

NACO REMARKS AT D8ER CONFERENCE

Captain Smith and Walsh, Commodores Kearton and McAdams and all of the members of the Eighth District Eastern Region, good evening. It is a pleasure to be here with you this evening and I consider it a privilege to be able to share some of the thoughts of the National Leadership with you.

Likewise, it is like a homecoming week for me since I was born and raised just across the river and I still have my parents, brothers and sister and our oldest daughter, her husband and 2 grandchildren just minutes from this hotel.

I would like to congratulate the conference organizers for putting together such an outstanding event. I know conferences can be difficult to coordinate and execute. I sincerely appreciate all the hard work that went into putting this event together. You have done an excellent job with the meetings, trainings, fun night and this banquet. Thank you!

I have always felt that it has been a tremendous honor for me to be able to support and represent the United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and its membership.

And I must admit, I have never been prouder to be a member of the Coast Guard family and, more specifically, a member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary than in the past few weeks.

As a part of Team Coast Guard, who could not feel pride in how the Coast Guard reacted after Hurricanes Katrina and Rita slammed into the Gulf Coast, destroying everything in a multi-state area – drowning New Orleans?

Regardless of their personal losses to the storm and flooding, the Coast Guard immediately began helping others, saving thousands from rapidly raising floodwater.

And yes, Auxiliarists were there too.

As usual, hundreds of Auxiliarists responded in the aftermath of the hurricanes, many working side by side with the Coast Guard, serving the Coast Guard and the country in diverse roles and responsibilities.

These Auxiliarists proved their resolve, each and every one of them, whether they were part of Auxiliary Aviation, delivering supplies and personnel, or performing aerial damage assessment; whether they were information brokers, supplying or transmitting the Auxiliary and Coast Guard story to the public or whether they worked in the Integrated Command Center or respond as trained medical personnel with state-run agencies or arranging for donations of much needed boats, and delivering them across half the continent.

Auxiliarists whether in the Gulf Coast region or around the country, assisted in the Search and Rescue and Recovery phases by assisting their local Coast Guard units. These Auxiliarists, like Kevin Gallagher of Flotilla 11-4 in Nashville, TN, spent a week at the Coast Guard Air Station in New Orleans assisting the Air Station by acting as Watchstander in the Air Ops Center and augmenting many of the duties of the local active duty pilots.

Individual Auxiliarists, from Sitka to San Diego, from Bar Harbor, Maine to Key West, Florida went to their local Coast Guard unit and did everything from standing radio watch to cooking meals, cleaning the station to manning their boats for Search and Rescue missions. These Auxiliarists took up the slack so the active duty and reserve members could be sent to the region.

Once again, Auxiliarists stepped forward when FEMA asked the Coast Guard to ask their Auxiliary to provide assistance to those in the disaster area. They even opened their homes to Coast Guard members assigned to duty in the area when no housing was available.

And for the first time, expanding the Coast Guard's recognition of what the Auxiliary can accomplish, we were asked to provide computer technical expertise to get the area's systems up and operating once again.

All that's a source of pride for all of us because that's what we do and because we do it very well.

But I want to talk about a new source of pride that came from this disaster – not just how we reacted physically but what we did financially.

Immediately after Katrina hit, Auxiliarists stepped forward and created Operation Life Ring, a way monetary donations could be made to Auxiliary and Coast Guard members who lost everything to Katrina and Rita.

In a few hours, a fund was set up through the Auxiliary Association to handle the donations. Likewise we established a strategic partnership with Coast Guard Mutual Assistance and the Coast Guard Foundation to coordinate donations and for distribution to the entire Coast Guard family in the affected areas.

In fact, I asked Past COMO Joe Taylor to take his motor home into the Gulf Coast State, setting up his motor home as an office and processing center where we were able to process 26 fellow Auxiliarist who had lost everything. We were able to write initial checks to these members in an amount that exceed \$105,000 to begin the process of getting them back on their feet.

See – my source of pride isn't about just what was done in the Gulf Coast area but across the nation. Auxiliarists opened their hearts and wallets.

