

Chapter Three: The Nature of Our Service

The nature of our Service has evolved as we accumulated new roles and missions from a variety of sources, including Executive Orders, congressional action, and the absorption of different agencies. These additional roles and missions were assigned throughout the years for a very pragmatic reason—we were willing to perform the assigned missions and able to perform them effectively and efficiently.

In assuming new duties, we developed the ability to conduct a variety of missions with the same equipment and people. We also developed a distinct nature, one shaped by our core values and by our military, multi-mission, and maritime mandate.⁴³

CORE VALUES

While the formal statement of our core values of Honor, Respect, and Devotion to Duty is a relatively recent event, the values themselves are deeply rooted in the heritage of commitment and service that distinguishes the U.S. Coast Guard. From revenue cutter crews protecting a fledgling nation from privateers and smugglers, to sturdy surfmen fighting howling gales to rescue shipwrecked mariners, to gallant small boat coxswains landing Marines at Guadalcanal, to the men and women of today who stop smugglers, rescue desperate migrants, and protect endangered marine species, Coast Guard people have embraced and lived these values.

Our core values are the bedrock upon which our character and operating principles are built. They provide fundamental guidance

Coast Guard Core Values

Honor—Integrity is our standard. We demonstrate uncompromising ethical conduct and moral behavior in all of our personal and organizational actions. We are loyal and accountable to the public trust.

Respect—We value our diverse workforce. We treat each other and those we serve with fairness, dignity, respect, and compassion. We encourage individual opportunity and growth. We encourage creativity through empowerment. We work as a team.

Devotion to Duty—We are professionals, military and civilian, who seek responsibility, accept accountability, and are committed to the successful achievement of our organizational goals. We exist to serve. We serve with pride.



U.S. Life-Saving Service rescue boat underway (most likely from Sandy Hook, New Jersey).

for our actions, both on duty and in our private lives, and they challenge us to live up to the high standards of excellence exhibited by our predecessors. Whether active duty, reserve, civilian, or auxiliary, our core values bind us together and guide our conduct, performance, and decisions.



Members of Officer Candidate School dress left while at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

A MILITARY, MULTI-MISSION, MARITIME SERVICE

We call ourselves a “military,” “multi-mission,” and “maritime” service. These three descriptors provide a basis for understanding the character and structure of the Coast Guard and are the result of our complex and varied history. They are also critical to understanding the Coast Guard’s role as a unique instrument of America’s national security.

Military

The military character of the Coast Guard has been the subject of consideration and comment throughout our history, and it is consistent with the original design of our founder, Alexander Hamilton. Hamilton originally suggested a law enforcement organization of “a few armed vessels, judiciously stationed at the entrances of our ports, might at a small expense be

made useful sentinels of the laws.” He insisted that this organization be organized along military lines, and convinced President George Washington to commission Revenue Marine officers.

Title 14 of the U.S. Code specifies that the Coast Guard is a military service and a branch of the Armed Forces of the United States at all times, not just in wartime or when the President directs. The 1915 legislation establishing the Coast Guard recognized again that military discipline and training were critical for the Coast Guard’s national defense duties, and useful for the performance of dangerous and difficult civil duties. That reality continues today.

The military profession is like no other. Members of the military voluntarily limit some of their freedoms—including even

their constitutional freedom of speech—in order to serve. Likewise, service members cannot just quit; they must continue to serve until their term is up and must obey all lawful orders while doing so. And those orders may include undertaking tasks likely to result in members giving the last full measure of devotion—their lives—in service to our country. This requirement sets military people apart from the members of every other profession. Military forces also are charged with carrying out the systematic application of violence in service to the nation. As members of an armed service, we are called to act in accordance with these responsibilities, and we have.

The Coast Guard has participated in all our nation’s wars as a naval augmentation force, providing specialized capabilities as required for the defense of our nation. Changes in the national security environment since the end of the Cold War, however, have caused decision-makers to reexamine the Coast Guard’s military role. Peacetime military engagement and “operations other than war,” areas of traditional Coast Guard expertise, have risen in importance within the national security calculus. The Coast Guard has wartime missions today that are based on logical extensions of its peacetime duties.

