



Admiral James M. Loy

"Who am I? And Why am I so Proud?"

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Introduction:

On New Year's Day, the *Steamboat Pilot*, the newspaper for Steamboat Springs, Colorado, delivered the sad news to its readers that one of their local heroes—a man named Ed Burch, a former sheriff and a retired Army officer who had served three tours in Vietnam—had been killed in a small plane crash in Alaska.

The Coast Guard had searched the waters between Juneau and Admiralty Island for several days. Our crews found two tires and a piece of material that could have come from one of the wings. But we found no survivors and reluctantly suspended the search.

The newspaper story announcing Mr. Burch's death recalled how an earlier story on Mr. Burch had mentioned an incident in which a friend had asked him what single word he would choose as his epitaph.

"I've struggled with whether it would be 'American' or 'soldier,'" Burch said at the time. "I guess it would be 'American.' As people get to know me, I'd like them to know that I'm proud to be an American."

I understand Mr. Burch's sentiments, I respect his choice, and I regret his passing. He sounds like the kind of American who makes our country great. However, if I were asked to choose a single word for my epitaph, I would choose something else. I'd choose carefully because I certainly wouldn't want to denigrate either my faith or my country, but I think I could respect both and still choose the one word that says the most about who I am and best identifies the labor to which I have been called to set my hand. That one word would be . . . "*Coastie*."

Coastie is the one word that comes closest to capturing the essence of Jim Loy—a kid who grew up in central Pennsylvania without the least trace of a yearning for seagoing adventure; a teen-ager who enrolled in the Coast Guard Academy seeking only the education that his hard working parents couldn't afford; a young man who went to sea with no plans for a military career; a man who stands before you now, still serving after almost forty one years because when he experienced the hardships of sea duty and the

danger of combat he realized that the privilege of performing such work for the United States Coast Guard abundantly compensates for every inconvenience.

I would also choose "Coastie" because the last two letters give it an informal tone that captures my identification with and affection for the hundreds of Coast Guard sailors with whom I have rubbed shoulders in narrow passageways and crowded pilothouses during the course of my seven tours at sea. That identification and affection endure as sources of motivation to serve even though I am no longer in a position to perform our missions first hand. I now leave that to younger versions of myself, but, believe me, I'm with them every step of the way.

As people get to know me, I'd like them to know I'm proud to be a Coastie . . . and I'd like them to know why I'm proud.

I thank Admiral Teeson for creating this forum for my first major address of the new year, for allowing me to visit the incubator of Coast Guard leaders, and to speak from my heart about my pride in the United States Coast Guard.

I am delighted to see the entire New London Coast Guard community represented here—the staff of the Leadership Development Center, officer candidates, *Eagle* sailors, First District Auxiliarists, and of course the corps of cadets and the Academy faculty and staff. So many representatives of that pride of which I speak today.

The Meaning of Pride:

I must be careful about my terminology when giving a speech on pride. Pride is one of the seven deadly sins, and it denotes many traits that military leaders must carefully avoid—arrogance, excessive self-esteem, haughtiness, lack of regard for others. But there is also a positive sense of the word, and it is this positive sense that every member of the Coast Guard should both understand and experience.

When I say I am proud of the Coast Guard and proud to serve in the Coast Guard, I am not boasting of my own worth. I am pointing to something larger than myself. I am exulting in the privilege of following in the footsteps of past heroes and of performing noble work in the company of current shipmates. This exultation motivates me to serve ever more diligently so that my shipmates and my successors will draw from me the same strength that I have drawn from this living service we call the Coast Guard. The pride of which I speak is not the pride that gives one a big head; it is the pride that gives one a strong heart.

Footsteps of Heroes:

I mentioned the footsteps of heroes. Douglas Munro, because of the magnitude of what he accomplished in a deliberately selfless sacrificial act, is certainly one of the brightest stars in our firmament. But there are many others. Far more than most people imagine. Many whose acts of heroism are every bit as spellbinding as Munro's. In fact, the reason

that so few Coasties know the names of any Coastie heroes other than Douglas Munro is that the path of Coast Guard heroism has been so frequently trod that it is hard to discern individual footprints. It's also because we don't study or teach them enough. We should fix that.

