

17 December 2019

Good Morning,

Please accept my nomination of BMCS John M. Barberi (ret) for the list of 100 Great Coast Guard Chiefs. Senior Chief Boatswain's Mate Barberi served from approximately 1973 to 1993 in various operational positions with outstanding impact on the waters of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest. After retirement, he served as a civilian in the 13th District Aton office continuing his longtime service to safety on waterways.

As a new BM3 in 1979, John was my BMC aboard USCGC Ironwood out of Attu and Kodiak. Thirty years later, I mentioned in my retirement speech that John Barberi was 'The Chief', someone who showed me the right way, the Coast Guard way, from the first day I served with him. In fact, vital lessons from him influenced my career and decision making all the way to my becoming BMCM. But I am just one of many impacted by John Barberi's leadership and management. After his retirement from active duty, while serving in the D13 Office, his expertise and guidance was irreplaceable to the operation of district buoy tenders and ANTs in maintaining safe waterways. With his combined military and civilian service, he was considered the 'go to' person by aton operators and headquarters program managers for over 30 years.

There are appointed leaders within organizations and then there are those who stand out through their recognized commitment, skill and overall depth of character. A person possesses these qualities or doesn't-there's no bargaining to gain them. When critical public safety missions require the best to meet challenges, an organization wants its best on a demanding platform such as a 180'. John was the perfect person for this type of demanding unit. One of the special things about John is his pedigree—the son of a Marine veteran of wars in Korea and Vietnam. He reflected a depth of military sharpness from this upbringing, to anyone privileged to serve with him in the Coast Guard. He was born with deep beliefs in service, matching with his talent to lead others as a Chief. Someone once told me that you can instantly figure out who is a leader within a group, before they even open their mouths—they just naturally stand out from the crowd. Without any knowledge about rank or designations, a stranger would pick BMCS Barberi as the person to follow and lead a mission safely. His natural well of leadership came with the quality of not having to say much to get things done, a look being as good as a word, much more effective than yelling or losing composure. John superbly stood out as a leader wherever he was stationed, with a proven track record working alongside other strong Coast Guard leaders such as Admiral Thad Allen and Admiral Ray Riutta aboard cutters they had commanded. No one ever needed to guess about John's level of motivation and dedication. His day to day actions were proof enough. He carried himself with dignity and strength of purpose in a way very few achieve but many strive to emulate.

I retain vivid impressions of the wide contributions of BMCS John Barberi in Alaska. I believe he impacted operational successes aboard the Ironwood more than anyone else in the chain of command. When Ironwood performed double coverage after our sister 180' ran aground, he set a standard of excellence in keeping us focused during a grueling underway schedule. When as a novice you first begin under the guidance of great people, underestimating the value of their lessons and examples are often taken in stride, a part of the learning curve of someone just

starting out. My appreciation of his skill and professionalism to our operational mission grew even more later, after working for exemplary role models such as Jack Downey and Lenny Cruz. Aboard the Ironwood, during tough Alaskan buoy runs up to Arctic Circle, working large lighted hulls in harsh conditions in the Gulf, accessing aids in the barren Aleutian Islands, a BM3 could get caught up in the intensity of the mission. Understanding the big picture of a successful buoy run comes sometime later when you are able to take a breath, glad to be back at the pier in Kodiak. That's when you get a better feel for the who, why and how relating to your still being in one piece after working in some of the most dangerous and remote waters in the US. BMCS Barberi's efforts in training us, planning and supervising operations were the difference in completing our mission without one injury aboard one of the busiest D17 cutters of that time. After serving aboard other cutters, and having the privilege of several OINC jobs, my understanding of his value to the Coast Guard only increased.

The best way to describe how he was involved every day as a leader goes back to the old adage of leading by example, starting with his focus leading up to a buoy run. His influence began way before getting underway on one of our frequent forty-day buoy runs to Northern Alaska and the Aleutians. His imprint showed in all early stages of preparation, including training his buoy deck team. A strong mentor, Senior Chief ensured each of us knew our jobs to the point of expecting the unexpected from this harsh environment. The extent of his leadership skills shows in mentoring BM1 Tom Hooper, later commanding officer of the Bittersweet and eventually rising to O-6 in charge of the D8 Waterways Office. Ensuring our readiness, he personally developed a training/qualification program of over a hundred knowledge and practical standards relating to seamanship. This increased the efficiency of every member of the Ironwood deck force, going well beyond any established Coast Guard directives from district or headquarters at that time. Many other D17 cutters adopted his innovative program, using a standard proven aboard Ironwood which prepared our skills before we even stepped onto a buoy deck. Senior Chief took each of us on as a personal project and developed green Coast Guard members to gain the tools which they then passed onto future generations. Something else which still stands out as an example in his taking care of Ironwood's crew and mission after all this time is how he improved the material condition of the Ironwood, procuring funds for updated safety gear (insulated boots, survival gear), tools to better facilitate safe ops on deck, new strong buoy chock blocks, modern steamboat jacks, always pressing his team to perform the mission in a more professional and in the end safer way. Senior Chief's leadership always tended toward finding the best way, molding into one solid crew people from many different backgrounds and competency levels.

