**OWENS SPEECH [EZ Speech No. 15417]**

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Remarks by Mr. Henry Owens on the occasion of his retirement from the U.S. Navy.

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well, ladies and gentlemen . . . shipmates and friends . . . and my dear, dear wife [first name] and our most precious daughter [first name] . . . it’s so great that you’re all with me here [today/tonight].

after 20 years in the united states navy, my last deployment’s done, and it’s time for me to swallow the anchor. i’m very proud that i was able to serve my country with honor and dedication during these last 20 years, and i’m enormously grateful for all the navy’s given me. it made a man of me, that’s for sure, and — maybe even more important — it taught me the true meaning of teamwork. for on every boat i ever served on, on every deployment i was ever sent on, i discovered how totally dependent each member of a ship’s crew is on one another. i learned that whenever a navy man says the word “shipmate,” it means a helluva lot more than just “friend.” it means a true comrade in arms, someone you can absolutely count on to have your back if the going gets

rough, someone who’ll save *your* life even if it means giving up his own. so to all you shipmates out there who’re with me [today/tonight] . . . [give a naval salute] . . . i salute you, and i thank you!

now you know, i began my naval career back in 1996 as a swabbie on the [name of first ship]. i can remember it like it was yesterday, like i suppose every sailor does his first deployment at sea. there i was, part of the deck crew, and we were working our butts off day after day, and i can tell you the days didn’t pass quickly. monday . . . tuesday . . . wednesay . . . watch after watch . . . and man: I just couldn’t *wait* til friday came around and we could take the weekend off. but of course, as i quickly learned, on a naval vessel, friday *never* comes, and there *are* no weekends off. like the sea itself, the work on board a ship is vast and endless, and that, my friends, was then this landlubber became a sailor.

since that first training deployment, i’ve had many others. you remember those old navy commercials where they said, “join the navy and see the world”? well . . . they weren’t kidding. in my 20 years in the navy i truly *have* seen the

world, or a damned good part of it, anyway. my deployments have taken me to [list all the ports of call you visited as a sailor]. the u.s. navy’s a damned fine travel agency, i can tell you!

Of course, there was also a darker side to that coin, as well, especially after [wife’s first name] decided in some fit of insanity to become my wife. as every military man knows in every branch of service, it’s not just *you* who’re serving your country, but your family as well. as you’re off seeing the world, sometimes for months and months at a time, the wife and kids are there at home, with the wife having to take care of everything — the bills, the house, the kids . . . everything you’d be helping with if you were there.

i met [wife’s first name] in [year], when we [circumstances of your first meeting]. we got married at [place of wedding] in [year of marriage], so we’ve been married now for [no. of years]. our precious little [first name of daughter] was born when i was stationed at the [name of navel base] in san diego, which was one of my last deployments. and the navy also gave me the opportunity to earn my associates degree in [field] there, which i completed in [year].

but there were other deployments after san diego, and once again, [wife] was stuck at home. [toward your wife] darling, i’m so grateful for your love and your sacrifice and your courage while daddy was out at sea roaming the wold. i can only *imagine* how difficult it must’ve been for you at times, especially when [daughter] was ill or having troubles or whatever. and for all that . . . for all that love and scrifice and courage . . . [give a naval salute] . . . i salute you, too, and i thank you from the bottom of my heart [throw her a kiss].

i’ve had a wonderful career in the navy, and i’m glad i chose it. and to my shipmates out there who’re still deciding what your future course might be, i can tell you that you could do a lot worse than making your career in the navy. but whether you decide to stay in, like i did, or leave when your present tour is over, i hope you’ll take advantage of all the wonderful things the navy has to offer.

as for me, i can’t tell you for sure what i’m gonna do with my life next, although i *do* know it’s gonna involve spending a helluva lot more time with [name of wife and daughter]. we’ve got a lot of catching up to do. but let me end this little speech with a story i think you’ll enjoy.

a guy named Charley was newly retired and, as a way to fill up part of his days, he decided to become a greeter at a WalMart store. but it turned out that charlie just couldn't seem to get to work on time. Every day he was 5, 10, 15 minutes late. But he was a good worker, really tidy, clean-shaven, sharp-minded, and a real credit to the company, and moreover he certainly helped walmart meet its "Older Person Friendly" policy.

well, after a week or two of charlie’s constant tardiness, the boss called him into the office for a talk.

"Charley,” the boss said, “I have to tell you, I like your work ethic, you do a bang-up job when you finally get here; but your being late so often is quite bothersome to me."

"Yes, I know boss,” charlie said, “and I am working on it."

"Well good,” said his boss, “you’re a real team player. That's what I like to hear”.

“Yes sir,” charlie replied. “I understand your concern and I will try harder”.

Seeming a bit puzzled, the manager went on to comment, “I know you're retired from the Armed Forces, charlie, so What did they say to you *there* if you showed up in the morning late so often?"

charlie looked down at the floor, then smiled and chuckled quietly as he answered the boss’s question. “well sir,” he replied, “they usually saluted me and said, ‘good morning, admiral, would you like your morning coffee, now, sir?’ “

[pause for laughter]

thanks for listening.

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