The result of this reexamination was a *Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Defense and the Department of Transportation on the Use of U.S. Coast Guard Capabilities and Resources in Support of the National Military Strategy*, which was signed on 3 October 1995.⁴⁴ This agreement assigns the Coast Guard five specific

national defense missions in addition to our general defense operations and polar icebreaking duties—maritime interception operations; military environmental response operations; port operations, security, and defense; peacetime military engagement; and coastal sea control operations—thus highlighting our role as a specialized military force.

However, the specialized capabilities that allow us to augment the U.S. Navy’s efforts also distinguish us from that service. The purpose of the Navy is set forth in Title 10 of the U.S. Code: “The Navy shall be organized, trained, and equipped primarily for prompt and sustained combat incident to operations at sea. It is responsible for the preparation of Naval forces necessary for the effective prosecution of war except as otherwise assigned.”⁴⁵ The Navy is not equipped, structured, or legally empowered to deal with the nontraditional threats we routinely handle. Unlike the Coast Guard, the Navy is constrained by the *Posse Comitatus* doctrine, which prevents the other military services from acting as law enforcement agents on U.S. soil or in U.S. territorial waters.⁴⁶ By the same token, the

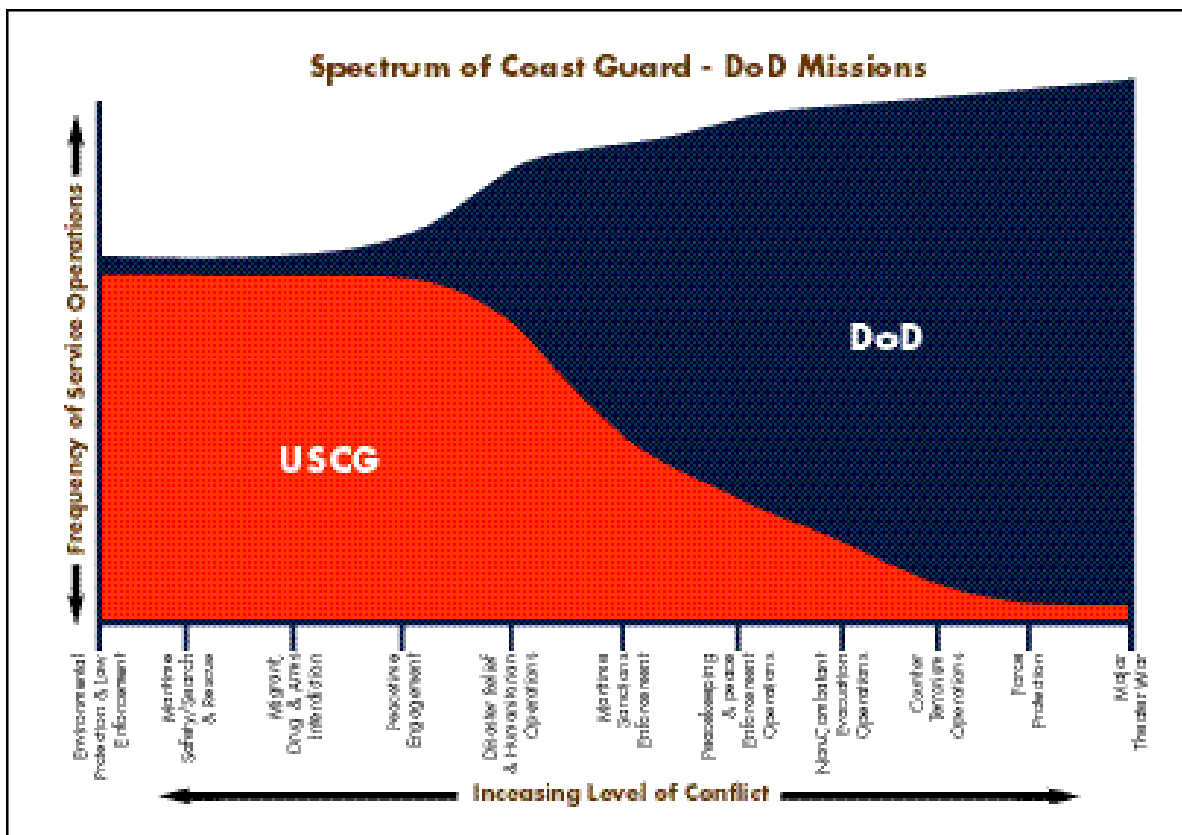


The high-endurance cutter *Midgett* (WHEC 726) sails alongside the *Constellation* (CV 64) while deployed to the Arabian Gulf in 1999 to enforce the United Nations sanctions on Iraq.

