

Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Remarks

at the

Coast Guard Foundation's 31st Annual Salute to the U.S. Coast
Guard Dinner in New York

October 13, 2011

Shipmates,

It is great to be here with you in Times Square – which is truly the crossroads of the world. Linda and I, and Master Chief Leavitt and Debbie always look forward to evenings like this, being surrounded by people who have a passion for our service and especially our Coast Guard families.

Tonight is a particularly special evening in several ways...

First, it's the 236th birthday of our sister service, the U.S. Navy – I do not want to get ahead of the service medley, but if we could have those who are serving or have served in the U.S. Navy please stand.

Second, this evening's dinner is styled as a "Salute" to the Coast Guard – but really it's the Coast Guard that should be saluting you – the Coast Guard Foundation and its supporters who are with us this evening. So on behalf of the over 40,000 men and women of the Coast Guard, I would like to return your salute by simply saying thank you!

Thank you for your generosity, thank you for your caring and and thank you for your comforting – you have made so much possible for so many of our Coast Guard men, women, and families – in ways that our Service could not accomplish with appropriated funds. From simple things like renovating basketball courts at our stations – most recently in Annapolis and soon to follow in Southwest Harbor, Maine...to life-saving gifts disaster relief to our most junior personnel whose homes and possessions were damaged by recent hurricanes and flooding...

And, then, there are those truly special projects like the creation of a memorial at Training Center Cape May to honor the sacrifice of DC3 Nathan Bruckenthal who gave his life in the war on terrorism in 2004. Your good works have, quite literally, touched every member of our service...and they continue here this evening...

Now, I also want to use this opportunity to tell you a little bit more about tonight's individual awardees... You have already heard about their exemplary leadership and extraordinary heroism. But, I wanted to tell you something more personal – about them – and the families that stand behind them making their service possible.

First, the crew of CG 6038:

As you know, this is a Sitka aircrew. So maybe we should start with that. Right after I first assumed my watch as Commandant, we tragically lost 3 members of a 4 person CG 6017 aircrew Lt. Sean Krueger, AMT1 Adam Hoke and AMT2 Brett Banks.

The impact of this tragic loss would be devastating on any command – but it was particularly devastating in Sitka – a small aviation command and a tightly knit Alaskan community. It's the kind of place where people truly depend upon one another – and, it was touching to see a large cross-section of the community in attendance at the memorial service.

The Foundation's generous support – as always – served to soothe this tragic loss. Your support allowed a fitting memorial to the 6017 aircrew to be designed, constructed and installed. And, most importantly it ensured the families of the fallen were able to be in attendance at its dedication. Once again, in our time of greatest need, you were there to support us.

So, I was particularly pleased when I saw that you chose to recognize a Sitka aircrew 6038 for their heroism...

Aircraft commander **Lt. Andy Schanno:** Now, although Lt. Schanno is a Coast Guardsman, he is a 1996 graduate of West Point. He flew UH60 helicopters for the Army in Germany, before he saw the light and came to the Coast Guard! He also played division I lacrosse for West Point. He has not been able to put together a lacrosse team in Sitka yet – apparently the only sticks used for sport in Sitka are called fishing poles, and he has adapted accordingly by becoming an avid fisherman when he is not attending to his duties as engineering officer. He is accompanied this evening by his wife Julie!

Lt. Mike Snyder: The 6038 co-pilot that day, is an avid sports fan – growing up in Western Pennsylvania he follows the Steelers, Pirates and Penguins – and he has brought his passion for sports to Sitka by playing in the local softball league and umpiring little league games. Accompanying him this evening is his mother, Karla, his father Bill, and his stepmother, Nancy.

AST2 Craig Powers: The 6038 rescue swimmer, is a fitness enthusiast...his is a certified cross-fit instructor, and recently placed 6th in the 2010 Alaska Regional Cross-Fit Competition in Anchorage, 20th in the Sitka Alpine Run and 3rd in his age group in the local triathlon.

He is also a survival instructor – he tirelessly works to ensure Air Station Sitka personnel are trained and equipped for the rigors of Alaskan emergency survival. He is accompanied this evening by his wife Sheri, his mother Elaine, father Tim, his sister Erin, and his brother-in-law Michael Servini.

AMT3 Nick Giumette: The 6038 flight mechanic. Nick is an avid hiker and outdoorsmen – when not on duty he can be found on the local trails, hiking or hunting. He also enjoys sport shooting and logs a lot of time at the local range honing his skills. He is also a community volunteer – most recently as part of the Sitka Health Summit where he worked to plant fruit trees throughout the community. Nick is accompanied this evening by his mother, Jane, and his father, Peter.

