

SHARON WILLIS FIJALKA

Sharon Willis was born and raised in Newburyport Massachusetts, the birthplace of the Coast Guard. While a cadet, she joined the men's bowling team and became the Eastern Regional women's collegiate bowling champion in the spring of 1980. She was also a member of the inaugural women's softball team and the Cadet Band Flag Corps performing at many football games and a special performance at the 1976 Macys Thanksgiving Day Parade. Sharon sailed Eagle every summer of her cadet career.

Sharon married her classmate, Michael Fijalka, just three days after graduation and together they headed north for shipboard assignments in Massachusetts. Sharon was a deck watch officer in CGC Chase. She was a qualified law-enforcement boarding officer and conducted the first successful Haitian interdiction and repatriation of migrants to Port-au-Prince. Next, she was part of the commissioning crew for the new CGC Bear.

In 1985, she was selected to attend law school at the College of William and Mary from 1986-89. After

graduation, she passed the bar and served in several staff attorney positions until 1991 when she returned to sea duty as a WHEC Operations Officer on CGC Gallatin earning herself a permanent Cutterman Pin.

Following tours in Coast Guard recruiting and as chief of legal policy and program development, Sharon was assigned as the Chief Trial Judge of the Coast Guard for Courts Martial. She was also a guest lecturer at the Army Judge Advocate Generals Training Center.

Captain Fijalka retired in 2007 as Commanding Officer of the Coast Guard Hearing Office. Her awards include Meritorious Service Commendation and Achievement medals. Following Coast Guard retirement, Sharon worked for the Department of Defense as a legal advisor to the Convening Authority for Military Commissions.

Sharon and Mike had one son, Michael, born on Governors Island. He passed away at age 25 after nearly a lifetime battling many cancer diagnoses.