Coast Guard is not organized, trained, and equipped to engage in the full spectrum of naval operations. Hence, far from being redundant, the Coast Guard and Navy instead provide resources that mutually support and complement each other's roles and missions in order to meet the entire spectrum of America's maritime needs. The accompanying graphic vividly portrays the relationship between the two services.

nated warships of the United States. This designation affords our cutters certain rights under international conventions and practice, such as the right to approach any vessel to ascertain its identity and country of origin. It gives our vessels sovereign immunity *vis-à-vis* other countries' laws. And it allows our government to assert principles of national sovereignty, such as freedom of navigation, with vessels viewed as less threatening than U.S. Navy ships and thus as a more acceptable presence.

Nevertheless, because the Coast Guard is a military service, our cutters are desig-



Signalman First Class
Douglas A. Munro
Congressional Medal of Honor Citation

"For extraordinary heroism and conspicuous gallantry in action above and beyond the call of duty as Officer-in-Charge of a group of Higgins boats, engaged in the evacuation of a Battalion of Marines trapped by enemy Japanese forces at Point Cruz, Guadalcanal, on September 27, 1942. After making preliminary plans for the evacuation of nearly 500 beleaguered Marines, Munro, under constant risk of his life, daringly led five of his small craft toward the shore. As he closed the beach, he signalled [sic] the others to land, and then in order to draw the enemy's fire and protect the heavily loaded boats, he valiantly placed his craft with its two small guns as a shield between the beachhead and the Japanese. When the perilous task of evacuation was nearly completed, Munro was killed by enemy fire, but his crew, two of whom were wounded, carried on until the last boat had loaded and cleared the beach. By his outstanding leadership, expert planning, and dauntless devotion to duty, he and his courageous comrades undoubtedly saved the lives of many who otherwise would have perished. He gallantly gave up his life in defense of his country."



Signalman First Class Douglas A. Munro (manning the machine gun in the foreground) interposes his boat between Japanese forces and the Marines being evacuated from Guadalcanal in 1942. After successfully recovering the Marines, Munro was killed by Japanese fire. He was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

Captain Quentin R. Walsh



Captain Quentin R. Walsh

Lieutenant Commander (later Captain) Quentin R. Walsh was a member of the Logistics and Planning Section, U.S. Naval Forces in Europe during World War II. He planned the occupation of the port of Cherbourg, France, which was viewed as vital to the invading allied forces and their resupply effort.

Lieutenant Commander Walsh's plan called for the formation of a specially trained naval reconnaissance unit to determine the condition of the port after its capture. While leading the 53-man special mission to the port of Cherbourg, he and his men met up with the U.S. 79th Infantry Division and joined them in fierce house-to-house fighting against the Germans. The Allied forces quickly captured the eastern part of the port, while most of the Germans retreated to the western section of the city.

Lieutenant Commander Walsh personally led a 16-member unit of his special task force on a raid to an arsenal area and adjacent waterfront on the western side of the city. Armed with bazookas, hand grenades, rifles, and submachine guns, he and his party overcame sniper fire to capture underground bunkers and approximately 400 Germans in the arsenal area. Lieutenant Commander Walsh's command went on to capture Fort Du Homet and its garrison of 350 men. Upon entering the fort, he convinced the Germans that the city had already fallen. He then accepted the surrender of 300 German troops and liberated 50 American paratroopers who had been prisoners since D-Day. Lieutenant Commander Walsh received the Navy Cross for his heroic actions.

Multi-Mission

We fulfill our five roles by accomplishing our various missions, with most missions supporting more than one role. This multi-functional capability is an enduring Coast Guard quality, and our ability to field versatile platforms and develop multi-talented Coast Guard men and women is perhaps our most important core competency. In short, we uphold all of America's maritime interests, including national defense.

We are the nation's at-sea law enforcement arm with the broad authority of Section 89 of Title 49 of the U.S. Code. Evolving over the years, our reach extends to illegal migrant interdiction, drug interdiction, and fisheries protection. Classically, our versatile deepwater platforms stand the watch with a ready flight deck, a boat at the rail, and a trained boarding party always prepared to enforce domestic law,

observe international standards, and preserve individual human rights. With a background in these roles and missions, the Coast Guard stands watch to ensure homeland security at our ports and maritime borders.

