

Script for CAPT Greg Johnson CGA 72 Link In The Chain for 2022

To The Parents of the 2022 SWABs at Swearing In Day, Day 1

Admiral Rendon, Admiral Allen, Academy staff, distinguished guests, and a special welcome to the parents of the soon-to-be cadets of the CGA Class of 2022.

June 24, 1968, 50 years ago, 425 young men entered Chase Hall as the Class of 1972 and began their CGA journey. Four years later 171 of us graduated as Ensigns and we began upholding the great Coast Guard traditions of humanitarian service to our country. As the 50 year class for 2022, our two classes forever will be special links in the chain of the Long Blue Line of CGA graduates.

There have been many changes to the Academy since 1968. And even though the missions of the Coast Guard have changed and increased dramatically, one thing has remained constant and that is the mission of the Academy.

Regardless of how many active duty years my classmates served, the Academy experience had a profound impact on each one of us. Whether we knew it or not, the Academy succeeded in its mission to produce leaders of character, mission ready officers, and a resolve to be worthy of those CGA graduates who came before us, who had established our incredible tradition of sacrificial service to our great country.

As Ensigns we served during the last few years of the Viet Nam war, and then played big roles in the Gulf wars and drug wars, we pioneered marine fishery treaty enforcement, migrant interdiction, embraced technology before Microsoft and Apple, we brought new classes of ships and planes into the CG and we were instrumental in reorganizing CG maintenance and logistics in the late 80's and 90's. Then in our 30th year 9/11 changed everything.

Our Class of 72 has an amazing history both while on active duty and later in the civilian sector. Most of us are retired now, but after our active duty service we were owners and leaders of businesses, a doctor, a dentist, {lawyers}, college professors, high school educators and coaches, {civil and electrical engineers}, ship and aircraft design consultants, leadership and business trainers, leaders in local, state, and federal government and community service, marine industry managers and executives, museum curators, commercial airline pilots, and commercial ship captains.

During the 3 decades while on active duty we were involved in hundreds of incredible sea and storm rescues, medical evacuations, and protecting our ports, coastlines, waterways and maritime industry and environment, all the while upholding the great traditions of our Coast Guard. But four of our classmates represent the highest of Coast Guard tradition and have been inducted into the Coast Guard Academy Walls of Gallantry and Remembrance on the quarterdeck of Chase Hall.

August 1980 Jimmy Ng was a pilot of an HH-3 Helo and his crew rescued 17 seamen from Merchant Vessel Theresa Lee which was filling with ammonia gas, disabled and sinking during the remnants of a devastating typhoon in Bristol Bay Alaska.

Two months later, was the October 1980 amazing rescue of 550 passengers and crew of the sinking Cruise Liner Prinsendam, on fire in the Gulf of Alaska; it was a miracle that no lives were lost and no serious injuries. You are able to see a large painting depicting the Prinsendam rescue in the foyer of the Alumni Center. I was chief engineer of Mellon, one of three CG cutters involved in that rescue. But Bruce Melnick our second Classmate on the Wall of Gallantry was an HH-3 Helo pilot whose crew rescued 110 of those survivors and he also later became the first of only two CG NASA astronauts.

Eleven years later in October 1991, “The Perfect Storm” hit off the coast of New England. You may have seen the movie based on this event. Larry Brudnicki our third Classmate on the Wall of Gallantry, was the commanding officer of CGC Tamaroa. In that tremendous storm, the crew of Tamaroa heroically rescued 3 sailors from a sinking sailboat and then saved 4 National Guardsmen after their helo crashed during that dangerous rescue operation. Larry and his wife Carol are here with us today and I’ll introduce them later with our classmates.

And there is one special classmate we would like to honor today, Bill Turek. In 1993 while inspecting and certifying a merchant ship for CG license, a test of the engine room CO2 system malfunctioned endangering workers in that space. LCDR Turek disregarded his own life and entered the engine room warning the workers to evacuate. Bill then went down to the lower level of the engine room thinking there may have been other workers in danger. There were none, but Bill didn’t make it out. He died of asphyxiation. In addition to being honored on the Wall of Remembrance and the Wall of Gallantry, Bill’s memory also lives on within the Coast Guard Marine Inspection community. The “Turek Award” is presented at the graduation of each Marine Inspection training class at Yorktown, VA to the student who most exemplifies Bill’s dedication, strength and courage.

Thirteen of us from the Class of 72 and 7 incredible wives are here today to honor the Class of 2022. Together we have 650 years of sea stories about the Academy and a life of CG and civilian service to share with you all. So please seek us out during the day, especially if we are from your state. We will each have an orange nametag with our name and state so hopefully we will stand out. Please let me quickly introduce my classmates.

Link In The Chain Classmates Attending 2022 Swearing In Day

Bill and Ella Armstrong Derry NH

Buck Baley East Sandwich MA

Larry and Carol Brudnicki Sunapee NH

Paul and Maggie Duddy Mystic CT

Frank and Suzette Kishman Cooper City FL

John Larned Newport RI

Charlie and Robbie McCarthy Waterford CT

Tiger McCarthy Dorchester MA

Tom Meisenzahl East Haddam CT

Jim Morton Chesapeake VA

Jim and Janice Norton Quaker Hill CT

Tom and Maggie Paar Niantic CT

Greg Johnson Red Lion PA

As the Link in the Chain to the Class of 2022, it is our desire that over the next four years we convey and model the traditions of our Coast Guard and help instill in your cadets a deep resolve to be worthy of those traditions. It is important because they will be writing the history and upholding the traditions of our Coast Guard over the next 34 years. {I know that it must be hard to get your arms around this thought because you are thinking your SWABs are just hoping they will survive today, but it is a reality that your Cadets are the future leaders of our CG!!} And most of all, we hope to convey and model what it means to be a Classmate. Your cadets will find that it is next to impossible to make it through these next challenging four years independently. They will not succeed on their own, but as a class. Classmates are everything and Classmates are for life. And the Class of 72 welcomes you to the Coast Guard Family.

Go 22, Go 72, and forever Go Bears.