

A Command Philosophy
USCGC Vigorous (WMEC 627)
Semper Paratus ⇔ Paratus Gerere

Respect, Honor, and Devotion-to-Duty: TRUST is formed only when each element is present in our conduct. A better future can only be built on trust. Your challenge, in all conduct, inside and outside our lifelines, is to be counted as trustworthy by both those sailors worthy of the title of shipmate and those citizens who depend on us to serve this nation.

This command philosophy expresses essential elements of how we work together to achieve a condition of trust as shipmates. You are part of something worthy and you are important. We are called to serve this nation, together, by combining our diverse maintenance, training, administrative, support, and operational contributions. Our primary missions are homeland security, law enforcement, alien interdiction, and search and rescue, but we stand ready to serve in any capacity at the outer boundary where American interests are decided.

The strength of our keel is defined by . . .

► **Semper Paratus**

► **Paratus Gerere**

Continually prepare yourself, your cutter, and your shipmates for the mission, its risks, its opportunities, and for greater responsibilities. *Semper Paratus* is precisely that constant effort. Preparation must translate into action. Do the right things the right way at the right time on and off the cutter -- help others to do so, require them to do so, and lead them in doing so. This focus on *right action* demands that *respect, honor, and devotion-to-duty* characterize our way of life. This is the essence of our motto *Paratus Gerere*. Being both *Semper Paratus* and *Paratus Gerere* is important to people that depend on us.

**Our watchwords are:
Foresight, Eternal Vigilance,
and Attention-to-Detail.**

*Never be grudging in taking precautions lest they prove unnecessary. Safety at sea for a thousand years has depended on exactly the opposite philosophy.
-- Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz*

We are always on watch. **FORESIGHT**. Anticipate -- the more elements that we have considered, the better prepared we will be to use initiative. **ETERNAL VIGILANCE**. Maintain situational awareness -- we need to actively look for trouble and opportunity -- there are enemies prowling, harms lurking, and possibilities waiting. **ATTENTION-TO-DETAIL**. Teach as we do, do as we teach. Execute tasks as they were designed and let others know when the plan or parameters are compromised. Work together to ensure foresight, eternal vigilance, and attention-to-detail characterize this cutter and its crew.

The Shipmate . . .

*In all matters that pertain to . . . organization, discipline, and tactics, the human heart in the supreme moment of battle is the basic factor. It is rarely taken into account; and often strange errors are the result.
-- Du Picq*

Being a shipmate means to value and serve others in whatever role we find ourselves. Our actions must help others reach their full potential and ensure they grow into greater responsibilities. Care for the most vulnerable member of the crew or the person you least like -- they may be the most important element to our safety and success at any given point of time. Being a shipmate means living the values of respect, honor, and devotion-to-duty in each task and in each relationship. If we are shipmates, we will have done our best and helped others to do their best. If we are shipmates, we will have made a difference in the lives of people inside and outside our lifelines and by that presence shown what true dignity is.

The strakes and plates . . .

*No sailor puts trust in mere
Paintwork in danger. Good ship, steer
Wisely--or on a rock
Be the winds' laughing-stock.
-- Horace*

These principles build on the Coast Guard's core values and frame our actions:

- Shipmates uplift everybody. Actively build internal dignity and ensure others are overtly respected. Discrimination, bias, and prejudice are unsafe, wrong, and cannot be tolerated.
- Shipmates ensure everyone participates to their potential. Creating better results depends on volunteering for tasks, volunteering to work with others, and ensuring others feel they can volunteer to be a part of our challenges. Make it easy to share the burden.
- Shipmates ensure everyone communicates and understands. Actively promote listening and open dialogue. At the root of many problems will be the choice to not communicate. Offering bad news will not be easy. Listening with an open mind may be hard. However, safety and effectiveness will depend on the courage to do both these things.
- Shipmates hold themselves and others properly accountable. The fear of being held accountable should not prevent anyone from doing the right thing. The fear of a personal consequence should not stop us from revealing problems. Mistakes will be made, but we need to prevent failure. Confronting mistakes is essential to being safe and successful.
- Shipmates demonstrate initiative. Within lawful and reasonable policy, within your responsibilities, act to make a difference. Don't wait; assert initiative and do the right thing. We are all called on to lead – being a leader isn't a position and is not confined to a rank; it is a shared function and conviction. Never allow a leadership vacuum.
- Shipmates are always early, on time as a last resort, and never late. We cannot reclaim lost moments. Idleness and inaction waste our one chance to enjoy participation in life. Whatever the task, complete it quickly so that the next moment can be invested in an unfolding experience of being a shipmate aboard Vigorous.

This is a journey, more than a voyage . . .

*And once I saw a ship sail straight and swift
through all its voyage across the sea
then perish at the end, at harbor entry.
-- Dante Alighieri*

Always look for a better way forward; care to the end. Commitment must be sustained: we cannot afford to be disinterested, distracted, or weary about our responsibilities. Public service is a public trust, requiring us to place loyalty to the Constitution, the laws, ethical principles, and the legitimate needs of others above private gain and gratification. The high standard can only be met if we work together. The value of sacrifice, a sense of worth, and future opportunities will more than repay that investment of yourself into this enterprise.

This command philosophy applies to each of us, and it will challenge us equally. If I stray, let me know. If you stray, I will let you know. The command philosophy must be the imprint each of us leaves on this cutter. Our safety and effectiveness depends on our solidarity around these concepts, our patience in teaching these concepts, and our dedication to acting on these concepts. Our shipmates, our families, our cutter, our Coast Guard, and our nation deserve our efforts.
