

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
Coast Guard Day Worship Service  
“Hope on the Horizon”  
4 August 2003

Good morning. I want to start this morning’s service by taking a moment to remember RADM Dick Bennis who passed away early yesterday morning after a long and courageous battle with cancer. During the entire ordeal, he never lost his sense of dignity, humor, and positive spirit . . . he is an inspiration for all of us . . . our thoughts and prayers are with his family. A moment of silence please.

[pause]

Thank you. I’m very pleased to be here today to celebrate the Coast Guard’s 213<sup>th</sup> Birthday . . . and to take a moment to pause on the year that’s past and look forward to the year ahead of us.

It is a great privilege to have Deputy Secretary England here with us today. Thank you for joining us, Mr. Secretary. We’re also honored to have Under Secretary for Border and Transportation Security, Mr. Asa Hutchinson, with us. Thank you, Asa.

[Recognize any other VIPs:  
RADM Louis Iasiello, Acting Navy Chief of Chaplains].

Thank you also to the Chaplain of the Coast Guard, CAPT Douglass, his Deputy and our Headquarters Chaplain, CDR McAlexander, and Mrs. Carr for all their hard work and dedication in putting on such a fine service for us to share this morning. It is important that we make room during this incredibly busy period for spiritual reflection.

Spirituality is an important component of each and every ones of our lives. It is central to members of the armed forces facing life-changing challenges. It may mean different things to different people, but whatever it means to you personally, it is an central part of your well-being. It is what brings peace to your soul, what brings you to a calm emotional place. Spirituality helps us to become our best selves, to be stronger individuals -- and when we are individually stronger, we are collectively stronger.

Our theme for today’s service is “Hope on the Horizon”, which I think is very fitting in these times for the Coast Guard.

People get their hope from various places – many from their religious beliefs, from their families and friends, from an innate sense that the glass is half-full, or from something as simple as seeing a beautiful sunrise or a child playing.

Our readings today all echo this theme of hope. Our Christian readings talk about how trusting in God gives us hope and that keeps our soul firm and secure in turbulent times, just like an anchor keeps a ship firm and secure in turbulent seas. In the Hebrew

reading, seagoing people put their hope in God in the midst of their most troubled times and they were “brought out of their distress”. Our reading from the Holy Qur-an speaks of nations and tribes knowing one another so that that they will not despise one another. Our hope is that as we come to know and then understand each other, we will learn to live in peace together. Our great nation is founded on the dream of liberty and justice for all, regardless of faith, color, “tribe”, or national origin. We in our Coast Guard, we in our new Department, work everyday to keep that dream . . . and the homeland that allows us to live that dream . . . secure.

I must caution, however, that hope by itself is not enough. Hope paves the way for us to move forward, but we must use our own initiative to actually move ahead on that road. Combining our hope with our strength and energy is how we overcome adversity – and how we improve the world around us. We must combine hope with vision, positive corporate values, and action. Such an approach has been the hallmark of the Coast Guard through its 213-year history.

I’ve been around the Coast Guard for a while now and in my time, I’ve seen some highs for our Service -- and some lows, too. Fortunately, many more highs than lows. And in my time in the Coast Guard, I cannot think of a more exciting time than right now for our Service as part of a new team, the Department of Homeland Security.

I find my hope from a number of different places, but one of my greatest sources of hope, looking toward the future, is from those of you in this room, within this building, throughout the Coast Guard, and throughout the great team that has been formed with the Department of Homeland Security. And I take great comfort in knowing that our men and women are seizing the moment, adhering to, and contributing to, our strategic action plan to build out our homeland security capabilities and to sustain operational excellence across all our missions.

Listen to this short, “tip of the iceberg” synopsis of our tremendous accomplishments this past year – you can’t help but have hope and know the future is bright with such a strong past!

This past year has been as challenging and dynamic as any in Coast Guard history:

- Confronting tremendous new demands of Homeland Security and the Global War on Terrorism, the Coast Guard supported Operation Liberty Shield to defend America's ports, coasts, and infrastructure.
- Deployed Coast Guard forces executed Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom as America's superb military and our coalition partners liberated Iraq.
- At the same time we successfully met unabated and unrelenting demands for search and rescue, marine safety, environmental protection, drug interdiction, migrant interdiction, fisheries enforcement, aids to navigation, and domestic and polar icebreaking during one of the worst ice seasons on record.
- We initiated two of the largest procurements in Coast Guard history: the Integrated Deepwater System and Rescue 21.

- We stood up an Assistant Commandant for Intelligence.
- We led the international effort to adopt a new maritime security code and began implementing major new federal maritime legislation, the Maritime Transportation Security Act, in record-setting time.
- And on March 1, 2003, as part of the largest government reorganization in over 50 years, we moved smoothly from the Department of Transportation to the new Department of Homeland Security.

Key to our success in these historic events was:

1. the hard work, integrity, professionalism, and adaptability of you -- our people;
2. the military character of our Service; and
3. the multi-mission capability embedded in our cutters, aircraft, boats, and systems.

Also key to our success has been and will continue to be our membership on the DHS team. Our partnerships with the other DHS players have paid dividends for us – and for our nation -- from Day 1. These partnerships continue to make us all more effective and are a real-life example of the “whole being greater than the sum of its parts” – we are much stronger together, as one team, than as separate entities. For us in the Coast Guard, continuing to add value to the DHS team is key to our way ahead.

Now, it is my honor to introduce one of the senior leaders of the DHS team. Deputy Secretary Gordon England is something of a “local boy” – he is a native of Baltimore and graduated from the University of Maryland with a Bachelors in Electrical Engineering. He also earned a masters Degree in business administration at Texas Christian University. Secretary England came to the Department of Homeland Security from the Department of Defense, where he served as the 72<sup>nd</sup> Secretary of the Navy. Prior to his service as SECNAV, Mr. England led General Dynamics Corporation as executive vice president for four years.

On January 24<sup>th</sup> 2003, after receiving Senate confirmation, he became the first Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my great privilege to introduce the Honorable Gordon England.

###