



**Remarks for Admiral Patrick M. Walsh
Commander, U.S. Pacific Fleet
236th U.S. Navy Birthday Ball
October 8, 2011
Honolulu, Hawaii**

Good evening and Happy 236th Birthday to the United States Navy!

Distinguished guests, special friends, ladies and gentlemen, and especially members of the U.S. Pacific Fleet...Aloha!

Thank you for the opportunity and the privilege to share this wonderful evening with you. I have looked forward to this event because I enjoy any and every occasion to honor the men and women who serve on our team.

First, let me say to those on our Pacific Fleet staff that you look sharp and proud...and clean up well. In my long time association with the fleet, I have learned to appreciate and live through your success and view the world through your eyes.

Andy and I...are especially grateful to be here and for the privilege to serve alongside such a dedicated, talented team. Over the course of our lives, we have learned that no matter where we are, no matter where your travels take you, that as long as you are with shipmates and friends, you are at home.

Depending on your perspective (as well as your age), birthdays are an opportunity to look forward to the future or they may be a chance to step back and review events. Anniversaries require us to think ahead, plan, set schedules, and invest our time. If we do not invest ourselves, then the date we celebrate and the event that we commemorate begins to lose meaning. Tonight we take a moment to remind ourselves of who we are and rededicate ourselves to what we do. Tonight we talk about what matters.

I am particularly grateful to the Navy Ball committee for this venue and those who invested so much of themselves into this evening's event. THEY wanted us to have a festive, spirited celebration, one that we would enjoy and remember. WE...want them to know how much their thoughtfulness and personal attention to this event means to us. They all have day jobs – to find time to remember other people during their own personal time is the mark of a great team and first class organization. Thank you for an evening to remember.

When you think about the program tonight, the festivities, the fun, the meal, the dessert, and how people will work behind the scenes to pull everything together, remember Cliff Collins and members of committee...

The timing for this evening's event, the wonderful setting and festive atmosphere, where we are surrounded by the warm embrace of friends and close colleagues has given me a special

opportunity to address you in a way that does not happen very often in the course of a professional lifetime. When I learned that I would retire in January, I realized that as much as I wanted to speak to you...what I really needed to do...was share with you...what I had learned about the honor and privilege to serve.

Several years ago, Dr. Randy Pausch, a professor of Computer Science, delivered an evening lecture to his class at Carnegie Mellon University. His life's work was a series of unique contributions to the field of computer animation while he studied and taught at Carnegie Mellon University and conducted research with Walt Disney Imagineers. Yet on that particular evening he chose not to talk about Engineering and Applied Science...that was not his message...Instead, we remember the title of this event as The Last Lecture: Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams.

Make no mistake, his contribution to the field of Computer Science was substantial, his research was significant and the impact of his work has withstood the test of time and scholarly recognition. Yet it was the story that he told and the words that he used that made his lecture so profound...because when he talked about things that mattered, he revealed himself, his vulnerability, his character, his humor, and his many gifts. While he had left his fingerprints on much of the technology that we use in the course of our daily lives...his words that evening, left footprints in the sand for all to see. What made it compelling for the at-capacity lecture hall audience and nearly 14 million YouTube viewers was the open, reflective, human dimension to his story.

His message was so personal...that it was powerful...his message was powerful...because it was so personal. His message, in its crisp, innocent form, broke down the barriers that separate people and connected them. I am confident students in the audience wished that they had enrolled the previous semester with Dr Pausch because there was so much that they could learn from him about life as well as about Computer Science.

Tonight on the occasion of our birthday, we sit in a remarkable position, we have an extraordinary responsibility, at a time best described as an inflection point in history when members of our Navy, this fleet, my staff, you and me, have an important role to play that will help define the path that the fleet and the nation will take from this day forward. No matter the course, the speed, the direction, or the outcome, I promise you, history will remember us by our actions, what we did, and how we responded while it was our turn to stand watch.

