

USS Frank E. Evans Reunion
Four Points Sheraton, Milwaukee Airport, Milwaukee, WI
"The Promise of the Future "
11 June 2005; 1900
Captain Anthony P. Barnes
Commodore, Navy Recruiting Region Central

Thank you, Mister Campbell, for that kind introduction. Vice Admiral Tidd – distinguished guests – Sailors of the Frank E. Evans – Sailors of the Melbourne – wives, friends, and family of them all...

It is an honor and a privilege to be with you this evening. The Sailors here tonight – have written proud chapters in our respective Navy histories. In total, you served – from the Second World War ... up until a few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

But, like life itself – some of those chapters have been sad ones – with sorrow and loss.

The events of that night in June, 1969 – I know are etched in the memories - of all those who were there.

And even for the Shipmates who served – before and after ... it is part of your own history, as well.

In reading the tragic events – I was impressed by one emotion ... and then, a very different one.

First, of course, is the shock and sorrow. The mourning for the young lives lost – and careers damaged. All due ceremony and respect is owed to those who suffered ... and we will remember them always.

But then, as I read further into the incident – I couldn't help remarking upon the tremendous fortitude, courage, and allied camaraderie – that was displayed on that ill-starred night.

The Sailors of the Melbourne – through every hazard and difficulty ... going above and beyond the call of duty ... to help and rescue the stricken ship and Sailors of their ally.

They certainly deserved the three cheers they got. And further cheers – down the years.

There's certainly no denying – that, what Sir Winston Churchill called “The English Speaking Peoples” – and what some folks nowadays call “The Anglosphere” ... we have a special bond.

Language, of course, will forever bond us, but, there are a few things more important than that.

A literary tradition going back a thousand years. A naval tradition. History. Law. An indefinable, yet definite, conception of “fair play”.

We're cousins. If not by blood – then by everything else I just mentioned. And it's *good* to have cousins ... and good to have Shipmates, too.

[... pause ...]

In all my career – I don't think I've ever seen a more exciting and challenging time to be in the United States Navy than in right now.

Not only are we in the midst of serving our Nation in war ... we are also re-inventing and re-structuring the Navy itself. Sixty years ago ... the Battle of Okinawa – and World War Two in the Pacific Theater ... was at the end of its second month. Fighting it ... was the

greatest armada in the history of the world – an American Navy armada, with our British allies. Specifically I'M talking about, "Operation Iceberg". The first invasion of a Japanese home island. It was a bigger operation - than the Normandy landings in Europe a year before.

Forty aircraft carriers – 18 battleships – 2-hundred destroyers ... 15-hundred warships in all. The allied invasion force numbered 182-thousand American land warriors. It was the most ferocious battle of the Pacific War. Today, though, we are getting small. That's simply a fact. Over the next five years, we are projecting a cut of 50-thousand Sailors ... from 373-thousand – to 320-thousand from the ranks of our naval fleet.

Our Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Vern Clark, says, "I'm the only Service Chief who is asking for fewer people. I want to maximize the importance of every job that we have. I want the jobs that we give people – to have incredible job content."

This CNO is preparing us for the future that is demanding, difficult, and uncertain. This is exactly the reason that we must change. And I am here tonight to tell you - that we are changing with

the speed and agility- that only a professional organization like the United States Navy can accomplish. The facts speak for themselves. Here are a few...

Some years ago, when the Navy had a fleet of 485 ships – it deployed an average of 98 of them warships at any one time. Today, we have fewer than 3-hundred ships – but we deploy about 92 of them at any one time.

The reason we can do that is because today's platforms are more capable, more ready, and better manned and trained than at any time in Naval history.

Here's another example. When earlier Naval aviators served aboard aircraft carriers in Vietnam - those carrier's strike package could hit 23 targets a day in Southeast Asia.

In Desert Storm (early 90's) – one of our carriers could hit 162 targets a day. In Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraq Freedom (early 2000's), our carriers could hit in excess of 680 targets a day, with incredible Laser guided precision and reach. By 2010 – we will be able to hit over 1000 targets a day.

That, ladies and gentlemen – is what they used to call “bang for the buck”. America is getting a heck of a lot more bang - **from** their Navy bucks – and from each individual Sailor who serves.

And bang for the buck has never been more important than now.

