

As delivered

Admiral Thomas H. Collins
RADM Dick Bennis Eulogy
September 23, 2003

Good afternoon. I'm humbled to be here with you today to honor a great professional and a true hero, Admiral Dick Bennis.

- We in the Coast Guard remember Dick as a leader who bettered our Service everywhere he went.
- We remember Dick as a leader with keen intellect, professional competence, and strong interpersonal skills.
- We remember him as a leader who instilled optimism and self-confidence, but stayed grounded in reality.
- We remember him as the epitome of a team player, building and leading successful teams whether that was
 - As a leader of Coast Guard efforts in three of our most challenging east coast ports, or
 - helping to develop the Coast Guard operational and regulatory response to the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989, or
 - providing for waterside safety and security associated with the 1996 Atlanta Olympics and OpSail 2000.
- We remember him as a mentor and coach who set high standards but gave people the freedom and responsibility to do their jobs.

Dick was a hero in every sense of the word. He proved himself to be a Coast Guard hero time and time again throughout his career, but most obviously when he was called into action on September 11, 2001. On his way out of town when the terrorist attacks occurred, he came back to New York by boat, then organized a flotilla of more than 100 vessels – crewed mostly by volunteers – who then evacuated half a million – that's *five hundred thousand* -- people from lower Manhattan. He proved he was not only a Coast Guard hero that day -- he was a hero for the nation.

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He also was a hero in a very personal sense, to everyone who had the honor of knowing and working with him. Dick fought valiantly against cancer for four years. During the entire ordeal, he never lost his sense of dignity or humor, and he never lost his positive spirit. His qualities inspire the best in us – his dedication to duty, his energy, his positive attitude despite the obstacles he faced . . . he is truly an inspiration for all of us.

Dick was a model of our core values of honor, respect, and devotion to duty. I, and the Coast Guard, grieve today for a fallen shipmate, one of our own, one of our best, one of our heroes. We will hold his memory in the highest regard and his inspirational life will live with us long after this day.

Our thoughts and prayers are with you, Gloria; your children, Keith, Timothy, and Wendy; and all Dick's family and friends.

Now, I'll ask Admiral Jim Loy, Administrator of the Transportation Security Administration and my predecessor as Commandant of the Coast Guard, to share his thoughts.