The Coast Guard's buoy tender fleet presents a classic example of our multi-mission nature. In addition to setting buoys for the safe navigation of mariners, these cutters deploy oil containment booms to protect the environment, break ice for domestic maritime traffic, conduct naval warfare duties, and perform search and rescue and law enforcement missions.

Our Marine Safety Offices (MSOs) are likewise multi-mission capable. MSO personnel examine vessels and facilities for compliance with safety and environmental laws. They enforce pollution prevention statutes and respond to discharges of oil

and refuse into our navigable waters. They supervise and control vessel movement in America's ports and waterways. And, they restrict access to vessels and facilities when necessary for national security purposes.

Maritime

The maritime region is the Coast Guard's domain. We are the only service that combines law enforcement and military capabilities in a single organization focused on operations and missions in the maritime environment. We provide maritime expertise across numerous mission areas and maintain a meaningful, credible federal presence in American and international waters, while also contributing to overall U.S. engagement overseas.

Given America's historic and continuing dependence on the sea, the formation of a force focused on maritime tasks beyond those that are strictly military was inevitable. While foreign trade fluctuates as a percentage of America's gross national product, it has always played a key role in the nation's economic health. Whether transporting dry bulk cargo, petroleum products, ferry passengers, or containerized cargo, ships will continue to provide a cost-effective method of transportation, and their safe and efficient movement has been an important consideration for the United States. Likewise, fish and fishing fleets have been important to the American diet and economy, and as the nation has grown wealthier, cruise ships, floating casinos, and recreational boats have joined traditional commercial users of U.S. domestic waterways in ever-greater numbers.



The cutter *Ironwood* (WLB 297) and an HH-60J offload equipment for maintenance on Eldred Rock Lighthouse, Lynn Canal, Alaska.

Everything we do—from drug interdiction, fisheries enforcement, and alien migrant interdiction, to pollution response, commercial vessel inspections, and search and rescue—has a maritime connection.

A HUMANITARIAN REPUTATION

The Coast Guard is renowned throughout the world as “America’s Lifesavers.” The same military discipline that serves the Coast Guard well in war, serves it well in peace. Nowhere is it more apparent than in the prosecution of search and rescue cases. Our reputation is based on personal courage and selflessness that goes back to the earliest days of the disparate Life-Saving, Lighthouse, and Revenue Cutter Services. Our history is replete with heroes such as Joshua James, Ida Lewis, Captain Josiah Sturgis, the Pea Island station crew, and countless others who repeatedly risked their lives to save mariners in distress. Nothing fills us with greater pride than the stories of harrowing rescues where professional Coast Guard men and women return would-be victims safely to their families

against all odds. It is not by accident that those stories conclude successfully. Rather, it is because the preparation for the moment—born of good training and good equipment blended with courage, discipline, and selflessness—is our hallmark as an organization.

Our humanitarian reputation, however, goes beyond our search and rescue mission.



A crewmember from a ship run aground is rescued via breeches buoy during a violent storm.

Whether responding to an oil spill, rescuing people from flood waters, ensuring safe marine transportation, performing peacetime engagement visits in foreign countries, or working with international organizations to improve the safety of commercial shipping, our Service reflects a commitment to serving others on a daily basis. Such service adds a distinctive humanitarian dimension to our character and helps define who we are.



Coast Guard boarding team members complete a rescue at sea while conducting interdiction operations off the coast of Haiti.

Captain Richard Etheridge and the Pea Island Life-Saving Crew



The Pea Island Life-Saving Station crew: (left to right) Richard Etheridge, Benjamin Bowser, Dorman Pugh, Theodore Meekins, Lewis Wescott, Stanley Wise, and William Irving.

On 24 January 1880, Captain Richard Etheridge became the first African-American to command a U.S. Life-Saving Station when the Service appointed him as the Keeper of the Pea Island Life-Saving Station, near Cape Fear, North Carolina. Soon after Etheridge's appointment, he supervised the construction of a new station and developed rigorous lifesaving drills that enabled his crew to hone their skills. The Pea Island Station quickly earned the reputation as "one of the tautest on the Carolina Coast," with Etheridge known as one of the most courageous and ingenious lifesavers in the Service.

