

PREPARED STATEMENT BY

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COMMANDING OFFICER, USCGC CAPE HENLOPEN

BEFORE THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON

CIVIL AND CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS

OF THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 26, 1983

GOOD MORNING MR. CHAIRMAN, MY NAME IS SUSAN DONNER. I AM A LIEUTENANT, JUNIOR GRADE, IN THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD. CURRENTLY, I AM ASSIGNED TO DUTY AS THE COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE COAST GUARD CUTTER CAPE HENLOPEN, HOMEPORTED IN WOODS HOLE, MASSACHUSETTS.

I HAVE BEEN ASKED TO ADDRESS THE ROLE WOMEN PLAY IN THE COAST GUARD, OUR CAREER GOALS AND OBJECTIVES, AND THE PROBLEMS AND SUCCESSES WE HAVE ENCOUNTERED. MY BACKGROUND IS "ROUTINE" AS FAR AS OVERALL COAST GUARD CAREER PATTERNS ARE CONCERNED, BUT IS SOMEWHAT ATYPICAL FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF WOMEN IN THE OTHER BRANCHES OF THE ARMED FORCES.

I ENTERED THE COAST GUARD AS A CADET AT THE UNITED STATES COAST GUARD ACADEMY IN THE SUMMER OF 1976. I CHOSE TO ATTEND THE ACADEMY BECAUSE I WAS INTERESTED IN PURSUING A CAREER IN LAW OR MARINE SCIENCE AND THE ACADEMY OFFERED SOUND EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES. DURING MY FOUR YEARS AT THE ACADEMY I PARTICIPATED IN THE SAME EDUCATIONAL AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING PROGRAM PRESCRIBED FOR MALE CADETS. I HELD POSITIONS OF LEADERSHIP IN THE CADET REGIMENT, INCLUDING A TOUR AS BATTALION COMMANDER WHICH WAS A SUPERVISORY POSITION, OVERSEEING APPROXIMATELY 220 CADETS. I GRADUATED WITH HIGH HONORS AS A GOVERNMENT MAJOR AND EARNED HONORS FOR SCHOLARSHIP AND ATHLETICS. MY ACADEMY CLASS WAS THE FIRST CLASS TO HAVE WOMEN MEMBERS. FOURTEEN WOMEN RECEIVED COMMISSIONS AS ENSIGNS IN THE COAST GUARD WHEN I GRADUATED IN 1980. THE ACADEMY IS THE MAJOR SOURCE OF CAREER COAST GUARD OFFICERS, ABOUT 13% OF THE CURRENT ENROLLMENT IS FEMALE.

AFTER GRADUATION FROM THE ACADEMY, ALL NEWLY COMMISSIONED ENSIGNS ARE ASSIGNED TO TWO YEARS OF SEA-DUTY. I SERVED AS A DECK WATCH OFFICER ABOARD THE CUTTER

SPAR, A 180 FOOT BUOY TENDER OPERATING OUT OF PORTLAND, MAINE. MY ASSIGNMENTS ENTAILED DIRECTING THE MOVEMENTS OF THE VESSEL AS IT SERVICED BUOYS AND OTHER AIDS TO NAVIGATION, AS WELL AS PERFORMING A WIDE VARIETY OF COLLATERAL DUTIES, INCLUDING NAVIGATION, COMMUNICATIONS AND AT ONE TIME OPERATIONS OFFICER. I WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR DIFFERENT OPERATIONAL AND SUPPLY DIVISIONS AND SUPERVISED NINE ENLISTED SERVICE MEMBERS. THESE DUTIES WERE IDENTICAL TO THOSE PERFORMED BY MY MALE COUNTERPARTS ON SUCH VESSELS.

IN 1982, I ASSUMED COMMAND OF THE CUTTER CAPE HENLOPEN. THE CAPE HENLOPEN IS A 95 FOOT COASTAL PATROL BOAT DISPLACING 105 TONS AND CREWED BY MYSELF AND 13 ENLISTED PERSONNEL. THERE ARE NO OTHER WOMEN IN CAPE HENLOPEN'S CREW. OUR PRIMARY DUTIES ARE THE PROVISION OF SEARCH AND RESCUE SERVICES IN THE COASTAL WATERS AROUND CAPE COD, AND MARITIME LAW ENFORCEMENT WORK, INCLUDING DOMESTIC FISHERIES LAW ENFORCEMENT AND DRUG INTERDICTIONS. OTHER WOMEN IN MY CLASS WERE ASSIGNED TO BOTH OPERATIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE JOBS AFTER THEIR TOURS OF SEA DUTY.

WOMEN HAVE ALSO ENTERED THE OFFICER CORPS BY COMPLETING COAST GUARD OFFICER CANDIDATE SCHOOL (OCS) IN YORKTOWN, VIRGINIA. WOMEN HAVE BEEN COMMISSIONED AS OFFICERS FROM THE OCS SINCE 1973. THERE ARE CURRENTLY 129 WOMEN OFFICERS ON ACTIVE DUTY IN THE COAST GUARD. THIS REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY TWO PERCENT OF THE OFFICER CORPS. THIRTY-FIVE OF THESE OFFICERS ARE ASSIGNED TO VESSELS AND NINETY-FOUR ARE ASSIGNED ASHORE, FIVE AS AVIATORS.

