



Famous Coast Guard Quotations

"They will always keep in mind that their countrymen are freemen, and, as such, are impatient of everything that bears the least mark of a domineering spirit. They will, therefore, refrain, with the most guarded circumspection, from whatever has the semblance of haughtiness, rudeness, or insult. If obstacles occur, they will remember that they are under the particular protection of the laws and that they can meet with nothing disagreeable in the execution of their duty which these will not severely reprehend. This reflection, and a regard to the good of the service, will prevent, at all times a spirit of irritation or resentment. They will endeavor to overcome difficulties, if any are experienced, by a cool and temperate perseverance in their duty--by address and moderation, rather than by vehemence or violence." - Alexander Hamilton, Letter of Instructions to the Commanding Officers of the Revenue Cutters, 4 June 1791

"The Blue Book says we've got to go out and it doesn't say a damn thing about having to come back." - Captain Patrick Etheridge, USLSS

"A few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at a small expense be made useful sentinels of the laws." - Alexander Hamilton, "The Utility of the Union in Respect to Revenue from the New York Packet," *The Federalist Papers*, Tuesday, 27 November 1787.

"The lighthouse and the lightship appeal to the interests and better instinct of man because they are symbolic of never-ceasing watchfulness, of steadfast endurance in every exposure, of widespread helpfulness." - George R. Putnam, the first Commissioner of Lighthouses, U.S. Lighthouse Service, 1906-1935

"The cat with nine lives is a piker compared to the Coast Guard. You can kick this old service around, tear it to pieces, scream from the house-tops that it is worthless, ought to be abolished or transferred to the Navy, have the people in it fighting among themselves and working at cross purposes and it bobs up serenely bigger and stronger than ever." - Rear Admiral R. R. Waesche, private letter, 1935

"I reasoned that I was a Coast Guard first class boatswain mate. My job was the sea and to save those in peril upon it." - Bernard C. Webber, recounting the 1952 *Pendleton* rescue in *Chatham: "The Lifeboatmen"* (1985)

"The U.S. Coast Guard is a shining example of how well a Federal agency can perform with its flexibility, speed, and expertise." - Representative Russ Carnahan (Democrat, Missouri), 2005

"While I recommend in the strongest terms to the respective officers, activity, vigilance, and firmness, I feel no less solicitude that their deportment may be marked with prudence, moderation and good temper. Upon these last qualities, not less than the former, must depend the success, usefulness, and consequently the continuance of the establishment, in which they are included." – Secretary of the Treasury William H. Crawford, Circular to the Captains of Revenue Cutters, 13 July 1819

“Commanding officers of the revenue service, of whatsoever grade or rank, are required and strictly enjoined to show in themselves a good example of virtue, honor patriotism, subordination, and of fidelity to the government and laws, and to be vigilant in inspecting the conduct of all persons under their command, and to guard, against and suppress all dissolute and immoral practices.” - Article 67, Rules and Regulations for the Government of the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service, 1862

“Keeping always under steam and ever ready, in the event of extraordinary need, to render valuable service, the cutters can be made to form a coast guard whose value it is impossible at the present time to estimate.” – Army & Navy Journal, 26 November, 1864

“When I am in charge of a vessel, I always command; nobody commands but me. I take all the responsibility, all the risks, all the hardships that my office would call upon me to take. I do not steer by any man’s compass but my own.” - Captain Michael Healy, USRCS, 1896

“Adaptability is a characteristic of the American fighting man that has enabled this country’s Armed Forces to emerge triumphant in every major war we have fought. Adaptability is synonymous with the operations of the United States Coast Guard.” - Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, USN

*“The story of the Coast Guard at war is replete with incidents which, in combat or otherwise, demonstrated consummate skill, great devotion to duty, and heroism worthy of special mention in any wartime history of the Service.” - Malcolm F. Willoughby, USCGG, author of *The U.S. Coast Guard in World War II**

“Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you had so ably used in testimony of mine...I am at loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement on board the Surveyor or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed inch-by-inch.” - Lieutenant John Crier, RN, in a letter to Captain Samuel Travis, master of the cutter Surveyor, after that cutter’s capture by the Royal Navy, 1813

“Upon the brilliant and successful consummation of your perilous mission I congratulate you and the Service in which you were even then distinguished officers, and I congratulate the country that produces such men. Future seekers for the record of heroic Americans will surely note with pleasure what was done...” - Secretary of the Treasury Leslie M. Shaw regarding the Overland Expedition, 17 January 1899

“These poor, plain men, dwellers upon the lonely sands of Hatteras took their lives in their hands, and, at the most imminent risk, crossed the tumultuous sea..., and all for what? So that others might live to see home and friends.” - Annual Report of the Operations of the United States Life-Saving Service, 1885

*“To date there has been no Homer, Herman Melville, or Charles Dana to record their deeds so that Americans recognize that they have always had maritime heroes living among them. Until that time, if you wish to see ordinary men and women who perform heroic deeds, visit a US Coast Guard small boat rescue station.” - Dennis L. Noble, Ph.D, USCG (Ret.), in *Rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard: Great Acts of Heroism since 1878**

“I will ensure that my superiors rest easy with the knowledge that I am on the helm, no matter what the

conditions." - Surfman's Creed

"The professional ability of the Coast Guard officers is evidenced by the fact that twenty-four commanded combatant ships in European waters, five vessels of the patrol force of the Caribbean Sea, and twenty-three combatant craft attached to naval districts. . .The Navy Department, naturally enough, assigned to the command of combatant ships only officers whose experience and ability warranted such detail and only those officers in whom the Department had implicit confidence." - Secretary of the Navy Josephus Daniels regarding the Coast Guard in World War I, published in his book *Our Navy at War*.

". . .I will not attempt to recount now anything of the history of the Coast Guard. Officers of the Coast Guard should know the history and traditions of the Service and should see that the men under their command are conversant with them. It seems to me that it must be a source of great pride and satisfaction to any officer or man to consider that he belongs to a military organization with such an exceptionally long and honorable record of accomplishment, with such traditions and with such high standards of duty. There is not, to my knowledge, any other organization under our Government which may so properly and accurately be called "The Peace and War Service". It is also the "Silent Service" whose record and work are not known as widely throughout the land as they should be." (Assistant Secretary Edward Clifford, U.S. Treasury Department, 17 July 1922).

"Most Citizens know about Uncle Sam's 'Devil Dogs,' his 'Gobs' and 'Dough Boys,' but how many know about his 'Trouble Shooters' of our U.S. Coast Guard?. . .These expert sea-lawyers aboard their [327]-foot, electrically-driven, 5 inch gun-armed Cutters, together with over 250 land stations, 19 wireless stations, disaster cars, mobile short wave radio trucks, 5000 mile telegraph, cable, telephone communications system, working in conjunction with their especially designed land and sea planes can do a thoroughly complete job of clearing trouble." – David A. Devine in his book *'Uncle Sam's' Trouble Shooters: An Historical Survey of the U.S. Coast Guard in Relation to Our National Defense*, 1940, p. 7

"To the Coast Guard is charged protection of life and ships upon the sea; to this end the Service bends its every energy, often at the expense of its other varied duties. 'Humanitarian' is the term that has been given to this phase of Coast Guard activity, and humanitarian the Service is. No night too stormy, no seas too high, no shoals too forbidding to restrain our cutters from their work of saving life. The same heroic spirit of self-sacrifice and disregard of personal danger that was fostered by our predecessors in the Service's infancy pervades the Service to-day, not only on large, seaworthy cutters and powerful destroyers but also on the tiny egg-shell craft that patrol nearly every mile of our far-flung coast." - U.S. Coast Guard Academy, *Tide Rips*, 1927

"I want to make sure that the Coast Guard people in Vietnam know that I am hearing about them often and that I am pleased with what I hear." - General Wallace Greene, Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, August, 1967