On 11 October 1896, Etheridge's rigorous training drills proved to be invaluable. The three-masted schooner, *E.S. Newman*, was caught in a hurricane while en route from Providence, Rhode Island, to Norfolk, Virginia. The ship lost all sails and was blown 100 miles south off course before it ran aground near Pea Island.

Etheridge and his crew quickly swung into action, hitching mules to the beach cart and hurrying toward the vessel. Arriving on scene, they found the vessel's captain and eight others clinging to the wreckage. High water prevented them from firing a line to the schooner with a Lyle gun, so Etheridge directed two surfmen to bind themselves together with a line. Grasping a second line, the pair fought through the breakers while the remaining surfmen secured the other end on shore. The two surfmen reached the wreck and, using a heaving stick, got the line on board. Once a line was tied around one of the crewmen, all three were then pulled back through the surf by the crew on the beach. After each trip two different surfmen replaced those who had just returned. The seemingly inexhaustible Pea Island lifesavers journeyed through the perilous waters a total of ten times, rescuing the entire crew of the *E.S. Newman*.

For their efforts, the all-African-American crew of the Pea Island Life-Saving Station—Richard Etheridge, Benjamin Bowser, Dorman Pugh, Theodore Meekins, Lewis Wescott, Stanley Wise, and William Irving—were awarded the Gold Lifesaving Medal on 5 March 1996. Richard Etheridge died while in service on 8 May 1900.

Aviation Survivalman First Class Michael G. Odom



Aviation Survivalman First Class
Michael G. Odom

On the night of 23 January 1995, the sailing vessel *Mirage* found itself battling 25-foot seas 300 miles east of Savannah, Georgia. After it began taking on water, the *Mirage* sent a distress call to Group Hampton Roads, Virginia. In response, an HH-60J helicopter and an HC-130 aircraft took off from Air Station Elizabeth City, North Carolina, to assess the unfolding emergency situation. Serving as the rescue swimmer aboard the HH-60J was Petty Officer Michael G. Odom.

Arriving on scene, the aircrew encountered 40-mile-per-hour winds and 25-foot seas battering the *Mirage*. While discussing the best course of action for the rescue, a crewmember from the *Mirage* jumped off the back of the vessel. Petty Officer Odom voluntarily entered the cold, turbulent ocean to rescue the crewmember. After being lowered into the water, Petty Officer Odom fought heavy breakers in the dark to reach the crewmember and to ensure he was hoisted to safety. This evolution was repeated two more times. However, during the rescue of the third *Mirage* crewmember, the hoist cable jammed. While the crew of the HH-60J was able to safely bring the last *Mirage* crewmember aboard, Petty Officer Odom had to be left behind.

Fatigued, he dragged himself into a small, six-man life raft provided by the helicopter. He was finally rescued five hours later, after having been repeatedly swept from his life raft. At the time of his rescue, Petty Officer Odom was unconscious, suffering from hypothermia, and near death. He was flown to a nearby U.S. Navy guided-missile cruiser, *Ticonderoga* (CG 47), where he recovered. While Petty Officer Odom's commitment to helping people in distress almost cost him his life, his unwavering courage saved the lives of the crewmembers from the *Mirage* and exemplifies the Coast Guard's core value of devotion to duty.

Chief Boatswain's Mate Joseph A. Habel



Chief Boatswain's Mate
Joseph A. Habel

On 25 January 2000, the 110-foot tugboat *Bay King*, with its four-person crew, found itself being pummeled by snow, sleet, and 50-mile-per-hour winds, and in danger of capsizing in over ten-foot seas and near-zero visibility conditions. Coast Guard Station Cape Charles, Virginia, received the mayday call from the crew of the *Bay King*, but the seas and winds exceeded the operating limits of the station's 41-foot utility boat. These same conditions prevented any other help from reaching the foundering tugboat. Chief Boatswain's Mate Joseph A. Habel knew that if his crew did not respond quickly, the four crewmembers of the *Bay King* would perish in the 38-degree waters of the Chesapeake Bay.

After coordinating with the Group Commander and evaluating the risks associated with the rescue attempt, Chief Habel and the duty boat crew volunteered to attempt the dangerous rescue. Chief Habel safely navigated the 41-foot utility boat over six miles to the *Bay King*, but, once on scene, the high sea state prevented a direct transfer from the tug. After reevaluating the situation, Chief Habel convinced the crewmembers of the *Bay King* to jump into the frigid waters.