Could all 6038 crewmembers and your families please stand.

I was also pleased to see you recognize a Pacific Coast boat crew – the crew of MLB 47254 – these boat crews brave some of our most challenging seas and bar crossings:

BM2 and Surfman Connor Bennett achieved the highest small boat certification in the Coast Guard when he became Surfman # 418 in 2008. When he's not navigating the treacherous bars of the Pacific North West, he enjoys racing 1000cc motorcycles, photography, and he's also a rabid fan of European "football" a.k.a. soccer – he also employs his "football" passion to coach youth soccer at the local Garibaldi Grade School.

BM3 Matthew Karas hails from Beverly, Mass. He enjoys snowboarding, he's a die-hard New England Patriots fan, and he and his wife Kaylee are huge movie buffs – they are expecting but unfortunately doctor's orders prevented Kaylee from travelling here this evening – but we are pleased Matthew is accompanied by his mother Laurie and his father Charles.

Seaman Austin Bartosz was born and raised in Carson City, Nev., where he worked for North Lake Tahoe as a wild land firefighter. In 2010, he enlisted in the Coast Guard and Station Tillamook Bay is his first duty station! He is very fond of the Coast Guard's maritime law enforcement mission, and he is currently awaiting orders to Maritime Enforcement Specialist "A" School. He is a passionate ice hockey player and fan – his favorite team is the New York Rangers.

Now Seaman Bartosz so you know – I took the liberty of checking to see if the Rangers were playing at home this weekend – the bad news is that they are away – but the good news is that they are playing the Islanders – so if you are able to stay until Saturday, you can take a short ride east of the city out to Long Island and catch the game! He is accompanied this evening by his wife Alora.

Fireman Mike Callahan was born in Sacramento, Calif., but grew up in Pleasant View, Utah. When he's off duty he is a volunteer with the Garibaldi Fire Department and the Tillamook County Search and Rescue Team – he also enjoys hiking, mountain biking,

skiing, running – and he is an avid treasure hunter – you'll have to ask him what he's currently hunting for! He is accompanied this evening by his fiancée Linda Branch...and his parents Howard and Debbie Callahan.

And, of course the Coast Guard Silver Lifesaving Awardee

AST3 Thomas McArthur was born in Charleston, S.C. Among other accomplishments, he earned the high distinction of becoming an Eagle Scout – and throughout his Coast Guard career he has continued to support scouting, serving as part of the Coast Guard's National Jamboree Task Force and being selected at the 2011 Scouting Salutes the Military Coast Guard Honoree

Now for the big news...he was just married last week – Oct. 2 – and, if my source is correct, he and his wife Jayne came directly here from their honeymoon – which I think was in Hawaii! Congratulations!

Finally, as you know, this year marks the 10th anniversary of 9/11. For me, this dinner makes those memories particularly vivid. 10 years ago today, I was scheduled to attend the dinner, but I was fairly certain it was going to be cancelled. The ruins of the trade centers were still smoldering. Workers were still digging through the heap of ash and twisted wreckage. And, our nation was in a collective state of shock and mourning.

But in spite of all that, the dinner was held. People wanted to come. They needed to come.

And while 9/11 is one of those days in our history that everyone remembers – to a person, right where they were, and what they were doing, I have another memory. A memory that is equally vivid – but even more poignant. And that memory was attending this dinner on October 2001 – with many of you here this evening – and, as the national anthem began to play, the entire audience rising in unison to sing it aloud – many with tears streaming from their eyes. For me, that evening symbolized the strength of our service, the power of our nation and the commitment of you – our citizens, who support us.

That spirit is just as strong tonight, as it was on October 2001. It continues to move me, to refresh me and to renew me. We hear so much negative rhetoric these days – especially coming from Washington. What we need to hear more about, is the heroic work our men and women in the armed services are performing, as what our nation needs to see is the outstanding support citizens like you are continuing to provide them. This spirit of optimism is what our country was founded upon – it is a source of national pride for those of us who serve to defend it – and your support for our Coast Guard is an example of the finest citizenry that serves as a beacon for others to follow – especially our youth.

So on behalf of these Coast Guard families, and our entire service, I want to thank you...thank you for continuing to be our lifeline. We count ourselves fortunate to have shipmates like you!

Semper Paratus!