



**Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
Sailor of the Year Luncheon
Hale Koa Hotel
Honolulu, Hawaii
Admiral Cecil Haney
30 March 2012
As prepared for delivery**

Aloha!

Thanks for the introduction Fleet Master Chief Minyard. It's great to see your wife Mechele here, thank you Mechele for your participation this week.

But today is not about me, it's about the stellar Sailors that are present in here today! It's about the families that have accompanied these Sailors. It's about how these Sailors, each in their own distinct way, have contributed, have made a difference, and have clearly demonstrated the potential to do even greater things.

They represent the best and the brightest of an amazing all volunteer force that every day is out and about the globe guaranteeing the freedoms and democratic lifestyle that we enjoy. They are on the high seas, in the littorals, and in some rather tough neighborhoods, carrying out the full spectrum of capability for our Maritime Strategy and Defense Strategic Guidance. They are ensuring the economic viability, not just that the United States enjoys, but the world. We are in the presence of some very special individuals.

More about them shortly.

It is good to see all of you here today, thank you for your support in recognizing our Sailors of the Year.

It is great to see many from the Pacific Fleet leadership team out here to include flag officers, but today, I would like to specifically recognize our Master Chief leadership team. I am blessed to have Fleet Master Chief Minyard on my staff. Thank you Master Chief for your work here today.

I was just sitting with the Command Master Chief for MARFORPAC, Master Chief Aldis. We also have Force Master Chief Knox from Naval Surface Forces here. There is Force Master Chief DeLozier with Naval Air Forces and Force Master Chief Caldwell of SUBPAC. We have Command Master Chief Schoeppey from Seventh Fleet, Command Master Chief Ortloff from Third Fleet and we have Command Master Chief Sibal representing the Region, right here in Hawaii. I know there are other Command Master Chiefs here in the audience today. Could I please get each of you to stand and be recognized?

Thank you for your leadership, commitment and example.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to our sponsors who have made this wonderful event possible. Without your support, we would not be able to conduct such a memorable event for so worthy a group. Please join me in a round of applause for our great sponsors.

It is my pleasure and honor to be here this afternoon and to have this opportunity to briefly speak to you and to announce our winners and to personally recognize and congratulate each of our Sailors of the Year for their outstanding achievement, service, and sacrifice. It is humbling and very rewarding to play such a small part in your big day.

It is great to see so many family members in attendance. Regrettably my wife Bonny was unable to be here as she has taken ill, but both of us would like to thank you for your support, service and personal sacrifice. Your efforts enable your Sailor to achieve the sustained superior performance that is being recognized here today.

We cannot recognize the superior performance of our Sailors enough. I hope that each of you have had the opportunity to talk to the Sailors at your table, to hear their stories and to thank their families for their sacrifices.

The greatness of our Navy is not measured by the numbers of ships, submarines or airplanes we have in our inventory. Our Navy owes its greatness to the hard-working and dedicated Sailors that bring those platforms to life. These are the enlisted leaders of today. These are the Command Master Chiefs of tomorrow. These are very special people.

For nearly 40 years the SOY Program has been recognizing and rewarding the very best of those special people. The Sailors we honor here today are proof that this program is still working extremely well.

This week I had the opportunity to review each finalist's endorsement package. I was impressed by the extent of their accomplishments, the scope of their responsibilities, and their exemplary performance. From what I read I knew it would be a difficult task to determine a standout among them.

This week I have also had the pleasure of meeting each of the finalists in person. I was further impressed by their can-do attitudes, their poise, presence, and their confidence. They were even more impressive in person than they were on paper.

These finalists come from diverse backgrounds. They were born and raised in eight different states, not including one who was born on a small island in the Azores.

They represent nine different rates, we have a Hospital Corpsman, Personnel Specialist, Special Warfare Operator, Steel Worker, Sonar Technician (Surface), Equipment Operator, Navy Counselor, Information Systems Technician, and a Navy Diver.

They have lead from the steel decks of our ships, as they deployed around the world. They have represented our Navy, and our nation, as ambassadors to other nations. They have been, in many cases, on a variety of extended deployments. They have answered the call in support of events such as Operation Tomodachi, when our nation extended its hand to help the people of Japan. They have deployed to Afghanistan where they either supported combat operations or boldly stepped on to the front lines and in to the fight.

They represent commands from as far away as Louisiana, California, Guam, Japan as well as several here in Hawaii.

Yet for as diverse and different as these Sailors are from each other, they are very much alike in several important ways. Each of them is a proven performer on the job, in their personal lives, and in their communities.

All of them have sought higher education. Several of them have earned their associate's and bachelor's degree. One of them has earned a master's degree and is working on a Ph.D.

They are volunteers in their communities. They volunteer for Toys for Tots, the Special Olympics, and they help restore national monuments. They volunteer for the Adopt-a-School program; they read books to children in need of role models. They coach little league, they organize fund raisers for playground equipment and food drives for the less fortunate. They are the model Sailors you see so proudly carrying our national ensign on to the field at sporting events.

These Sailors do not accept second best at anything they put their minds to. They are always a winner. They exemplify the highest standards of service to our nation, at home and abroad, at sea and ashore. They fully embody the Navy's War Fighting Ethos.

Putting it all into perspective, out of the 181 ships and submarines and 1000 aircraft in the Pacific Fleet, out of the hundreds of units spread out to encompass half the world's surface; out of nearly 100,000 of their fellow Sailors, these nine finalists have proven to be the best! A truly impressive accomplishment.

Yet for all of that, it is worth mentioning that no Sailor achieves this level of greatness alone.

Many of you have a spouse and children who support you, who encourage you, inspire you and who sustain you. Each of you were raised by mothers, fathers, or perhaps grandparents, who instilled in you the values and morals that were the foundation of who you are today. There are the mentors and teachers who have guided you along your path to success, who have helped you see the future and all the wonderful possibilities before you.

There are your fellow shipmates. Shipmates who are there by your side, holding you to the standard just as assuredly as you hold them to that same standard of excellence. Shipmates that challenge you every day to live up to your full potential.

I would like to personally thank everyone who has played a role in helping you become the Sailor that you are today.

Now ladies and gentlemen, believe it or not, I have kept my remarks short. I can appreciate the anxiety that some of you in this room are feeling right now. According to the program, as soon as I step down, you will learn who the Commander, United States Pacific Fleet Sailor of the Year is, for Sea and for Shore. But I would also say you are all winners and again, thank you for your dedication and tremendous service and commitment.

Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta once said, “The most important ingredient in our national defense is found in the extraordinary men and women who comprise our all-volunteer force.” It is truly heartening to see just how extraordinary our men and women in uniform are. I’ll end this by saying that I wish each of you the best of luck.

Mahalo and God bless our Navy and all those who serve.