All four crewmembers were safely pulled from the water in less than two minutes, and Chief Habel then safely navigated the utility boat back to port. Chief Habel's decisive actions, realistic assessment of the capability of his boat and crew, and superior seamanship skills saved the lives of the four crewmembers of the tugboat *Bay King*.

A UNIQUE SERVICE

Taken together, the Coast Guard's combination of military status, law enforcement authority, and humanitarian reputation gives us a range of access unique among the Armed Forces of the United States. In our law enforcement role, this authority includes enforcing all federal laws on, under, and over the high seas and waters subject to the jurisdiction of the United States.⁴⁷ As both a law enforcement agency and an armed service, we embrace a broader concept of national security that extends beyond our national defense missions and provides the nation a maritime resource with capabilities not duplicated elsewhere in the government. All Coast Guard roles—whether rescuing distressed mariners, interdicting drug smugglers, combating major oil spills, or conducting naval warfare missions in support of the unified Commanders-in-Chief—contribute directly to the economic, environmental, and physical security of the United States.

Because of this unique character, U.S. Presidents have often found the Coast Guard to be the most readily available and useful instrument for responding to national emergencies or enforcing national policy. In addition, we “speak the language” of both civil and military organizations and can play an important bridging role by coordinating the actions of U.S. and foreign civilian agencies and military forces in the maritime arena.

Our status as a military force with many civilian duties and responsibilities was closely reviewed at the time the Life-

Saving Service and Revenue Cutter Service were merged to become the U.S. Coast Guard in 1915. Captain-Commandant Ellsworth Price Bertholf—the last Commandant of the Revenue Cutter Service and the first Commandant of the newly formed U.S. Coast Guard—forthrightly discussed the nature of the newly created Service in his first annual report to Congress:

The Coast Guard occupies a peculiar position among other branches of the Government, and necessarily so from the dual character of its work, which is both civil and military. Its organization, therefore, must be such as will best adapt it to the performance of both classes of duties, and as a civil organization would not suffice for the performance of military functions, the organization of the service must be and is by law military. More than 120 years of practical experience has demonstrated that it is by means of military drills, training, and discipline that the service is enabled to maintain that state of preparedness for the prompt performance of its most important civil duties, which ... are largely of an emergent nature.⁴⁸

Captain-Commandant Bertholf's statement is no less true today than it was in 1915. Coast Guard men and women perform well because they prepare well. In the final analysis, the Coast Guard's legal historical core is as a military service, originated with unique law enforcement authority and leavened with a well-earned reputation for humanitarian service. These purposeful attributes enable us to meet a broad multi-mission mandate from our nation. Our core values of honor, respect, and devotion to

duty enable that mandate to be fulfilled.
As America's Maritime Guardian, we are

proud to be warriors and protectors at
all times.

Lieutenant Colleen A. Cain



Lieutenant Colleen A. Cain

Lieutenant Colleen A. Cain became the Service's third female aviator and the first female helicopter pilot in June 1979. In her brief career, Cain flew many rescue missions and completed her qualifications as Co-pilot, First Pilot, and Aircraft Commander. In 1980, she received the Coast Guard Achievement Medal for saving a three-year-old boy involved in a boating accident.

In the early morning hours of 7 January 1982, while stationed at Air Station Barbers Point, Hawaii, Cain took flight in severe weather, heavy winds, and limited visibility in response to a distress call from a sinking fishing vessel with seven persons on board. While en route to the sinking vessel, the HH-52A helicopter she was co-piloting crashed into the side of a mountain in the Wailua Valley of Molokai, Hawaii, killing Cain and her two crewmembers, Commander Buzz Johnson and Aviation Survivalman David Thompson. Cain became the first female Coast Guard member killed in the line of duty. A Coast Guard officer wrote of Cain's reputation among her peers: "Without fail, they regarded her as an exemplary Coast Guard officer, patriot, and human being."

Lieutenant Cain and her fellow crewmembers made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their nation and fellow countrymen, striving to protect life at sea. On 25 October 1985, the Coast Guard dedicated Cain Hall, a 100-room residence hall at Reserve Training Center Yorktown, Virginia, to her memory.