



PHOTO BY CLARY GRANT

Captain Craig Eisenbeis, U.S. Coast Guard, retired, was keynote speaker at Depoe Bay's Memorial Day Fleet of Flowers.

Sisters man speaks at Fleet of Flowers

Sisters area resident, Captain Craig Eisenbeis, U.S. Coast Guard, retired, was tapped to be keynote speaker at Depoe Bay's 71st annual Memorial Day Fleet of Flowers.

The annual Fleet of Flowers features dozens of boats decked out with thousands of flowers and wreaths in parade-style fashion. After the ceremonial activities and speech, the boats paraded out through Depoe Bay's entrance channel and under the Highway 101 bridge, also decorated for the occasion and lined with thousands of observers. Officials estimated attendance at about 3,500.

Like all Memorial Day observances, the Fleet of Flowers honors fallen service members and is a solemn event. Depoe Bay takes the spirit of remembrance even further by honoring all those lost at sea and who offer up their lives in the service of others.

The Fleet of Flowers was first observed in 1945 to honor the memory of two Depoe Bay fishermen — Roy Bower and Jack Chambers — who lost their lives in a storm at sea, while trying to save others. A monument was erected in their memory on the downtown sea wall, near Depoe Bay's Spouting Horn, a natural phenomenon that spouts like a geyser when surf and tide conditions are right.

In his address, titled "Being an Everyday Hero," Captain Eisenbeis touted the virtues of selflessness and sacrifice, and remembered individuals lost in the past year. He also highlighted the service of Coast Guard members, both past and present, including his own father, Sidney Eisenbeis, who volunteered his service and his own boat at the onset of World War II to assume Coast

Guard patrols up and down the Columbia River to guard against foreign incursions and saboteurs.

Captain Eisenbeis concluded his message by exhorting the crowd to make a difference in the world themselves by their everyday actions toward others. "So, if we are to truly honor the lives and past sacrifices of those who have passed on before us," he said, "there are things that each of us can do to be heroes in today's world. They need not be big things, and they need not be actions of great sacrifice; but they should — and must — be done. Together...we can all make a difference."

The ceremony included flag-bearing veterans from each military service, a performance by the Coast Guard honor guard, and multiple singers and musicians. Fallen service personnel were honored, with a special remembrance to the recently deceased Coast Guard Master Chief David Duren. After the ceremony, to the strains of bagpipe music, Captain Eisenbeis and other dignitaries boarded a Coast Guard motor lifeboat to lead the procession of flowered boats out to sea for the ceremonial laying of memorial wreaths.

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