

Remarks as delivered by ADM Mike Mullen  
VADM Massenburg Retirement, Patuxent River, Maryland  
16 February 2007

Dr. Etter, distinguished guests, family and friends. It's great to see you all.

It's good to be here today, and from the looks of it, it's a good day in what some call "Wally World."

It is also a special day for the Massenburg family, these occasions always are so. For Carolyn, Beau, Ian, and Ronan, and for Wally's mom Kitty, for his brothers George and Robert, Wally's uncle Bud, who inspired Wally to join the Navy, and his aunt Nan. Carolyn's parents William and Joan Flanagan and for so many other friends and family who have traveled far and wide to be here today in this blustery winter weather.

I make this next statement with some trepidation. It says "Aloha to the Blue Sharks." And that'll be it. That's VP-6.

It's not often we pipe a shipmate over the side for the last time and even more rare to have the opportunity to get in a few parting shots before he goes and I understand there were plenty last night.

Wally, I thank you for inviting me to share in the celebration of your outstanding career. It is a great honor to speak on your behalf.

If Wally is anything, he is a devoted son and a dedicated father. Kitty, we know you have been a huge influence on your son and we appreciate the challenges you faced in molding him into the man he is today.

Beau, I see you too wear the wings of gold and understand you are already doing great things in the VP community for which I am very appreciative, and like your father has, I expect you to lead and do well.

Ian, it looks like you inherited your dad's business genes and I hear you are doing very well down in Gainesville, FL.

And of course, there's Ronan, U.S. Naval Academy Class of 2027. And so far, he has a pretty good track record; he's been to every Army-Navy game since he's been born.

Wally's leadership philosophy was shaped in his early career and it has not changed in the nearly eighteen years since he's left squadron command.

He's passionate, he's caring, and he leads by example.

Wally started his career in the Navy as a P-3 Pilot but being a bit of a rebel, he essentially created his own career path.

He didn't do the first tour instructor job, nor did he serve the typical tour aboard an aircraft carrier. Instead, he took on some remote assignments to places like Antigua.

He didn't follow the traditional formula to make it to command. But he made it and he commanded exceptionally well.

In every assignment, Wally has made a difference. Everywhere he went, he's left his mark.

In all he did, he was persistent and passionate about the Navy, about his community, and about the Sailors he led.

And he's still making a difference today.

As a P-3 pilot, his tactical prowess was second-to-none. He's told me that. Crews that flew with him, some of which are here today, describe his flying as phenomenal and his tactical performance as incredible.

Wally could find a submarine when no one else could, an old squadron mate said recently, and he spared not a moment in passing on his knowledge to his crews.

Captain Bill Mosk, who's in the audience today, tells a story of how Wally used to teach. On long patrols, he would pull out a black grease pencil while sitting in the command seat of the cockpit.

He would hold court for his crew and use the cockpit window as his whiteboard. He would spend the flight writing up aviation formulas and diagrams of tactical maneuvers.

The longer the flight, the more he wrote and the less the pilot actually flying the plane could see out the window.

Safety rules notwithstanding, the technique worked and apparently left quite an impression on his officers and crew.

Wally told me just before the ceremony that twenty-five of his shipmates in his wardroom, his squadron mates from VP-6, showed up today. Ever mindful of his role as a mentor, he has never been one to pass up an opportunity to teach and he teaches us still today.

But instead of teaching us about flying and tactics, he teaches us about business, process improvement and cost reduction.

Catapulted into the forefront of the managerial revolution sweeping the Navy today, Wally has transformed Naval Aviation's business culture from one of consumption at any cost to one of readiness at the right cost.

There is no doubt he was the right man for this job. He is efficient. He lives efficiency. He understands requirement and cost containment.

Even the car he drove for nearly thirteen years is a testament to his commitment to cost containment.

Some of you here today may have been subjected to the pleasantries of riding in his “Blue Rollerskate.” Those of you who were not, please allow me to elaborate briefly.

You see, Wally was a proud owner of a 1990 Geo Metro.

By the time he was a 2-Star, this chariot of the Taj Garage required pliers to change the radio station and athletic ability to reach the driver’s seat since the driver’s door locks didn’t open, but it gave him great gas mileage.

After many miles, the exhaust system required replacing.

A new exhaust cost more than the book value of the car which was about \$250.00. Still, he fixed it and drove on for a few more months promising to replace the car the next time something broke.

Something broke. He lost a tire.

The tire was replaced and the car immediately driven to a side street next to a Dodge dealership.

He already knew what car he wanted and what the right price to pay was.