Heroic Coasties have made their mark in every mission area and every era of our service. And for every hero we know, there are many others whose less remembered deeds should also inspire us. Munro's fellow coxswain, Ray Evans, also performed heroically at Guadalcanal. We remember the sinking of the *Tampa* at the end of World War I, but the eleven Coasties from *Seneca* who died two weeks earlier in a valiant effort to save the British collier *Wellington*, also torpedoed by a German sub, give an even clearer object lesson in devotion to duty. We remember the combat Search and Rescue exploits of Jack Rittichier in Vietnam, but we should also honor the crew of the Coast Guard PBM who died trying to rescue fellow aviators from a Navy reconnaissance aircraft that had been shot down off the coast of China in 1953. We remember Richard Etheridge and his crew at the Pea Island Life-Saving Station for their rescue of the *E.S. Newman* in 1896, but Charles Goodwin has a comparable claim on our heart. He went out in gales with his crew three times in a single two-week period in 1883, rescuing 29 people from three separate shipwrecks near Cleveland.

The accounts of known Coast Guard heroes are staggering both in terms of number and drama. And an even greater number of Coast Guard heroes rest in obscurity because they performed their heroism anonymously.

Consider the example of Seaman Apprentice William Flores. It is possible that you heard his name briefly last September when Master Chief Patton presented SA Flores' parents with a posthumous Coast Guard Medal, but it is unlikely you ever heard of him before then. William Flores was a typical Coastie. He enlisted in the Coast Guard shortly after high school, attended basic training, and received orders to a ship that was going through a yard availability. The ship was the *Blackthorn*. The very first time SA Flores got underway, his ship collided with a large merchant ship and rolled over. Seaman Apprentice Flores made his way, along with another shipmate, to the starboard lifejacket locker and began throwing PFD's to his shipmates in the water. When it became apparent that the ship was sinking, SA Flores tied the life jacket locker open and set off to relieve shipmates who were still trapped and disoriented inside the ship. He died in the attempt, giving his life for shipmates whose names he hadn't yet had time to learn.

One occasionally hears discouraging social commentators who lament the selfishness and aimlessness of young people who are growing up spoiled in a country without role models. You've heard these generalizations. They usually end with some despairing form of the question, "Where have all the heroes gone?"

Where have all the heroes gone? Many simply ran away to sea and joined the Coast Guard. Just as they have been doing for more than 210 years. Shortly after I became Commandant, I had the privilege of meeting one of those supposedly adrift members of Generation X or Y. Petty Officer Michael Beyer was a young Coastie who went out on a SAR case in the North Pacific and got caught between his motor life boat and a distressed fishing vessel. His pelvis was crushed, but he held on to a bit and was dragged aboard the

fishing vessel. Despite the excruciating pain— pain magnified by the pounding the disabled boat was taking in the trough of ten-foot seas—Petty Officer Beyer helped the crew of the fishing vessel troubleshoot the pumps and directed de-watering and damage control efforts, consenting to his own evacuation only when assured that the fishing vessel and its crew were safe.

The Coast Guard has always been a service of heroes. And we find them in our present as much as in our past. Petty Officer Beyer is medically retired now, but other Coastie heroes have signed on to fill his place. They are all around us. Every young graduate of recruit training who reports aboard your cutter comes to you with the heart of William Flores or Michael Beyer.

A year and a half ago, four typical Coasties from the Cutter *Jarvis* were on liberty at Sacred Falls Park on Oahu, enjoying the sort of afternoon that the Coast Guard sometimes affords when it deposits young people in a tropical paradise and gives them a few hours to themselves.

These Coasties were hiking through some rugged terrain when a sudden landslide dumped tons of rock on a park crowded with hikers and campers. These four Coasties went into the rockslide area while boulders were still tumbling down around them. Eight people had been killed and dozens seriously injured. Our Coasties ignored the danger and spent several hours assisting with triage, performing emergency first aid, carrying children to safety, comforting those in shock. One of them entered the water at the base of the falls while rocks were still falling and dragged an injured man to safety. They did what Coasties typically do when disasters strike. They showed fortitude, compassion, poise, and courage. These are the men and women that you will have the privilege to serve alongside when you enter or return to the fleet after your studies at the Academy or the LDC.