So, on the occasion of one of my final opportunities to speak to you, I see a chance to share with you what I have learned about the wonderful blessings that come with the privilege to serve.

I want to talk to you about what we value...and I would like to start with the words that we use to describe ourselves. When we write our biography, our resume, our curriculum vitae, by design, the prose that we use make the jobs in our career path seem to move freely, almost effortlessly, from one responsibility and command to the next, along with a series of awards, degrees, and

citations, so that we describe...success...and after many, many years of training, education, and jobs, our resumes...(from the perspective of those who are junior to us), appear devoid of emotion, lack any human quality, and become lists of accomplishments that seem ‘out of reach’ to consider and are difficult to connect to the lives of those who are junior to us.

But what if we talked about when we fell before we succeeded; when we stumbled instead of when we leapt...it would put everyone on the edge of their seat. All would ask, “how did you get yourself up, who helped you, how did you rise to the occasion? The conversation would be rich, instructive, powerful, and helpful. Leaders would reveal vulnerability...and in the course of doing it...demonstrate remarkable strength of character... In that scenario, the introduction of the speaker, would give an audience a sense of appreciation for the dimension and a connection to the defining moments in a leader’s career and lifetime, before he ever uttered a word in a speech*...more people would be fascinated by the introduction than the speech itself.

Our story, our history, is all about how one generation prepares the next for leadership – we have an unspoken but expected responsibility...to teach...and to prepare those who follow us for the intense, awesome responsibility of representing the nation, alone, at sea. If that is our job, then how do you know if you have been effective? True leadership is an active enterprise, requires active involvement and engagement...in short, you cannot simply make pronouncements and proclamations – you have to demand a dialogue with those in your charge and trust.

Have you ever asked the question – how are you doing...to the staff, to subordinates, or to the crew...the answers have a predictable quality to them, depending on the mood, the meal, the weather, or the conditions of the day.

What if you rephrased the question – what makes you proud...note the difference between the two questions, and the difference the answers reveal about who they are, the work that they do, and the mission that we share.

I asked the enlisted members of our staff:

What was your proudest moment in the Navy? All I can say is, ‘strap in and hold on’...here is a sample of their answers.

“I had been deployed to Fallujah, Iraq, when I saw the Iraqi people exercising their right to vote. Then I realized, suddenly, this extended nine month long deployment to a combat zone made sense.”

“I went through a difficult divorce, and I thought that my career was over because of bankruptcy. The Navy (and my future spouse) stood behind me and never turned their back on me. I married my wonderful friend and I have excelled in my career ever since.”

“My proudest moment was making Chief and going through induction. I stick out my chest each time I put on my uniform.”

“My proudest moment was when I was able to make my first organizational purchase in my LS rating with (almost) no help.”

“My proudest moment was being a member of the team on USS Lake Erie that shot down an uncontrollable satellite and saved people’s lives.”

“My first time taking out a ceremonial unit, involved a road trip. I was a Third Class Petty Officer and probably should have had some ‘Top Cover.’ However, knowing my leadership had faith in me to complete the mission independently gave me a huge sense of pride and confidence.”

“My proudest moment is every time one of my Sailors receives a promotion.”

“My proudest moment was when I took over the worst Post Office on the waterfront and achieved the highest inspection score in Sasebo. The inspector called me out in front of the Commanding Officer and gave me credit in front of everyone.”

“I returned home after completion of an Individual Augmentee tour in Afghanistan to a welcome ceremony at the airport with my family present. It was the proudest moment of my career to serve my country in uniform during war. I always wanted to be an IA and I can now say that I did my part to help.”

“My proudest moment was participating in the humanitarian operation for the evacuation of Lebanon in 2006.”

“I am in the Pacific Fleet Band and we deployed on the 2011 Pacific Partnership to the Asia-Pacific region. I have never before felt that my personal service has had such a major impact on so many people in such a positive way.”

“My proudest moment was when I had my anchors pinned-on during the CPO pinning ceremony on-board my ship. Wearing my khaki’s for the first time and getting my anchors put me up in the clouds.”

