



INSPECTOR GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE
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RETIREMENT OF ADMIRAL LARRY L. POE, USNR: “HONOR, COURAGE, COMMITMENT - AND CLASS”

*Remarks as Prepared for Delivery by Inspector General Joseph E. Schmitz of the
Department of Defense, Suitland, MD, Friday, October 24, 2003.*

Thank you for that introduction, Captain Bortmes.

Honor, Courage, Commitment - and Class

Who would have ever thought that the great grandson of a freed slave named Lafayette would serve as the first Inspector General in a newly freed land encompassing historic Babylon and known as “the Cradle of Civilization”?

It reminds me of the Proverb [4:23], "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts."

When all is said and done, we think of Larry Lafayette Poe not so much for his material accomplishments, though they be legion, but for his honor, courage, and commitment to the high ideals about which one former Assistant Secretary of the Navy spoke on the eve of the last century. In 1899, Theodore Roosevelt [at the time, Governor of New York,] admonished "that our country calls not for the life of ease, but for the life of strenuous endeavor. . . . Above all, let us shrink from no strife, moral or physical, within or without the nation, provided we are certain that the strife is justified; for it is only through strife, through hard and dangerous endeavor, that we shall ultimately win the goal of true national greatness."

Larry Poe has never shrunk from strife, as typified by his most recent service as Inspector General to Ambassador Bremer in Baghdad. He epitomizes not only the moral courage demanded of all commanding officers and others in authority in the United States Naval Service, but courage with class.

A month ago Sunday I chanced to run into Ambassador Bremer after Mass in Bethesda. I asked the Ambassador directly about Admiral Poe's performance in Baghdad, to which Ambassador Bremer unhesitatingly replied: "Admiral Poe performed great as Inspector General in Baghdad."

Admiral Poe's professional performance speaks volumes.

Admiral Poe's exemplary performance spans his entire Naval Career, including Active Duty assignments as a naval intelligence officer in Vietnam, Korea, Thailand, Suitland, Paris, Washington DC, and Baghdad.

When Admiral Poe joined my staff a year ago, I told him that he would need to gird himself for unconventional warfare against asymmetric enemies of the United States Constitution, both foreign and domestic. Admiral Poe has valiantly met every professional challenge in the Arena known as the Office of the Inspector General of the Department of Defense. He has epitomized the "Man in the Arena" about which Teddy Roosevelt spoke: Admiral Poe's "face is marred by dust and sweat and blood"; he has striven valiantly; he has erred and come short a few times (as have I). But Larry Lafayette Poe "knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions," because he has spent himself in a worthy cause in the United States Navy.

He knows now at the end of his Naval Career "the triumph of high achievement" in the greatest Navy as part of the greatest Armed Forces the world has ever seen. Larry Lafayette Poe epitomizes Teddy Roosevelt's proverbial "Man in the Arena: "his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat."

But I will continue to think of Larry Lafayette Poe for his class, and Mrs. Larry Poe epitomizes Larry Poe's class.

They say that "Behind every great man, there is a great woman." [Dictionary of American Proverbs] It is no wonder that the pictorial introduction to today's official program features prominently the radiance of Barbara Poe.

It is, therefore, my distinct honor and pleasure to present a few awards today not only to a great man, but also to the great woman behind Rear Admiral Larry Lafayette Poe.

Would Admiral and Mrs. Poe please join me at the podium?