

CAPTAIN HOPLEY YEATON SUPERIOR CUTTERMAN AWARD



OFFICER

LCDR DONALD RUDNICKAS, USCG

*CGC SPAR (WLB 206)
COMMANDING OFFICER*

LCDR Donald Rudnickas demonstrated extraordinary leadership and maritime skill as Commanding Officer of CGC SPAR. Taking temporary command during a critical 2024 mission after an unexpected leadership change, he immediately faced significant challenges. With other cutters in the fleet experiencing equipment failures, LCDR Rudnickas guided his crew to become the primary asset for Great Lakes operations. Under his command, the crew decommissioned 115 buoys in 63 days, including 45 in heavy ice conditions.

He then led Operation TACONITE, the largest domestic icebreaking mission, safeguarding the transit of over \$100 million in vital cargo. As the sole qualified ice pilot, he expertly trained his crew in the complex art of icebreaking, conducting dangerous close-quarter maneuvers to escort 1,000-foot vessels and free ships beset in ice. His exceptional ship-handling was further highlighted when he rescued the M/V John J. Boland from drifting into hazardous rocks.

Beyond his operational prowess, LCDR Rudnickas cultivated a highly positive command climate. His infectious optimism and dedication to mentorship directly resulted in a significant increase in crew retention, inspiring several members who had planned to leave the service to re-enlist. He also enhanced the Coast Guard's public image by engaging with media to showcase the cutter's mission to over 85,000 viewers. Through his steadfast leadership and resilience, LCDR Rudnickas transformed a period of instability into a showcase of operational excellence and crew development.



ENLISTED

EMC MARC MOUTON, USCG

*CGC SPAR (WLB 206)
COMMAND CHIEF*

EMC Mouton, a Permanent Cutterman with seven years of sea time, has distinguished himself as an exceptional leader and engineer, currently serving as Command Chief on the CGC SPAR. His leadership was pivotal to the cutter's operational success during a period of immense strain, which included a 300% increase in workload and 30 days of intense icebreaking. Despite being an electrician, he was hands-on in major, non-electrical repairs of the ship's reduction gear and a main diesel engine, showcasing his versatility and ingenuity.

As the acting Engineer Officer, EMC Mouton led his department to achieve stellar evaluation scores of 99.4% in Engineering and 94.7% in Damage Control, earning a "Most Valuable Player" award. He was instrumental in training new personnel, including a new Engineering Officer, ensuring mission readiness and safety.

In his role as Command Chief, he has been a trusted advisor to the commanding officer through numerous crises, including a court martial, a medevac for a crew member with suicidal ideations, and multiple investigations. His steadying, positive influence on the crew was critical in maintaining morale, especially during an unexpectedly extended five-week mission. His leadership is directly credited with a significant increase in crew retention, inspiring six of seven members who had planned to leave the service to instead re-enlist or extend their tours. EMC Mouton's technical skill, selfless service, and unwavering optimism exemplify the highest standards of a Superior Cutterman.