“My proudest moment was when I graduated from boot camp. While I was older and already had my degrees, I viewed the Navy as my destination...not a stepping-stone to go somewhere else. My Navy career has saved my life. Graduating from Boot Camp represented ‘my arrival’ and has been a very important achievement for my family.”

“Driving home from work, I noticed an apartment building on fire and a man waving frantically for help. I was first on the scene and called 911 – then I banged on all the doors, to notify everyone before the police, fire department, and ambulances arrived. I helped get people out of danger. I am a Yeoman and when I received a Navy Achievement medal from the Base Commanding Officer, it was the proudest moment for me.”

“Making Chief and then Senior Chief are milestones of my career. Serving on the Hawaii Region Ceremonial Guard is by far my proudest moment because I was able to represent the Navy and serve the community.”

“My proudest moment was when I made First Class in a joint command...especially since I passed by .18 of a point.”

“My proudest moment in the Navy is everyday that I serve. Knowing that I am defending and supporting my country on a daily basis gives me great satisfaction and makes me feel proud of myself.”

“By far, being selected to Chief Petty Officer...and all the blessings this command has given me. My uniform fitting brought tears to my eyes.”

“My proudest moment came after I had helped an officer who had failed a certain section of a board exam twice. I helped train him and showed him some things that I had learned in my career. A few days later, he passed the exam and he said that I was the best at what I do.”

“The day that I put on Senior Chief made me proud. The second proudest moment for me was the day that I returned home from a 9 month deployment.”

“My proudest moment was sharing the international language of music to thousands who live in the Ukraine.”

“My proudest moment was when I made First Class after five years and 11 tries.”

“My proudest moment will happen when I retire. I look at these moments as something I have finished. My highlights include making Senior Chief Petty Officer, Chief Petty Officer, and earning my Bachelor of Arts degree.”

“My proudest moment was saving a heart attack victim while aboard a submarine at sea.”

“My proudest moment was as a junior enlisted, put into a position where the command needed me to stand watch in a supervisory position normally reserved for a First Class Petty Officer.”

“My proudest moment was when I stood beside one of MY Sailors, when HE made First Class Petty Officer and I was able to pin him.

“The day that I felt accepted into the mess by my peers – not just seeing my name on the list, but when I felt accepted.”

“While assigned to Assault Craft Unit ONE, during the operation to assist Indonesia and Sri Lanka after the tsunami, we brought ashore over 100 tons of relief supplies.”

“The day my daughter was born.”

“The day my Captain presented me with my degree from college was my proudest moment.”

“The day that I made Master Chief was my proudest day (of course, making Chief Petty Officer was awesome too).”

“My proudest moment was when I wrote a poem at my best friends commissioning. I saw his mother’s face while the speaker read the poem. She was overwhelmed with pride and it showed me the importance of his hard work and achievement.”

“When I took off my Recruit Hat and placed my Navy Hat on at the completion of Boot Camp was my proudest day.”

“My proudest moment was a day when a full bird Captain came down to our spaces with a technical issue. He did not want to talk to anyone but me.”

“When I made Second Class Petty Officer, only one year after going to Captain’s Mast, I proved that I was worth keeping in the Navy and earned respect back from everyone...then I made First Class in six and a half years. In a nutshell, I went from the ‘top’ to the ‘rock bottom’ and proved to myself that I could climb back up to the top.”

“During a 2008 deployment, a sailor was in distress. I called ‘Man Down’ and later learned that my call had saved his life.”

“My proudest moment was when my Mother and wife pinned on my anchors.”

“We performed in the Pacific Partnership Band at an elementary school in Timor Leste. The children were so excited to help us perform, that together, we danced and paraded around the school with them.”

“My proudest moment is when one of my junior folks gets promoted under my watch.”

“Every September I am filled with pride, to watch First Class Petty Officers pinned as Chiefs.”

