

Stay Coast Guard!
(Career Advice for Junior Personnel to Consider)

by
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Introduction

I first considered writing an article like this for The Bulletin about six years ago, when I was the commanding officer of CGC WRANGELL, a 110' patrol boat in Portland, ME. At that time there was a lot of talk about "career fear" - loosely defined as the tendency by perfectly good leaders to refrain from taking risks (calculated or otherwise), including pursuing command or other positions of responsibility, for fear that a mistake might end an otherwise successful career. I wanted to speak up with concepts like "carpe diem," "live life to its fullest," and "define the moment" (I'm a golf nut and *Tin Cup* was current at the time). However, WRANGELL deployed to Puerto Rico for two deployments that year (for a total of 13 weeks), and I never organized my thoughts enough to contribute any genuine value to the discussion of the day.

Well, now it is six years later. I'm a little older, certainly, and a little wiser, I hope. At a minimum, I've learned that it is good to make time for the "important" (vice the "urgent"), even if that means putting something on hold, or in this case, staying up late several nights in order to get the job done.

My goal in writing this is to share some "lessons learned" with the future of the Coast Guard (that is, all enlisted & officer personnel with less than 10 years of service), so that you may be as satisfied and successful as I have been in my career thus far. The main title - "Stay Coast Guard!" - has two meanings. First, for anyone considering leaving the service, I hope that Part I will make you think twice before doing so. The grass is not always greener on the other side of the fence! Second, for folks who desire a full career, or who may not have decided just yet, but want to succeed as much as possible in the meantime, I hope that Part II will help you out along the way, and perhaps help you avoid being asked to leave the service (e.g., by non-selection for promotion).

I've changed the parenthetical part of the title twice...but I think I like what I've got now. You see, at first I thought this was only for CGA cadets and junior officers, probably because that is my background, and I wasn't sure I should presume to offer advice to folks in whose shoes I have not walked. Fortunately, I quickly realized that what I have to say is just as useful for officer candidates, and on review of my outline, for junior enlisted also. In short, this article is for anyone pondering "what to do when they grow up." I confess in advance, however, that none of it is rocket science, and that most,

if not all, of the advice I am about to share can be found in a great variety of leadership & management publications already available. What I hope to offer as value added is personal insight and/or a case study or two to reinforce the simple suggestions I offer. It is my sincere hope that you find what follows useful! Read on, and enjoy.

Part I – The Coast Guard is a GREAT place to be!

I could write VOLUMES on this first point alone. The Coast Guard has always been a terrific organization to work for, with critically important and valued missions and dedicated people trying to make a difference. Now, in the post 9-11 world, more than ever, the Coast Guard is a GREAT place to be. Rather than focus on what you can do for the Coast Guard, though, allow me to share the three greatest benefits of being in this outstanding service.

First, where else can you make such a difference, and gain responsibility, so quickly? Two years out of the Coast Guard Academy (at age 24, some 11 years ago), I assumed command of CGC POINT BROWER, an 82' patrol boat in San Francisco, CA. Talk about responsibility! What challenges, opportunities, and rewarding experiences I enjoyed. Without launching into a series of now ancient sea stories (e.g., 180 migrants on a 165' freighter one month, a WWII mine in the net of a fishing vessel another), suffice it to say that the Coast Guard is the only organization I'm aware of that trusts its junior personnel with so much. I have long been proud of and impressed with the load placed on our BM3 coxswains, QM2 officers of the deck, MK1 engineering petty officers, and LTJG commanding officers and executive officers. While not everyone chooses (or is given the opportunity) to pursue these high-level positions, nearly every job in the CG carries with it awesome responsibility, especially for the age, experience, and rank of the people involved when compared to the other services, and to "corporate America." To drive this point home, look at the opportunity for command afloat in the U.S. Navy. A very few hard-charging O-5s are rewarded with their first command after 15-plus years of service. The Coast Guard offers command afloat to over ten O-2s, approximately twenty O-3s, and a half dozen or so O-4s each year. What a difference!

