

On Land He Likes Bike Rides and Peking Gourmet

ADMIRAL Thad Allen became the 23rd commandant of the US Coast Guard in May, taking over an agency that has been front and center in news stories from homeland security to drug interdiction. The Coast Guard was one of the few successes after Hurricane Katrina: It rescued more than 22,000 people, and Allen won widespread praise after **President Bush** made him leader of the federal effort when FEMA chief **Michael Brown** was removed.

Allen is a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy and son of a Coast Guardsman; he also holds master's degrees from George Washington and MIT. He lives with his wife, **Pamela Hess Allen**, in Potomac. With another hurricane season under way, he's likely to face more trying times this summer.

Favorite Fourth of July tradition? Barbecue with the family, and lately we get the grandkids while our children brave the trip into town.

Favorite spot to watch the DC fireworks? We've haven't been into town for fireworks in the past few years. But this year we will join good friends at their apartment, which overlooks the Iwo Jima Memorial. I would add as a George Washington University alum that the roof terrace of the new Elliott School would be a great choice.

Your favorite spot in Washington? Bike riding



New Orleans introduced Allen to Godzilla.

Photograph by James Keigley for Government Executive magazine

along the C&O Canal.

Favorite pastime? Given the hectic environment of Washington, my wife and I enjoy simple pleasures such as walking or bike riding on the weekends, reading, music, and having our grandchildren over.

Favorite television show? We started watching *24* this last season but also spend a lot of time on the Sci Fi channel (I live with a Trekkie). I watch a lot of sports, and there is always the Food Network.

Favorite movie? We really liked the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and my wife is a big Harry Potter fan.

Date movie: *The Notebook*. My wife has the soundtrack at work.

Every time *The Godfather Part III* comes on, I sit down and watch it until the end. I don't know what that means. Same with *Casablanca*.

Favorite book? Ron Chernow's biography of **Alexander Hamilton**.

What's on your bookshelf now? I buy too many to read. In the queue are **Jared Diamond's** Pulitzer Prize win-

ner *Guns, Germs, and Steel* and **Malcolm Gladwell's** *Blink*.

All-time favorite restaurant? It's hard to keep my family away from Peking Gourmet Inn at Baileys Crossroads in Falls Church.

Favorite everyday restaurant? The Irish Inn at Glen Echo or the Carlyle in Shirlington. I like the Quarterdeck in Arlington quite a bit as well.

Favorite food? A good grilled steak or ahi tuna, rare.

Best meal ever? (1) A dish called Godzilla Meets Green Fried Tomatoes With Alligator and Andouille Cheesecake at Jacques-Imo's Café in New Orleans (the Godzilla part is an upright fried soft-shell crab!) and (2) a Kobe beef dinner at a restaurant in Bangkok in 1975 just after the fall of Saigon, but I can't remember the name.

Favorite social event of the year? My wife and I really enjoy the USO's Spirit of Hope dinner when they recognize the tremendous contribution of our young men and women in the military.

Favorite vacation spot?

Hillsboro Inlet, Florida.

Your proudest achievement? Having three successful children who are happy.

Cooler thing you've ever done? Several years ago I traveled to Antarctica via New Zealand to observe Coast Guard icebreakers breaking a channel to resupply McMurdo Station; included was a trip to the South Pole. Very "cool" in every sense.

Historical figure you'd most like to meet? Alexander Hamilton, the father of the Coast Guard and the greatest American who was never president.

Favorite object you own? My XM satellite radio in my car.

Thing that others would be surprised to hear about you?

My eclectic taste in music. I listen to everything from opera to bluegrass. I use music as an inspiration for writing, speeches, and life in general.

What makes Washington special? It's not so much a city as it is a collection of neighborhoods, each with its own character and diversity, and the Metro makes it accessible to everyone.