

## **An Admiral Reflects**

I was recently invited to speak at my son's graduation Dining Out and I took advantage of the occasion to share some of my experiences in the Navy to help illustrate the challenges I thought they would face as newly commissioned officers in the Navy and Marine Corps. As I compiled a list of "Top Ten" topics, it became apparent that most of my successes were due to the support of spectacular Shipmates. In my retirement remarks, I mentioned five individuals, by name, in addition to my wonderfully supportive wife, in recognition of their influence on my career.

The first was AGCS Randy Dyer, whom I was privileged to serve with on three occasions; he was my Chief on board USS JOHN F. KENNEDY (CV 67), a forecaster at NEOC when I was XO, and a civilian senior forecaster at NEOC when I was Commanding Officer. My first LCPO in the navy was MMCM Groce who gave Ensign Donaldson three rules to live by: 1) keep the XO out of the engine rooms 2) do all the Division paperwork and 3) don't touch anything in his engine rooms without his permission. If I would do those three things, he would make a naval officer out of me. I did as requested (actually directed...) and he upheld his end of the bargain. The third Chief named was STCS Ken Jackson who helped me navigate the challenges at the Fleet ASW Training Center in Norfolk, VA. The two officers I mentioned were CAPT Don Roman, who mentored me and CDR Ray Toll, the best XO on the earth, bar none.

Had I planned for a longer speech, I would have included my two Command Master Chiefs, AGCMs Doug Maxwell and Phyllis Shirley and my string of Chiefs of Staff at CNMOC, starting with CDR Parker Lumpkin. Finally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention Dr. Don Durham who provided the senior civilian leadership for the majority of my tenure as CNMOC.

The problem with daring to list select individuals is the fear of offending individuals who should be on the list which in my case is very long. The point of writing this article is to give credit where credit is due; that I owe my success in the Navy primarily to the Chief Mess. I was fortunate to serve directly with 22 Chief Petty Officers in 10 different ratings. If I include my General Quarters Station on the JFK, as Foxtrot Repair Locker Leader, the number of ratings goes up to 14. By far, most Chiefs were outstanding, some were fair and only two were disappointing. Twenty great Chiefs out of 22; I'd say that was above fleet average.

Today, the Naval Academy has a senior enlisted Navy or Marine Corps adviser assigned to each company; something I wish they had back in the early 70s. I consider myself exceptionally fortunate to have served with many excellent Chief Petty Officers, and I hope my son is equally fortunate as he begins his Navy adventure.

Submitted by RADM Tom Donaldson, USN RET