That’s why it’s so exciting to be in today’s Navy. Every single Sailor is needed more than ever before.

The Navy expects a whole lot more out of them ... and is anxious to reward them for it.

Admiral Clark puts it best. “A Sailor raises his or her right hand – and promises to defend our Nation.” He says, “As the Chief ... I’m going to do my best to give each of them the tools ...”

... “so that they can blossom to their full potential – and we will give them a chance to make a difference.” Those “tools” begin with their initial Navy training. That’s where Great Lakes, the Recruit Training Command and Naval Service Training Command comes in.

I can tell you that the Sailors in active service today – as America is engaged in its fourth year of our war on terrorism... have the same kind of steel – as all you patriots of our country's past.

The Navy... and Great Lakes ... are doing the utmost to prepare ourselves – and the Nation's newest Sea Warriors ... for the coming challenges.

[... pause ...]

In telling you about your Sailors - I'll preface by pointing out the a stern fact of our existence ...

... That the greatest, most powerful, and most technologically sophisticated Navy in the world... needs intelligent and well-educated people to sail it – and fight it.

Every time a Navy warship leaves the harbor – it is a primed and ready weapon system. Every veteran Sailor knows that.

It doesn't matter if America is at peace, or at war – our mission as a fighting fleet is to be prepared, to be ready at any moment's notice ... to defend America and defeat any foe - at sea, in the air, beneath the ocean, and on the land.

Now, of course, when our ships leave port – they are a national asset ... ready to carry out orders, whether it be active combat - force and port protection – peacekeeping - or humanitarian assistance.

We are currently off the coast of Afghanistan – Iraq – and Indonesia, and in many other corners around the globe – all the while planning and preparing for homeland defense.

We work with other services and agencies – and extend the Nation's defensive perimeter further out to sea ... and overseas.

I probably don't have to tell our Aussie friends here tonight – that the terrorist attack on Bali - on 12 September, 2002 – which killed and injured so many of your countrymen ... was deeply felt in America.

It's not pleasant to be targeted by terrorists. And the only possible response – besides surrender ... is to fight. Our countries are allies in this new war, too.

In America's new war - our Navy needs the best and brightest ... the most competent men and women - who live out our motto, "Honor, Courage, and Commitment". Our need for them has never been greater.

Navy Recruiting and Naval Service Training Command – and the entire Navy – are embarked in what we call the "Revolution in Training" ...

... to ensure each new Sea Warrior begins his or her naval service with the necessary training and skill sets for success.

The launching pad – the port from which that revolution begins – is Great Lakes and Naval Service Training Command, now about a year old.

That is not just a name change – it's a new way of doing business.

This new command - is responsible for every single Sailor who puts on the Navy uniform – the “cloth of our nation” – with the lone exception of the Naval Academy.

It includes Boot Camp at Great Lakes – all 59 Reserve Officer Training Corps units throughout the country ... and the 159 participating colleges and universities in that program.

It also includes Officer Training programs - in Newport, Rhode Island and Pensacola, Florida ...

... and all Navy Junior R.O.T.C. high school programs, and there are 621 of them. Two of them are in Lake County ... Zion and North Chicago.

Now, for the first time in our Navy’s long history of innovation – one commander, and one command – will train nearly every new Sailor,

... enlisted, officers, even high school cadets. We'll all be on the same sheet of music, playing the same song.

And that leads me to my next subject. The newest Shipmates we are building – at Great Lakes, and elsewhere in the U.S. Navy. And the new Navy we are creating. I know many of you went thru “Boot Camp in the 40’s or 50’s, But things at Great Lakes are a little different today. This year, 2005 – marks a century from the summer day in 1905 –when Great Lakes first hoisted the Navy flag and began construction ... of what was to become – and still is – the largest ... and BEST – enlisted naval training institution in the world.

It’s a challenge – and a work in progress. But the Navy is already experiencing the benefits ... in the young Sailors who first arrive in the fleet.

[... pause ...]

Let me just tell you about one of those commands where the fleet’s finest begin – the largest of them ... Boot Camp – Recruit Training Command – in your back yard at Great Lakes... and some of its major initiatives. You can compare to how it was back when You were a new Boot.

In and of itself, the construction of our new Boot Camp is a monumental undertaking. It's been going on for five years already – and will take another five years to complete. Total cost for RTC re-capitalization – is over three quarters of a billion dollars, \$850 Million to be exact.

