

# 2013 Hopley Yeaton Commissioning Day Celebration

Coast Guard Headquarters  
March 20, 2013

*Master Chief Petty Officer of the  
Coast Guard Michael P. Leavitt*

Good morning Adm. Papp, Vice Admiral Currier, and fellow cuttermen. Thank you for inviting me to be here today. Welcome to the 2013 Hopley Yeaton Commissioning Day Celebration.

What an honor to spend a few minutes talking to you about Hopley Yeaton...share a sea story and talk with you about leadership.

Hopley Yeaton was one of our service's first cutterman and commissioned officers. As I went through some of the history while preparing to speak with you all today, I was a little disappointed that more isn't known about him... What we do know about him is... he was a visionary, a ship captain, a patriot and a leader of his time. So I'd like to focus on why Yeaton is important to our service and what he can teach us about being cuttermen today.

August 4, the Tariff Act of 1790, provided for a Revenue Marine Service with 10 cutters to suppress smuggling, piracy, and basically to bring in revenue. And that's when Hopley Yeaton became one of the first sea-going officers of the United States.

Appointed by my favorite forefather, George Washington, his commission bore the name of both George Washington and Thomas Jefferson. And he was assigned to one of those original 10 cutters – the Cutter SCAMMEL, out of Portsmouth, New Hampshire.

So why do you think Hopley Yeaton was selected? What leadership characteristics did he bring?

I don't think any of us have any sea stories that can match some of Hopley Yeaton's. What an amazing career. He went to sea at an early age and spent most of his life at sea...becoming a merchant captain as a young man... In 1778, while waiting on a ship, he joined a brigade of New Hampshire Volunteers which was formed to help evict the British from Rhode Island... He went on to serve in the Continental Navy during the War for Independence before being called upon to serve in the U.S. Revenue Marine.

Hopley Yeaton had his share of adventure and challenge.... he fought during the revolutionary war, he was taken prisoner by the British.... according to some accounts he survived more than a couple shipwrecks.... And he even lost his commission under President Adams. Of course he was re-commissioned under Jefferson... He saw his fair

share of battle, of death... both on land and sea... Amazingly, he sailed until he was 70 years old... on THIS not THAT....He finally retired to his farm in Maine at age 70.

Times were very different when Alexander Hamilton, a visionary leader, provided guidance to Hopley Yeaton. And although much has changed over that time, one thing has not changed ....good old fashioned leadership principles. Yes, our resources are more capable today... but then and now, our people are as capable as their resources allow. But ultimately it is leadership principles that are the foundation of everything we do. Assets change with time, leadership lasts.

Often, you will hear the Commandant and me talk about mission and vision. I find Pub 1 very useful as a guide to leadership. When Alexander Hamilton charged his ship captains he provided them with 7 principles...principles that defined their culture and leadership values...

- The principle of setting clear objectives
- The principle of effective presence
- The principle of unity of effort
- The principle of on scene initiative
- The principle of flexibility
- The principle of managed risk
- The principle of restraint

These principles were good for our revenue cutter skippers and they are still the basis of good sound leadership decisions today, no matter what level. (SEA STORY: Coast Guard Cutter BOUTWELL Alaska patrol...leadership is about decisions.... culture CO created...The right decisions, Hawkeye Little...trusting your people.)

As you all know, we face many challenges today.... That's nothing new. Hopley Yeaton faced challenges..... As he was guided by a strong foundation of leadership and visionary leaders, we are guided by these same principles today.

So years from now when people look back, what do you think they will be saying about us 220 years from now? What were our principles of leadership... what were we all about...what were our missions & how did we perform our missions? How do all of our components work together? Will there be that much difference?

How many of you have read Pub 3.0? It talks about how we protect those on the sea, how we protect our nation from threats delivered by the sea and how we protect the sea itself... It talks about prevention and response and if you haven't read it I would recommend that you do.

Thank you for your time and for everything that you do...I'd like to open it up for questions...to hear what's on your minds.