

## **Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Remarks**

at the

### **Bernard C. Webber Commissioning Ceremony**

*Miami, FL April 14, 2012*

I want to start out by simply saying thank you to the crew. I recognize the effort, skill and commitment – you have put into this fine cutter to get her here. Because of you, the first, of what will be a game-changing class of new patrol boats stands behind us ready to conduct operational missions . . . and, because of the leadership of your command, a well-trained crew stands before me, ready to take her to sea.

I also want to thank the families of the Webber Crew. I know they were equally committed to getting you to this day . . . especially during the many days away from home, at the shipyard, and at sea, that allowed this crew to get this cutter ready for commissioning – and, in the days ahead, I know you will be called upon even more to support, as this cutter heads to sea to patrol and protect our waters . . . thank you for your continuing support of this crew!

Indeed, today is a special day for our entire Coast Guard – it's not every day we get to commission a new Coast Guard cutter . . . but, what makes today truly special, is having you Mr. Andy Fitzgerald with us someone who was part of one of the greatest rescues in Coast Guard history – and part of the reason this cutter's namesake is Bernard C. Webber – with us to mark this next chapter in Coast Guard history – it is such a great honor.

The Bernard C. Webber is the first of a new class of patrol boats that will serve to protect people from the sea, protect the Nation from threats from the sea, and protect the sea itself.

I look forward to her 57 sister ships rolling off the line, and making this commissioning ceremony a much more routine event in our Coast Guard – and especially here in the Seventh District!

The cutter before you not only has beautiful lines, it is backed up by speed, capability, seaworthiness, and survivability. Its over-the-horizon small boat will expand its operational footprint. Its technology will allow it to detect and track threats at much greater ranges. And, its fully interoperable command, control and communication systems, will allow it to operate seamlessly with other DHS components, and our sister services in Department of Defense.

And, although this cutter is gleaming white on the outside – she's GREEN on the inside – her propulsion system complies with EPA Tier 2 standards – which means the emissions from her engines are reduced by as much as two-thirds!

But, from my experience as a ship captain, all the naval engineering, all the state of the art communications, and all the cutting-edge technology won't make a bit of difference unless you have one thing – and that's a proficient and well trained crew.

I have been stressing the importance of proficiency combined with traditional concepts of leadership including command authority, responsibility and accountability at every unit I visit throughout the Coast Guard.

Proficiency, Expertise in the Operational Arts of Seamanship, and Airmanship is what our service has relied upon for more than 221 years to accomplish our challenging maritime missions.

During a recent all-hands visit to a Coast Guard Station, I was asked to define proficiency.

Rather than answer the question directly, I asked the crew, who's the best boat coxswain? The hands of half-a-dozen Boatswain's Mates immediately went up! Then I rephrased the question . . . if the Search and Rescue alarm sounded and you had to go out in the worst storm, who would you want to be the coxswain of the motor life boat? Everyone immediately pointed to the Commanding Officer . . . a warrant boatswain, a surfman with decades of experience.

That's mastery of your craft. You know it when you see it.

And, I know, if I was able to go back in time 60-years, to Station Chatham in 1952, and ask the crew who the best coxswain was, everyone would have pointed to BM1 Bernie Webber.

But, it's equally important to remember, that although this cutter bears the name Bernard C. Webber on her stern – BM1 Webber could not have accomplished the *Pendleton* rescue unless he had an outstanding crew – including an engineer like Mr. Andy Fitzgerald – someone whose skills BM1 Webber could instinctively rely upon . . . to keep their 36-foot motorized wooden motor lifeboat running in what was a perfect storm as they rescued the crewmen from a foundering 500-foot tanker *Pendleton*. . . that had broken in two.

A proficient crew is what you must rely on when you are awoken in the dark of night by the sound of the Search and Rescue alarm . . . and, with one look up at the sky, one glance out at the awaiting sea, and one gust of wind upon your face, you know that on this night, Duty Will Demand Courage.

Proficiency is all you have to rely upon, once you get across the bar, and, it is just you and your crew . . . alone, in a small craft, at the mercy of an endless ocean, whose waters are cold, dark and deep.

And your operational skills, experience, and training is what allows you, to head out, when everyone else is heading in, and rescue souls from the perils of the sea.

Indeed, it was the crew of CG 36500's proficiency that enabled them to rescue Mr. Charles Bridges – and 31 others – on that fateful night of February 18, 1952. And there's something else . . . something that many of you might not know. BM1 Webber initially refused our Service's highest award for bravery – the Gold Life Saving Medal. Why? Because he was told his crew would receive a lesser recognition.

Well, Bernie Webber knew his crew was equally responsible for accomplishing the *Pendleton* rescue, indeed, he knew their courage and determination was the ONLY thing that made such a feat possible . . . So he made darn sure that SN Richard P. Livesey, SN Ervin E. Maske and (looking at him) EN2 (P) Andrew J. Fitzgerald also all received the Gold Life Saving Medal.

You see, even after the rescue was over, he was still using his legendary courage and commitment to make sure his crew was taken care of – because that's what great leaders do.

So, to the crew of Bernard C. Webber, this is your legacy. The name **Bernard C. Webber** is displayed on the stern of this fine cutter – that's something you can be tremendously proud of – but it's the spirit of the crew of 36500, and their courage, determination and commitment to proficiency, and being a great crew, that must live on in you.

Soon this cutter will be operational . . . your duty, will demand courage. And, whether it's a perilous rescue, or one of the Seventh District's many challenging law enforcement missions, you should be inspired by this legacy to begin writing what will become your legacy.

And, by doing so, you will carry forward the spirit of Station Chatham – and BM1 Bernie Webber – and the crew of CG 36500 . . . the same spirit that says . . .

We do not fear uncertain and stormy seas!  
That's when we go to work!  
That's when our country needs us the most!  
And, that's when we're at our best!  
We're Coast Guardsmen.  
This is our chosen profession. This is our way. This is what we do.  
Thank you! Semper Paratus!