At the present time, we are training an annual average of 40-thousand young men and women in Boot Camp.

They all receive eight weeks of intensive training – before going on to graduation, further training, and then to the fleet.

When our construction is completed ... they will all be trained in full-function, self contained structures ... just like it is on a warship.

Classrooms – training rooms – berthing – mess hall ... almost every facility needed to make American volunteers into Sailors ... will be in a single structure. That is why we name each building - which can hold over 1-thousand recruits – after historic - or active - ships of the fleet.

After the barracks, the biggest single project will be an 82-million dollar new Battle Stations 21 complex for recruits, planned for completion in 2007.

For more than six years now, Great Lakes recruits have gone through the capstone event ... we call "Battle Stations"...

... from which they emerge, 24 long hours later – with a new blue ballcap ... imprinted with the proud word, "Navy" – to replace the "Recruit" ballcap - that they've been wearing since Day One of their training.

More than 250-thousand young Americans have graduated from Battle Stations already. For the last several years, we've been improvising - running that culminating event – in improvised and ad hoc spaces.

One day soon – we will have Battle Stations 21. It is a requirement – a mission – that has no precedent in the history of the Navy, or Naval training.

This is an initiative that demands realism, relevancy, and rigor – to prepare our newest Sailors to hit the deck of the fleet – ready to fight and meet head on the challenges of the 21st Century Security Environment.

It is an 82-million dollar investment in American security - its Navy, and its Sea Warriors.

Admiral Clark, puts it this way ... He recently said during a visit to Boot Camp:

“What is going on ... at Great Lakes – is a tremendous investment – in the infrastructure – so that the men and women serving here ... have the right tools to create the 21st Century Sailor.”

“We are giving our instructors – and our recruit division commanders – the kinds of tools and facilities – that they need – to get the job done.” Unquote.

[... pause ...]

Sailors are getting the job done right now. Currently, there are 21-thousand Sailors – including 28-hundred Reservists – in the Central Command’s Area of Responsibility... the Middle East.

Sailors on the USS John F. Kennedy’s Carrier Air wing 17 – between July and November of 2004 - have flown, and maintained – more than 8-thousand sorties over Iraq – for a total of nearly 22-thousand flight hours.

Currently, Carrier Air Wing 3 – on the USS Harry Truman – is providing our allied forces in Iraq close air support ... and conducting intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions in ongoing operations.

Other Sailors are guarding oil terminals in the area. Many of our warships have been intercepting and boarding - tens of thousands of

suspicious vessels - in the Central Command area since November of 2001.

We have more than 25-hundred Navy medical personnel in direct support of both Operation Enduring Freedom – and Iraqi Freedom.

They provide medical care to our forces – and are inspecting areas for chemical weapons and infectious diseases.

More than a thousand Seabees – our Naval Construction Force - are in Iraq – building schools, hospitals, and other essential infrastructure for the Iraqi people.

The Navy is also doing other, less traditional missions. They include: assessing damage to bridges, roads, and facilities – and teaching hundreds of Iraqis in the construction trades.

Navy Expeditionary Supply personnel ... are serving in Iraq and nearby waters as customs inspectors – and others are providing mail, fuel services, and cargo handling.

And the first tangible source of United States support and aid following last December's tsunami ... was the USS Abraham Lincoln

Carrier Strike Group - with the USS Bonne Homme Richard
Expeditionary Strike Group.

[... pause ...]

All the enlisted Sailors – and the vast majority of the officers –
engaged in those missions, or preparing to take them on ... became
Sailors under the aegis of Naval Service Training Command.

I'm proud to be able to report ... that the recruits, staff, and
students of NSTC – are doing their jobs with skill, confidence, and
dedication. With Honor, Courage, and Commitment.

They are the future of the Navy – and I am here to tell you ... that
future looks very bright, indeed.

With your encouragement and support – and that of the American
people as a whole ... we will perform every mission given to us with
pride and confidence.

That is all every Sailor, Marine, Soldier, Airman, and Coast
Guardsmen ... asks from those back home. "The support of the

American people.” The people they took the oath to defend.

And that, assuredly, includes Navy and other veterans – of other wars, and other service.

With you behind us, in heart and spirit ... there is nothing under heaven – that we cannot do.

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