Having decided on a Dodge Intrepid after renting many, he walked up to the dealer, picked out the one he wanted and managed to convince the salesman to guarantee a \$500.00 trade-in for his yet unseen \$250.00 Geo Metro.

He bought the Dodge, got what he wanted and sold his Metro for \$500.00. That says a lot about Wally.

Wally is a visionary who leads by example. He brought an intense commitment to controlling cost while providing our Sailors and Marines with the right capabilities to carry the fight to the enemy.

In fully appreciating the realities of modern warfare, Wally placed the aviation community squarely in the future and has led the Navy in adopting the most effective business processes to keep up with the rapid pace of change on the battlefield.

His dedication to responsible resourcing of the fleet is driven by his passion for his customer, the warfighter.

As the world changes, the face of naval aviation is changing and adapting to the challenges of a new era.

But this cannot happen by itself. It requires capable leaders and that is exactly what Wally is -- a strong, committed, and incredible leader.

Under his watchful eye, NAVAIR and the Naval Aviation Enterprise have brought us the P-8 Poseidon to replace Wally's beloved P-3 Orion and it's been done on budget and on schedule.

We've also seen the development of revolutionary aircraft system designed to provide critical situational awareness, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance, and targeting data to the warfighter.

Admired by those who have had the privilege of serving with him, he has been a change agent in a time when everything is changing.

I remember when I was the Vice-CNO and came down to pin on Wally's third star. I believe the words I used were "Welcome to the NFL."

Later, as CNO, I asked him to lead a study looking at the potential for a new Material Command. Of course he did and from that study emerged the Navy Enterprise "Behavior Model," a business framework I am applying Navy-wide.

In this league, Wally, you played like a champion.

You have cast a long shadow. By deeds rather than words you used your stewardship over Naval Aviation to further the business foundations of the Navy that we will use to dominate the seas for generations to come.

There are countless examples of how Wally impacted Naval Aviation. This small sample of accomplishments illustrates what most of you already know: he is a talented naval officer, an officer those of us remaining on active duty will sorely miss, and a leader of people who has really made a difference.

Here's what some of you had to say about Admiral Massenburg:

- He loves the Navy. He is passionate about Sailors. He understands Sailors. He deeply cares for them.
- I'd follow him anywhere.
- He's extremely down to earth.
- He's a real people person. He wants to get out there and shake hands.
- He listens, he hears our concerns, he addresses our concerns.

That powerful testimony underscores everything he does. In the end, it all comes down to Wally's passion to do the right thing, his desire to make things better, and his passion for taking care of his people.

Reaching the end of his naval career, Wally can take solace in the fact that he has ensured naval aviation and the Navy are better poised to deliver crucial capabilities when and where needed. Thank you Wally for all you've done. No better example of your investment exists today than the Carrier Strike Group John C. Stennis who sailed west to represent us as a Navy and us as a Nation in a very, very difficult time. It is really efforts like those Wally Massenburg has generated over the last several years that have allowed us to be ready to do that and to be able to go much deeper with that capability than just one more carrier strike group.

We all know he hasn't done it alone. He has had the unflinching support of his wife Carolyn who now, as they move just west of Boston, has the hardest job of all, Wally. In addition she's probably going to try and turn him into a Red Sox fan and that won't work well with somebody from Baltimore.

Carolyn, I thank you for your service. You've been a part of our team since your days in the Navy Office of the General Counsel and you will continue to be a part of our extended Navy Family.

Today we also welcome the Venlets. Dave, now it's your turn.

Your background is impressive, and your career has been remarkable. Naval Flight Officer, fighter pilot, test pilot, and program manager. All those achievements have led you here today. You bring exactly the right experience and exactly the right leadership to this job.

I have no doubt you will continue the momentum and build on NAVAIR's successes.

You now bear the burden and enjoy the privilege of ensuring we provide our Naval Aviators, Sailors and Marines with the right tools to fight and win the Global War on Terror and other potential conflicts. I wish you the best and Bunny as well as you take on your new assignment.

At the end of WWII, legendary Aviator Admiral Ernest J. King simply told his flag secretary, "Well, it's all over. I wonder what I am going to do tomorrow." Wally, we know you haven't yet decided what you are going to do tomorrow, but today we all celebrate your career, your accomplishments, and your devotion to duty.

Today, we are all thankful for Admiral Wally Massenburg – the Aviator, the Sailor, the Naval Officer – who showed us how to be better, who passionately served, and for thirty-eight years led with style.

Wally, regardless of what vector you fly, regardless of where you decide to take your incredible talent, I know you will do well and I know you will continue to inspire others to do well.

Personally and on behalf of our whole Navy, all Sailors, thank you, fair winds and following seas, and congratulations for all you've done.