

ADM Mike Mullen
Remarks as prepared for
VADM Joe Metcalf III
Memorial Service Eulogy
March 8, 2007

Ruth, Joseph, David, Elizabeth; other members of the Metcalf family, distinguished guests, dear friends:

Today the Navy weeps.

Today we say goodbye for the last time to a great man.

Today, every Sailor on every ship in the fleet, though he may not even know it, has lost one of the best shipmates he ever had.

Vice Admiral Joe Metcalf is gone. I can hardly believe those words even as I say them here to you.

Yet for all my disbelief, the truth shakes me.

The indefatigable, unassailable, mighty Joe Metcalf has slipped the ways and sailed on.

And though we are sad for the parting, as we are in the Navy at all partings, we can and we should take comfort in the way we knew the man, in the lessons he taught us, the service he rendered, the love he showered on Ruthie, his children and his grandchildren.

Let us take pride in the leadership he demonstrated in war and in peace.

Let us be thankful for the strident way he defended our freedom.

Let us be humbled by the example he gave us -- the very best example of integrity and character and resolve.

He would never allow it, of course, given the opportunity to say so, but we owe him that and more on this day.

We owe it to his memory not just to herald the accomplishments and the laurels or to speak of battles tried and battles won but to remember rather the extraordinary way in which he approached life and service.

We must focus not on the deeds, but on the doer.

When I think about Admiral Metcalf myself, of the impact he had on the Navy over the course of an amazing 41-year career -- and of the love he bore in his breast for his family

and his nation -- I am reminded of a passage found in the second book of Timothy, chapter four, verse seven:

“I have fought a good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith.”

No words in praise that I could offer here today, nor any accolade thrust forth, could hope to capture the essence of a legend like Joe Metcalf any better than these.

He did fight a good fight nearly all his life. He fought for the Navy, of course, and for the safety and security of democracy throughout the Cold War.

He even, as Commander of our Second Fleet, led the war in Grenada.

But he also fought to revitalize the main battle line of our Navy, the surface fleet.

Taking a cue from his mentor, the great Admiral Arleigh Burke, Joe made it his personal mission to make sure our surface fleet was ready in all respects for sea and for struggle with the Soviets.

He led what we are only now coming to recognize was something of a naval renaissance, an enormous leap forward in technology and tactics that brought us the Aegis weapons system, the ARLEIGH BURKE-class destroyer and a 600-ship Navy.

If there is one legacy for which he will always be known, admired by most, feared by some -- it is as a rock-hard, salt-stained, dyed-in-the-wool Surface Warrior.

Joe was a Sailor first, and he was proud of it.

To suggest, however, that he fought only on the sea -- or even about it -- would be slightly less than accurate.

Joe was a bit of a scrapper in just about everything it turns out.

There's a story still floating around the Pentagon that, annoyed by the constant editing of his paperwork and memos by an over-zealous boss, Joe deliberately began to insert misspelled words in whatever document he passed up the chain.

A friend, knowing Joe for the perfectionist he surely was, asked him one day what this was all about.

"Well," said Joe, "the deputy needs to find something to change in my work. He might as well spend his time fixing these spelling errors than messing with the content."

The tactic worked. To be honest with you, I think it still works.

Here was a man who truly did everything for a reason -- a purpose -- not for himself or for his own glory, but for the glory of others.

He loved nothing better than to mentor and to teach, whether it was on the bridge of ship or in the halls of the Pentagon.

He loved Sailors, and they loved him back. He never considered himself above them. Indeed, he would put it the other way around.

Sailors, he felt, were above him. He kept the faith, their faith.

It was an honor just to have lived at the same time and to have served in the same uniform as Joe Metcalf.

I treasure the times he and I spoke, and all the advice he imparted. Like so many of his pupils, I am what I am -- and I can do what I do -- because he lit the path before my feet.

Joe leaves us today in body, it is true. But the path remains lit, for his spirit lingers here in this chapel, out there in the Yard, and especially out there at sea with the Fleet.

To his children and grandchildren here today, please know that we know how fortunate we were to have known him and to have been inspired by him.

Please know that we will never forget what he taught us about war and peace and about sacrifice to a greater cause, about the true high cost of living in a free society.

And to his wonderful Ruthie -- the love and the light of his life -- please know how very much we appreciate your service and sacrifice over these many years.

We know -- and will always remember -- the love and support you gave him.

We know and will always remember how you made possible what he made possible for the Navy.

We are truly in your debt.

To the Sailors of this great Navy, the ones out there on watch right now, I say this:

Remember Joe Metcalf. Learn of his life and of his service, for he helped build the Navy you now put to sea. He made you ready for combat so that you might never know its ugly sting.

He fought a good fight. He finished his course. He kept the faith.

May God bless his soul, his family, his Navy and the nation he loved so much and served so nobly.

Thank You.