



## U.S. Coast Guard History Program

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### Coast Guard Academy

125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ball

June 8, 2002

Good evening, Ladies and Gentlemen. It's great to be here with you tonight to celebrate the history of this fine institution. I want to thank RADM Olsen and the faculty and staff of the Academy for inviting me to be here with you to share a few thoughts about our past, as well as our future.

As some of you know, in addition to being a member of the Class of 1968, I have also had the pleasure of teaching history and political science here at the Academy. As a former instructor and life-long student of history, I know that often the best way to learn it is to teach it. I have learned, for example, the following very important lesson.

Among the ancient Greeks, Socrates was considered a learned man in the academy of his time. Consequently, he often was asked to attend formal occasions, during which he openly discussed the issues of the day...dispensed a great deal of free wisdom...and delivered many memorable—though often lengthy—speeches.

They poisoned him! I will try to be brief tonight.

I'm very pleased that we have taken this moment to stop and remember an important part of our cherished heritage. It's important to do that. It is important not just because we are proud of the traditions that this Academy represents, but because we look forward to the promise of the future.

The lessons of history teach us that sound education is the mainstay of our future. That lesson should come as no surprise to any of us, but it is good to be reminded of its importance from time to time.

When we think back to the days of the Revenue Cutter *Dobbin*, commissioned as the first school ship in 1876, we are reminded that its purpose was to educate and train future officers, providing them the knowledge and skills they would need to be capable and competent in performing all required missions.

Sumner Kimball, then Chief of the Revenue Marine Bureau, established the *Dobbin* as the first official school ship of the Revenue Cutter Service. The reason he did so was not that he had some extra money to spend. His budget was small, and there were many competing interests. Good stewardship was an absolute necessity.

The main reason he established the Revenue Cutter School of Instruction was to help reform an officer corps that had grown complacent in a system of patronage that rewarded political influence over professional competence.

That is an unpleasant fact in our history, but it was a fact that was not uncommon to our government in the two decades after the Civil War, later known as the Gilded Age. In fact, complacency, corruption and patronage have always been hazards of government. They are deadly hazards to its competence in leadership. Our founding fathers knew that very well, I think.

Sumner Kimball knew it, too. History records that he did his best to restore the strength of the Revenue Cutter Service, in part by ensuring that it was committed to improving the quality of its people, and that in return its people were committed to delivering the highest quality of service to the American public.

The cadets were chosen very carefully. Of nineteen candidates, only ten passed the difficult entrance exam. Eight cadets of good moral standing were admitted to the first term in 1877. Under the careful eye of Captain John Henriques, the cadets learned mathematics, physics, history, English, and law, as well as seamanship and navigation skills, while sailing onboard *Dobbin*. Only six graduated from the rigorous course of study two years later.

So began the life of this venerable school.

Kimball's commitment to nurturing good people through sound education and training, as well as his ironclad dedication to good stewardship, helped restore the readiness of the Revenue Cutter Service and prepared it to become the modern day Coast Guard. That tradition continues to the present day.

Now, the Coast Guard Academy enjoys an enviable reputation for excellence, integrity, and quality of education. Our service has earned the same reputation. We have earned that reputation through continuous hard work and dedication to the core values of our service.

But we still have work to do. Perhaps our task is not as daunting as what Sumner Kimball faced in 1876, but we can still learn some good lessons from his example.

As we face the future, we are confronted with new challenges to the safety and security of this great country. We must move ahead in a direction that will help to ensure our nation's security, and so restore safety and confidence to the American public.

On Thursday evening, President Bush announced a major restructuring of government, in which he intends to create a new Department of Homeland Security. His purpose is to strengthen the ability of our nation to prepare our response to a variety of threats to the security of our nation, the most prominent and urgent of which is the advent of terrorism, brought against us by a determined and ruthless enemy.

Consequently, he has proposed to transfer our service from the Department of Transportation to this new home, to join with several other agencies having the authority and capability to protect and secure our homeland. The proposal will be sent to Congress in the next few weeks. The president has asked Congress to establish the new department by the close of the current session, with implementation occurring over a phased-in period.

The proposal is to transfer the Coast Guard intact. Our maritime, military, multi-mission character must not change—and it will not. We will remain a national and international leader in maritime safety and security. We must continue our excellence of service in every mission.

I fully support the decision of the President, and so does Secretary Mineta. I believe Congress will support it, too. I know history when I see it. I believe this is a watershed moment in the history of the Coast Guard.

The implementation of this decision will be a tremendous challenge. Every challenge, especially one such as this, is an opportunity to reach an even greater level of achievement. We must take every advantage of the new challenge before us.

