

Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Remarks

at the

Silver Ancient Mariner Change of Watch

Pat Thompson Center- Millington Naval Base, TN
Friday August 19, 2011

Shipmates,

Welcome! It's rare these days that you get the opportunity to attend three events of this caliber for the price of one – but today, we have a true three-fer!

To the Frascella Family — Wife Joanna, Daughters Erika and Megan, and Son Niko... Congratulations on Command of Cutter KANKAKEE ...

I want to extend a special welcome to the Hearn family – Wife Dina, Daughter Stephanie, Son Brandon –

And especially to Gold Ancient Mariner number 4 – from 1985 to 1987 -- Captain John Hearn – can you please stand sir!

When Captain John Hearn, assumed his watch as the 4th Ancient Gold Mariner on June 28, 1985, he made an entry in the log of the Ancient Mariner:

“Times and missions are changing, but the tradition remains. Honoring the men and women who put their lives on the line going to sea is a distinct pleasure.”

The Fourth Ancient Mariner's log entry rings as true today as it did when Captain Hearn made it some 26 years ago...this ceremony is about tradition...and I am delighted that he is able to continue the tradition by joining us today!

And to the Pierce Family – Wife Joyce and Sons Josh and Cole, welcome! I am not sure how your father is going to take being called “Ancient” but I assure you it is not as bad as it sounds!

Thank you for taking the time to be with us today.

You know, every time I put on this funny hat – it gives me a chuckle – because I look in the mirror and I see Captain Crunch! Nothing like some O-6 crunch to get you started in the morning!

But, on a more serious note, when I put on this hat, it's for an important reason. It's about honoring our profession – and tradition. Tradition is why we have Ancient Mariners and Ancient Albatrosses – and Change of Watch Ceremonies.

Our Service has a story that needs to be told – that must be told. It's a story about honor, respect and devotion to duty. But ours is more than just a story. It is 221 years of tradition. We are privileged to serve in a maritime service with a rich legacy that extends back to the earliest days of our Nation. Coast Guardsmen have bravely fought to defend our Nation in wartime, and they vigilantly protect our waters, and those who work upon them in peacetime.

This is our history. And it matters today, more than ever. Not because it gives us context. Or because it establishes us as the oldest continuous maritime service. Those things are important. But what is truly important is passing on the customs, traditions and values we hold sacred to future generations of Coast Guardsmen -- To all of you.

We are all part of a long blue line. History tells us about the beginning of our service – but our future – the arc of our history – is up to you. We cannot know what duties we will be called upon to perform, what challenging maritime missions our Nation will ask us to undertake, or even what fate will hold. But, we do know one thing – ensuring our Coast Guard men and women are fluent in our history and traditions will positively influence, inform and impact how we perform our duties.

As the 10th Silver Ancient Mariner, Master Chief Hearn has not only told our story and passed down our traditions, but he has embraced all that sea service has to offer – the challenges, the rigors, and the unequalled rewards.

All you need to do is take one look at the beautiful cutter KANKAKEE and her crew...You can see his passion in their faces...his pride is evident in the way they maintain their ship...and in their bearing. I assure you they gained a wealth of knowledge under his command...the confidence of a Master Cutterman...the instincts that come from serving more than 23 years at sea...and the experience gained serving in 8 cutters, and commanding 5 of them...they have not only gained this knowledge, but in time, they too will pass it down ...

Master Chief Hearn has not only instilled the importance of our seafaring traditions in KANKAKEE's crew – but he has instilled it in the thousands of Coast Guard men and women he has led throughout his career...all while inspiring many others to pursue a career at sea.

Today, Master Chief Hearn will pass his Keeper's Cap and Long Glass onto Master Chief Lloyd Pierce. The passing of the Keeper's Cap symbolizes the passing of wisdom, knowledge and experience ... As well as trust and confidence in all who will continue to carry on our seafaring ways...

Master Chief Hearn, Thank you for keeping watch over our traditions – and especially our seafaring traditions. You've been a great shipmate!

Master Chief Pierce, I can think of no one more worthy of assuming the watch of the Ancient Silver Mariner... nor can I think of a better place, (other than being underway), to serve as Silver Ancient Mariner than serving as Command Master Chief of the Coast Guard Academy. You will have the opportunity to influence generations of future sea going officers – instill in them a liking for the sea and its lore – and inspire them to pursue a career serving at sea.

As Master Chief Pierce dons the Keepers Cap, he brings with him 14 years of sea time, while serving aboard eight Coast Guard Cutters, including Red Oak, Lipan, Steadfast, Sherman and Matinicus. Master Chief Pierce also served as Officer in Charge of Cutter Franklin, Cutter Seahawk and was the Plankowner Officer in Charge of Cutter Mako.

Master Chief Pierce, it will now be your duty to keep watch over our professionalism...and leadership associated with long sea service...I know you will keep our lamp of tradition burning brightly.

And, as the Gold Ancient Mariner, I am honored to share this duty with you...

Semper Paratus....