

# Coast Guard Commandant Admiral Bob Papp's Remarks

at the

## Retirement Ceremony for Master Chief Steven Hearn

Pat Thompson Center- Millington Naval Base, TN  
Friday August 19, 2011

Good afternoon again shipmates!

When I reflect upon BMCM Hearn's career, it inspires me. It also makes jealous. You heard he has 23 years at sea. But, it turns out he keeps close track of these things. Master Chief Hearn's own count is more precise: he has 23 years, 1 month, and 25 days at sea. But wait, there's more. According to his count, he has also spent a total of 8,335 days aboard various cutters and boats.

Now, why all this counting? Why the precision? One word. Competition. He was trying to beat Dad's record. I don't think he was able to do it – but he does claim that all this time on coastal buoy and river tenders has made “Master Chief Hearn” a better shiphandler than Captain Hearn... I am sure Captain Hearn might have something to say about this claim...

Now at first blush this might look like an ordinary competition between father and son...but this runs much deeper. This is really a story about a Coast Guard family. It is said that those who go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters, see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep.

As a boy, when Master Chief Hearn was not in school, or on weekends, he would often tag along with his father, going aboard the Coast Guard cutters and units he commanded, where he saw the business his father did in great waters. He decided to make it his business – a family business – and it has resulted in not just competition, but a lifetime bond between father and son, that is really best described as love...love of service and love of kinship.

For many of us, the Coast Guard is a family business – the roots of our family trees run deep in this service. We work as a crew, but we serve as a family. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of our service – one of its greatest assets – and what keeps so many in our service is our focus on family. Family and Service is certainly what the Hearn family is about – it is a great part of their legacy that today, they pass on to all of us.

Master Chief Hearn has had a remarkable Coast Guard career. He has lived in a lighthouse. He has saved lives. And, from what I can tell, in his 30 years of service, he has sailed not only our coasts, but nearly every navigable branch of our Western Rivers, keeping thousands of aids to navigation on station and

watching properly. Along the way, he's gotten pretty salty – if you can get salty on a Western River. The KANKAKEE crew tells me that much like Mark Twain, even when it is foggy, Master Chief Hearn can listen to the tide wash off the bank to determine his way up the river.

But that's the part of Master Chief's legacy that everyone knows about. What is less known, is Master Chief's role in designing the power system that keeps these aids blinking and winking. He was going green long before going green became fashionable – you see, as a young 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Boatswain Mate aboard Cutter RED CEDAR he and his Chief designed the solar charging system that is still in use today...

But, despite these accomplishments, if you asked him, he would humbly tell you that his most enduring contribution is the thousands of young Coast Guard men and women his many commands have given him the opportunity to mentor. He would say personally enriching – I choose enduring because his leadership will continue to guide many in our service long after he retires today. There are more than a few Coast Guardsmen that are still with us – that, but for Master Chief, probably would not be otherwise – and probably a few standing over there – but no need to step forward or raise your hands!

What's most impressive is that Master Chief was able to continue this legacy of leadership up to almost his last day on active duty. Quite literally. My staff was trying to call him last week. They could not get him. He was underway—leading the crew of the KANKAKEE! Setting one last buoy as the sun set on his last watch at sea.

Master Chief, you have done so much, for so many, and you do it so effortlessly. But, we being Coast Guard families, know that a lot of time and effort goes into effortlessly...

So, I would like to ask Dina, Stephanie, and Brandon to join us on stage...

I don't know why people always wish you following seas...especially for a river tender Captain a following sea would be terrible...  
Fair Winds, Following Seas...Smooth Seas, and a Long Sunset Story  
Shipmate...We will miss you Ancient One...

*Semper Paratus...*