

## Getting the Hammer

*Story and Photo by PA3 Barry Jeffrey Bena, District Seven Public Affairs*

It's an award not often heard of in the Coast Guard, yet it gives those who receive it, a great amount of pride. It isn't the Coast Guard Medal or a Lifesaving Medal. In fact, it isn't even a medal or citation; you can't place it on your chest or hang it in a frame. It's the Turek award and it exemplifies the personal qualities necessary as a Coast Guard Marine Inspector.

The Turek Award is given to the top graduate in every Coast Guard Marine Inspector Course who goes above and beyond in terms of professionalism, integrity, flexibility and an overriding concern for the safety of life at sea.

Along with having their name placed on a plaque that hangs at the Training Center in Yorktown, Va., part of the award includes the presentation of a ceremonial hammer to the Coast Guard Inspector.

The hammer is a tool needed by a marine inspector during a routine inspection. The hammer is used to test the stability of the vessel's hull material.

"Like a boarding team member who is proud to receive their gun belt, the hammer is basically OUR gun belt," said Lt.j.g. Michelle Schopp, a Turek Award winner in Feb. 2003, and now the assistant senior investigating officer at Coast Guard Sector Miami.

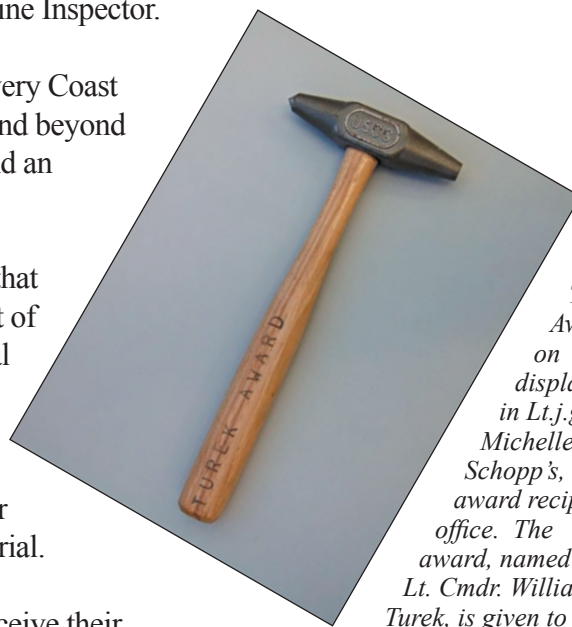
The award was named after Lt. Cmdr. William B. Turek, a marine inspector who died in the line of duty while stationed at Marine Safety Office Hampton Roads, Va., March 3, 1993.

Turek was in the control room of the engineroom of the motor vessel Cape Diamond testing the carbon dioxide extinguishing system alarms which involved releasing a small amount of carbon dioxide into the engine room. The chief engineer and first assistant engineer of the Cape Diamond realized the amount of carbon dioxide being released had been exceeded and escaped through an emergency hatch.

Rather than escaping with the others, Turek entered the engineroom, where the crew remained working, to warn them of the carbon dioxide discharge. The final words heard from Turek were, "CO2, Evacuate, Evacuate!" Turek was later found at the bottom of the ladder leading out of the engineroom dead from carbon dioxide asphyxiation.

Turek was posthumously awarded the Coast Guard Medal.

"He was a great man and embodied everything a Coast Guard Marine Inspector should be," said Schopp.



*The Turek Award on display in Lt.j.g. Michelle Schopp's, 2003 award recipient, office. The award, named after Lt. Cmdr. William Turek, is given to the graduate of each Marine Inspector Course who exemplifies the qualities necessary to be a Coast Guard marine inspector.*