Second, the Coast Guard takes care of its people. Look at the Flag Voices that RADM Ames publishes; the truly impressive leadership, career management, and training information available (especially on the web); and the personal examples of the top leaders with whom you have already had the opportunity to serve. In short, focus for a minute on all of the POSITIVE examples of genuine concern for you as a "coastie" (my apologies to anyone who doesn't view this word as a term of affection used by many to express both pride in and adoration for all that we do). Furthermore, allow me to share a

personal experience. When I was diagnosed with cancer a little over three years ago, there was absolutely no place I would rather have been than in the United States Coast Guard! From the medical attention available to me (including surgery by an Air Force doctor at the Sub Base in Groton, CT and radiation therapy under the care of a Yale doctor at Lawrence & Memorial Hospital in New London, CT) to the concern for my well-being (and that of my family) by my co-workers, CG friends, and "subordinates" (my cadet students at the time), the entire situation could not have been less painful. To paraphrase a recruiting video used by CGA, "What other organization has that?" Not many, from my observations!

Note: I have been cancer-free and fully fit for duty for the last three years, and anticipate remaining so for years to come! Thank you for your concern, which amplifies my point even more - Coasties Care!

Third, look at the opportunity to do different things within the Coast Guard at large. In my various travels, mostly during top-notch training at which "corporate America" was also present, I used to be amazed at how frequently "civilians" changed jobs. I routinely heard of intelligent, hard working people either choosing or being asked to leave organizations after only a few years of employment. The reasons were numerous, and varied greatly (though low job satisfaction, quality of coworkers/supervisors, and limited opportunities for advancement were usually in the mix), but the result was always the same: an unstable lifestyle and unpredictable future. I was amazed because I couldn't understand why these people couldn't hold a job, and how they dealt with the stress of changing jobs and/or moving so frequently. Then it occurred to me – I've been doing the same thing for the last 13 years, only I've done so within the United States Coast Guard. Without changing employers (or sacrificing medical care, retirement plans, etc.), I will have averaged just 2.5 years per job by the time I reach 15 years of service. It now occurs to me that this is a GOOD thing. I would grow tired of doing one thing for years on end (or even working in one place for any length of time), but I would not be pleased with all the disadvantages of changing employers so frequently if I was not working for the United States Coast Guard. Worth thinking about, at a minimum!

A wise mentor at CGA once taught me how to help cadets contemplating leaving the Academy, and I'd like to share his general advice with you here. Don't leave just because you think there is something better for you out there somewhere, or because you are not satisfied with how things are going (or because of negative experiences) in the Coast Guard. You deserve better than this, and so does the Coast Guard. For the former, find a specific something and a specific somewhere before turning your back on the Coast Guard – you may save yourself a lot of pain and heartache by doing so. And for

the latter, stick around and strive to make things better. In other words, be a part of the solution rather than "abandoning ship" (and leaving your shipmates with an unresolved situation or problem). In short, weigh all of your options before opting for anything other than "Stay Coast Guard!" One final note before I move on. If you do decide to leave active duty, think seriously about becoming a reservist.

Part II – Fifteen concepts that have worked for me

Now that you want to stay and succeed in the United States Coast Guard, allow me to share some insight on how I have enjoyed genuine satisfaction and success thus far in my career. May these tips work for you, whether they are new to you, or simply reminders of common sense rules you already know.

✓ Communicate

I have said for many years that 90% of the problems in this world are because of lack of (or ineffective) communication. Whether you are a leader or a follower, you have to communicate your needs, your expectations, your preferences, your concerns, your questions, and your interests; and you need to do so up, down, and across the chain of command. There is nearly no such thing as a dumb question. Allow people you work with to get to know you. Yes, this may be risky, but doing so offers great rewards, too. Keep people informed – your supervisor, your peers, and your subordinates need to know what is going on with you, with your job, and with all that you are responsible for. Very quick sea story: I learned long ago the importance of keeping my supervisor informed on my patrol boats. If we had a casualty of any kind, no matter how minor, I made sure to report the same to whomever we were working for (usually a Group or a WMEC CTU), so that they knew what my status was at all times. The last thing I wanted was to be asked to do something that we weren't capable of doing because of some change in our operational status (no matter how small). Share information, and share freely!

✓ Do your job well (i.e., make a difference)

This is pretty obvious, but I didn't want to leave it out. Become a subject matter expert in as many fields or topics as you can. Two of my strengths as a ship driver were my grasp of relative motion and my ability to do rapid radar plotting. These served WRANGELL and I well one night off the southeast coast of Puerto Rico when intercepting a small, unlit radar target heading for the island at about 10 knots (we had our lights off, too, by the way). Confident that we were about to bust a bad guy running drugs into Puerto Rico, but not interested in plowing him over, I used relative motion and rapid radar plotting to take the contact close aboard (at about 120 feet, as I recall – I have video somewhere). Long story short, did you ever hear about the 110' WPB that collided with a U.S. Navy submarine off the southeast coast of

Puerto Rico? No? Only because yours truly knew a thing or two about relative motion, and managed to avoid this perfectly possible catastrophe!