In short order, Operation Life Ring has raised over \$60,000 to date and we are still getting donations so that we can continue to support our Coast Guard family in a time of need.

Now, besides their lives, they have hope and they have money in their pockets.

It adds to the meaning of saving lives, not just physically but as a close-knit family, Coast Guard Active Duty, Reserve, Auxiliary and civilians all together.

On October 5, ADM Collins, Commandant of the Coast Guard, issued an ALCOAST recognizing the Auxiliary's part in Katrina operations. I don't know if you saw it so I'd like to share it with you. Quote:

SUBJ: Coast Guard Auxiliary hurricane response

In the aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, Team Coast Guard has risen to meet the many challenges in the storm-ravaged Gulf Coast. Whether conducting over 30,000 search and rescue cases or providing personnel to assist in the recovery efforts, Team Coast Guard is America's maritime lifesaver.

Active Duty, Reserve and civilian components of Team Coast Guard would not have been able to conduct relief efforts without the unwavering support of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Your dedicated volunteer service to the Coast Guard, the Department of Homeland Security, and this nation is nothing less than outstanding. Your continuing support of Coast Guard missions in the Eighth District area of responsibility including Auxiliary aviation logistical flights, surface patrols, watchstander augmentation, support of Coast Guard families, and housing Coast Guard personnel detailed to the effected area is invaluable. Volunteering for the Federal Emergency Management Agency's disaster assistance programs highlights the Auxiliary's selfless support of the largest relief effort in our history. You are directly impacting the lives of fellow Americans. They look to you for guidance, assistance, and, most importantly, hope.

On behalf of the men and women of the Coast Guard, thank you for your dedicated, selfless service."

We all can take pride in not only helping those physically in distress but as a great, diverse family selflessly helping our extended family in their time of need.

Please join me in a round of applause for those who do so much and who always seem ready to do more, whatever the need, whether directly or indirectly.

And that's not all! On October 4th, just last week, I was present at an awards ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC where the Association for Rescue at Sea awarded silver life saving medals to 3 Auxiliarists from the Ninth District Western Region for

their heroic efforts in saving lives. Auxiliarists Jay and Linda Croy, and Dick Runde, in their 20 foot Grady White, faced 4 to 6 foot seas and 20 knot winds, with gust in excess of 35 knots to rescue and treat 4 hypothermic sailors. Not only did they save the crew, but through their boating skills, were able to tow the 25 foot sailboat some 4 miles in these adverse conditions to safety at the nearest marina.

Am I proud of this organization and its members? You bet I am!

As many of you know, the theme at this year's National Conference in Orlando was the "Winds of Change". I felt that this was an appropriate theme for the Auxiliary at the present time; for the events of the past few years have caused and will continue to cause changes in our world view, in our operating environment, in our requirements and qualifications for membership, and many of our day-to-day activities. **However, I hasten to add that many things have not and will not change; most importantly our continuing commitment to the core values of honor, respect and devotion to duty, and our commitment to Recreational Boating Safety.** Furthermore, what will not change over the next few years is our conscious efforts to balance our missions of Recreational Boating Safety and Coast Guard Support with Maritime Homeland Security.

It is this balancing of missions and resources that is critical to our continued success. As we began the year, our mission was to transform the Coast Guard Auxiliary from an organization solely concerned with maritime safety, to one that gives added attention to maritime security. We are making major progress with this transformation. Our intended course was and continues to be one that blends maritime safety and security into **one balanced effort** that will see the Coast Guard Auxiliary in step with the Coast Guard, in providing this country with safe and secure waterways.

However, I caution you that a total equilibrium between these two missions is more of a hypothetical state, since each unit faces unique local challenges.

This balanced blend of RBS and MHLS is the ultimate strategic objective for the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

So how do we get there from where we are today?

Since the enactment of the 1996 Auxiliary Act, which gave the Commandant the authority to expand our missions well beyond that of public education, vessel safety checks and safety patrols, we have been experiencing and were willing victims of mission creep.

