

## Speaker: Jeff Pettitt

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I'm Jeff Pettitt, retired as a 06 captain aviator for 28 years of my 30 years in the Coast Guard. That was a charmed time to be flying. I got my wings in 81 and retired in 2009. While a lot of these guys have some incredible stories to tell, I like to tell a lighter side of things. I'm going to have some hysterical historical info just to keep it fun, all right. Now I say I lived in a charmed time and I had some great jobs. I flew at five different air stations. I had some jobs where I had to go visit a lot of the other air stations for investigations, safety visits, that sort of thing. I'm one of the few guys that has probably seen just about the entire US coastline by Coast Guard helicopter, from Maine to Key West on the east coast, from Corpus to Miami on the gulf coast, from St. Lawrence seaway to Chicago on the Great Lakes and from San Diego all the way to Canada. I've seen it all and flown from all of the air stations at my time except Kodiak, even a couple air stations that don't exist anymore like Brooklyn, Cape May and now Los Angeles.

It's been a grand time. A lot of these guys did really amazing historical stuff. I just got by, had a good time, flew all over the place and proud of that, really had a great time, no complaints. My last job was one of the best, down there as liaison to Navy flight training. My last three years I got to bring in all the newest Coast Guard aviators there were and get them started down the right path, what a great way to go out, no complaints. Now, for my last little bit of historical info, I did do a couple of odd ball things. We'll get them down for posterity's sake. First of all, I did the last operational landing of the HH-65 Alpha, the original configuration of the dolphin. That was on the 14th of June in 2005 at air station Humboldt Bay. We were the very last operational unit to fly the [H65A. Then everybody was transitioning to the Bravo.

Kind of interesting because I was at the last unit that flew the H52 as well, air station Detroit. It seems like I'm always the last one to get the new toys. It was a great ride anyway, can't complain. Then my last little bit of history, which really is kind of amazing, when I was at air station Brooklyn, the Navy had a huge historical event, the 200th anniversary sailing of the USS Constitution, Old Ironsides to you history buffs. That was the first time that ship had sailed in 116 years. The Navy got it ready to go and sailed that beautiful sailing rig out of Boston. I was the helicopter

assigned to provide them some security and keep all of the nutcase public away from them. In my helicopter, I circled around that ship for several hours keeping everybody away. Then it was time to take old Ironsides back to port. They started to head back into Boston. We weren't communicating very well on the radio. It was just time to wish them goodbye.

I got the helicopter all up to speed and we're doing a nice pass down the port side. Lo and behold, Old Ironsides decided to do a very nice thing for the public and fire all their cannons off the port side. Luckily, it was the US Navy and all the cannon balls missed me. The shock wave just about knocked us out of the sky. It was quite exciting so I can say without a doubt I'm the only Coast Guard helicopter, air craft commander to survive a full broadside by a Navy vessel. What a bit of fun that was but a glorious day and a great ride all along. That's all I got, I just wanted to have a little bit of levity in there and tell a little bit of the fun side.