her gratitude was expressed in the name of her newborn son, Valiant.

That same cutter is anchored in the stream behind us today.

A decade later, I saw the devastation wrought by the ravages of an enormous oil spill in the pristine waters of Prince William Sound, Alaska. The Coast Guard was there to direct the clean-up.

In the fall of 1994, we saved 65,000 Cuban and Haitian lives during the refugee exodus from those two troubled countries.

A little more than eight months ago, we all witnessed the enormous destruction and terrible loss of life in New York City, our nation's capital, and the countryside of my home state...brought against us by murderers who dare to call themselves messengers of God.

I could go on. What is my point?

Out of many tours of duty, spanning nearly the entire spectrum of Coast Guard missions, ...one career.

"E pluribus unum."

Looking Ahead Realities:

For the past four years, it has been my purpose to restore the readiness and shape the future of this service, to prepare the way for the Coast Guard to perform its duty to the best of its ability well into the coming decades.

We have made great strides together.

It is clear that the Coast Guard today is uniquely positioned as the lead agency for Maritime Homeland Security. We have the experience and the expertise. . . .time-tested legal authorities and precedent . . .established working relationships with the public,

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industry, other armed services, federal, state and local agencies, international organizations . . . and an organizational culture of flexibility.

With our multi-mission capability, we provide an important bridge between law enforcement and military operations, matching the formidable range of homeland security threats with the vulnerabilities in the maritime domain.

And, while we are doing every job we've been asked to do, even as we conduct the missions that we consider most humanitarian in nature, we must always do so with a clear and steady eye on whatever presents the greatest impending threat to the people whom we are called to protect. We advertise ourselves as Guardians. That's what Guardians do.

In the interest of ensuring that we are indeed always ready to do good work, our national leaders have been discussing options to place our service and others elsewhere in the structure of the federal government. I know that many of you are concerned about that prospect. Don't be concerned.

Our maritime transportation system is the most valuable and vulnerable lifeline of our national prosperity. Nothing warrants more careful protection.

For the moment, we are right where we belong, offering the maritime security leadership to join the air and land legs of Secretary Mineta's three legged stool of the national transportation system.

If, however, down the road, organizational change is considered, there is one thing that must never change. That is the integrity of our multi-mission character. To serve America best, the Coast Guard must remain whole.

Many missions. One service. Out of many, one.

Muti-mission capability for the future depends on the right tools...which is why re-capitalization remains a critical priority. Deepwater and the National Distress and Response System are the first-fruits of what must be an ongoing process to replace obsolete capability with assets that will also improve the security of our homeland.

And operationally, that knife I described as dull three years ago is about to get a serious sharpening. The supplemental bills for FY02 and the FY03 President's request are like rays of sunshine . . . they mean 100% operating hours, full parts bins, full maintenance accounts, and parity with DoD quality of life entitlements.

They represent Year One of our three-year building program to enable the CG to reach the capability to make its contribution to our new Maritime Security paradigm. They represent the down payment on opportunity . . . the opportunity for us to serve America. Carl Schury once said:

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Ideals are like stars; you will not succeed in touching them with your hands. But like the seafaring men on the desert of waters, you choose them as your guides, and following them, reach your goals.

We set out to raise the visibility of our service, to restore its readiness and to shape its future. Having come to today, there is yet so much more to do.

Tom Collins is waiting not so patiently to relieve me. He is ready to lead you all to do the “so much more.” He is a good, good man and a gifted leader. I know he will concentrate on the mission and taking care of sailors and their families. Tom and Nancy, Kay and I wish you GODSPEED.

The Change of the Watch

At our last flag conference, we all boarded a bus one morning and just at daybreak, visited the Jefferson Memorial. I often stop there when I bike to work . . . to capture just a momentary sense of the man and his wisdom.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their creator with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

On the uppermost combing:

“I have sworn upon the altar of God eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man.”

Before I relinquish the watch and go below, let me reinforce the President’s sober warning about the times in which we live:

[Quote] “We face an enemy of ruthless ambition, unconstrained by law or morality. The terrorists despise other religions and have defiled their own. And they are determined to expand the scale and scope of their murder. The terror that targeted New York and Washington could next strike any center of civilization. Against such an enemy, there is no immunity, and there can be no neutrality.” [End quote]

As an open society, we are still perilously vulnerable. Citizenship requires us each to stay alert, as well as able and willing. It requires us all to stay alert—together, as one.

Out of many—one.

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Early in this ceremony we saluted the national ensign and listened to the Star Spangled banner. Our flag means more than association and reward. It is the symbol of our national unity, our national endeavor, our national aspiration.

It tells you of the struggle for independence, of union preserved, of liberty and union one and inseparable, of the sacrifice of brave men and women to whom the ideals and honors of this nation have been dearer than life. So many meanings from a single symbol – e pluribus unum.

Major General Joshua Lawrence Chamberlain won the hearts of his men and the admiration of a grateful nation for his heroism at Gettysburg.

In later life, when he looked ahead to see all that lay before him, whether the future portended bright promise, uncertainty, or calamity, he wrote this word of admonishment—a word that we would all do well to heed:

“We know not the future, and cannot plan for it much. But we can...determine and know what manner of men we will be whenever and wherever the hour strikes.”

To my Coast Guard colleagues and to my fellow citizens, I say that hour for us is now at hand. Be able, Be willing. Be Semper Paratus!

God Bless America and God Bless the U. S. Coast Guard.

I will now read my orders.

From: CG Military Personnel Command
To: Admiral James M. Loy

Subj: Orders; Retirement

1. Effective upon relief as Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, you are detached from all duties and will proceed to your home of selection in conjunction with retirement.

Captain Pekoske, haul down my flag!