Earn the respect of your coworkers by knowing your job, whatever it is, and by knowing where to find the answer to any question you can't answer right away (there is nothing wrong with saying, "I don't know, but I'll find out" when that is the best answer for a given situation). Make a difference wherever you are, no matter what job you have. The world, and the Coast Guard, needs folks to do all sorts of jobs. If you're tasked with being a mess cook, be the best-darned mess cook that you can be! There may be no such thing as indispensable, but that doesn't mean you don't try. Work as if you're the only one that can do the job as well as you can, and you'll be amazed at the results in terms of respect at your unit and impact on your career.

✓ *Do the right thing (and the rest will take care of itself)*

Always do the right thing purely because it is the right thing to do. Do not avoid doing the right thing because there is an easier way out (for this will surely get you nowhere fast). This tip is for anyone who (still) thinks they should do certain things in order to get promoted, or rewarded in some other way (assignment process, or whatever). Do things because they are the right things to do... then be surprised when doing so earns you the award, advancement, or assignment of your dreams. This also applies to anyone (still) concerned that doing the right thing, even if risky, will result in negative consequences. It is my humble opinion that a lot of what we do is inherently dangerous (e.g., any operations on or above the water). Be smart and be safe, yes, but above all else – do the right thing. I cannot think of any times in my career when I have gotten into trouble for doing what I thought was the right thing to do! Finally, your people will know what your motives are in all that you do – so be sure that they are honorable.

✓ *Be a team player (i.e., play nicely with others)*

I'll keep this one "short and sweet." There was once a junior officer who was clearly out for himself. His subordinates knew it, his peers knew it, and his supervisors knew it. His career was stifled while his peers' careers took off, almost exclusively because they were team players, willing to do nearly anything for the unit in the name of cooperation. Be a team player. Respect others, and do all that you can to help them succeed. You'll be thrilled at how well you succeed, together, and how well you will succeed as an individual, too. Read on.

✓ *Take care of your people*

This is what being a leader is really about. I don't know where I picked this up, but it is my belief that every command in the Coast Guard really only has two jobs. First, do the mission. While I acknowledge that there is a

LOT that goes into this simple statement, it really is quite simple, when push comes to shove. Second, take care of your people. This, I'm afraid, is not as simple. You must determine, and meet, their needs. You must develop them, personally and professionally. What is their plan? Where is it that they want to go? And most importantly, how are you going to help them get there? And finally, you must never give up on them, no matter what the situation, until on very rare occasions no hope remains for them to meet your expectations. Of the many articles and books I've read on leadership, my favorite describes how a leader needs to stand up for his/her people, and stand up to his/her people. As a parent, I understand this now more than ever. Sometimes I have to protect my son (i.e., stand up for him), and sometimes I have to discipline him (i.e., stand up to him). All of this is required because it is in his best interest. By the way, subordinates should apply this upward, too (i.e., take care of your supervisor). Again, you'll be amazed at the difference if you do so.

✓ *Be creative, energetic, and optimistic*

Be creative. Look for better, cheaper, faster, and/or more efficient ways to do things. Don't be afraid to try something new. One of the nicest compliments I ever received was from one of my executive officers after a mooring in a Caribbean port a few years ago. You see, we tied up at a cruise ship pier and the bollards were too far apart for us to run line two aft and line three forward, as usual. After surveying the situation, I suggested that we reverse the normal direction of the lines, using line two as a forward bow spring line and line three as an after quarter spring line. It worked! My XO praised my ability to "think outside of the box" – and I remember his kind and respectful words to this day.

Be energetic and optimistic. These are contagious, and there is nearly no substitute for them. Furthermore, they are, unfortunately, frequently missing from the workplace. Infuse a little positive attitude into your office or unit, and watch morale, job satisfaction, and productivity take off. Life is dynamic. What that means to me is that nothing stays the same. Every encounter you have with others is either a positive or negative one. More importantly, you have either a positive or negative impact on everyone with whom you interact, every time you interact with them! Attitude is everything. Choose to make a positive difference with your energy and optimism!