While underway, one instance of his taking care of the crew and ship stands out during one of our fall buoy runs. A first class steel buoy, always a tough tie down due to its unique shape, design and weight, worked itself loose out of the only few points of positive control afforded by the buoy deck appendences. Senior Chief led four of us onto the deck around two a.m. to tighten the existing gripes and attempt to attach double tie downs. Along with the hazards of being in a Gulf of Alaska building chop in the middle of October even when fishing boats were tied up, we had a newly qualified OOD on the bridge unsure of the situation developing on the buoy deck. Soon after dragging out more chain and gripes from the forward hold, the severity of the seas

increased, and the buoy now started to whip around, threatening to break completely across the deck and damage the rest of the load. SC immediately told us to move toward the messdeck WTD area for refuge while he instructed the OOD over a handheld radio to take the seas more evenly and find a safer speed in order for us to secure the buoy. After getting no results using a voice strong enough for someone to hear all the way back in Kodiak, SC approached the bridge and took over the watch, attaining a speed and course which enabled us to attach the necessary gripes and even a cargo net to stabilize the buoy. Almost forty years later, there is not a doubt in my mind that there was no better person to have aboard that 180 that night to meet this challenge than John Barberi. He was out there on deck with us, and then took control of the situation on the bridge. The crew on deck had to stop this heavy buoy from damaging the ship, so our sense of preserving mission was predominant in all four of our minds. The focus of the BM1, two other deck members and me as a young BM3 narrowed on securing the buoy, but the key factor in this scenario was the broader actions of our leader. John Barberi was indispensable to our and the entire crew's safety that rough night, instinctively matching a demand for action few others could have filled better. The professionalism, skill and leadership on witness that early morning in a brutal environment itself makes him one of the most memorable people ever to serve in the Coast Guard.

Along with him taking this situation in hand, another factor stood out from this incident--the high respect and regard held by the command for Senior Chief Barberi. In this case, he was thanked by the CO, then LCDR Riutta, for his quick response on deck and the bridge. This reflected his profound capability to join and impact important command decisions as a Chief. Senior Chief's presence established the Ironwood Chief's Mess as a source of strong leadership for the entire crew, greatly enhancing the command climate and morale during our heavy underway times. His operational leadership and credibility were sought out at all levels for over 30 years, valued by both enlisted and officer ranks aboard Ironwood and throughout his active duty career and later as a CG civilian. Starting in the 1970s until 2010, he influenced an entire generation of leaders in the aids to navigation community stretching from Alaska to Oregon. He later filled a critical role as Training Team head for the Pacific Northwest, advising commands and teaching crews the right way to perform aton operations for many years.

Before retiring out of the D13 Boat Manager job, I had the privilege of working again with The Chief, now a Coast Guard civilian, observing his tireless dedication in overseeing important aton projects and taking it highly personal in meeting the needs of numerous crews out in the field. Hundreds of lights and buoys were renewed through his keen efforts in finding support in ever tightening budgets. He oversaw innovative improvements in aton technology including new types of buoy hulls and solarization of numerous aids. Throughout an active career, BMCS Barberi's persistency of purpose applied new innovations to improve conditions for field operators and increase aid availability for the mariner.

Aton is not considered the most glamorous of Coast Guard missions, but for many years Senior Chief Barberi displayed extraordinary devotion to duty to impact its legacy as one of our most vital services to the mariner. Everything he had achieved earlier as a junior member aboard CGC Sedge, a D13 surfman, building aids in the Snake River, and in charge of USCGC Bitt, combined and developed him as one of the best Chiefs ever serving in the Coast Guard.

Throughout, his righteous character as the embodiment of Coast Guard core values stands out as the key factor in the high regard from everyone privileged to work with him. Disciplined but open minded, John was always in front of any challenge and few people ever gave more to the Coast Guard and its people. He always stood up for the call without anyone telling him to meet a situation head on. He was one of the best sailors I ever served with.

Thank you for allowing me to recognize his efforts.

-BMCM Charlie Tanski (ret.)

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List of others and units related to BMCS Barberi's service (final rank listed):

Commandant Thad Allen (USCGC Citrus)

Vice Admiral Ray Riutta (USCGC Ironwood)

Captain Thomas Hooper (USCGC Ironwood)

Commander John Moriarty (D13 Waterways Management)

BMC Dale Dempsey (ANT Puget Sound)