

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
Commandant, United States Coast Guard
Designation of Wilmington, NC as a CG City
Wilmington, NC
26 July 2003

It's great to be here with you today, to celebrate both the spirit and unity of Wilmington and the Coast Guard, and to formally recognize the valuable contributions Wilmington provides to our Coast Guard men and women who are lucky enough to be stationed here in the Port City!

[Recognize VIPs]

We've enjoyed your terrific city and visiting both with Coast Guard families and with permanent residents of Wilmington. A number of those Coast Guard families have let me know that they want to join the ranks of the "permanent residents" of Wilmington – I sure can't blame them! It's not hard to understand why there is so much enthusiasm within the Coast Guard for making our affection and gratitude official by proclaiming Wilmington, NC, "A Coast Guard City."

Today, we recognize the long-standing relationship between Wilmington and the Coast Guard, which, as noted by previous speakers, is almost as old as the Coast Guard itself! In a couple weeks, we'll be celebrating the 213th birthday of the Coast Guard – and you've been told of our 211+ year partnership and the fact that one of the original ten ships of the Revenue Cutter Service, the Revenue Cutter DILIGENCE, called Wilmington home. We trace the Coast Guard's roots back to the Revenue Cutter Service, which combined with the Life-Saving Service in 1915 and then became, officially, the United States Coast Guard.

Life aboard the DILIGENCE of 211 years ago differed slightly from today's DILIGENCE – 1792's DILIGENCE was a sailing vessel and her crew consisted of four officers, four enlisted men, and two boys. Her commanding officer was William Cooke. He was paid \$40 a month; the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd mates were paid 26, 20, and 18 dollars a month, respectively . . . I don't know how that compared to other salaries in 1792, but I sure am glad there have been some pay raises between then and now.

As highlighted earlier in the ceremony, in addition to DILIGENCE, seven other Coast Guard units are fortunate enough to call the Wilmington area home: the cutter BLACKBERRY; Marine Safety Office Wilmington; Stations Wrightsville Beach and Oak Island; LORAN Station Carolina Beach; Recruiting Detachment Wilmington; and our CG Auxiliary Flotilla 10. They all do terrific work for the city, region, and our country.

So what does it mean to be a Coast Guard City?

Well, first let me tell you what it doesn't mean.

As delivered

It doesn't mean that Wilmington is the biggest Coast Guard base we have. We do have a strong Coast Guard presence here, but there are areas that have more Coast Guard families than Wilmington does.

And it doesn't mean that the Coast Guard has been here longer than we've been anywhere else – you're certainly close, but not quite the oldest. Longevity isn't what sets you apart.

What sets you apart is the way you have made room in your hearts for the Coast Guard, and the way that you have allowed the contributions of Coast Guard people to help shape the character of the community—just as your openness has helped shape the character of the Coast Guard. The poem in your program captures that feeling exceedingly well. Megan Goins, an 11-year-old student at Carolina Beach Elementary School, here with her mother, Kimberly, and brother, Hunter, is the author of that poem.

Wilmington is “A Coast Guard City” because over the years, you—our gracious hosts — have made it clear that Coasties shouldn't consider Wilmington to be their duty station. They should consider it their home. A home with all the best associations of belonging, caring, mutual support, and love.

What does it mean when I designate Wilmington “A Coast Guard City”?

It means that when a boat crew returns to port after being hammered by heavy seas while towing in a disabled sailboat . . . or when a cutter crew pulls in to the pier and sees how much their kids have grown while they were on an extended counter-drug deployment . . . or when a young Coast Guard family gets its first set of orders to one of the Wilmington units . . . it means they know they will soon be among friends. Friends who know them, who care about them, who understand their traditions of service and sacrifice. Friends with whom they can cheerfully pitch in together make Wilmington an even better place to live.

In short, it means that they are home.

Mayor Peterson, will you please join me?

I will now make the designation of Wilmington as a Coast Guard City formal by reading the following:

Proclamation of the United States Coast Guard

Whereas, the people of Wilmington, North Carolina have provided a home for the United States Coast Guard for two hundred eleven years, since 1792 when the Revenue Cutter Diligence made Wilmington its home port; and

As delivered

Whereas, in the years since, the Coast Guard's presence in the city has grown and evolved, with the cultivation of a mutually supportive and beneficial relationship between local Coast Guard units and the people of Wilmington; and

Whereas, the people of Wilmington and local businesses generously support Coast Guard personnel by providing assistance and support to families of deployed Coast Guardsmen and women during times of need, organizing welcome home ceremonies whenever a Coast Guard ship returns to port, and offering Coast Guard families free or discounted admissions to sports and entertainment events in the community; and

Whereas, the people of Wilmington have shown their respect and appreciation for the Service by including Coast Guard representatives on important community committees, and inviting Coast Guard commanders to serve as keynote speakers at events in conjunction with Rotary Clubs, civilian clubs, veterans associations and other civic organizations; and

Whereas, the Wilmington chapter of the Navy League of the United States has adopted the Cutter Diligence and provides financial support to its morale fund; and

Whereas, the people of Wilmington work alongside Coast Guard personnel and families to contribute to local charitable organizations, and partner with the Coast Guard to organize and support the annual Diligence Dash 5K road race, which has raised thousands of dollars for local charities; and

Whereas, the friendliness and hospitality of the Wilmington community are reflected in the large number of Coast Guard retirees who have chosen to call Wilmington home, and who play an active part in the city's support of the service:

Now, therefore, I Admiral Thomas H. Collins, Commandant of the United States Coast Guard, in accordance with Public Law 105-383 enacted by the United States Congress and signed by the President on November 13, 1998, do hereby take great pleasure in proclaiming that Wilmington, North Carolina, is to be known officially as "A Coast Guard City."

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty- sixth day of July, in the year of our Lord two thousand three.

Thomas H. Collins, Admiral, U.S. Coast Guard, Commandant.