Last month, we saw breathtaking footage of our helicopter crews rescuing 34 people from a sinking cruise ship more than 200 miles east of North Carolina, and we saw our marine safety professionals keep a major spill in Louisiana from becoming an environmental catastrophe.

Indeed, we walk in the footsteps of heroes past . . . some of those footprints are very fresh.

The Potency of a Military, Multi-mission, Maritime service.

Coasties come into our service as normal people. But there is something special about the Coast Guard that gives them the opportunity to achieve their fullest potential. That something is our status as an agency organized along military principles, focused on maritime issues, and designed with multi-mission capability. It is one of our great strengths and one of the strongest foundations for our pride. It tells us who we are.

Our military nature infuses us with the discipline to perform dangerous work, the flexibility to mobilize quickly, and the command structure to empower on-scene decision

makers. It is also essential to our character in that it defines our service in the terminology of martial qualities like valor and sacrifice.

Our military character under-girds everything we do and enables us to perform every mission effectively. There is not, as some have imagined a contradiction between our defense and our humanitarian missions; neither is there any sort of Jekyll-and-Hyde struggle for the soul of the Coast Guard. In fact, there is no conflict. The military discipline that facilitates efficient movement of personnel and materiel is as relevant to disaster relief as it is to joint operations. Our military command and control structure is as vital to open-ocean search and rescue as it is to counter-drug operations.

Our military organization makes management of our multi-mission portfolio both feasible and efficient.

This special chemistry between the "three M's" is the driving force behind our organizational history. The Coast Guard did not reach its present form or acquire its present mission profile through historical accident. We are the product of 210 years of thoughtful consideration of how best to fulfill the government's maritime responsibilities to its people.

The whole of Coast Guard history is quite simply the story of a growing nation increasingly aware of its maritime interests.

The Coast Guard's mission growth has paralleled the growth of those interests. Ours has been a history of accretion, a history of a growing nation confronting one emergent maritime need after another. With each crisis, America looks around, sees only one agency capable of handling the job, and entrusts the mission to the Coast Guard. Each time, the Coast Guard accepts the new challenge, performs it with its distinctive stamp of quiet efficiency, and folds it into its inventory of multi-mission capabilities.

This historical trend began in the eighteenth century when anti-slavery patrols and tariff collection were assigned to a Revenue Cutter Service that had been commissioned to prevent smuggling—because nobody else could do them. We were multi-mission in our very first decade of existence. The trend continued in the nineteenth century when nobody else could assume responsibility for search and rescue, marine inspection, quarantine laws, anchorage regulation, protecting seal herds, and enforcing the Chinese immigration act. In the twentieth century, when there was nobody else to arrest rum runners during prohibition, to perform convoy escort duty, to deal with the flood of immigrants from Cuba and Haiti, to enforce marine environmental laws, or to conduct maritime drug interdiction, these jobs were also handed to the Coast Guard.

And the twenty-first century? More of the same. The nation will continue to grow. Our inter-connection to the rest of the world will magnify the importance of an efficient and safe marine transportation system, of security from terrorist attack and criminal enterprises, of preservation of living marine resources, of protection of the marine

environment, and of the continued preservation of our national liberty. It's the work to stir our souls.

Everything points to increased demand for a strong and vital Coast Guard. This strong historical trend places you—the present and future leaders of the Coast Guard—right in the middle of a broad and strong current that carries you toward even greater opportunities for heroic service. Our status as a military, multi-mission, maritime service both defines our purposes and enables us to achieve them.

Nobility of Purpose.

I am proud of Coasties. I am proud of the strength of our uniquely constituted service. And I am proud of our noble purpose.