“My proudest moment was when I saw the tears of pride on my wife’s face when I told her that ‘we’ made chief petty officer.

“My proudest moment was when I came home for the first time in uniform to see my friends and family. I was a Seaman Recruit.”

“My proudest moment was when I prepared my first package to nominate the Junior Sailor of the Quarter, and then learned that my Sailor was selected.”

“My proudest moment was when I received a Distinguished Leadership Award.”

“My proudest moment was when I received news that I had made Second Class Petty Officer.”

“My proudest moment was when I earned the title of Career Counselor of the Year.”

“My proudest moment was when I commissioned the USS STERETT in Baltimore, MD, and seeing the ship that Andrew Sterett was on in the 1800’s sitting right in front of the newest ship carrying his name. It was an outstanding moment of the true history of our service.”

“My proudest moment was when I became a plank owner for the CTN rate and made First Class Petty Officer on the first CTN exam.”

“My proudest moment was when I completed my one year duty as an Individual Augmentee in Djibouti. I am a reservist and grateful to make my own contribution.”

“My proudest moment was when I played taps at Punchbowl national cemetery for a shipmate who was a bugler when he was in the Navy.”

“My proudest moment was when the Navy re-evaluated the advancement exam for the September 2010 cycle, and realized that they had left a great First Class Petty Officer off the list (me)...and December 17, 2010 became my official frocking date.”

“My proudest moment was when I received a Command Advancement to First Class Petty Officer for success in recruiting. My daughters were at the ceremony to share that with me.”

“My proudest moment was after a ten year struggle, I made Chief Petty Officer. My wife is proud of me and I am proud of her...she stood by me the whole time.”

“My proudest moment was when I put on Second Class Petty Officer. It came with more responsibility, but I knew that I was ready for it.”

“My proudest moment was earning my ‘Air Warfare’ pin and being the first E-3 to do it.”

“My proudest moment was when I finished ‘C’ school and finally placed in a rate. I had wanted it for a very long time and now, I finally have it.”

“My proudest moment was the day that my wife pinned the Master Chief anchor on my collar.”

“My proudest moment was when I re-enlisted.”

“My proudest moment is every time when I see my junior personnel excel, advance, win awards, receive recognition for their achievements and qualifications.”

“My proudest moment was when I made Second Class Petty Officer while on deployment to Japan.”

“My proudest moment was when I finished Boot Camp and joined the Fleet.”

“I am proud for being the person that I am right now, by making it to Second Class Petty Officer with an outstanding Navy record.”

“My proudest moment was when I graduated from the Navy School of Music.”

“My proudest moment was when my family visits and I can share my experiences with them.”

“My proudest moment was when I found out that I was selected for Chief Petty Officer in 2003.”

“My proudest moment was when I was promoted to Third Class Petty Officer.”

“My proudest moment is when we deploy and we all return together.”

“My proudest moment was when I earned my ‘Surface Warfare’ pin as an E-3.”

“My proudest moment was when stood at attention on the ship as we returned from my first deployment.”

“My proudest moment was when I was named ‘Junior Sailor of the Year’ for COMPACFLT with only five years of service.”

“My proudest moment was when I earned my ‘Air Warfare’ and ‘Surface Warfare’ pins on the same deployment.”

“My proudest moment came after six years of service, when I received an ‘Early Promote’ on my evaluation, which allowed me to take the E-6 exam six months early.”

“Anytime that I took a ‘board’ and passed, it gave me a sense of achievement and meant the world to me.”

“I played taps at my grandfather’s funeral.”

“My proudest moment was when I advanced before I expected to...it was a complete surprise but I was grateful to finally receive recognition.”

“My proudest moment was when I received my first award.”

“My proudest moment was when I made First Class Petty Officer, while on shore duty, when everyone told me it was impossible to do.”

“My proudest moment was when made Second Class Petty Officer and re-enlisted in 2003. It felt as though I had really accomplished something and was making a difference.”

“My proudest moment was the day I found out that I made Chief Petty Officer.”

