



Gene M. Seibert, National Commodore

SUBJECT:

Final Log Entry—Message to Members

Hauling Down My Flag:

In a few short days, I will be hauling down my flag as National Commodore and recently, I have had a little more time to be reflective. I wanted to take this opportunity to share a few thoughts with you about the Coast Guard Auxiliary. But let me lead into what I want to say with a sea-story about the Coast Guard.

A brand new Commanding Officer (CO) of a Coast Guard Cutter wanted to get to know his crew. So one day, not long after he had arrived, he decided to take a walk on the pier while his crew members were scraping and painting the hull to get the ship ready for sea.

He walked down the pier and came to a seaman who was scraping and asked, “Seaman, what are you doing?” Startled, the seaman scrambled to his feet and said, “Scraping the buoy critters off the hull, sir!” The CO responded, “A very important job, sailor, and you are doing it well. Carry on.”

The CO continued down the pier to a second seaman, who stood and saluted. He asked, “Seaman, what are you doing?” The seaman answered, “Preparing the ship to go to sea, sir!” “A very important job, sailor, and you are doing it very well. Carry-on” replied the CO.

The Captain walked on toward the third seaman, who was on his feet even before the CO got to him. The seaman stood at attention and snapped a salute. “Seaman, what are you doing?” asked the CO. The seaman replied, “Sir, I’m protecting our nation and saving lives!”

The CO smiled and said, “You are absolutely right! And you are doing it very well. Thank you. Carry on.”

As the CO walked back to his quarters, he thought about the third seaman ... he thought about how one job can be perceived in so many different ways.

- The first seaman saw the tactical view, the actual job as an end in itself. [Scraping buoy critters]
- The second seaman saw the operational view, the overall purpose of the task. [Making the ship seaworthy]
- The third seaman understood the BIG PICTURE, the strategic view; the importance of every task within the Coast Guard. [Protecting our nation and saving lives]

Admiral Allen emphasized the BIG PICTURE for all of us when he said:

“We must never lose sight of the importance of excellence in Mission Execution. We are all in the business of protecting the Nation and saving lives. From the Auxiliarist conducting a Vessel Safety Check ... to the command center operations controller, each of you is vital to our ability to execute our missions. We work as a team and we succeed as a team.”

You as a Team:

Over the last two years, the Auxiliary has worked and succeeded as a team, exhibiting Mission Excellence throughout our organization, from flotilla level activities to national initiatives. Whether we are working at the tactical, operational or strategic level of this organization, each task is critical to the excellence of our overall Mission Execution. Whether a mission goal is efficient and safe marine transportation, curriculum development, security from terrorist attack, training for readiness, protection of the marine environment, teaching, vessel examinations, helping others to be safe in a marine environment or supporting these missions in a myriad of ways, it is work that – on some level – stirs our souls.

Pride:

So consider what each of us gives toward Mission Excellence and at what each of us brings away from our service in the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

I firmly believe that the answer is simply, PRIDE.

Pride in what we do, pride in being a part of something noble, pride in supporting our Nation and saving lives.

The pride I speak of is the pride we share in being a part of something larger than ourselves. The BIG PICTURE! This is not the pride of arrogance, excessive self-esteem and self-importance. It is the kind of pride that comes from deep within; from knowing our own contribution to our Nation.

Something special happens to us as we continue our service because there is something special about the Coast Guard Auxiliary. The Auxiliary allows each of us the opportunity to become more than we were when we joined.

In the course of our service, we become stronger as individuals and as a result of that strength, the Auxiliary's noble purpose becomes stronger. Our pride in that noble purpose is the strongest foundation we have. It tells us who we are. No matter what position we hold, no matter what missions we choose as our own, we're a part of this organization because we have something we want to share with others.

Legacy:

As my term of office as your National Commodore comes to a close, I have been asked, "What is your legacy?"

I recall that when asked the same question, retired Secretary of Defense William Cohen said that he never gave any thoughts to legacies; he simply tried to keep the faith of all who had come before him and those who would come after him.

Frankly, I could not have said it better myself. For I firmly and fully believe that a legacy is not about one individual, but rather collectively about a team of individuals – in this case – the entire membership of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Good Things:

At the national level, we developed the strategic view of our organization. We shared this BIG PICTURE view with you through our Strategic Business Plan, Operational Plans and Contingency Plans. We looked at best practices, we talked of numbers and missions and we tried to find both personal and organizational balance between surge and normal activities; between security and safety missions and between operational and recreational boating safety.

We focused on the development of improved communications, not only utilizing our traditional publications of The Navigator, What's New and SITREP, but by also initiating Aux e-News and On Course to get the information directly to the membership in a timely manner.

UNITED STATES COAST GUARD AUXILIARY COMMODORE'S INFORMATION

We openly shared reports and quarterly briefings by making them available to all members interested in reading them. We laid the groundwork for minimizing and simplifying the burden of paperwork for the members. We kept the member in focus and informed.

Closing Remarks:

In closing, as I prepare my final entry into the ship's log for this watch, I feel PRIDE in the fact that we continued and accelerated the trend toward increased professionalism; that we brought forth improved methods of business analysis and planning; that we have initiated a way forward for improved leadership succession and that we increased the effectiveness of our communications. *But most of all, we have set a prudent course for the future.*

Of course, we must continue our efforts to seek ways in which to ignite passion, motivation and innovation. If we can successfully nurture these characteristics day in and day out, recruitment and retention will not be an issue.

In a few short days, I will turn the helm over to COMO Steve Budar, a shipmate and a friend. I do so with a sense of tremendous satisfaction, with no regrets and with great optimism for the future of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

I have often said that the Coast Guard Auxiliary is what happens when you focus on possibilities and not on limitations. You, our membership, have consistently proven me right.

What we have accomplished over the past two years together ... is our legacy. I am so proud to have been a part of it, serving with you. From the bottom of my heart, I thank you for all that you have done and what you continue to do.

So, I simply say "thank you" for allowing me to serve you – my fellow members of the Coast Guard Auxiliary.

Semper Paratus



Gene M. Seibert
National Commodore