I seldom draw comparisons to the other armed services except when I'm telling a Congressman that you deserve to be paid as much and treated as well as your DOD counterparts— an argument, by the way, that is gaining ever more traction around Washington. But I will note one difference between our advertising and the advertising campaigns of the other services. (No, it's not that they can afford to place ads on Monday Night Football!) The other armed services present young people with opportunities to test their mettle, to obtain technical training, to experience adventure, or to sock away money for college. There is value to those motivations, but we don't stop there.

Our recruiting motto of "Jobs That Matter" differentiates us from the other services in that we do not sell military service as a stage in life or a step to bigger and better things. We are the only service that attracts recruits primarily based on the work we do. We recruit the idealists. We serve the nation daily. That is our unique attraction.

Every single Coast Guard mission resonates with an idealistic impulse. Defending the country. Saving lives. Protecting the environment. Improving safety. Everybody in the Coast Guard either performs important work or performs support functions without which that noble, important work could not be accomplished. And because of that, everybody in the Coast Guard has a share in the nobility of our purpose. Everybody in the Coast Guard can go home at night—on the nights that duty permits them to go home—and enjoy the serene rest that comes to those who know they are directing their paths toward worthwhile purposes.

Summation of Reasons for Pride in the Coast Guard:

A few years ago, a couple of management experts named James Collins and Jerry Porras completed a study of companies that manage to remain successful for long periods of time. Their book, called *Built to Last*, identifies the attributes that distinguish enduring organizational greatness. They wrote about successful business enterprises, but I recognized the Coast Guard in much of what they wrote.

They spoke of having a "core ideology," which consists of core values and a fundamental purpose. Both the values and the purpose have to be enduring features that come together in a way that preserves the core while stimulating progress. Furthermore, the interaction between values and purpose must enable leaders to look beyond short-term concerns and establish what Collins and Porras call "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals." "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals" are the ambitious projects that organizations undertake when their core values and purpose drive them forward out of the comfort of the status quo.

When I look at the Coast Guard, I see these features. Our core values of Honor, Respect and Devotion to duty combine with our enduring purpose of serving Americas maritime interests to give us that core ideology. The "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goals"? Deepwater, the Marine Transportation System, Maritime Domain Awareness, just to name a few.

When you add together all of these elements—noble purpose; core ideology; big, hairy, audacious goals—and put them to work and then throw in the greatest element of all—the Coastie—you have the opportunity to be part of something that is truly special and not easily replicated in any other line of work.

We are absolutely blessed both in being the heirs of those traditions and in having the opportunity to prepare the way for further innovation. We offer opportunities for meaningful service that simply are not available in very many other organizations.

VI. Leadership Challenge.

Why have I gone to such great lengths to tell you why I am proud of the Coast Guard? Because there is nothing more precious that I could offer you. A nation reveals itself not only by the men and women it produces, but also by the men and women it honors, and the men and women it remembers. Who am I? A Coastie. Why am I so proud? Because for my life's work, I've been privileged to walk with heroes along noble paths.

Now I'd like to set a two-part leadership challenge before you.

A.Obligation to Treat Coastie Heroes with Respect.

When you leave New London with your new stripe or your new sense of what your anchor means or with your course completion certificate from one of the leadership schools, you will be entrusted with the Coast Guard's most precious resource: the first term sailor. These young people represent your best personal opportunity to influence the present and future effectiveness of the Coast Guard.

If you've been paying attention this afternoon, you already know my estimation of the value of the Coastie heart, and you can quickly understand the significance of that responsibility of training and leading the next Michael Beyer and the next William Flores. The respect you bear for your people must be sincere, and it must be deep.

A few years ago, we took a service-wide survey—the Workforce Cultural Audit—to get a handle on the range of attitudes and perceptions among our people.

We got back big thick binders full of data—data that was very useful in targeting a long list of workforce interventions. But one number stood out from all the other numbers in those binders. No. It did more than stand out. It jumped off the page and slapped me in the face. I was both astounded and grieved to read that 73% of the respondents thought that the officers over them cared more for their own careers than for the needs of their subordinates. Seventy-three percent!

That number says we're not treating our sailors with the respect they earned when they enlisted in the Coast Guard and undertook to perform our work.

