

As delivered

Admiral T. H. Collins  
Welcome CGC LONG ISLAND to New Homeport  
Remarks  
June 28, 2003  
Valdez, AK

Good morning! Thank you all for joining us here today to welcome Coast Guard Cutter LONG ISLAND to her new home here in Valdez.

[Recognize distinguished guests].

We're extremely fortunate to have the Governor and both Senators from the great state of Alaska with us today to celebrate LONG ISLAND's arrival in her new homeport.

We're proud to be able to call Governor Murkowski a shipmate, counting him among our Coast Guard veterans. He served on board both the Cutters SORREL and THISTLE while in the Coast Guard.

Senator Murkowski is a third-generation Alaskan and the first Alaskan-born senator to serve the state. She has already shown herself to be a dedicated public servant and a supporter of the Coast Guard through her visits to and recognition of local Coast Guard units.

Senator Ted Stevens, is a long-time friend of the Coast Guard's. He has served his country and this state as an elected official for almost 40 years – and always with a sharp focus on the maritime issues facing Alaska and our nation.

The Coast Guard is forever indebted to the support shown by Alaska's Senators. At a time of sharply competing resource demands, they, like President Bush, have shown a keen understanding of the need for the Coast Guard Deepwater Program in order to renew our aging fleet and ensure that we can do our jobs efficiently and effectively. Over the next 20 years, with the help of Congress, the Coast Guard will rebuild its fleet, and will be able to continue to save lives, protect our living marine resources, and secure our ports and waterways. We thank you for your support.

LONG ISLAND's arrival here adds one more chapter to the long and colorful history that Alaska and the Coast Guard share.

Even before Alaska was a U.S. territory, agencies that formed today's U.S. Coast Guard were serving Alaska:

- In 1865, the U.S. Lighthouse Service's tender SHUBRICK came to Alaska's coast carrying Western Union officials interested in running a telegraph cable from North America to St. Petersburg.
- The U.S. Revenue Cutter Service transported the first federal officials here, after Alaska became America's newest territory in 1867.

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- And just like today's Coast Guard protects Alaskan fisheries from illegal harvesting, the Coast Guard's roots in Alaska stem from preventing over harvesting of another Alaskan resource, the northern fur seal.
- From the time Alaska became a U.S. territory, Revenue Cutters sailed her waters, enforcing U.S. laws and helping mariners in distress. One of the more unusual duties these cutters performed – and I doubt LONG ISLAND will add it to her list of duties -- was that of sailing Court Cruises. A cutter would transport a judge, public defender, court clerk, and U.S. Marshall to different ports, and they would then try criminal cases throughout the region. Sometimes the cutter's crew would end up serving as jury members – that's not a part of today's usual Coast Guard repertoire of duties!

Two of our service's most honored cuttermen are best known for their work in Alaska: CAPT David Jarvis and CAPT Mike Healy.

While a First Lieutenant aboard the Revenue Cutter BEAR, Captain Jarvis led an expedition to save 300 whalers stranded in the ice off Point Barrow. It took three-and-a-half months, but Jarvis and two others from BEAR successfully drove a herd of reindeer over 1500 miles of Alaskan tundra in the dead of winter to resupply the stranded whalers.

Captain Mike Healy was born in Georgia in 1839, the fifth of ten children born to an Irish plantation owner and a former slave. Three brothers entered the priesthood and three sisters became nuns. Having that many siblings become priests and nuns might just about have compensated for their brother, who was known as "Hell Roaring Mike".

As Commanding Officer of BEAR in the waters of Alaska, Healy truly made his mark in history. During the last two decades of the 19th Century, Captain Healy was the U.S. Government in most of Alaska. He protected the natural resources of the region, suppressed illegal trade, resupplied remote outposts, enforced U.S. laws, and performed search and rescue. That may sound like a usual run-down of Coast Guard missions, but I don't think LONG ISLAND will be doing things exactly like Captain Healy did. With the reduction in the seal and whale populations, Healy introduced reindeer from Siberia to Alaska to provide food, clothing and other necessities for Alaskans. LT McQueen, I don't expect to hear any stories about reindeer running around on LONG ISLAND's decks.

We are all aware of the multitude of missions the Coast Guard performs in Alaska.

- Our men and women in blue constantly go out into some of the roughest weather in the world to save lives.
- There is not a month that goes by during which Coast Guard cutters patrolling our EEZ and protecting our nation's fisheries, don't catch illegal trawlers.
- The Coast Guard protects Alaska's vital waterways and ports to ensure the safety and security of our nation's mariners and commerce.

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Moving LONG ISLAND to Valdez will keep the Coast Guard “Semper Paratus” and ensure we have the resources in Alaska to continue performing all our missions. LONG ISLAND joins the other five 110’ Patrol Boats here in Alaska, all of whom have served Alaska and the United States well – these ships are large enough to handle Alaska’s weather and sea conditions where our smaller boats and cutters can’t. The 110s are our workhorses when it comes to near-shore operations in Alaska. By homeporting LONG ISLAND in Valdez, we are greatly increasing our search-and-rescue coverage in the western half of Alaska, our fishery-patrol capabilities, ensuring the future of Alaska’s fisheries, and our homeland security presence.

Valdez is fortunate not just to have the cutter tie up here, but also to be getting such a fine crew and their families. I’m sure there will be some adjustments for these folks, just like there are with any move. [To the crew:] I know both Valdez and Alaska are glad to have you here, as a part of their community, and will make you feel at home.

I mentioned the fine crew on board LONG ISLAND. Their accomplishments are many and I’m proud to recognize their outstanding work while homeported in San Diego. Lieutenant McQueen, would you please join me?

[Present Meritorious Unit Commendation]

I now present Admiral James Underwood, Operational Commander for the Coast Guard in Alaska, who will effect the change of homeport for Cutter LONG ISLAND. Thank you.