

## **Time to Hang'em Up**

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This is a phrase that great athletes use when they realize it's time to call an end to their career. Last week, in a small hospital room, another great person has come to the same conclusion. However, this is not a great athlete or an athlete at all. But rather a great man who has been a volunteer to his organization for over 70 years.

On Wednesday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2016, U.S. Coast Guard Lieutenant Noel Johnson, Commander of Coast Guard Small Boat Station Atlantic City and Coast Guard Auxiliarist Walter Alsegg, presented Richard Keast with his certificate of retirement from the U.S. Coast Guard Auxiliary. Mr. Keast (known as Dick to his friends) is now in his 90's. However, for all of his adult life, Dick has been an active member of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. Dick has been in the Auxiliary since World War II.

In 1939, with war clouds on the horizon, Congress created the Coast Guard Auxiliary as a volunteer organization to assist the Coast Guard in its many functions. Dick Keast joined the Auxiliary in 1942. As a young mechanical engineer, Dick was considered vital to the war effort and exempt from military service. Joining the Coast Guard Auxiliary allowed Dick to serve his country while still performing his crucial economic duties. Once a week, every Tuesday afternoon, Dick and a crew of 7 reported to the Quaker City Yacht Club in Northeast Philadelphia to embark on a 12-hour security patrol. From 7PM to 7AM Wednesday morning, this volunteer crew in a 40' privately owned boat, patrolled the Delaware River in the area now located from the Ben Franklin Bridge to the Old Navy Yard.

During the war, this area was home to two private shipyards that built a significant portion of the U.S. Navy. At the nearby Philadelphia Naval Shipyard, new ships were being built and damaged ships were being repaired. The job of the Auxiliary at that time was to watch the Delaware River for saboteurs attempting to interfere with these crucial maritime activities.

At the conclusion of the War, like many of the millions of citizens that served in the military, Dick Keast resigned from the Auxiliary to raise a family. However, the desire to serve remained. Dick re-joined the Auxiliary in the 1960's while living in Delaware County. He rose to Flotilla Commander and taught radio communications to the Auxiliary members, which at that time was still using Morse Code radios.

After retiring, Dick moved to Ocean City and joined Flotilla 81, the oldest Coast Guard Auxiliary flotilla in New Jersey. Dick advanced from Flotilla Commander to eventually serve on the Auxiliary National Staff. Dick served as a Coxswain and facility owner up until his late 80's. This writer had the privilege of accompanying Dick on his last patrol before he gave up being an

active coxswain. Dick was also active as an instructor, teaching navigation to new boaters who took the Auxiliary's "About Boating Safety" class.

One of Dick's great passions in life is painting. Dick loved to paint portraits of the Coast Guard facilities that were in our flotilla. Many of his fellow flotilla members have these paintings hanging in their homes. Dick also painted portraits of Coast Guard vessels. One of his paintings hangs in the lobby of Coast Guard Station Atlantic City.

On this retirement day, Lt. Johnson presented Dick Keast with a painting commissioned by the crew of Station Atlantic City to celebrate Dick's many decades of faithful service to the Coast Guard and Coast Guard Auxiliary. If ever the term "Living Legend" can be used, Dick Keast is that person. We all wish him "Fair Winds and Following Seas" as he completes his life's journey.

*Semper Paratus*