

STANDING THE WATCH: AN UNLIKELY JOURNEY

**I was not born to privilege,
nor guided by advantage.
A high school dropout,
searching for purpose—
for a way to serve.**

**Here, there was room
for effort, for growth,
for the possibility
that one could succeed
despite an uncertain start.**

**In uniform, I learned discipline.
In service, I found meaning.
In adversity, resilience.**

**A life unfolded—
not by entitlement,
but by opportunity
met with responsibility—accepted.**

**From battlefield care
to the bedside,
from public service
to national responsibility—
each step a reminder
that the mission extended beyond self.**

One lesson endures:

**Democracy requires vigilance.
It depends on truth.
And truth, once weakened,
is not easily restored.**

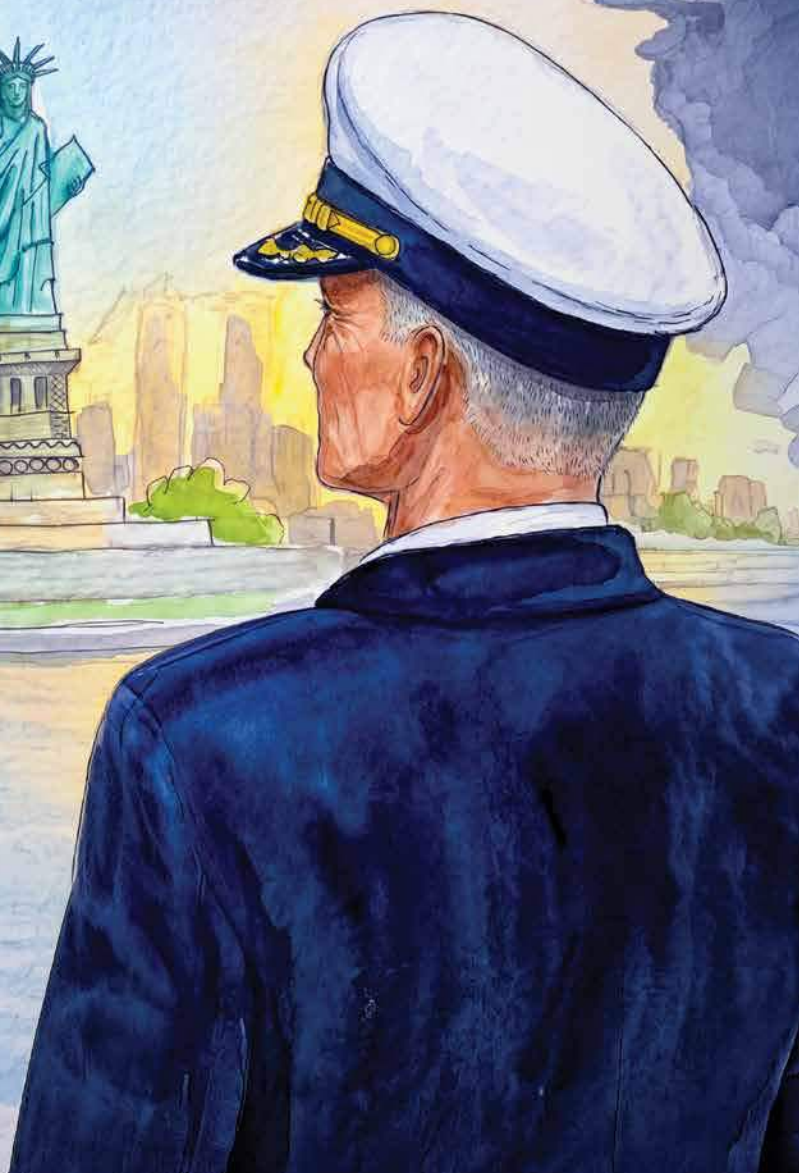
**I have stood the watch
in moments of consequence—
when truth was not abstract,
but consequential.**

And the lesson remains:

**We stand the watch
not as partisans,
but as stewards—
of trust,
of truth,
of one another.**

**For what we fail to defend,
we may not keep.**

—Richard Carmona, VADM (ret), MD, MPH, FACS



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