“My proudest moment was when I learned that I had made First Class Petty Officer. I was not expecting it...so it was quite emotional. I have a lot of proud moments in the Navy, because I am proud to serve my country.”

“My proudest moment for me was when the Base Commanding Officer took the time out of his busy schedule to call me at 7:00pm at home. He told me to put the phone on speaker because he had something to tell me and my wife... something GREAT...he wanted to tell me and my wife that ‘we’ made Chief Petty Officer. The look on my wife’s face was something that I will never forget.”

“I was not happy with my ranking as an E-5 on our submarine...so I studied for two hours a day, every day, for six months. My proudest moment was when I cut an 80 on the advancement exam, advanced to E-6, and learned that all my E-5 friends...were still E-5.”

“My proudest moment was when I graduated from Basic Training and realized that I had become part of a group with a world of tradition.”

“My proudest moment was the first time I put on the uniform of a Chief Petty Officer.”

“I joined the Navy and met my first Chief Petty Officer, Senior Chief Petty Officer, and Master Chief Petty Officer and said, ‘I want to be part of that club.’ My proudest moment was on September 16, 2010, when I received my anchors and became part of this group that I had always held in such high regard.”

“My proudest moment was when I made Second Class Petty Officer – when I did not think that had done that well – it was a complete surprise.”

“My proudest moment was on stage with the Pacific Fleet Band, in front of 10,000 people in Indonesia. It was amazing to have all of these people excited and happy about U.S. Sailors. I felt like we made a difference in how people who live overseas, look at us.”

“My proudest moment was getting my ‘Navy’ ball cap at Boot Camp.”

“My proudest moment was the day that I reported for my first sea duty assignment as a Chief Petty Officer.”

“My proudest moment was when I was named Honor Recruit at Boot Camp because my fellow recruits voted for me.”

John Quincy Adams once said, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, to learn more, to do more, to become more...you are a leader.” His words come to life and take-on an even greater meaning when you think about how many of you, and people like you, supported the development of this Sailor over the course of his professional lifetime.

“My mother and father were poor and have had great difficulty getting-by in life for as long as I can remember. They have had nothing to be proud of and say, “look what I have done.’ Through two divorces and a lifetime of drugs, alcohol, and misplaced values, the future always seemed dim. Then the day came...when they could stand in Washington, D.C.... and listen to the Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy and the Chief of Naval Operations...talk about me, their son, and listen to a story of how great things were done by my hands...I watched them cry as they pinned my anchors by their own hands – it has been and always will be my proudest moment in uniform.”

It is important to take stock and understand what we have here...how valuable, how powerful, and the impact that this organization has had on the individual lives of Sailors and families...as well as...the impact individual contributions have had on our Navy and nation. You have just heard the voices that make contact with people in the Asia Pacific, who represent the national interest, and who act on democratic principles. Their actions and ideas appeal to audiences well beyond the confines of a single mission or operation. When they demonstrate the leadership, commitment, and the resolve of the American people, they reveal the soul of our nation.

You never know the enduring impact of your words, your ideas, and your example. In the challenging days that lie ahead, remember this moment, remember this team.

Tonight is more than an annual event. This is an opportunity for fellowship, reunion, and renewal. It is your chance (it is our chance) to restate goals and dreams as well as acknowledge the important role and contribution of each other...for each other...to say hello...to spend time together, and to support the goals and aspirations of each other. If we let these moments slip away, then you risk becoming numb, deaf, and blind to the goodness, richness, and potential of the person who stands with you on watch and will some day fill your shoes.

The wonderful and truly remarkable aspect of our calling is that you never know how fate will test the person next to you, or what great national decisions will fall upon the shoulders of your team, or how the future of the republic will rest upon the judgment of those you have taught, led, and mentored.

For me, I am grateful and thank you for the imprint that you have had on my life, the chance to be on this team, and for having had the privilege to serve.

Thank you. God Bless you, our nation, our Navy, and all those who stand with us.