In doing so, we must carefully define our strategy, build out our competencies to meet new requirements, and begin the transition in earnest. The key to the success of our efforts will be to bring about change within continuity.

As we do so, our emphasis in thought and action should be focused sharply in three areas: readiness, stewardship...and people.

All three areas of emphasis will be important to meeting the challenges of the future, as we look forward to the coming days ahead. But the most important will be the emphasis on people, just as it was in Sumner Kimball's day.

To begin with, we must continue to improve our readiness to perform all the jobs that America has asked us to do. We have long been recognized for our superior operational service. We must bring the same level of professionalism and maritime leadership to the war on terrorism that has been demonstrated in everything else we do.

As the lead federal agency for maritime safety and security, we will do all in our power to ensure that our units employ sound doctrine and tactics...that they are supported with capable integrated systems, both on shore and on the high seas...that they have enough people properly trained...and that they are equipped

with modern cutters, boats, aircraft, and equipment. And we will continue to build upon the incredibly strong partnership we have with other government agencies, especially the Department of Defense and the United States Navy.

Second, we must continue to strengthen our stewardship of the public trust by striving to be the best led and managed organization in government. To do so, we must ensure that we are in alignment from top to bottom and bottom to top—and for us, the top begins in the Oval Office, and extends through our Secretary and his staff.

We must inspire a culture of innovation, embracing technology and more effective management practices to achieve measurable outcomes. We must take full advantage of opportunities presented by our newest acquisition strategies, such as the Integrated Deepwater System Project. All of our efforts must be aimed at delivering measurable results that support the President's Management Agenda.

Third, and most importantly, we must remain loyal to our people and inspire their loyalty to us. We must grow the work force. The first increment of growth in the coming year will be about 2200 people, with more to come in the out-years. This growth puts our recruiting, retention, and training efforts front and center.

We must grow and we will...but we must do it with a watchful eye on the diversity of our ranks. We can't afford to grow indiscriminately. The future of our service demands a multitude of technical skills and capabilities. It will require people with broadly diverse talents and backgrounds. We can easily observe in the natural world around us the simple lesson that life adapts to change best through diversity.

The readiness of our ships, aircraft, and systems will come to nothing without Coast Guard men and women who are ready, willing, and able. We must ensure that they are indeed ready, willing, and able in every respect. I am talking about every element of our team: active duty, reserve, civilian, and auxiliary.

We need to build and sustain a highly skilled, knowledgeable, and well performing workforce to meet current and emerging mission requirements.

We can do that by strengthening our organizational culture and support for lifelong learning, dedicated to developing leadership skills, professional competency, and broader personal knowledge.

Our goal should be to create an environment in which our people constantly learn and grow, both professionally and personally—and they are helping those around them do the same. We can realize the operational excellence that we continually seek through the actions of highly capable people, who are motivated by passion for their work.

We must continue to develop the means that will create the culture that we desire—such as: Individual Development Plans, online e-learning courses, broader leadership and management training, wider

availability of mid-grade officer and civilian command and staff educational opportunities, as well as expanded educational programs for senior officials.

By doing so, we will in turn improve the readiness of our service to enable us to meet the challenges ahead.

This Academy is central to that vision. We will do everything possible to ensure that it increases in stature and substance, to sustain its position among the finest colleges and universities in the nation. This is where our future leaders will begin to develop their desire for lifelong learning.

Also vitally important are the Leadership Development Center, the Chief Petty Officers' Academy, and our training centers, all of which have earned reputations as centers of excellence. We have made great strides in the last several years.

But we can't demonstrate excellence by sitting on our reputations. I know that you all agree with me on that point. I want to acknowledge your tremendous efforts, under the leadership of Rube Olsen, to press forward through innovation.

Associate professor Glenn Frysinger and Captain Rick Gaines are using a technique known as two-dimensional gas chromatography to determine whether gasoline, kerosene, lighter fluid or some other accelerant was used to start a fire. They are trying to find a new way to fingerprint arsonists. As many of you know, arson will likely be a major tool of terrorist actions in the future. That research could turn out to be vital to our national security.

There are many other examples that we could look to, as well, to show the excellence of thought and initiative in this place. I encourage you to press on.

Oliver Wendell Holmes, a great American who was alive to see the Gilded Age in which this school began, wrote these words, from which I have taken strength and wisdom through the years:

"The great thing in this world is not so much where we are, as in what direction we are moving. To reach our goals, we must sail with the wind and sometimes against it—but we must sail, and not drift nor be at anchor."

It seems to me that these words have never before been more relevant.

We dare not drift with the current. Nor should we secure an anchor in the past. We must sail on. And as we do, we must think and act anew.

Thank you. And Semper Paratus.