In fact, the Auxiliary has experienced a rapid cultural transformation that has only been accelerated by the events of September 11th and the recent hurricanes. These intense events created a tremendous operational focus by the Coast Guard and by the Coast Guard Auxiliary resulting in an even further imbalance within these two mission sets.

I am not saying that this is necessarily bad. In fact I am proud of our ability to respond and meet the operational challenges placed in front of us.

However, this success comes at a price – an over utilization of our resources, our capability and our capacity. In other words, we risk the potential for burnout and the neglect of many of our other important missions, specifically recreational boating safety. Therefore, each unit level needs to manage its resources against the missions. Each unit needs to find their optimum blend between missions and resources; between recreational boating safety and maritime homeland security, and they must manage both the expectations of the Coast Guard and those of our members.

It is up to our leadership at each level, to construct and direct the membership so that we get a good balance between those two missions.

Now what makes this a difficult task is that we do not expect members to be qualified and perform in all mission categories. At the deck plate, Auxiliarists should be encouraged to choose just the areas for which they have expertise and a desire to serve. In doing so, it can leave gaps in fulfilling needs and expectations of the Coast Guard.

Therefore, balance has an important effect on recruitment. Units need to recognize these gaps and then recruit to fill them. Depending on the gap to be filled, it may dictate the recruiting method and the market from which we draw these potential new members. If the gap indicates a need for computer technicians, desktop publishers, salesman, educators, doctors, radio operators or sailors, the unit may need to initiate a target recruiting program. We can no longer depend solely on Public Education course to be that source of recruitment. To meet specific mission needs, we need to spot recruit people who may or may not have a boat or are interested in boating courses, but rather have the required skills.

This balance between RBS and MHLS is also important for retention. This balance enable us to meet the expectations of our members, allowing them to do something that is meaningful and self-fulfilling, providing them with opportunities that fulfill their needs and to grow as individuals. Recognizing members for what they do and showing appreciation for what they contribute, no matter how much or how little, will make their Auxiliary experience rewarding and worthwhile. If we can attain the benefits of balance in our missions and activities, it will result in a greater degree of member satisfaction and retention.

The Coast Guard Auxiliary has successfully begun this transformation. In the past we have just basically gone with the flow. This year began with many changes and change will continue to be our partner as we stay our course into the future.

As we close out this year and move into 2006, we need to sustain our momentum.

We need to continue to focus on serving our membership. In simple terms, this means that we must communicate our priorities effectively, train members in our program areas,

provide competitive materials to those who teach public education classes, empower our members to find attractive service opportunities and, work to simplify their day-to-day lives.

We need to do what we can to find ways in which to communicate to our membership the information they need to do their jobs. We have made much progress in this area in 2005, but we cannot rest on our laurels, continuous improvement is necessary. It's not easy! Our membership is geographically diverse and has limited face-to-face contact. Not all of our members come to every meeting (even those who are very active in the programs), memos from one staff level to another don't always get distributed, and there are limited opportunities for feedback to ensure that the message was received and understood.

As I have stated, we need to recognize that balance is critical to our success. Specifically we need to maintain a healthy balance of our efforts in recreational boating safety and operations activities. Many of the new mission opportunities are in operations. But, we need to remember that recreational boating safety is not only an important mission in itself, but also the major source of funding at all levels of the Auxiliary and, historically, a major source of new members. Both the Coast Guard and the Auxiliary continue to have major responsibilities in the Recreational Boating Safety area and we need to ensure that these are not neglected when we undertake new missions.

We have set our direction, charted our course and adjusted our sails. As we continue our journey, let each of us work together, to find ways to attain mission balance. Just as important, let's not lose sight that we need to meet the expectations of our members and do whatever we can to make their Auxiliary experience both worthwhile and personally rewarding.

Overall, I am pleased with our progress over the past year. Bravo Zulu to all of you for your efforts. But we must remember, "success is but a journey, not a destination." We still have many challenges ahead, and I offer one further challenge to each of you; help me to sustain our course for the good of the Auxiliary, the Coast Guard and our country.

Thank you for the opportunity this evening to talk to you and for your warm and gracious hospitality.