



**MARINETTE MARINE CORPORATION**

**SPEECH OF ATTORNEY GENERAL JANET RENO**

**AUGUST 12, 2000**

**MARINETTE, WISCONSIN**

**11 a.m.**

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

ATTORNEY GENERAL RENO: Thank you very much, Admiral. I am greatly honored and privileged to be here today to share in this celebration with the employees of the Marinette Marine Corporation. You have built a great vessel, and I am proud to sponsor what you have done.

It is wonderful to fly in over the fields and come through Menominee and Marinette. You feel like you're coming through America, and thank you for making me feel welcome.

I am proud to share this celebration with the Coast Guard. A great service for this nation, but I am especially proud to be here to honor and salute the SPARs.

Our mission here today is three-fold. First, it is to recognize the dedication, the commitment, the pioneering spirit of the SPARs. Two of whom I've met, and you couldn't have better representatives, Ms. Blaine and Ms. Didgerly (phonetic) have kept me going all morning.

I speak to people who were too young to remember, such as myself, but have had the voices of our elders tell us what it was like in 1942 in the United States of America. War

had burst on our nation in Pearl Harbor. Continental Europe was occupied by the Nazis. We were at war on two fronts, two grim fronts, the vast sweep of the Pacific, the north Atlantic, and even the Gulf Stream along our shores.

When their country needed them, a group of women stepped forward to serve their country and defend democracy, and 80 of them are sitting down there now. 10,000 enlisted women and 1,000 officers of the SPARs represented the best in public service. Never faltering in their wartime mission. They opened -- they operated the LORAN navigation system, they recruited in cotton fields in the south. They did so much for so many to free others to go to the sea and to defend this nation.

Sometimes I think we take democracy for granted, but as I watch representatives of the emerging democracies of eastern Europe come to my office, I realize more than ever how fragile democracy is. How we must cherish it, and how we must never, ever take it for granted. Let us follow the example of the SPARs, and in our daily life work hard to build the freedoms, the democracy we hold dear, here and around the world.

But those ladies did something else. And I will share with you a story of another group just like them who profoundly affected my life. My aunt was a WASP, a women's Army service -- Air Force service pilot. She towed targets, she ferried bombers, and she served her country. When she came home, she and her fellow WASPs, as a seven-year old child I sat there in awe and looked at them. I went to fly with them. And I said, "How did you do it"? And they said, "You can do anything you really want to if it's the right thing to do and you put your mind to it".

Because of the SPARs, because of the WASPs, because of all you wonderful ladies, I'm Attorney General now, and it wouldn't have been possible without you. I salute you. I honor you. And I thank you for opening the doors for me and thousands of others across this land.

My second mission is to express to the United States Coast

Guard and all the men and women who have served in it and who serve in it today my gratitude, respect and affection and that of a grateful nation you serve. As a child, I watched flying boats take off from Denner Key to look for submarines in the Gulf Stream. Coast Guard flying boats. I heard the stories of what the Coast Guard did off the coast of Florida to save crews and others in hurricanes.

I grew to be a sailor and a scuba diver. And I never had to use the Coast Guard myself, but just seeing them there made all the difference in the Florida Keys and as I sailed across the Gulf Stream. As State Attorney in Miami, I watched them handle the delicate, difficult, complex exodus from Mariel, and do it with humanity and compassion. I watched them interdict drug dealers, and do it with force and firmness and respect for due process.

Now as Attorney General, I have stood shoulder to shoulder with the Coast Guard as we worked on issues relating to exodus from Haiti, from Cuba. I've watched them stop a major cruise line from dumping hazardous waste in the Caribbean. I've seen their efforts to curtail smuggling.

Thank you to all of you in the United States Coast Guard for saving lives, for protecting our environment, for enforcing the law, for assisting maritime commerce, and for making this nation a better, stronger nation that cherishes its democracy and the beautiful world that we live in.

As my third mission, I have come to christen this cutter, and send her on her way to the sea with our prayers that she and all who sail with her will be safe, and that they will sail and serve this nation with the same indomitable pioneering spirit of the SPARs, and the strength and the courage, the excellence and the dedication of all the United States Coast Guard.

Let us go forth from here, resolve to work as hard as we can to build the best ships possible, to serve our country in whatever fashion we can in the best way possible, using the example of the SPARs and the Coast Guard to remind us of all that we can do along the way. Thank you for opening

the doors.

(Whereupon the speech was concluded.)