

**Horace D. Taft Alumni Medal
and Citation of Merit
2013 Recipient**



Cynthia M. Thebaud '81

As your family introduced you to the sea and sailing at an early age, a career as a naval officer might have been viewed as a logical step. Such was not the case in the 1970s. Early and courageous steps were to be taken: electing to attend a newly co-educational Taft, playing varsity field hockey, leading the Papyrus as editor-in-chief, serving as the finest sailor on a predominantly male sailing team, and achieving high honors throughout your career at Taft speaks to your intellect, determination, and skills as a leader. Upon graduation your advisor wrote, “I am heartened by your courageous selection of the Naval Academy. The experience will test you, but I have no doubt that you will be equal to the test.” Graduation with distinction from Annapolis, a master’s degree from the George Washington University, and honors at the Naval War College—training as the only female among 67 men seeking a place as an engineering officer—preceded service on ships throughout the world. Command of Destroyer USS Decatur in the midst of Operation Enduring Freedom, command of Destroyer Squadron 60 to provide security and build prosperity for West and Central Africa through the African Partnership Station, and membership of the Strategic Studies Group of the Chief of Naval Operations all prepared you for your selection as one of the first women ever to be appointed as a rear admiral of the United States Navy. Throughout your career, you have been deeply proud of the “Covenant of Leadership”—the moral and ethical imperative to be responsible for all who work with you. You have led a life of service to this nation and to keeping the peace throughout the world, exemplifying the enduring power of the Taft School motto: *Non Ut Sibi Ministretur Sed Ut Ministret*. Today your school is deeply proud to present to you its highest award, the Horace D. Taft Alumni Medal.