✓ *Look at challenges as opportunities to excel*

This is for anyone nervous about taking a chance or a risk (or more accurately, trying and not succeeding). Rather than be intimidated or afraid, think back to nearly everything you ever learned how to do well. Was it easy the first time or right away? Probably not. But that doesn't mean you didn't try! Have you ever watched 10-year old children play miniature golf? They sink a lot of putts adults miss because, one, they think they can, and two, they are not afraid. Oh, the power of positive

thinking! Remember the little engine that could? “I think I can, I think I can!” Sometimes all it takes is a little faith and/or self-confidence. And when you fall down, as will happen from time to time (we all have our trials and tribulations), do what you learned to do in your childhood: get up, dust yourself off, and get right back in the game! Still not sold on this one? Imagine a world where people were afraid to take chances. There would be no United States, no cars, no planes, and no space exploration, just for starters. Ordinary people can do extraordinary things. So can you!

✓ Look for challenges (i.e., opportunities to excel)

Now that you see challenges as opportunities to excel, look for some! Don't just wait for challenges or opportunities to come to you. Look for worthwhile projects (see "Do the right thing..." above), room for improvement (wherever you are), and new ways of doing things (see "Be creative..." above). See how interconnected all of these are! That's not an accident. It takes effort, intelligence, hard work, and just a little bit of luck (or a LOT of luck in the case of my career!) to succeed. The potential pay-off is magnificent, though. To illustrate this last one with a brief note from my personal life, I have run two marathons and two half-marathons, and I once shot a hole-in-one at a local golf course (135-yards, 8-iron, and yes, I had witnesses). These are the riches of hours of sweat in training for the runs and my fair share of frustration on the golf course through the years (though that expression about a bad day on the golf course beating any day at work is hard to argue). In short, don't wait for opportunity to knock. Rather, fling open the door and search the world for differences you can make.

✓ Take care of yourself (mentally, physically, and emotionally)

Mentally – Dedicate some time to your personal development. Read (just about anything will do...my favorites have been Colin Powell's book, any of the *Endurance* books (about Shackleton's expedition to Antarctica), and some good leadership books), discuss world events with others, and/or attend as much training as possible. If you have not done so, seek out MBTI (Myers-Briggs Type Indicator) training. You'll learn a TON about yourself, and about others. I also highly recommend Leadership and Management School (LAMS), Team Coordination Training (TCT), and/or Crew Resource Management (CRM).

Physically – Dedicate some time to your physical development. Run, swim, bike, lift weights, do aerobics, play basketball, or anything else that keeps you healthy. Stay (or get) in shape. I weighed 155 pounds until my late twenties (when I ran the two marathons). About two months ago, I stepped on the scale and read “193.” Yikes! Long story short, I adjusted my diet and started walking (yes, just walking, at first), and lost 20 pounds in less than ten weeks! Furthermore, during a recent fitness

evaluation, I scored “excellent” (for my age) in push-ups (35), sit-ups (39 in a minute), and the 1.5 mile run (10:57). For you young folks who think, “What's so great about that?” – wait a few years, and you'll be proud, too. If you are in shape, stay with it. If you're not, start a sensible program ASAP (just 30 minutes a day really is all that it takes).

Emotionally – Dedicate some time to your emotional well-being. Work hard, and play harder. That's my motto, in its simplest form. Life is nothing if not a gift. Be sure to live it in as balanced a manner as you can. I believe I have worked hard thus far in my career. I also believe I have taken a reasonable amount of time for me (and my family) when needed. With all the stress in your life, you deserve a little play now and then. Don't abuse it, but don't neglect this critical component of your emotional state, either. Take your 30 days of leave each year. Enjoy those tropical hours on occasion. If you're always the last one in the office, on the ship, or wherever you work, KNOCK IT OFF. Please take this “lesson learned” (from a cancer survivor) for action! You'll thank me later.

✓ Learn from others' experiences (positive & negative)

Good leaders learn from their own experiences and mistakes. Great leaders learn from others' experiences and mistakes, and apply the lessons learned (good and bad) to their own lives! Make a conscious effort to learn from the successes and failures of others. Read books, collect case studies, and talk to mentors. When I assumed command of WRANGELL in 1995, there had been a series of 110' WPB mishaps in the First District. One ship had run aground in Boston Harbor, another had collided with a buoy just outside of Woods Hole, and a third had wrapped a tow around a buoy during a transit through Great Round Shoal (GRS) outside of Nantucket. Without judging the command/crew of any of these ships, I made sure my crew and I learned as much as we could from the unfortunate experiences of our brethren. When faced with nearly the exact same tow through GRS during my tour, I quickly recognized the need for a 20-40 degree crab angle to offset the significant set and drift from a treacherous crosscurrent. “There but by the grace of God go I” – thanks to having learned some valuable lessons from others!

