

To the women of the Coast Guard (in uniform or out):

“The time has come,” the walrus said, “to speak of many things” Well, not *too* many. I have saved my “annual” letter in the *Bulletin* until now, because our four years in this remarkable observation post are rapidly drawing down, and I wanted a last word with you all.

Jim and I have fantasized that the proper way to salute you all — and your male counterparts — would be to take “Coast Guard 01” (the Commandant’s plane), start in northern Maine, fly over every Coast Guard unit, and waggle the wings. That would be great fun and an appropriate way to convey our appreciation and gratitude. However, you are all so far flung it would take unconscionable piles of money and months of time — particularly if we added in places like Lampedusa and Guam and all the other myriad duty stations where some of you are.

This, then, must be my “overflight.” I have shaken hundreds of your hands, shared numbers of occasions great and small, read and written letters, and generally shared bits of your lives and experiences. That’s a very special privilege. As a group you have given me warmth and welcome, and a marvelous ego trip.

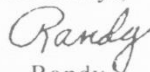
Even more than all that has been an unparalleled chance to watch you in action doing your various jobs — whether in Coast Guard blue or civilian multicolors. What a joy to find you all over the world attacking the nomadic military experience with gusto, energy, patience and sometimes grim determination. Your exuberance and imaginative ways of showing the Coast Guard to be the uniquely fine service it is do not go unnoticed in the public and in Congress.

I have a theory that people attracted to the military life and also with a burning urge to be of service to others join the Coast Guard. This is my answer to those who ask how we manage to attract such superior people. It follows that such men and women would look for and attract equally outstanding people to marry — hence the ever-expanding marvel of the “Coast Guard family.”

And so, good luck to you all. I am so proud to have been a part of this honorable institution for so many years — as, I hope, are you. There are very few occupations left of such unquestionably humane and admirable intent. I wish you many future years of pleasure and pride in your service life.

I have recently found a quotation from Walt Whitman that speaks for my heart:

“It avails not, time nor place — distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation,
or ever so many generations hence”

As always,

Randy