



Coast Guard News

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From Navy Cross to the Cross of Christ by Vic Primeaux

As hard as it may be for us in the “modern Coast Guard” to comprehend, not all that long ago there were no training centers in the entire Coast Guard. But, from that era would emerge two Coast Guard heroes who first met each other when signing up with a Seattle recruiter in September 1939: Douglas Munro, the only Coastguardsman to ever receive the Congressional Medal of Honor, and Ray Evans, one of only two enlisted Coastguardsmen to be awarded the Navy Cross during World War II. They were recognized for their heroism in action while serving as shipmates in the same battle.

Evans’ Navy Cross citation reads, in part: **...for extraordinary heroism as a member of the crew of a Higgins boat assisting in the rescue of a group of Marines surrounded by enemy Japanese forces on a beachhead of Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, on September 27, 1942. Although he knew that his boat was to be used for the purpose of drawing enemy fire away from other craft evacuating the trapped Marines, Evans, with utter disregard for his own personal safety, volunteered as a member of the crew. Gallantly remaining at his post during the entire evacuation and with every other member of his crew killed or wounded, he maintained control of the boat with one hand on the wheel and continued to fire his automatic machine gun with the other, until the last boat cleared the beach. By his great personal valor, skill and outstanding devotion to duty in the face of grave danger, he contributed directly to the success of his mission by saving the lives of many who otherwise might have perished.**

Evans grew up in Seattle and enjoyed singing in his church choir during his high school years, knowing the importance of walking with the Lord. The end of the

summer following high school graduation would begin momentous changes in the life of Ray Evans and quickly develop his character as a man of integrity with a growing sense of selfless service to his nation, his fellow comrades-in-arms, and to his God.

Upon their enlistment, both Evans and Munro took their initial training at Port Angeles and first tour of duty aboard CGC SPENCER on Staten Island. From there they volunteered for service aboard Coast Guard-manned attack transports which on 7 August 1942 brought Evans to Guadalcanal and Munro to Tulagi for the first-ever amphibious assault by the United States in modern warfare known as Operation WATCHTOWER. This campaign lasted until Feb 1943 and would mark the end of the advance of the Japanese war machine.

It would be roughly six weeks later when Evans and Munro, in the same Higgins boat, would be in the thick of the action assisting the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines under the command of Lt. Col. Lewis B. “Chesty” Puller, of the 1st Marine Division ... and Douglas Munro would lay down his life while in charge of the boats evacuating the Marines under intense enemy

fire, while Ray Evans would complete the mission in the last boat filled with evacuated Marines.

Malaria would eventually force Evans to depart the Pacific



Chief Signalman **RAYMOND J. EVANS** in 1944 as he is awarded the Navy Cross on the parade ground of the Coast Guard Training Station in Alameda on Government Island — now Coast Guard Island (Coast Guard photo). Admiral “Bull” Halsey was the Navy official who made a war time field promotion for Evans from First Class Petty Officer to Chief and recommended him for the award, as well as for SM1 Douglas Munro to receive the Medal of Honor (posthumously). The Coast Guard has further honored Ray Evans with the annual award of the “Commander Ray Evans Outstanding Coxswain Trophy” for the enlisted coxswain who demonstrates exemplary performance and superior technical, professional, leadership, and seamanship abilities.

Theater and allow him to return to San Francisco and take leave to get married in May 1943. His Coast Guard career would move the couple to numerous locations, with their final stop in Houston, TX, where CDR Ray Evans would serve as Captain of the Port and retire from that position in 1962.

But while in Houston, Ray and Dottie Evans were able to settle into a wonderful church they could call home for 14 years, with Ray serving as a deacon and then elder. When they finally moved for good back to the Puget Sound area, they assisted their local church for several years with hosting a large single-adult fellowship at their home each Sunday ... and still stay in touch with many who filled their home with the joy of the Lord each week. Ray even published a volume of “Calls to Worship” which he used in church.

CDR Ray Evans — *Semper Paratus* for God, church, and country.



Ray and Dorothy **EVANS** with Vic Primeaux following the August 2007 Puget Sound Joint Harbor Operations Center (JHOC) Ribbon Cutting Ceremony at which Admiral Thad Allen officiated amongst a host of other dignitaries. The JHOC is the state-of-the-art, multi-agency command center housed in the Commander Ray Evans Shore Operations Building at ISC Seattle. Ray and Dottie will celebrate their 65th anniversary this month, with Ray’s added reflection: “In God’s strange way, we both knew at that instant we first met (in 1939) that we were to be together for life.... they have been wonderful years even the times we were apart due to sea duty. God has always been with us.” (photo by Vic Primeaux)

Major portions of this article are from official Coast Guard sources at <http://www.uscg.mil/history/> and personal papers of, and interviews with, CDR Ray Evans (ret)

Masthead photo shows the brand new 45-foot Response Boat-Medium (RB-M) which will replace the aging 41-foot Utility Boats (UTB). The first of the planned 180 RB-Ms, and possibly as many as 250, was recently delivered to Station Little Creek, VA, and built by Kvichak Marine of Kent, WA, under contract to Marinette Marine Corporation, WI, the prime contractor with the USCG (official Coast Guard photo)