

Admiral Thomas H. Collins  
Chief Petty Officers' Association Installation  
May 16, 2002

**Good Morning ... it's a pleasure to be with you this morning to help orchestrate the "change of watch" for the Washington Area CPOA ... From my perspective, the CPOA is one of our communities that are essential leadership elements within our service -- and as such the CPOA deserves our collective attention and commitment. As you all know well, the CPO Needs Assessment cited leadership traits as the key elements needed as we grow and manage our CPO workforce. We have to be an organization that studies and practices and nurtures leadership. Chief Petty Officers – because of their position of great personal influence over the greatest proportion of our workforce and because of the credibility accorded to their professionalism – have the best opportunity to exercise action as leaders and to create that culture of leadership.**

**One of the widest read books on leadership ... entitled On Leadership by John Gardner .... stresses that one of the most important tasks of leadership is affirming values. Gardner says this:**

**“A community lives in the minds of its members—in shared assumptions, beliefs, customs, ideas that give meaning, ideas that motivate.”**

**It is the job of a leader to affirm the values and traditions that are important to a community or an organization in the minds of its members. This essential task ensures that the life of the organization continues.**

**If that is true, and I believe it is, then it is not only fitting, but it is absolutely crucial that the values of the Chief Petty Officers’ Association are so closely aligned to the core values and traditions of the Coast Guard.**

**As you are so well aware, we articulated “Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty” as an organizational phrase a number of years ago. However, these values have always been central to the Coast Guard way of doing business. But they need continuous, conscious support.**

**So much is heard these days about the changes in our society’s values. You need only to surf the channels of your TV set to see some rather amazing changes in the content of the**

**average program, or even the advertisements, over the past decade.**

**The truth is that left to themselves, the values of a society or any human organization always change over time. So, if an organization desires to retain its essential character, it is up to the leadership, not only to affirm the values that hold it together, but to regenerate those values among the most junior members of the organization.**

**Chief Petty Officers serve a multitude of functions in our organization. But none—it appears to me—not one is more important than affirming and regenerating the core values and traditions of the Coast Guard among our youngest members. We absolutely have to get every member of this organization to the point --- not at which they recite “Honor, Respect, Devotion to Duty” – but at which they measure their actual and contemplated behavior, speech, and thoughts against these values and strive to uphold them. Thus from my view, the Chief petty Officer’s number one job is to embody, illustrate and otherwise foster the cores values ... and traditions... of the Coast Guard.**

**And that's the real value of the Chief Petty Officers' Association.**

**To be sure, the CPOA does many other good and worthwhile things for its members and for the Coast Guard at large.**

**You also care for members and their dependents who may be in urgent need of assistance, financial or otherwise.**

**You assist in recruiting for our service.**

**You support the purpose and goals of the Chief Petty Officer's Academy.**

**You get involved in community affairs.**

**You stay involved in issues that concern the Coast Guard.**

**But I suggest to you that none of these good works is more important than ensuring that the life of our service continues without faltering and that its character remains strong and true.**

**The Chief Petty Officers' Association of the Washington Area is an important part of that lasting legacy.**

**This Chapter had such a tremendous influence over the changes in the ways in which we choose to pass on the long-standing traditions and values of the Chiefs' Mess through the CCTI.**

**The purpose of those changes was to keep and affirm the most essential and important values and traditions —those that give meaning to pinning that gold anchor on your collar every morning...and the same values that give purpose to wearing the Coast Guard uniform.**

**I want to commend you for the outstanding work that you do on a daily basis in every respect. It is truly an honor to be part of this ceremony to install new officers, whose job it will be to make certain that your important work...and that of the Coast Guard...will live on. I look forward to your help in keeping our values and traditions alive and well as we go about doing great things for this nation.**

**Thank you.**