

# Remarks for Rededication of Captain Robert W. Vail's Ring to the Golden Legacy Program

Prepared for presentation during dinner at the Golden Legacy Ceremony March 2020  
by Captain Terry W. Newell, USCG (Ret), '72

Admiral Kelly (Superintendent), Captain Wester (Commandant of Cadets), Class Advisor LT Schwartz, Class of 2022 and your Class President Cadet 3/c Kirvelevicius, Class of 1972 Ring Donors and Classmates

Captain Johnson, my dear Classmate, thanks for the kind introduction.

I'm honored to stand before you tonight as a 1972 Link In The Chain participant and address our Link in The Chain Class, the great Class of 2022. Truth be told, our 50 year class gets great joy in connecting with and encouraging, the members of the Class of 22 who have volunteered to participate in the LITC program directly with me and my classmates. Our thanks to you for your participation.

Tonight during the Golden Legacy Ceremony, you will see an empty chair on stage. That empty chair is set for a revered 72 Classmate who sadly left us all too early when he crossed the bar in 2005. That Classmate is Captain Robert W. Vail, USCG, Retired. So you may ask, why is CAPT Vail involved in the ceremony tonight? Because 72 wishes to rededicate CAPT Vail's ring. Rededicate because his ring was one of the very first rings donated to the Golden Legacy Program by his lovely widow Mickie at the inaugural event in 2009. Over the course of the last decade, it has become more common that the rings donated are from the 50 year class to their Link In The Chain class. The Class of 72 has no doubt that CAPT Vail would have been an enthusiastic supporter and participant in the LITC Program and to the Class of 2022, and it seems only natural to recognize him in this year's Golden Legacy Ceremony.

So tonight, we are honored to rededicate CAPT Vail's ring to the Class of 2022. In this way, CAPT Vail's Class ring will be symbolically presented along with the donated rings from 8 of our '72 classmates which will be melted and mixed with the gold used to forge the Class of '22 rings.

So why is this important to the class of '72?

Let me tell you just a little about CAPT Vail, who hereafter I'll refer to as Mole, M O L E, his Class nickname. Why the nick name Mole you may ask. If you want to know, it's a great sea story which I will be glad to share with you at another time, maybe later during dinner or at the formal.

Mole was probably the smallest guy in physical stature in our Class [side note, small in size but a ferocious soccer player]. Ironically, he was a man larger than life as an informal leader in our Class. Most of the Class business passed through the Mole in some informal capacity. He was

rarely if ever a formal leader, I don't think he ever had more than 2 stripes as a firstie, however, he had a big say in Class affairs through the informal pipeline. Mole was a bit of a rebel at the Academy, but despite his rebellious attitude, he resolved to be worthy of the traditions of Coast Guard officers, and he upheld those traditions with gusto throughout his Coast Guard career and beyond.

Every Classmate loved Mole, and I mean everyone. You couldn't help but like Mole. He was definitely eclectic, and he had the innate ability to relate to everyone he met on some level of sincere commonality, a rare trait indeed. Mole exuded camaraderie. Mole was a Classmates' Classmate, pure and simple.

I know you know the phrase "The Coast Guard is the hard-core nucleus about which the Navy forms in a time of War." Well, Mole was the hard-core nucleus about which the Class of 72 formed when it was Crunch Time.

In summary, Mole is an icon of the Class of 72, representing the best in all of his Classmates.

So I hope you have a Mole in your Class, just as we did. You probably do, and may not recognize him or her yet, but you will in due time. We need Moles, those great leaders who help the Class, the Academy, our great organization the U. S. Coast Guard, while serving, and later in retirement, and even after crossing the bar.

Rest in Peace Mole, as we rededicate your ring to our Link In The Chain Class of 2022. Your memory lives on Mate. Sail on high above.

Your classmates salute you, sir!

-----*Turn and Salute Class President*

And we, the Class of 1972, salute the Class of 2022!