Note: Remember the “Keep people informed” and “Share information, and share freely” advice from the Communicate section above? I am eternally grateful to those who went before me for sharing their lessons learned...their doing so made me a better officer, leader, CO, and CGA instructor. Furthermore, I was sure to do this, too, when circumstances permitted (most notably when we lost one of our three \$7,000 life rafts in 20-plus foot seas off Cape Hatteras one dark and stormy night).

✓ Have a plan (in fact, have several)

Have you seen the *Friends* episode where Phoebe is asked if she has a plan? She quickly replies, “I don't even have a pla.” You've got to have a plan! It doesn't

matter if it changes, even frequently. In fact, a plan is virtually guaranteed to be the one thing that doesn't happen, but that doesn't mean you don't have one anyway. I'm mostly talking long-term planning, here, by the way. The power of vision, if you will. You see, I've had a plan (several, actually) pretty much throughout my career. My ADCs (now e-resume) are fun to review, in hindsight. Six months after graduation from CGA I wrote, "I am eager for command of a WPB and I would very much like to return to the west coast...." Ten months later (in my 2nd "dream sheet") I wrote, "Intend to make a career of the Coast Guard, with high interest in postgraduate school and an instructor billet at the Coast Guard Academy. I would like to precede these with a CO billet." To paraphrase a really old *Styx* album, "I'm here to tell you people...dreams do come true!" But you have to dream (i.e., you must have a plan), and you need to communicate your dream (I prefer vision, actually) to others (most notably your supervisor, command, and assignment officers). Just to drive this one home, I currently have four plans (specifically: Plan A, Plan B, Plan C1, and Plan C2) for the next 7-plus years. Suffice it to say that I've considered the various factors, options, variables, etc., and am working to make my plan (Plan A, I hope) a reality. Note that none of this discussion means you don't thoroughly enjoy wherever you are right now (or at any given moment). However, it is possible to look to the future while enjoying the present!

✓ *Do what you like (to the extent possible)*

This one is for anyone who thinks they need to do certain jobs (i.e., punch tickets) to advance. I don't know about you, but I do well at things I enjoy (and tend to enjoy things that I do well). To the extent possible, seek out jobs that you want to do rather than those that you think you should do (for whatever reason). The Coast Guard offers a wide variety of options...explore them! Do the right thing for you, and again, the rest will take care of itself. I was fortunate to discover during my 1/c summer (just before my last year as a cadet at CGA) that driving ships is FUN, and that I was fairly decent at it. What an important discovery for me! More recently, I discovered an affinity for meteorology and physical oceanography, so much so that I sought out two "payback" tours in a row (first as a marine science instructor at CGA and now as Deputy Commander of International Ice Patrol). Every job I've had has been the best job I've ever had (they really do keep getting better and better) because I've sought out jobs that interested me! At what do you excel? What do you enjoy? To the extent possible, seek these out during your career.

✓ *Like what you do (no matter what that may be)*

Will you always be able to choose your billet, collateral duties, or daily tasks? Of course not. When required to do something that you don't particularly enjoy, find a way to enjoy it (and do it well) anyway. Remember: do the right thing; be creative, energetic, and

optimistic; and look at challenges as opportunities to excel. We are, the last time I checked, a military organization. You are going to be tasked with unpleasant assignments from time to time (somebody has to do these jobs). Here's the trick. Things turn out best for people who make the best out of whatever situation they are in. During my career, I've had a couple of projects that I would have preferred to hand off to someone else (not many, but a couple). That's not really being a team player, though, so I buckled down and made the best out of these tasks. You can do this, too! One trick that might help is to ask, "Will this matter to me six months from now?" I've found that the answer is "no" more times than not, and that identifying that the long-term ramifications of a current predicament are minor is VERY calming.

✓ *Be assertive (take charge of your career)*

This is an important application/extension of "Communicate" and "Have a plan...." Don't wait around for your supervisor, command, or assignment officer to make your dreams come true. Seek out the training that you need or desire. Make things happen for you wherever you are. Enroll in courses from the Coast Guard Institute, make suggestions to your command that will improve your ability to advance (e.g., an hour of study time one day a week), and take on projects that will improve the quality of life at your unit. Communicate your career intentions and "dream job" up your chain of command.

