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“How Do You Earn Merit Marks”

To: D/C's & Squadron Commanders

Now that you have been elected to serve USPS in these elected positions, it is time to focus on the above topic so that you will enjoy the process of recommending members for the only National Award for service to USPS. The following is how the process works:

First, you as a recommending officer of USPS, have the opportunity to recognize members for substantial service to your District or Squadron. Notice that I said opportunity and not task. It is a privilege of your office, and one that should not be taken lightly. While the Chief awards the Merit Mark, only you can convey the necessary information that will allow him to favorably review.

Use as your reference the USPS Operations Manual (which is available by going online in pdf format at www.usps.org):

16.1 A “merit mark” (MM) is awarded by the Chief Commander to a member for substantial effort in personally furthering the interests, programs and objectives of USPS, its districts and squadrons. It is a coveted award; it is by and large the only official recognition a member receives for his/her efforts. Only one merit mark may be awarded in a year to a member; no matter how extensive the contribution [Bylaws 14.1.7]. A certificate is issued, and a special insigne may be worn on USPS uniforms [refer to 18.44 on page 190]. Recommendations for a merit mark are made by squadron, district, rear, and vice commanders and chief commander. Active and family members may be recommended. Family merit marks shall not count toward senior, life or emeritus status.

Several of the activities that count toward an award of a merit mark are:

Classes Taught: Number of individual class sessions or lectures given, not courses.

Classes Proctored: Number of table group sessions supervised.

Interviews Held: How many sessions did member help with interviews of class members, how many did he/she interview?

Substantial Service Performed: Any and all services performed by members, such as the following:

- **Office Held:** actual work done by the officer (simply holding the job title is not sufficient description for the Chief to award a merit mark)
- **Committee Chair:** meetings chaired, result of meetings, results of activity, reports of activity to Executive Committee or membership.
- **Activity Chair:** meetings held, result of meetings, and reports given to Executive Committee or membership.
- **Committee Member:** committee meetings attended, work performed on activities. Some activities: cooperative charting (how much time was involved, how many items reported?, rendezvous (how did member help, how much time involved? Simply attending does not count), cruises (how much time involved, how did member help? Attendance alone does not count). Others with similar restrictions are: predicted log contests, change-of-watch, dinners, founders day, auctions and safe boating week activities to name just a few. Any and all squadron sponsored activities when service is rendered on behalf of the squadron and not just attending.
- **Executive Committee Meetings:** number attended as an officer or member at large, contribution to meeting, reports given etc.
- **Regular Meetings:** credit for officer's attendance only. No credit for general members as this is a privilege of membership unless member participated in meeting.
- **District Meetings:** credit only if attending as a delegate of squadron, participating in a workshop or seminar, or exhibiting a teaching aid.
- **Governing Board or Annual Meetings of USPS:** credit for members only if attending as a surrogate for the commander or participating in an activity such as exhibiting a teaching/training aid. Attendance as a voting member of the Governing Board or Annual Meeting does count, but what member did at meetings should still be documented.

A merit mark chair should be appointed early on in your year and maintain a list during the year of those members who have performed significant work, noting the nature of the work and the result. A large number of hours involved are not in itself sufficient to earn a merit mark.

In summary, the more a member participates and contributes, the better the chance that the Chief will award a merit mark! Please do not hesitate to call or Email me if you ever have a question as to procedure etc. Have a great year and recommend the members that helped you have the great year! Remember that **15 November is due date for Merit Marks!!!** My telephone # is (252) 442-1066 and Email is lbarnesiii@earthlink.net.

Yours in Safe Boating,

P/C/C L. M. Barnes, III, SN