I do not believe that this number accurately reflects officer attitudes, but I have to accept its validity as a measure of how well or how clearly officers express their regard for their subordinates. And I have to accept that we need to improve.

I spent the New Year's weekend on four different cutters down in GANTSEC. Seeing the spirit of energy and good will with which these Coast Guard crews—most of whom had also spent Christmas underway—went about their business had the effect that contact with Coast Guard sailors always has on me. It was an adrenaline rush. My respect for them soared. Seeing them at work—and even at play on an underway New Year's Eve—strengthened my resolve that I would return to Washington and work even harder to get them what they deserve in pay, housing, health care, training and education, retirement plans, and other tangible measures of respect.

These sailors are the legitimate heirs to the tradition and glory of the Coast Guard. My job as Commandant—and your job as front-line leaders—is to exemplify the respect that is their due.

As I left each ship, I took the CO and leading chief aside and told them in no uncertain terms to take care of the kids in their crew.

That is the first part of your leadership challenge.

B. Retention.

The second part is to help us improve our retention rates by communicating your own sense of pride in the Coast Guard to your first-term sailors.

I recently re-issued my *Commandant's Direction* and boiled down my original list of five areas of emphasis and 23 objectives to two areas of emphasis and eight objectives. Both of my areas of emphasis—restoring our readiness and shaping our future—depend on improving retention.

I've studied our workforce models for every component of our workforce—active and reserve, officer and enlisted, military and civilian, even Auxiliary—and one point is very clear: No matter how well we execute our recruiting and training plans, we will not restore personnel readiness unless we improve retention.

Beyond its impact on readiness, retention is also important because it tells us how well we're doing with the first challenge I set forth—treating our sailors right. Retention is the best measure of how we're treating our first term sailors, and how well you're fulfilling the first part of your leadership challenge. I understand that sometimes people join the Coast Guard, see what they want to see, accomplish what they set out to do, and move on to other lines of work. And that's fine—as long as they leave to pursue another worthwhile dream.

However, if and when sailors leave in numbers large enough that we must assume we are not fulfilling their reasonable expectations about the work they would do, the training they would receive, or the benefits they would enjoy, then we had better be sure we sit up and pay attention.

We are going to improve retention the only honorable way I know: by treating our people with respect; by working to offer them and their families a reasonable quality of life on par with DOD service members; and by giving them the equipment, training, and shipmates they need to do the jobs they signed on to perform.

We will limit the extent of our persuasion to the leadership challenge I've given you. Communicate your pride in the Coast Guard so that Coasties weighing that stay-or-go decision have more to consider than a general sense that they can make more money in the civilian sector. We must each become responsible for retention at our units. An exit interview is too late. We must intercede with plenty of time for a young sailor to consider the good things about life in the Coast Guard.

Retention must be addressed at the organizational level, the unit level, and at the individual level. At the organizational level, we have been able to deliver some significant benefits—lower out-of-pocket housing expenses, improved Tri-Care Remote, solid pay increases. And we are working towards a long list of other improvements.

In the mean time, retention can be improved right now at the unit and individual levels. In fact, of all the service-wide challenges we face, retention is the one that is most effectively addressed by local and personal leadership. One of the reasons I spoke to you today about my love of and my pride in the Coast Guard is that I want you to be equipped with more than an ALCOAST spelling out benefits when you talk to your sailors.

The measures I'm working on will help remove some of the irritants and hardships that can cause people to want to leave the service. But it does not lie within my power to make someone want to stay. That part is up to you.

When all is said and done, people will stay in the Coast Guard if three conditions are present: their families are decently provided for; they find the work meaningful; and they find respect and acceptance among their shipmates. Let's each resolve to make it so!

Conclusion:

Who am I? And why am I so proud? Robert Frost wrote about a hired man . . . one whose fate was having "nothing to look backward to with pride, and nothing to look forward to

with hope." I've told you of my pride looking back into the footsteps of our Coast Guard. I look forward to a Coast Guard whose heroes will steadily raise the bar of every dimension of the Coast Guard experience. You are the heroes.

That is your personal calling. That's the way it always has been. That's why I'm proud to be a Coastie. Semper Paratus. Thank you very much.