Allow me to share a couple of success stories from my career. I was sent to graduate school to study physical oceanography. While at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS), I realized that I was as interested in meteorology as I was oceanography, and that NPS offered a joint program. I asked my program manager for permission to do the joint program, I worked hard (when I wasn't golfing), and I graduated with a Master of Science in Meteorology and Physical Oceanography. During this same period, it became apparent to me that there were not going to be any marine science ("72") jobs open when I graduated (we are a small community). I discussed my options with the afloat detailer at the time (before and after screening for command), was humble and understanding when told that I would be considered for all O-3 afloat jobs (CO, XO, and Ops), and miraculously received orders to WRANGELL.

Have you seen "Renaissance Man" with Danny Devito? Toward the end of this otherwise average movie, he says, "The choices we make dictate the life we lead." Be assertive and make good choices; and above all, take charge of your career!

✓ *When all else fails, go back to "Be optimistic" and "Like what you do"*

Too many people choose to be unsatisfied with their current job, coworkers, supervisor, command, or life in general. I think that is a shame. Just as you choose

whether or not to be upset (and how to react) when someone cuts you off in traffic (for example), I believe you choose whether or not to be satisfied with your life. More on this shortly, but for the moment, I recommend referring back to “Be optimistic” and “Like what you do” when you find your spirits down. When I had cancer in 1998, I moved very quickly from “why me” (which is not particularly productive) to “what next” (which is). Again, always make the best out of whatever situation you are in. This is arguably a learned behavior, and may not be easy at first. However, with time I think you will find that the destination is worth the journey, however arduous.

Summary (of Part II)

- ✓ Communicate
- ✓ Do your job well (i.e., make a difference)
- ✓ Do the right thing (and the rest will take care of itself)
- ✓ Be a team player (i.e., play nicely with others)
- ✓ Take care of your people
- ✓ Be creative, energetic, and optimistic
- ✓ Look at challenges as opportunities to excel
- ✓ Look for challenges (i.e., opportunities to excel)
- ✓ Take care of yourself (mentally, physically, and emotionally)
- ✓ Learn from others' experiences (positive & negative)
- ✓ Have a plan (in fact, have several)
- ✓ Do what you like (to the extent possible)
- ✓ Like what you do (no matter what that may be)
- ✓ Be assertive (take charge of your career)
- ✓ When all else fails, go back to “Be optimistic” and “Like what you do”

Bonus Section

- Cadets & Officer Candidates: Maximize your education and training while at CGA by seeking out mentors who can pass “words of wisdom” on to you. Listen to them!
- Enlisted: Keep a record of your accomplishments, including the impact on your unit, and submit this valuable document with your EPEF input (i.e., use the optional support form to your maximum advantage).
- Officers: Submit a CG-4082 every year or so (especially when up for promotion or reassignment). Check out JetForm Filler if you aren't sure what this is!

Conclusion

Allow me to amplify on all of the above with a final bonus piece of advice. If you're not enjoying life and making a positive difference wherever you are, you are doing it wrong! We in the United States are phenomenally fortunate. With few exceptions, we have very little to complain about, compared to most of the world. Did you know that? Have you thought about your difficulties in relative terms?

To quote part of an e-mail I received that illustrates this final point:

“If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world. If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.”

Get the picture? We in the United States, and especially we in the United States Coast Guard, are the fortunate few. Things could nearly always be better, sure. However, and perhaps better to focus on, they could always be worse, too. Sometimes just keeping this thought in mind can make a difference, no matter what you are facing at any given moment. Never underestimate the difference a positive attitude and fresh perspective can make!

I hope that this article has helped you in some small way. Please contact me if you would like to give me any feedback (positive or negative) on anything I've shared. Thank you, and have a GREAT Coast Guard Day!

LCDR Rogerson graduated from the U.S. Coast Guard Academy with a B.S. in Applied Science in 1989. He served as a Deck Watch Officer in CGC NORTHLAND (WMEC 904) from 1989-1991, and as Commanding Officer of CGC POINT BROWER (WPB 82372) from 1991-1993, then attended the Naval Postgraduate School from 1993-1995, graduating with an M.S. in Meteorology and Physical Oceanography. He served as Commanding Officer of CGC WRANGELL (WPB 1332) from 1995-1997, and then taught in the Marine Science Section of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy from 1997-2001. He is currently the Deputy Commander of International Ice Patrol in Groton, CT. He and his wife Marnee live in Stonington, CT, with their son, Christian. Note: For anyone interested in International Ice Patrol (and especially anyone who has never heard of this small unit with a big mission), please check out: <http://www.uscg.mil/lantarea/iip/home.html> at your earliest convenience.