THE COAST GUARD HAS BEEN RECRUITING WOMEN INTO REGULAR ENLISTED SERVICE SINCE 1974. PRESENTLY, THERE ARE NEARLY 1800 ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED WOMEN IN THE

COAST GUARD. THIS REPRESENTS APPROXIMATELY FIVE PERCENT OF THE ACTIVE DUTY ENLISTED FORCE. OF THESE WOMEN ABOUT 1000 HAVE A DESIGNATED SPECIALTY, WHICH MAKES THEM THE EQUIVALENT OF JOURNEYMEN AND SUPERVISORS.

IN 1978, ALL SPECIALITIES, RATINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS WERE OPENED TO WOMEN. THE COAST GUARD, BEING UNDER THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, IS NOT PROHIBITED BY LAW FROM PLACING WOMEN ON COMBAT SHIPS. THIS ALLOWS CONSIDERABLE FLEXIBILITY IN ASSIGNING PERSONNEL RESOURCES WHERE NEEDED. THE ONLY CONSTRAINT ON ASSIGNMENT IS THAT ANY UNIT WHERE WOMEN ARE ASSIGNED MUST HAVE THE CAPABILITY TO PROVIDE REASONABLE PRIVACY FOR SLEEPING AND PERSONAL HYGIENE. THIS IS SOMETIMES A PROBLEM ON OLDER UNITS, BUT AS SHIPS AND STATIONS ARE REPLACED OR OVERHAULED THESE PROVISIONS ARE INCLUDED. UNLESS A SERVICE MEMBER SPECIFICALLY REQUESTS IT, ONE WOMAN WILL NOT NORMALLY BE ASSIGNED AS THE SOLE FEMALE AT A UNIT.

I DON'T KNOW YET IF I WILL MAKE THE COAST GUARD MY CAREER BUT MANY OF MY PEERS ARE CAREER ORIENTED. IN THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE I WOULD LIKE TO PURSUE GRADUATE STUDIES, POSSIBLY IN LAW. IF I DO ATTEND LAW SCHOOL, I COULD ANTICIPATE ASSIGNMENTS AS A COAST GUARD LEGAL SPECIALIST AT MAJOR COMMANDS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES. I DON'T PERCEIVE ANY INSTITUTIONAL IMPEDIMENTS TO ACHIEVING MY GOALS IN THE COAST GUARD. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, A NUMBER OF POTENTIAL PROBLEMS LOOMING AHEAD OF ME IF I DETERMINE TO MAKE A CAREER OF THE COAST GUARD. I AM NOT CURRENTLY MARRIED, BUT IF I SHOULD GET MARRIED, I DON'T KNOW HOW MY HUSBAND WOULD REACT TO MY CAREER. SINCE I HAVE A FIVE YEAR SERVICE COMMITMENT, AS DO ALL ACADEMY GRADUATES, I WOULD HAVE LITTLE OPTION UNTIL 1985. IF I DO MARRY DURING THE NEXT FEW YEARS THIS WILL PROBABLY BE MY

MAJOR CONCERN. MANY WOMEN IN THE COAST GUARD ARE MARRIED AND THEIR SPOUSES ALSO HAVE CAREERS. SOMETIMES BALANCING TWO CAREERS IN A SERVICE FAMILY IS A LITTLE EASIER WHEN THE SPOUSE IS ALSO IN THE COAST GUARD. THE SERVICE TRIES TO STATION MARRIED MEMBERS IN THE SAME GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION, HOWEVER, AS A MATTER OF POLICY, MARRIED COUPLES ARE NOT ASSIGNED TO THE SAME VESSEL OR TO A SHORE UNIT WHICH WOULD REQUIRE THE SERVICEMEMBERS TO HAVE EXTENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEALINGS IN THE SAME CHAIN OF COMMAND ASHORE. WHEN THE SERVICEMEMBER'S SPOUSE HAS A CIVILIAN CAREER, THE PROSPECT OF PERIODIC RELOCATIONS CAN IMPOSE GREAT STRAINS ON THE MARRIAGE. CHILD CARE CAN ALSO BE A REAL PROBLEM, AS IT IS WITH ALL TWO CAREER FAMILIES.

I HAVE NOT PERSONALLY EXPERIENCED SEXUAL HARASSMENT DURING MY CAREER. FROM WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD, IT DOES EXIST. APPARENTLY IT MOSTLY INVOLVES JUNIOR ENLISTED WOMEN. I KNOW THE COAST GUARD IS CONCERNED AND HAS TAKEN SEVERAL STEPS TO PREVENT IT. THE COMMANDANT HAS CREATED AN INVESTIGATIVE SYSTEM TO FOLLOW-UP COMPLAINTS. GENERALLY, I THINK ATTITUDES AMONG MEN IN THE COAST GUARD ARE POSITIVE TOWARD WOMEN. WE ARE HERE TO STAY AND WE ARE DEDICATED. THEY SEE THAT WE CAN DO THE JOB IN A PROFESSIONAL MANNER. WE WILL GAIN EVEN GREATER ACCEPTANCE AS MORE WOMEN ARE PROMOTED IN THE NORMAL COURSE OF EVENTS AND THE SENIOR WOMEN WILL ACT AS ROLE MODELS FOR JUNIORS.

IN SUM, I LIKE THE COAST GUARD, IT HAS ENABLED ME TO MEET MY GOALS. THERE ARE NO RESTRICTIONS FOR WOMEN WITHIN THE SERVICE, AND I BELIEVE THAT WOMEN ARE CAPABLE OF RISING TO THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE ORGANIZATION IN ALL AREAS.

I WILL BE PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THE COMMITTEE MIGHT HAVE.